



Washington County Courthouse

# My Meanderings

by  
Elsie J. (Tribus) Martin

# My Wanderings

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Elsie J. (Miss) Martin



Javoni Publishing

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## *A QUEST FOR WORDS*

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

I woke up in the dead of night  
Thinking of things I could write  
Instead of rising up right then  
To get some paper and a pen

I just lay there on the bed  
With a lot of things going through my head  
All the musings were for naught  
This little rhyme is all I've got

## *RAINBOW'S END*

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

At the end of the rainbow  
There is said to be  
A pot of gold  
For you and me

It's not so  
Everyone knows  
The treasures of life  
Are right under your nose





# *ACCIDENTAL MEETING*

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

When I was young  
I was very shy  
I would blush  
At the wink of an eye

I didn't want  
To leave the house  
I was afraid  
As a lone church mouse

I tripped  
While walking down the street  
And this helpful person  
I did meet

I looked  
Into the big blue eyes  
The same color  
As in the sky

A few weeks later  
I happened to see  
The same one  
Who had befriended me

He came by  
Where I was standing  
On the bank  
Of the river's boat landing

He ask me about  
My health and welfare  
I was pleased  
That he would care

We kept meeting  
By chance at different places  
I was glad to be  
In his good graces

I was hoping  
My steps wouldn't falter  
As we turned  
To walk from the altar



## ***THE REMNANTS***

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

A pretty print  
Of red and brown  
Would be made  
Into a gown

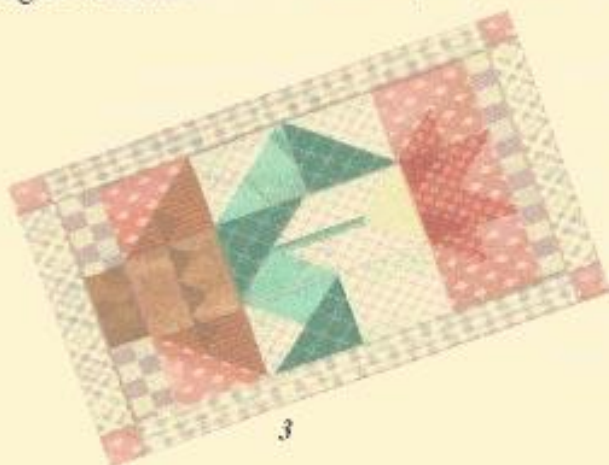
The green and purple  
Really looked bad  
It was the ugliest garment  
I ever had

Then there was  
The blue and white  
I remember  
Wearing it out one night

I hadn't seen these clothes  
In years  
And when I did  
It brought some tears

The stripes  
Of bright orange and yellow  
Reminded me  
Of a big bowl of Jello

I was pleased  
At what they had become  
A patchwork quilt  
Made by my Mom





# THE CALENDAR

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin



January starts  
A brand new year  
Wishing for all  
Joy and good cheer

In February should  
the ground hog show  
We may get out  
From under the snow

The winds of March  
Sure do blow  
Will suit me fine  
When at last they go

The rain in April  
Does go on  
Sure seems quiet  
When it is gone

In May the flowers  
Put on a show  
As they begin  
To grow and grow

A bride walks  
Down the aisle in June  
When she goes  
To meet her groom

We have a good time  
On the Fourth of July  
As we watch the parade  
Of flags go by

When August gets  
As warm as it can be  
The air-cooled house  
Feels good to me

As it starts to cool  
A bit in September  
The pleasures of summer  
We tend to remember

Halloween in October  
Can bring a good time  
We dress up in costumes  
Either funny or fine

November comes  
With a nip in the air  
Our town always has  
A great harvest fair

How do we describe  
The month of December  
It's one time of the year  
We all remember

## ***OFF TO WORK***

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

— This is a little episode I would like to tell to you You probably won't believe it — But really it is true	One car at a time Was all I could pass Speeding to get ahead of The mass
I reached over and pushed the button — On the clock placed by my head I sat for a while Then lay back upon the bed	From behind I heard A siren loud and clear Sounding as if It was very near
I would be late for work At the time I did not care To have to leave so early Really was not fair	I stopped at the curb For it to go by It stopped right behind me And I gave a sigh
When finally — I got around to dress I found my skirt did need a press	He said I changed lanes While going through a red light Right then I decided To give up the fight
— By now I really Was very late It took forever — To get out the gate	More time and more money Were to be lost I paid a big fine Plus the cost
Down a busy road — I had to go Behind all the cars Going so slow	I know I said This was true I know it must be For I saw it on a T.V. preview
— As I was itching To get ahead My powerful engine — I did rev	

## ***NOT FOR ME***

Elsie J.(Titus) Martin

I have a friend who thinks that I should wed  
Why ever does she think I need someone in my bed

Feel sorry for me not and shed no tears  
For I have been alone quite a few years

If I don't want to cook a meal  
A sandwich I do make and an orange I do peel

I have grown to an ample size  
To expect too much now wouldn't be wise

I don't think it would be much fun  
Any old man would take one look, drop  
His crutches and run



## *PARTING*

Elsie J.(Titus) Martin

My love and I went for a walk  
To be together so we could talk

We went through the garden walking slow  
To the river bank down below

The water caught a bright sunbeam  
As it flowed down the stream

The nice green grass by the river land  
Was a great place to sit and hold a hand

We had planned on talking, but along the way  
We couldn't think of a thing to say

For words to speak there was a lack  
Might as well stroll on back

This seemed to be the end of the line  
Without each other we'll do just fine

# ***WALKING THROUGH THE YEARS***

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

When we are very young  
And first begin to talk  
We are called toddlers  
For we can barely walk

