CERTIFICATE OF AWARD

The Tenth District

of THE ILLINOIS FEDERATION of WOMEN'S CLUBS

Proudly Presents This Certificate

to

Edith Mabie Lawall Woman's Club of Wilmette

in Recognition of Outstanding Achievement

in

Creative Writing Short Story Class II

Second Place "Twasn't All Bad"

Date May 9 1980

Joann B. Frank, President

Shirley R. Peter 1st V.P.

Lorraine Middleton, Creative Arts Ch.

TENTH DISTRICT ILL. FED. CORPORATE SEAL ILLINOIS

LITHO IN U.S.A.

'TWASN'T ALL BAD

The manuscript enclosed is one I wrote in a week's time, beginning October 29, 1979. (This is the same date the U.S. stock market collapsed 50 years earlier.) For several days prior to this anniversary we were repeatedly informed by the media about this approaching event, which ushered in the Great Depression of the Thirties. A quick review of my life at that time indicated it was a particularly exciting time for me too, but in a different sort of way. In my familie's situation little money and no stocks were involved. Immediately I felt impelled to record my memorable recollections. I began the story that day. And so it was.

As it worked out there were two incentives for me to write on this subject: 1. I hoped it might add personal interest for any Mabie family posterity. 2. I wanted to have something to enter in the Annual Creative Writing Contest, sponsored in various categories by the 10th District of Federated Woman's Clubs of Illinois, and possibly, the State Federation Contest. It seemed that the "Crash" was a timely subject, due to its Worldwide repercussions.

Since my recollections came very easily, I did enjoy writing it, and I suppose I'm the only "Leaf" left on the Mabie-Westcott Family Tree, who might even know about these particular family events.

This "'Twasn't All Bad" narrative is being sent to Robert and Martha Warnock in San Francisco, California; David and Willa Samors Lawall of Charlottesville, Virginia; and Gilbert and Sarah Nesbit Lawall in Amherst, Mass. and their families. We hope the grandchildren will read it too.

~~Edith Roe Mabie Lawall~~ January 29, 1980

To Martha, David, Gilbert

Edith Mabie Lawall
Short Story
2485 Words
Class 11

IT WASN'T ALL BAD

Today is October 29, 1979. Newspapers, television, and radio, have reminded us constantly that it is just fifty years since the Stock Market Crash. Pictures of wild crowds in the streets, and tales of the millions of paper assets which vanished, have been harrowing. Only those who are fifty-ish and upwards, can remember it, and the succeeding years that were affected by it. However, I am also reminded that it wasn't all dismal, and I particularly recall one bright spot from this period, which I wish to sketch.

For the Mabie family, our personal Depression had already peaked, and begun to decline. Our scanty assets had never been invested in the Market. Instead, they had gone into the higher education necessary for my sister, Helen, and myself, in tune with our desires to reach our musical aspirations. The minister father, Harry Mabie, and devoted wife, Esther, musically inclined themselves, cheerfully supplied the necessary funds, with the result, that by 1929, Helen and I had received Bachelor of Music Degrees, from the University of Cincinnati.

In September of 1929, father received a "call" to the pastorate of the East Baptist Church of Lebanon, Oh. 25 miles by bus from Cincinnati. Coincidentally, Helen signed a contract to become Music Supervisor of the Bay Village Schools, (suburban Cleveland) and I was made

teacher of piano classes in our nearby Madisonville School.

I'll never forget the thrill of packing the Chevvy, full of overflow from our Van, (including our pretty white cat); the lovely drive thru lush Warren County; and getting settled in our new home. I had secured a suitable place to live in Cincinnati, in the home of one of our church members, near my school. I could go home to Lebanon for week-ends and summer vacations. Helen had arrived in Bay Village in time to see many sad situations, following the Crash Day. Numbers of her school children had come from families that had been forced to give up their cherished Lake Shore homes, and seek cheaper living elsewhere. Farewells were hard!

In Lebanon, I was asked to take over the organist's duties; teach in the Sunday School; and steer the young people's Sunday Evening group.

An unexpected delight that both Helen and I could enjoy, was the golf course, nearby, where all the privileges were free to the local ministers and their families. A dear friend gave us some of his old clubs, balls were cheap, and we were most happy to get up at sunrise, hike to the Park, avail ourselves of the small mounds of dirt provided for "tees", and do our practicing. Nearly always, we had the Park and the spacious golf course to ourselves and birds.

