

A Journal of My Life

Facsimile Edition

Winnie Apple Newton

Prepared with a Foreward by
Christine Newton Bush



A Journal of My Life
Facsimile Edition
Newton, Winne Apple (1926-2014)

Prepared with a Foreword by
Bush, Christine Newton (1968 -)

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Christine Newton Bush
Diana Joy Newton
Robert Lee Newton, Jr.
Anita Marie Greene

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Winnie Apple Newton circa 1978
Apple-Newton.name family archive

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Winnie's rocking chair (2021)
Digital composite.
Christine Newton Bush

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Journal of Winnie Apple Newton (2021)
Christine Newton Bush

Back flap photograph:
Self portrait (2021)
Christine Newton Bush

For all the Apples, Newtons, friends, and Pathfinders.

Count your blessings to have known Winnie.

FORWARD

Winnie Apple Newton described herself not as a poet but a writer of verse. In these pages we can trace the origins of her sensitivity to the subtleties of language back to her mother who could recite all ten verses of *The Burial of Moses* (1890) by Cecil Frances Alexander [née Cecil Frances Humphreys].¹ Life on her family's tobacco farm in North Carolina during the first half of the twentieth century was not devoid of cultural sophistication. In an early chapter of this journal titled "School Days" Winnie recalls the first poem she learned. It begins: "When I was down beside the sea/A wooden spade they gave to me to dig the sandy shore."

As the waves of her life rolled in, that first spade was transmuted into a quill that served her well. She was valedictorian of her high school class, earned her nursing cap from Duke University, and directed church productions of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* and Harry van Dyke's *The Other Wise Man* with imagination and verve. Throughout her life she would share pieces of writing with friends and family and church groups, sometimes original compositions with a keen sense of linguistic rhythm and often a poignant disclosure relevant to the topic at hand.

The reader will discover here that Winnie also had a talent for memoir. She has collected the persons, events, and stories that were central to her life and recounted them in the same voice those of us fortunate enough to have known her will fondly recall — sometimes amused or excited, other times stern or worried, but always compassionate. While she loved spending time with friends and family, these musings of her later years were written in relative solitude. Winnie bears witness to her historical context as well as to her social sphere. In a later chapter titled "The Election – of 2004" she concisely assessed the war declared by the United States against Iraq: "It became a disaster and a mess." Indeed.

Nobody knew Robert Lee Newton, Bob, like Winnie did and there is much here to remember about him through her telling. "He was an excellent pastor," she underlines. She also recounts his involvement beyond the church, such as his brief tenure on the Watauga County school board during one of the worst winters on record in the mid-1970s. Here also are tender, romantic moments. (I will not spoil the discovery of their pet nicknames one for the other.) In one oft-told anecdote she relates the story of a departure from Chicago that will separate them for a time. She gives a fellow traveler on the plane pause when she reveals her tears are for leaving someone dear behind: her husband...of twenty-one years. Perhaps the gift of a blank journal was an unconscious gesture on my part to provide an outlet

¹ This is not an obscure work, but one that has since been published by Franklin Classics as part of their *Scholars Select* series and identified "as being culturally important, part of the knowledge base of civilization as we know it."

for her grief the year after Bob died. In these pages she notes often how much she missed him.

Like many of her generation, Winnie was grateful for modern conveniences. At the same time, she was downright *suspicious* of computers. This edition replicates (in grayscale) a hand-written artifact. This provides opportunity to appreciate her beautiful penmanship and calligraphic fortitude, but it also displays some of the limitations of a human editor. She needed to number the pages by hand. Inconsistencies have inevitably resulted. For this reason, I have added auto-generated page numbers at the bottom of the facsimile pages that diverge from the numbering at the top of her hand-written pages. I hope this will provide more help than distraction. Additionally, there are some pages which were numbered and then left blank. Annotations indicate where this is the case. To preserve the layout of the original journal, some of these numbered but blank pages have been included.

I also want to acknowledge that Winnie began pages about some of her grandchildren that for reasons we cannot know were not completed. I want to include a special note here for Melissa, Katherine, Zachary, and Andrew that this in no way reflects on her affection for you. Please have no doubt that she was exceedingly proud and filled with hope and love for all her grandchildren.

I would also be remiss not to note that during the period in which she wrote these journal entries Winnie began to reckon with Alzheimer's disease, a condition that tragically inflicted many in her family. Traces are present in the writing and one of the final chapters grapples with it directly: "I just hope to take whatever comes as patiently and valiantly as Bob did. I have told God I know he knows best." Sentiments such as this reveal the depth of her faith. She was brave beyond words, conceding her condition to divine will rather than petitioning for intervention.

Finally, I want to note that Winnie's journal is also filled with observations and celebrations of nature. Seasonal awareness was a fact of life for a farming family and this was further reinforced by the annual cycle of church events she and Bob were responsible for managing during their pastorates. The calendar was a primary organizing principle for Winnie. Its ebbs and flows brought joy and angst. For this reason, I think it was ultimately a poetic decision that her final entry is titled "Summer's End – September." She spoke often of what a relief it was, as a young person, once the tobacco harvest was complete, the heat of summer subsided, and autumn arrived.

Once during a visit just before her passing, I sat with her in a courtyard. After a period of quietude a spark returned to her eyes and she spoke. "Time and tide wait for no man,"² she said.

Christine Newton Bush
December, 2021

² A phrase often attributed to Geoffrey Chaucer from *The Canterbury Tales* in The Clerk's Prologue: "...How our days pass in various ways/For though we sleep, or wake, or roam, or ride,/Ever flees the time; it will wait for no man." It is likely an ancient idiom dating back to the 13th century or older.

FACSIMILE

a journal of My Life

I have decided to use this beautiful gift from Chrs to write down the memoirs of my life. It will include stories and information about my parents, my siblings, my Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles and Cousins. Also about the many, many friends and places that have enriched my life.

The most important relationships in my life have been, first, with my husband of 55 years, and the four wonderful children we were blessed to have - and our six grandchildren.

God placed us in families and how wonderful to spend our time on this earth in loving ones. I was exceedingly blessed!

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My Life Begins ^{chap.} ₁

I was born on June 8, 1926, at home on a farm in Rockingham Co. North Carolina. My father was a farmer and my mother was a busy, hard working homemaker and also worked in the fields and harvesting of gardens and the "money crop" - tobacco.

This was a large family of 11 children - I was the 10th child. Only 9 of us lived to be grown - 4 boys and 5 girls. One little daughter died at age 4 from "seasms" that today would probably be diagnosed meningitis. Also one infant son only lived 1 day. As I grew up we were 6 children at home - 3 older brothers, a sister 3 yrs older than me, and the last child, a sister, 5 yrs younger than me - and me. Lewis, Laurie and Ruth were married

(2)

Such a life we led! We all had chores to do, working the farm, tending the cattle and all that was required for almost self-contained life on a plantation.

Only staples such as salt, sugar ^{cheese, oysters} and spices were bought from the neighborhood store. Corn and wheat were ground at the grain mill in town for flour and corn meal.

The money crop of tobacco was cured in barns and "graded" in the big pack house for sale in either Reidsville or Danville, Va. Sometimes it was January before the last load was sold. Then there were a few ^{leisurely} winter months before the spring plowing began for the next year.