Just out of school  
And starting a life  
Not realizing  
There could be sorrow and strife

A few years later  
We just want to run  
And have  
Lots and lots of fun

I know middle age  
Is known as our prime  
Yet some of us dream  
Of going back in time

We then start climbing  
In the trees or on most anything  
And would most likely  
End up with an arm in a sling

If at this stage of life  
We could stay  
Would we do it  
Or say no way

As a teen  
We wished we were older  
We do what we can  
To be daring and bolder

Now we have aged  
And some walk with a cane  
I guess you could say  
We are toddlers again





# ***THE STOMPER***

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

This little boy I knew about  
Was a stomper without a doubt

His little feet went up and down  
As he stomped his way about the town

He would stomp when he was glad  
Stomped some more when he was mad

Little did he know the trouble he would meet  
The day he went stomping without shoes on his feet

This day he stomped upon a bee  
Jumped, fell and scraped his knee

What I get from all the talk  
He changed his stomp into a walk





# *CHRISTMAS RECALL*

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

From my childhood  
I do remember  
Things that took place  
In the month of December

Many cookies  
In the oven baking  
Rich chocolate fudge  
In the making

All of us children  
Were in high glee  
As we strung popcorn and cranberries  
To put on our tree

Secret sewing  
Late into the night  
Our promise that  
Our Christmas would be bright

Entry to the workshop was forbid  
As our toys  
Were being made there  
By our Dad

There was no other way  
As I recall  
What do we do now?  
We go to the mall!



## ***TIMETABLE***

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

With my handsome face  
And sturdy hands  
I might make  
A lot of plans

If something pleasant  
Is going too fast  
You might want to slow it down  
And make it last

If there is a time  
You need to go  
Better not move  
Quite so slow

I think that we will  
Probably find  
That every thing we do  
Is timed

If something important  
Is impending  
On me  
You might be depending

I hope this doesn't come  
As a shock  
For I am as ever  
Your faithful clock



# THE REPAIR JOB

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

A friend called and asked me to meet him

At a nearby café

I needed to stay home

As everything was in disarray

However I relented

And consented to go

Time was short

I moved rather slow

I tried to find something

Suitable to wear

When in my skirt

I spied a tear

I changed into

A shirtwaist dress

After giving it

A very quick press

I put on the shoes

I chose to wear

And quickly ran

A comb through my hair

I would soon

Be ready to leave

As soon as I adjusted

My sweater sleeve

I hit my hand

On the car

It was then

I saw many a star

I looked down and saw

A fingernail was gone

So I picked it up, returned to the house

And glued it back on



## *NATURE'S OWN*

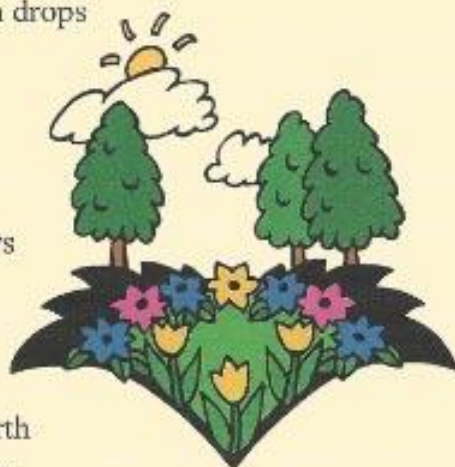
Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

A very good morning  
To everyone  
Waking early  
To catch the sun

There seems to be  
A few clouds in the sky  
Should get some rain drops  
Bye and bye

If it doesn't rain  
As we all know  
The grass and flowers  
Cannot grow

Nature's beauty  
Is the best on this earth  
We should appreciate  
All that it's worth



## ***NO SECONDS NEEDED***

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

A friend and I were driving down the street  
Watching for a good place to eat

As both of us were ample size  
Our eating buffet wasn't very wise

Standing in a very long line  
We had to wait our turn to dine

We started with the salad bar  
It was great and up to par

With veggies, meat and potatoes we each filled our plate  
We found a table, it was hard to wait

Dessert was the last thing either did need  
But to temptation we did heed

Before we decided to eat more  
We got up and waddled out the door

## ***MY FIRST TIME***

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

There was no advantage  
In waiting longer  
My determination  
Could be no stronger

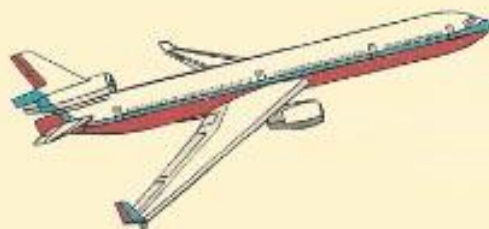
Why I waited so long  
No one will ever know  
Perhaps because  
My fear continued to grow

The sweat  
Was pouring off my brow  
No more stalling  
Do it now

My overnight bag  
Had been packed for a while  
I was planning  
To do this up in style

My companion  
Kept urging me on  
The act would be done  
Well before dawn

I went up the ramp  
With him by my side  
To have what was to be  
My first plane ride





## ***NOT READY YET***

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

There comes a time to throw away  
What's left of a bar of soap  
But I'm not ready yet

There comes a time to get rid  
Of those worn out too small clothes  
But I'm not ready yet

There comes a time when one should  
Quit eating all those foods we like  
But I'm not ready yet

There comes a time when one tends  
To give up all hope  
But I'm not ready yet

There comes a time when we must  
Say good-bye and leave this world  
But I'm not ready yet

## *ANOTHER ROOM*

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

Have the morals of this country gone to pot?  
Just starting today, I think not.