On a certain bright Monday morning in July, 1931, all of us rose early, for this was the day Father and Joe, (our adopted 12-year-old brother), were embarking on a combined

business and fishing trip. The business entailed a church conference at Green Lake, Wisconsin, for father, with plenty of time on the side, to supervise Joe's fishing in the Lake. They would camp out, as did many others, and cook their own meals. After an hour of frenzied thought and furious packing, they were off on the grand excursion.

A great calm descended on the household, but not for very long. Mother, Esther Westcott Mabie, was very much interested in family history, and had cherished records from many past generations. A Mr. Whitman, a (distant) Westcott was compiling a history, and he was very grateful for information which Esther had sent him. He wanted to host a reunion of all living Westcotts within reach, and had invited mother. He lived in Milford, N.Y. and had access to historic regions nearby. Mother planned to stay for at least a week, including visits with friends after the reunion. Her departure was scheduled for noon of the next day. There were still many things to be done.

Tuesday morning mother was out, doing errands, and Helen was busy in the kitchen, when the doorbell rang. I answered, and there stood a very personable young man, who introduced himself as Jesse Lyons, a Senior from Wooster College, and part of a "Peace Caravan" representing the American Friends Service Committee. He had gone to the office of our church, and asked where he might find the minister. He told the Secretary that he hoped to make arrangements, for himself and co-student, for a meeting where they could explain the mission of the Caravan. He was referred to our residence, and there he was. I invi-

ted him to come in, and explained that the minister was out of town for a week, but I was sure the arrangements could be made. Then he told me he was looking for a place for himself and his co-student Wendell, to stay for a few days. Without a moment's hesitation, I said, "You can stay here", and that was it.

Soon mother returned, and she was impressed with his serious interest in the cause of peace. She volunteered to arrange with a lady friend, to stay nights, as a chaperone during her absence. Jesse soon left to pick up his friend Wendell, and offered to help mother for errands, and to drive her to the bus station when needed. Meanwhile, Helen had come in, and she was happy to meet Jesse, and assumed the lunch preparations. And thus began a most delightful 8-day period for us all!

After seeing mother off, we soon worked out a cooperative routine. Naturally, Jesse and Wendell were eager to fall in with our early-rising golf routine, and we had enough clubs for all. Also, they indicated a desire to help with the housework. Jesse chose to do the vacuum-cleaning and dusting. Wendell volunteered for dishwashing, in which he claimed expertise from camp experiences. Each would take care of his own washing, and either one would be available for driving to market, and odd jobs. Of course, Helen and I would be the cooks.

Plenty of time was found for long, deep discussions of philosophical problems. We did not ignore the Depression, but neither did we let it disturb us unduly. There

were other subjects which we wanted to know about, for instance, how did they get started on this summer activity? We gathered that the Peace Caravan was instigated by the noted Quaker, Rufus Jones. It seemed to have some of the emotional and spiritual drive, that would in later years become the central motivating force of the Peace Corps of the John F. Kennedy era.

Both young men were keenly interested in their College Dramatic Department. A recent performance in which they had participated, was "Death Takes a Holiday", a semi-serious play putting forth the possibility that there were always people who knew that their time had come, and were praying that it might be as soon as possible.

Another matter about which they were concerned, was their College Fraternity System. Both men belonged to Greek-letter Fraternities, but they were constantly running across fine students who had never been pledged. They felt something should be done about it. Jesse had finally persuaded his fraternity brothers to host a special monthly party for non-pledged people. The parties had been quite successful, and they hoped this would become a part of college activity programs.

One morning after our customary 2-hour period on the golf course, while we sipped cool lemonade, Jesse confided his future plans and problems. For some time he had been considering preparation as a missionary in the foreign field. However, with his uncertain home situation due to the frailty of his mother, he felt that he might set aside these plans, in favor of entering the ministry

at home. He also expressed his firm belief in "Providential Guidance", or "The Inner Light" as the Quakers expressed it. He said that he never made any of his talks, without a preliminary, prayerful meditation hour. Wendell had similar ideals, but apparently had not chosen a life work.

Another day, which turned out to be one of the warmest, around 100°, we spent a part of our leisure time, getting ready for the evening appointment. Helen had been asked to furnish some music for a gathering at the local retirement home for "genteel" widows. She had a number of songs in mind, and seized the opportunity to try them out on us. It was lots of fun. Sometimes we all joined in, and Helen was never happier than when she could play the piano, and go from one song to another, as fancy chose. Of course, some were appropriate, and some were not, and the decision for the evening finally boiled down to several which we all approved.

