

Biographies

Biographies and autobiographies of over forty relatives are included in My Father's House and Worthy to Remember, with thirty-four histories presented here. The complete biographies of twenty-one of these accounts are not shown on this Internet site for the sake of privacy, but are included in the paper form of these publications. To complete these biographies I interviewed all but one of my first cousins by telephone. From this information I wrote each history and included photographs and captions in the text. I then mailed what I had written to my relative for his or her approval. In most cases small changes would be made and then the copy returned to me. By this means each biography was approved before being published in this work.

Of the biographies shown here, Mildred Bowles, Patricia Bowles, Nancy Bowles, Ronald Martin, Nancy Martin, Kathleen Heard, and Richard Martin wrote their own histories. Each of them was also able to review their final autobiography with photographs and captions included before publication took place.

These are short histories and are not intended to be all-inclusive. An individual's life consists of much more than where they lived, where they went to school, and even whom they married. Their deepest thoughts are rarely presented herein. These



Above: Reunion of the family of Thomas and Frances Massey Bowles at their home in Little Rock, Arkansas, in June 1957. The little 3 ½ year old boy sitting on the lap of his grandmother is me, Richard Sharp (later Martin). My seven year old sister, Nancy Sharp, is sitting across from me. Back row, left to right: Paul Long (husband of Nancy Bowles), Johnny Vaught (son of Mildred Bowles), and John "Buddy" Bowles (Uncle), holding his daughter, Jane Bowles. Middle row: Pat Bowles Sharp (Mother), Mildred Bowles Vaught (Aunt), Nancy Bowles Long (Aunt), and Maxine Bowles (wife of John Bowles). Front row; Frances Massey Bowles (Grandmother), Richard Sharp (me), Tom Bowles (Grandfather), Nancy Sharp (Sister), and Michael Braden (son of Nancy Bowles). His extra set of ears belong to my brother, Ron Sharp (later Martin), who was intentionally hiding behind him. I'm looking at Ron and clearly remember this moment. Everyone has now (2020) passed away except Michael Braden, Jane Bowles, and me.

histories are generally event oriented, but even though they are only an outline they offer at least some insight into that person's life.

And for most people life is difficult. It presents a series of problems that we have to face and try to overcome in some way or another. Our ancestors went through many of these same trials and have now completed their allotted time on earth. I believe that life is a great gift, but regardless of how we feel about it we must eventually pass through the change called death.

Just trying to comprehend life can be a challenge. When my youngest daughter was ten years old she asked me, "Daddy do days ever seem like a dream to you? I was thinking, and yesterday seems like it could be a dream." She didn't know it, but she was expressing herself in the same way that an ancient prophet did at the end of his life. He reflected, "I have written according to the best of my knowledge, by saying that the time passed away with us, and also our lives passed away like as it were unto us a dream" (Jacob 7:26).

Hugh Nibley wrote, "We are pushed onto this earthly stage in the middle of a play that has been going on for thousands of years; we want to play an intelligent part and, in whispers, ask some of the older actors what this is all about—what are we supposed to be doing? And we soon learn that they know as little about it as we do" (*Of All Things, Classic Quotations from Hugh Nibley*, compiled by Gary Gillum, page 55).

What we decide or don't decide is the purpose of this "play" determines in large part what we end up doing with our lives. It is obvious that the environment and opportunities we are born into, the attitudes and teachings of our parents, and our genetic makeup have profound effects on what we will accomplish. Nevertheless, most people believe in agency and that we have the ability to determine what we will make of our lives. Yet, we want to be careful how we judge others because everyone has a struggle in life, and some have done well given what few opportunities that they have had. As Daniel wrote, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:2-3).

When my daughter was 17 she shared with me a quote from J. R. R. Tolkien that she liked: "The journey doesn't end here. Death is just another path, one that we all must take. The grey rain-curtain of the world rolls back, and all turns to silver glass, and then you see it."

I want to appreciate my morality before the great change of death takes place, and hope the same for everyone else. By writing my autobiography, I was able to reflect on how good God has been to me, and to see His hand in certain events of my life. A long time from now, these biographies may be the only record remaining that show that we ever existed.