I listen to all the reporters' views  
When each morning I turn on the news.

Should all our presidents be old and stumbly,  
And all their aides fat and ugly?

If we don't want all the world's bubbles to burst  
Should not our country's welfare come first?

If the White House is to be known as the temple of doom  
I suggest they build on a rumpus room.



# *A PORTRAIT OF A CLOWN*

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

Sometimes he has a smile, sometimes a frown  
Which is nothing but a smile upside down

He wears a wig, flouncey clothes and a big red nose  
Some huge shoes to cover his toes

Dressed like a hobo he can be a delight  
In a tacky old hat he sure is a sight

Behind the funny painted on mask  
He willingly takes on many a task

He has talent that is a fact  
With some balloons and a magic act

Whether a circus or a rodeo clown  
He will make your day and not let you down

We all know why God put clowns on this earth  
To fill all of us children with glee and with mirth



## *ANTICIPATION*

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

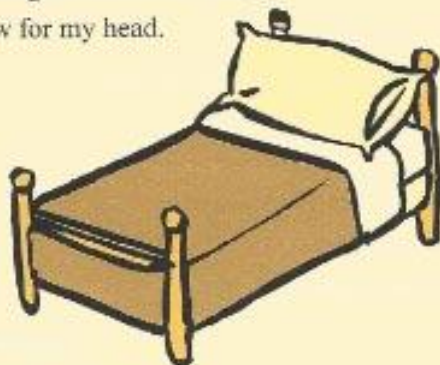
As I walked into the room  
My shoes hit the floor.

I couldn't wait much longer  
As I advanced my joy did consume me  
And grew into something much stronger.

Next to go were my skirt and my blouse  
Scattering them as I walked through the house.

I finish undressing along the way  
Looking forward to a very long stay.

With anticipation I glanced  
At what was waiting for me on the bed,  
A nice soft pillow for my head.



# ***HE WAS MARRIED***

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

His big blue eyes and sandy hair  
Were always attractive to me  
I saw him standing at the altar  
Waiting for his bride to be  
He would be married

My heart was beating very loud  
While trying to get away  
From the crowd  
He was married

As this went on through the years  
I still hadn't shed any tears  
He was married

As time passed by  
I always wanted him to be nigh  
He was married

Why I didn't fret you see  
All this time  
He was married to me



## *TO PASS THE TIME*

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

When I woke  
At the crack of dawn  
I tried very hard  
To stifle a yawn

While waiting  
For the coffee to brew  
I thought of many things  
I needed to do

I had become very hungry  
Overnight  
And decided I needed  
To eat a bite

Now I'd better  
Be on my way  
To do all the things  
Planned for the day

If I think  
Perhaps I can recall  
What I wanted  
From the mall

Through every store  
I did look  
I finally found  
Just the right book

On the way back  
I took a walk through the park  
Making sure I was home  
Well before dark

No, this isn't  
The last refrain  
For tomorrow  
I will do it all over again





# UNDER COVER

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin



On the outside  
An angel you might see  
But on the inside  
The devil it might be

Could a pretty flower  
Be a rose  
If it smells bad  
When held to the nose

A nice mild cat  
Around the house  
Might still like  
To get his paws on a mice

Angels, devils, flowers  
And other things  
With much information  
On all human beings

From the start through the middle  
And to the very end  
And any intimate details  
You may comprehend

So when you finally  
Get under that cover and look  
I know you will enjoy  
Every page of that book



# ***THE WINNERS***

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

This is such a lovely day  
It's nice so many people  
Came to play

There is plenty of coffee  
And plenty of food  
It helps to put every one  
In a good mood

We are seated four at a table  
Which most of the time  
Is not too stable

The person on the left of the  
dealer has first bid as he tries  
To keep his cards well hid

No one is willing to give up  
When two people  
Want to make trump

Finally one  
Will give up to the other  
To keep on bidding  
Is to much bother

If you have some aces,  
a double marriage  
And a pinochle too

Your opponents might as  
well hang it up  
As this card game is through



# THE YEAR AROUND

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

The holidays are over  
The New Year has begun  
I am going to miss them  
For it has been much fun



I haven't as yet  
Put the gifts away  
And the relatives  
Decided not to stay

Cool fall weather  
Is due to begin  
Then Halloween  
Is here again



Soon after that  
Christmas is on the way  
We can start  
Our shopping any day

Valentine day  
Will be here soon  
That's the night lovers  
Stroll beneath the moon



Then comes Easter  
And the Fourth of July  
With a lot of noise  
Who can deny



I don't want to change a thing  
So here is my solution  
I will make not  
One resolution

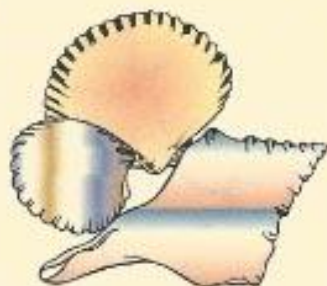


## ***THE BEACH***

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

I love walking on the beach  
Breathing in the salty air  
Having the soft breezes  
Blow through my hair

Watching the waves  
Washing up on the shore  
Leaving behind  
Many shells and much more



Amazed at the newly hatched turtles  
Making their way to the sea  
Wandering how many will survive  
And fully grown there will be

The many people basking in the sun  
Who came to the beach to have some fun  
Everyone is tired at the end of the day  
We are going home, we are on our way





# THE WEB

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin



Everyone tells me  
Don't mess with him  
Because if you do  
He will slowly  
Draw you in

He tries every trick  
To keep your ego fed  
But you don't let him  
Stop and use your head

I had better tell you  
What his name is now  
Don't give in to him  
Don't let him take a bow