Upon our arrival at the lovely antique-filled old home, the hostess suggested that the men would be more comfortable on the front porch, sitting on the porch swing. Helen and I went in and greeted the ladies, who were just entering the parlor. All very pleasant, so far. Then there was the flurry of the arrival of the Cincinnati soloist, accompanied by two friends. They had to be introduced also, but we soon realized that the soloist knew many of the widows, as she had been there before, to sing. Helen ventured a mild remark about the heat wave we were having. The soloist spoke up, "Oh,

was it hot today? I never notice the heat". It was hard to think what to say next, so we were very relieved when the hostess announced that the program was about to begin. She introduced the Cincinnati soloist, who went to the piano, sat down, and said, "I hope the piano keys are cleaner than they were the last time I was here." But soon she started to play and sing, and I could see that she was a very gifted person, indeed. We all applauded enthusiastically. Then it was Helen's turn. She sang "Du bist die Ruh" of Schubert, and the contemporary, "In the Time of Roses". Then she smiled and announced that the last number would be, "The Big Brown Bear", which she played and sang with great gusto. Everyone was carried away with the humor of the lyrics, and her original version of the accompaniment. The applause was almost equal to that of the professional. Then the boys were invited in, to tell about their "Caravan". Jesse told them something of Rufus Jones, and his greatness as a speaker to students, and the inspirations he, and many others had received. Cooling refreshments were served, we shook hands with everyone, and departed.

All too soon, the day of the "Caravan" departure arrived. One more early golf game, then breakfast and packing. We expressed our appreciation to them, as they did to us, and off they went!

When Helen and I returned to the kitchen, there were the breakfast dishes, neatly stacked in the sink, but no Wendell to wash them. We were both suffering an acute attack of Self-Pity. We sat down by the kitchen table,

looked at each other, and burst into tears. Each of us had known that the let-down would have to come. We knew all along that the "Caravan" was like a ship that passed in the night, but oh, how much fun and inspiration we had enjoyed. Memories would last - well, probably longer than the Depression, and we were most thankful they were all happy memories.

Our return to normalcy was helped very much by two unexpected dinner invitations for the next two nights, from friends in our church. These were to honor former church members, visiting from New York. The next day, as Father, Mother and Joe returned from their vacations, we were ready to resume our regular routine also.

One good thing about writing a factual story about fifty years ago, is that it is possible to know, not just surmise, the sequel.

In June, 1933, when Helen came home for summer vacation, she was accompanied by a devoted girl friend, her brother Wilfred, and his best friend, Russell Lawall. Russell was about to be side-tracked for the rest of his life, by meeting me. Fortunately, he had a good job with the A.T.&T.Co for which he was well qualified by being a graduate of Earlham College, and holding a degree from Case Institute in Cleveland. He was also a Birthright Quaker. The result of this and other visits, culminated in our lovely Quaker wedding in August. We immediately took up our residence in Detroit. Signs of business stagnation were evident everywhere. But we were very happy, and

still are, forty-seven years later. I was often mindful of my good fortune in having learned about the Quaker's tenets from our "Peace Caraven" students.

We had three children: Martha in July of 1934; David in August of 1935; and Gilbert in September of 1936. They were, and still are, a great joy to us. We moved in 1944 to Oberlin, O. and Russell commuted to work in Cleveland. In 1957, he was transferred to Cincinnati, and it was while living there that I heard about Jesse Lyons again. I was waiting in a dentist's office, and picked up a newspaper to read, and happened to see the church notices. One was headed, "New minister to be installed." I soon saw that the new minister was Dr. Jesse Lyons, who would take his place the following Sunday, as one of the Staff Ministers at the Riverside Baptist Church in New York. Immediately, I knew there could be but one Jesse Lyons! And I was right!

Several years later, we were saddened to hear that a younger sister of my father, was dying of cancer in a New York Hospital. It was sad to think of Janet, a gifted writer, alone in a big city in her last days, and I decided to write to Jesse and see if he could get someone to call on her. I also wrote about the death of my sister, Helen, of cancer in March of 1949. He responded with a beautiful letter, saying how well he remembered the week in Lebanon in 1931. He reported that he had delegated a staff member, a lady who was particularly good at cheering and counseling people, to carry out my request. Later she reported to him that she had found Janet weak,, but still a most vibrant and interesting person, and they had talked

together for an hour.

A half century later, how can we evaluate our present situation, so plagued with seemingly insoluble dilemmas in high places, as well as low? At least we can remember that God works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform, in season and out of season, in bad times as well as good. We must have steadfast faith that a better world will eventually emerge!

Note - This is a factual story, written entirely from my own memory.
January 25, 1980