His name is Daddy Long Legs  
It is said  
Don't let that spider  
Catch you in his web

## *ADMIRATION*

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

I admire a young couple  
Walking arm in arm  
Dressed with fashion and neatness  
Showing much charm

I admire the older couple  
Taking their evening walk  
Holding hands while they talk

I admire the birds  
Singing in the trees

I admire a litter of puppies  
Scampering around  
Knowing they won't be going  
To the pound

I admire good music  
And great singing voices  
And thankful  
There are so many choices

I admire  
All the beautiful green grass  
Bordered by flowers  
Growing all in a mass

I admire the bright stars  
In the sky at night  
And always thankful for the words  
Let there be light





# *A MILLIONAIRE*

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

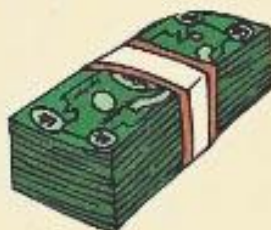


If I could gather together  
All the time I spent doing nothing  
And done something worth while  
I'd be a millionaire

If I had all the money  
I squandered on trifles  
And had invested it wisely  
I'd be a millionaire

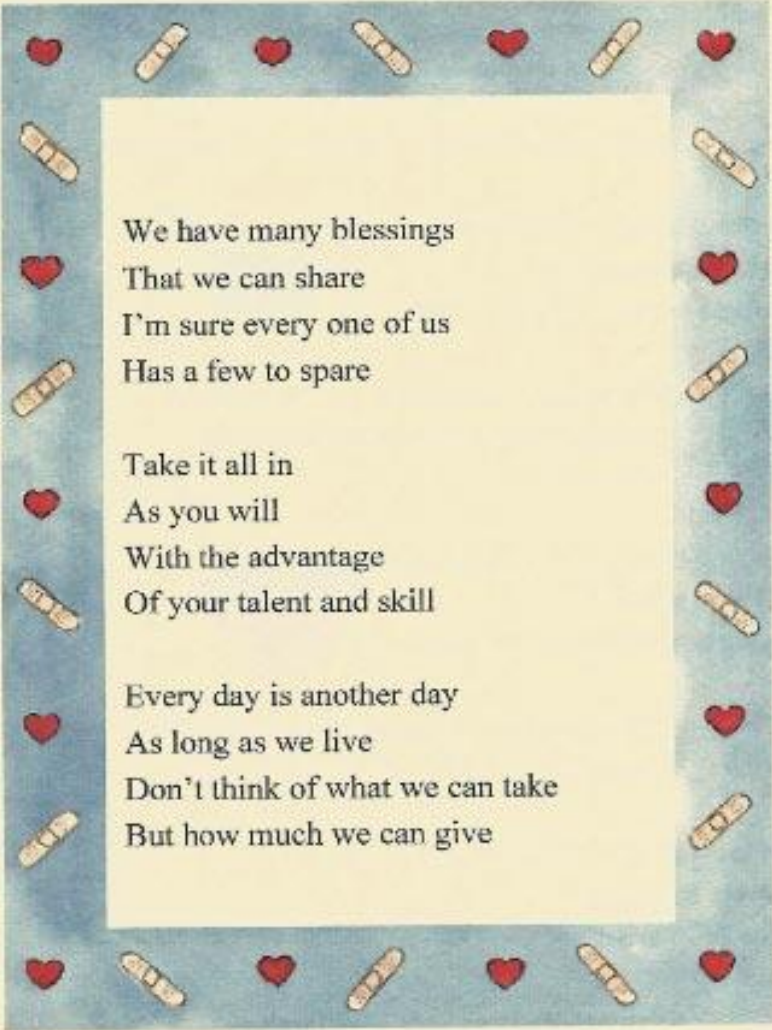


If I count all the good things  
That has happened to me  
And all the blessings I have received  
I am a millionaire



## ***FORESIGHT***

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin



We have many blessings  
That we can share  
I'm sure every one of us  
Has a few to spare

Take it all in  
As you will  
With the advantage  
Of your talent and skill

Every day is another day  
As long as we live  
Don't think of what we can take  
But how much we can give

## THE MENU

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin



As mom stood and peeled the potatoes  
She asked me to slice some nice ripe tomatoes

The pound of ground beef in the huge skillet  
Was beginning to brown  
The flame to hot, must turn it down



We needed a vegetable to go with the meal  
A large jar of home canned green beans  
Seemed like a good deal

Mom sliced the potatoes and onions  
In with the meat  
That big bowl of hash couldn't be beat



Some vanilla pudding over plain yellow cake  
Was good and took but little time to make

How many people will experience the feel  
Of a very large family  
Sitting down to a meal



As around the large table all did wait  
The Lord was thanked before we ate

## ***PRELUDE TO FAMILY HAPPENINGS AS I REMEMBER THEM***

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

This is about us, the children of Joseph and Maude Titus. I may have exaggerated some events and downplayed others. I didn't write anything specific about any of you. Most of these stories are memories of my school years, a few of them a little later. Some of you hadn't been born yet when others had already left the nest. For example, my younger brother was born three months after my son.

I didn't put names in the stories but you know who you are. Just in case you have forgotten any of us, here is a list: Alice, Robert, Elsie, Mary, Leora, Joe, Lucille, Ruth, Paul, Dan, David, Virgil, Neil, Eileen, and the baby, Mike. Brother Robert and sister Leora died a few years back and an infant brother, Paul, died at about four months of age.

If you don't remember things the same as I, feel free to pick up a pen and write it as you see it. Be sure you don't use "was" and "were" too often in the same paragraph. This I learned in creative writing class and from brother Dan, the author.



## ***FRUGAL by NECESSITY***

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

I'm convinced that my mother invented frugality. My siblings and I thought sometimes we were deprived because our diet consisted of a lot of one-dish meals.

Many mornings our breakfast would be oatmeal with brown sugar and diluted canned milk. Other times it would be corn meal mush. The left over mush was poured into a loaf pan; by noon it was set up enough to slice and fry for lunch. Lunch also could have been homemade tomato soup with big hunks of homemade bread to have with it. An evening meal may have been big pot of beans and rice along with some more of that homemade bread, or a big iron skillet of ground beef gravy over huge biscuits, a pound of ground beef stretched a long way when crumbled into a big pot of macaroni and tomatoes. One chicken cut up and baked along with a lot of vegetables, topped with biscuit dough made a large potpie, enough to serve everyone around the table. The homemade bread was baked in batches of six or eight loaves, this was mixed in big round pans. This was done several times a week. If we could talk mom into it she would make some cinnamon rolls or some raised donuts out of some of the dough.

We ate all these things at the time out of necessity. Now we eat beans, rice, pasta and vegetables because we are told it is a heart healthy diet. All of the staples were bought in large quantities because it was consumed in the same manner by all of us children sitting around the large table in the kitchen.

Clothing at times proved to be a problem. We wore hand me downs, cut downs, makeovers and make-dos. When the dry goods store had a sale on cloth, any purchase had us wearing the same color clothes for months.

Scraps from these garments eventually found their way into patchwork quilts or braided rugs. Almost all scraps ended up in something useful. Even buttons from discarded garments were saved to be used on something else. I save anything and everything I may or may not use some day. I probably have the largest collection of recycled unusable anyone has ever seen.

## ***FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT AND HOBBIES***

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

Games and hobbies cost little or nothing to get as we created most of it from things that were readily available. This included birthday and Christmas gifts as well.

My father had some kind of wood in his hands carving something constantly. If I had kept some of the miniature furniture he made for our cardboard dollhouses, it would probably be worth a small fortune today. He also made small chests of drawers to be used as jewelry boxes by the older girls. He created authentic looking log cabins and some early army forts mounted on pieces of plywood. Our plywood checker boards with the squares painted on them worked just fine with the checkers cut out of old broom handles and painted red and black.

Card games played around a big square table provided many an evening and Sunday afternoon entertainment. When my youngest daughter was five years old, my father taught her to play canasta, she was a very perceptive child. The first time she won a game from him, he changed the rules. She said, "Mom, I'm not going to play cards with Grandpa anymore, because he cheats". He did too.

Horseshoes in the back yard came to be a Sunday afternoon pastime. Uncles and cousins often took part.

Refreshments for the checker, card and horseshoe parties were huge pans of popcorn and glasses of iced tea. Well, cold tea anyway, we didn't have any ice.





## *Family Entertainment and Hobbies*

Continued

Our mother had a lovely voice, and often played the piano and sang. We would circle around her and join in the singing. I'd join in, but what can I say? I still can't sing.

Two of the boys did well in the country western circuit. One brother, a good tenor, frequently sang at weddings and funerals. Two of the girls have good soprano voices and sing in their church choirs. The youngest sister was asked to sing at parties at the age of five. I guess she lost it along the way.

My Dad's workshop was in a room in the back of the house. Most of his tools were manually operated. He used saws, drills, rasps and chisels. He also used a pocketknife and a piece of glass to scrape things smooth. Dad made our sleds out of wood he picked up here and there.

I remember two violins Dad carved, shaped and put together. He varnished and polished them to a high gloss. No one in the family seems to know what happened to them, or if they do, they aren't saying.

Crochet hooks, when in the hands of my mother created beautifully doilies and tablecloths for other people. She also crocheted rugs. I couldn't begin to know how many quilts she made in her lifetime.

All of the girls can do most of this needlework. My girls are not interested in needlework. They are more interested in computers.



## MOM'S MEALS

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

As a small child I watched in awe my mother create many a meal. Wondering how they managed to taste so good as she measured very little of the ingredients. When she did it was with a teacup and a teaspoon from the table. Otherwise the portions amounted to a dip of this and a dab of that—a pinch of this and a handful of that. When I first started to cook after observing her for a lot of years, I tried her method but nothing tasted the same.

I decided to get a recipe book, measuring cups and spoons. That worked but, I was still a little puzzled at how her's tasted so good without the proper measuring utensils. However, the one thing I cook today that looks and tastes exactly like her's is my mother's lumpy gravy.



## ***JUST DESSERTS***

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

My mother, a short chubby woman, was always busy trying to stretch one provision into another. She always wore a bib apron with four or five safety pins tacked to the bib half, and a hanky in each of the two pockets. One never knew when one or the other might be needed.

More often than not desserts appeared only on Sunday. Fruits ripened in the summer and the fall ended up in quart and half gallon jars to provide us with most of our desserts for the winter. Several of the older children, including myself, spent a lot of time peeling apples and peaches.

All of the fruit didn't get put in jars. Some was sliced very thin, put on big baking pans and put in a slow oven until they were dry. The fruit was then put in cloth bags and hung in back of the big pantry with the jars.

Black walnuts, butternuts and hickory nuts gathered from the timbers in the fall had to be laid out on large boards to dry. Before they dried completely, the younger children enjoyed the chore of walking on them to get the hulls off. These tasted mighty good in cookies and candy for the Christmas holidays.

Canned fruit served over plain yellow cake made for a tasty dish. Baked into pies or cobblers, or sweet dumplings dropped into the sweet fruit tasted just as good.

Lunch bags with cheese or peanut butter sandwiches weren't so bad when there were oatmeal, peanut butter, sugar, or raisin cookies to go with them.

A lot of these goodies my mother made without recipes. I don't remember that she had any measuring cups or spoons. Her measuring devices were her hands and her fingers, a handful of this and a pinch of that. She did have recipes, however. One of these is for a burnt sugar cake handed down from my grandmother. The recipe that is, not the cake.



## FINANCIAL AIDS & HOMECHORES

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

Our father worked on road construction. Sometimes it wasn't easy to get everything needed for school and other expenses. Those of us who were old enough to do odd jobs could help with some of our own needs.

The brother just older than I took a job with two elderly ladies who lived next door. He cleaned house, cooked, and drove them around town in their big Buick. He thought he was king of the hill. With the money he earned he bought some nice clothes and took dancing lessons. He later taught dancing for a few years, going to small towns in the county. He was a good cook and several times cooked dinner for the High School faculty. Later in life he was produce manager for a large supermarket chain until his health forced him into early retirement. He died several years ago of Alzheimer's disease.

I baby-sat and styled the neighbor ladies hair. I couldn't charge for the hair dos of course, but all donations were greatly appreciated. I made some of my own clothes, learning from my mother and Home-Economics classes in High School.

The younger boys delivered papers, mowed lawns in the summer and shoveled snow in the winter. Some of the neighbors paid them to dig fish worms; they also went out at night with a flashlight to pick up night crawlers, also known as dew worms. They stored them in the damp basement in a special box Dad built to keep them in, one that the worms couldn't escape out of the cracks. At that time worms sold for twenty-five cents a dozen. Last summer, when I was in the hometown, they sold for about two dollars a dozen. It doesn't make any difference what you're in the market for, inflation gets you coming and going.



## **FINANCIAL AIDS & HOMECHORES**

*continued*

I don't want to forget my older sister. She would get all dressed up pretty and meander around the block, glance about to see if there happened to be any boys watching. She recently had a birthday and I found a card I thought was appropriate. The outside read, "Remember those funny clothes Mom used to dress us in?" On the inside it read, "You can stop now."

The sister just younger than I hated to do dishes. When it came her turn to do them, she would stack them in the sink, run water on them and let them sit. She said the food was stuck and they needed to soak. The problem with this was that I had the job of wiping the floor when the dishes were finished. These two jobs had to be completed before we could go out to any school functions or any other activity we wanted to attend. I usually ended up doing both the dishes and the floor so I could go out. I didn't like to do the dishes either, and I still don't. That's why I use paper plates whenever it's permissible and sometimes when it isn't.



## ***TO THE GRANDPARENTS' FARM WE GO***

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin

Our Grandparents owned an eighty-acre farm near a small settlement called New Era. It is located about fifteen miles from Muscatine, Iowa, the town where we lived. The settlement had a general store, a church, community building, the parsonage and several other houses.

Several of us children would visit the farm at one time. Grandma, having raised seven children of her own, probably couldn't contend with us all at one time.

Grandpa had a small herd of six or eight dairy cattle. After the morning milking the cows would be let out to pasture until about five in the afternoon. We looked forward to going on our big cattle drive. We would dawdle along and pick blackberries if they were ripe. The farm dump in the ravine looked mighty interesting. We picked up some pretty colored bottles and took them home with us. I think Mom threw them away. The flea markets are full of pretty glass bottles today and have some pretty prices on them too.

I tried my hand at milking but didn't have any luck at it. I must not have had the right touch or had cold hands. The truth was that I was afraid of the cows.

The milk was strained and put into a cream separator. It had to be going very fast to separate the cream from the milk. Some of the good rich cream was put into pitchers for table use. It sure tasted good on homemade strawberry shortcake. The rest of the cream was put into cans to be taken to the dairy and traded for butter and extra cash. The skim milk was fed to the pigs. We would get to churn some butter while we were there. It was a fun time then because it wasn't something we had to do.





## ***TO THE GRANDPARENTS' FARM WE GO*** *continued*

The wood-burning stove in the basement was used to can vegetables in the summer for winter use. Grandma also used the stove to make cottage cheese. A big pan of milk was put on the stove to heat. She would stir this with her hand until it was too warm to keep her hand in it. She then drained it in cheesecloth, washed it with water and drained it well again. After it was well drained, it was put into a bowl and with some of the rich cream mixed in. I wouldn't eat it at the time because it was made out of sour milk. Some time later I learned to like it and ate my share.

Grandma would let us go to the hen house to gather the eggs. I remember one mean hen didn't want us to take her eggs and would peck us on the hand. Grandma would go get them and probably thought it would have saved time to have done it herself in the first place.



I can still see Grandpa walking behind his one horse plow back and forth over the hill. He would have been plowing the land for planting or cultivating corn already growing. At one time he had a collection of Indian relics that he dug up out of the land.

One sister and I usually went to the farm at the time the church in the settlement had its vacation Bible School. We enjoyed being with the farm children. Later we went to High School with them. No school buses then, car pools were the thing.

The community building had a gym in it. It also had a stage for programs. In the basement many good church suppers were served.

The general store was just that. Everything was sold there; food, household goods, farm seed and what have you. Also located on one side was an ice cream parlor. It had wrought iron tables and chairs. It was taken out to make more room for merchandise. Living quarters were above the store. After the older couple that ran it retired, one of our uncles ran the business. I don't remember how long he stayed there. The store is still in operation.

## ***TO THE GRANDPARENTS' FARM WE GO*** *continued*

In the late 1930's their large farmhouse burned down. It has been said that Grandma filled her apron with some of her favorite dishes, went to the back yard, dropped her apron and broke them all. While a new house was constructed, they moved into an old house in the back yard. They had lived there before the large one was built. This old house had been made of logs, a top floor was added and it was covered with siding. When the farm was sold a few years ago the log house was torn down, the logs were numbered and stored. I don't know where they are but I think the historical society is in charge of them.

A trip to the farm wouldn't have been complete without a trek down the road about a mile to a state park called Wild Cat Den. An old gristmill located on the stream is still there. The park had a lot of trails and rock formations. There is a place between the rocks called Fat Man's Squeeze. I used to go through it like a breeze. I said used to. The park has been updated since then, the mill renovated, restrooms and picnic tables were added. An old rural schoolhouse has been moved there also. Perhaps this would be a great place for the log house.



## *EPILOGUE*

While in high school I was good at artwork and made many of the posters for school activities. I graduated in 1943 and wished to go to school to become a commercial artist. But, at that time no student loans were available. I may have given up too easily and settled for what I thought was the next best thing--I got married. Until my husband got out of the army I worked at the Rock Island Arsenal.

We had three children: Dannie, who lives near me in Casselberry, Florida, Nancy in Monterey, California, and Susan, who finally got married last October at the age of 42 and lives in Tampa, Florida.

After we went to Florida in 1959, I went to work for Winn Dixie Stores Inc. I worked for them for twenty-seven years.

We had been married for forty-five years when Gene died in 1988. We didn't have to many problems. One that caused a lot of controversy was, which way to hang the toilet paper, over or under.

I got tired of sitting home alone feeling sorry for myself, and started going to the Senior Citizens Center. I now go there four times a week. I crochet, quilt, and learned how to play pinochle. I also started going to creative writing class. There I was inspired to write all these pages.

There is never an end to memories. I still have plenty of them stowed away.

Going back to when I graduated from high school, next to my picture in the Year Book, it read--and I quote--"Has a figure to be envied." Eat your hearts out.

THE END---Love, Sister Elsie



## ***TOP OF THE HILL***

By Elsie J. [Titus] Martin

I never thought of myself as a nostalgic person until I took a little trip up the hill. That is, up the hill from where my parents lived for many years. At this point there is a small observation park where one may look up and down the Mississippi River and see much of Muscatine, Iowa. While sitting there my mind goes back to the time there was a radio tower for a small station located on this site. The call letters for this station were KTNT, said to have meant "Know The Naked Truth ". It was operated by a colorful character by the name of Norman Baker. He called himself a Doctor and claimed to have a cure for cancer and established a hospital in Muscatine and later a clinic in Eureka Springs, Arkansas. In 1940 he was convicted of using the mail to defraud, for advertising a cure for cancer and was sentenced to a four-year prison term. After his prison term he went to Mexico and broadcasted from a station there. He died September of 1958 in Miami, it is rumored he died aboard a three-story houseboat. The body was then brought back to Muscatine. Only 15 people attended the funeral services, his sister did, but not his two brothers. The reason I called him colorful was because of his dress habits. He wore white suits with purple shirts and red and purple ties. He also rode around in an orchid colored car when most cars then were black.

## TOP OF THE HILL continued

Looking down at the marina, I see the many vessels docked there. Years ago there was no marina, just a lot of fishing boats tied up along the riverbank. Clammers used many of these small boats; they went out on the river to look for clam beds. The clams were harvested for the shell, used to make buttons. Some large and many small button factories sprang up all over the town. Circles cut out of the shells were ground down smooth and holes bored in them. A German immigrant who came to Muscatine in the early 1900's invented the button cutting machine. The meat of the clams was not wasted, it was fried, made into chowder and any other way people could think to prepare them. Muscatine at one time was known as the pearl button capital of the world. Little by little the supply of clams depleted down to nothing. There are still button factories here but the buttons are all cut out of plastics.

Although I was born in Muscatine, we lived in the small town of Wilton, for a few years. After moving back to Muscatine we first moved to the south end of town where I attended the old Garfield school. To get uptown, a distance of several miles, we took a shortcut, walking up the railroad track, [it was shorter and also forbidden]. At that time many trains went through the town. We later relocated to East Hill, and lived several places until we moved to Second Street Hill where my folks lived the rest of their days.

## *TOP OF THE HILL continued*

The main street on East Hill is Park Avenue. Many businesses are located there. The beautiful Weed Park on the way out of town is a frequently visited place. The park has several shelters for picnickers and family gatherings, of which I have attended many. Other features are a swimming pool, tennis courts and a baseball diamond. There is still a shortage of rest rooms and as my generation grows older it is getting more difficult to climb those hills to locate one. The Greenwood cemetery is located on West Hill I am sure that we all probably have ancestors buried there.

Still at the overlook, I'm thinking back to my high school days. The last two years I worked at a sandwich shop to buy my books and clothing. Before I went home from school I would stop at the public library to do my homework. With so many brothers and sisters at home it could get a bit noisy. Once in a while I would stop at a local ice cream parlor for a cherry coke. After a YMCA Friday fun- night a Maid-Rite was great. A Maid -Rite, you ask? It is only the best loose meat sandwich ever made with mustard, pickle and onion. Accompanied with a root beer served in a frosty mug. Several years ago I got off the plane in Moline greeted with the news that all the Maid-Rites in Muscatine had closed. What? Not in the town where they had originated and spread all over the Midwestern States. So I had a Maid-Rite in Moline before my sister brought me to Muscatine. Several shops have reopened since then.



## **TOP OF THE HILL** *continued*

I come back every summer for several months to visit friends and relatives. While I am here I try to meet with some of my classmates. Many of them have moved away as I have but still come home when they can.

I see the river front park where some of us children would pack our cheese or peanut butter sandwiches and go spend the day. By the time we ate those sandwiches they were pretty well beat up.

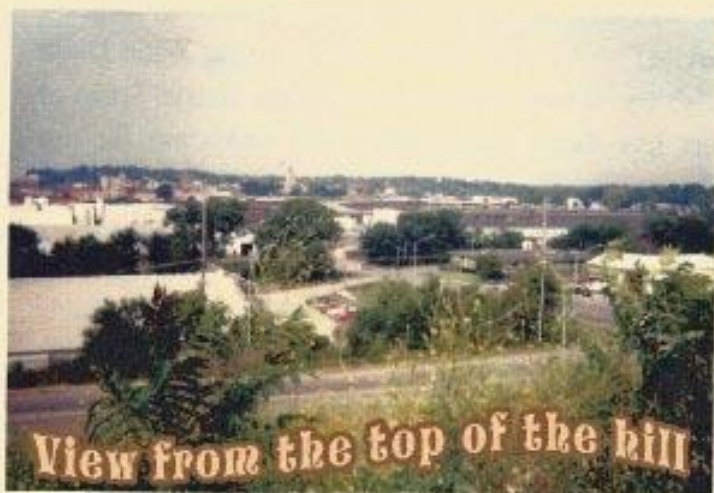
Carnivals always set up on the riverfront in the summer; one was setting up last summer on my way through town.

Some time during the summer a paddle wheel boat would come up the river and dock for a day or two. During the day it would take passengers up the river to Davenport. It docked there several hours while people went shopping before returning to Muscatine. In the evening it went down river, with live music for dancing, and returned about midnight. Everyone came back tired and happy, I know I did.

Mark Twain once stayed in a small house at the foot of the old bridge. This house has been preserved. The old bridge fell in; I think in the early fifties. A new one was built just below the hill. During the time it was being built cars were ferried across the river.

I decided that when I went down off the hill I would tour around the town. I wanted to see if some of the older homes still existed. Many of them still do and look well cared for.

One more look before leaving the hill. I realize the words "you can't go home again" are wrong. When I'm up here on the hill, I am home again.



## *THAT SATURDAY*

That Saturday, April 27, 2002, I will not soon forget. I had been invited along with other retirees of the Winn Dixie stores to a fish fry. It took place on Little Lake Harris. Some of our members live there and secured their clubhouse for our activity.

My son, daughter in law and granddaughter left Friday afternoon for Merritt Island where they have friends. They were to return Saturday evening. Since they were not available to go with me I decided to ask a friend to go with me. Sophie had gone there with me one other time, and had enjoyed it so she was glad to go with me. I retrieved my container of potato salad from the fridge and went to pick up Sophie. She came out carrying a cake to take along. We enjoyed the ride, arriving at the lake about 10:30. The weather was great.

The fish along with hush puppies, baked beans, potato salad, and slaw were great. After that, we had many desserts. There was plenty of food left to take home.

We arrived home about 4:00; I dropped Sophie off at her house and decided to spend the rest of the day and evening watching ballgames. Around 5:30 I received a phone call from another friend Gloria, wanting to know if I would like to play cards that evening. I said I wouldn't mind, so she told me that Sophie and Sally would pick me up about 6:15 to take me to her house. So I called my son to tell him I would be out until about 10:30 playing cards with friends. They weren't home from the coast yet, so I left a message on the answering machine. When I arrived home from the card game my son's van was in the driveway and the house was all lit up. I was in a panic thinking some thing was vitally wrong.



## ***THAT SATURDAY*** *continued*

Well, I guess they thought so too. When they left their friend's house to come home they called me on the cell phone, no answer. So they tried again several times on the way home. They stopped at my house instead of going home. Since my car was in the carport they thought something had happened to me. Well, I had locked all the doors, and two keys are needed to get in. They only had one. They went across the street to get the key I left with my neighbor. Guess what? She only had the one. My son went in the carport, broke out several jalousies and unlocked the door. Another guess what? I had locked the door between the little den and the kitchen. My son used some tools to take the lock out. Well since I wasn't there they started worrying about where I could be. So Jo—my daughter in law called a member of my retirees club to see if I had been to the fish fry, and was assured that I had been. My granddaughter wasn't feeling good so she called her boyfriend to come get her and take her home. She called back to my house and told them about the message I had left. I guess they were relieved but didn't go home, as they didn't want me to come home to a house that had been broken into. I had some spare glass in the store room so they replaced them and got ready to go home. Before they left my son said—"Mom, why didn't you call my cell phone when we didn't answer at home?" I am ever grateful for such a caring son and family and friends, and happy that "That Saturday " ended so well.



## *The Past*

*Elsie J. (Titus) Martin*

I just came back  
From yesterday  
Picking up memories  
Along the way

I don't know which part  
Of my life I liked the best  
But I'll make the most  
Of all the rest







**1943**

Elsie J. (Titus) Martin was born October 2, 1924 in Muscatine, Iowa the third child of Maude and Joseph Titus. They moved to the town of Wilton when she was about five years old, and lived there until she was twelve and then moved back to Muscatine. She went to several different schools and graduated from Muscatine High in 1943. Elsie married Eugene Martin in August of 1943 in Santa Barbara, California, while he was still in the Army. After he was discharged from the Army they had three children, Dannie, Nancy and Susan. After living in West Liberty for a few years they moved to Orlando, Florida. Elsie then worked for 27 years for the supermarket chain, Winn Dixie. Her husband died in 1988. She now spends a lot of time at the senior center, going to several different activities. She especially like to play cards and do some creative writing.



**2002**

