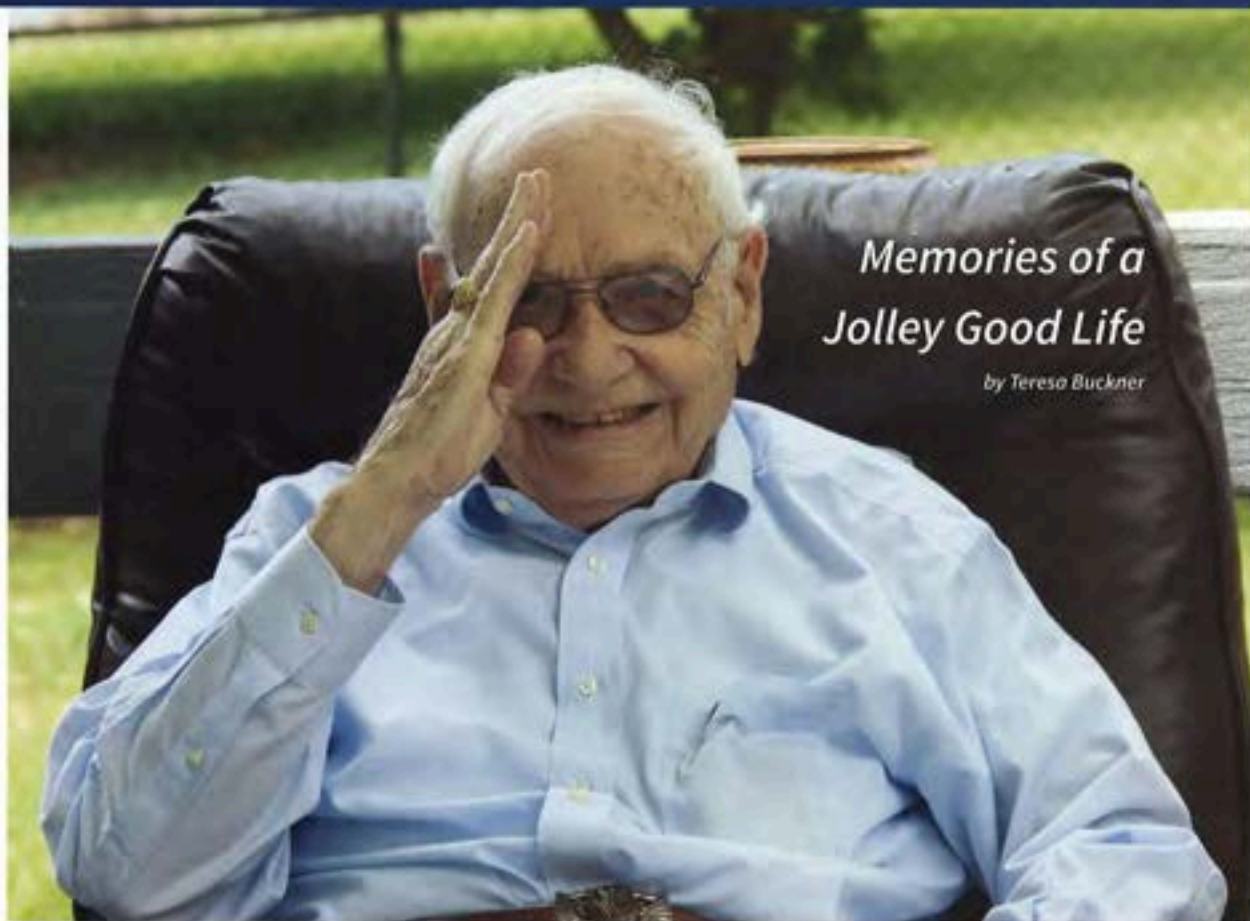


Harley and Betty Jolley



Memories of a Jolley Good Life

by Teresa Buckner

At 94, Dr. Harley Jolley remains sharp and witty, a deep well of seemingly unfaded memories. Born in 1920, Jolley's memories include a treasure trove of history from a life that has not only studied, but lived many of the most significant historic events of the 20th century.

Harley Jolley taught history at Mars Hill College from 1949 through 1991. His wife, Betty Jolley, came to the college in 1949 as an assistant librarian, but she quickly began teaching humanities and history courses. For over four decades, they formed the backbone of the history department of Mars Hill College, and they were integral to the life of both the college and the town of Mars Hill.

Dr. Jolley was known as a fascinating teacher, not only because his lectures were passionate and animated, but also because his retelling of the historic events of the 20th century often blended with stories from his own life.

Jolley's stories included his boyhood during the Great Depression in Caldwell County, NC; his stint in the Civilian Conservation Corps during the late 30s; his service in the army air corps; and the terrible day on December 7, 1941, when he survived the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, HI.

"Of course, I was there when the Japanese visited us with bombs," Jolley said recently. Around 7 am on December 7, Jolley and his bunkmate were awakened by the booming sounds of bombs dropping. Both Jolley and his friend initially thought it was the U.S. Navy on practice maneuvers.

"Well, it *was* the navy," he said, "but it wasn't *our* navy; it was the Japanese. And we could see them flying over, with torpedos coming in the windows of the barracks."

Jolley still carries a piece of shrapnel he picked up during the attack, as well as the memories of several friends who didn't make it.

In early 1942, Jolley was transferred to Arizona, and later to France, where he served for the rest of the war, some 200 miles from the front lines.

When he returned to the U.S. following the war, he quickly made use of the G.I. Bill, and went to Appalachian State Teacher's College, where he intended to major in math. But that all changed when he took his first history class.

"I met the most amazing professor I've ever had in my life," he said. "His name was Duggins, fresh out of the navy. He couldn't say a full sentence without profanity, but oh boy, could he give a lesson."

According to Jolley, Professor Duggins came to class thoroughly prepared. Armed only with chalk, he would give a thoroughly engrossing lesson. It was a technique that both Jolleys (Betty was also Duggins' student), would deliberately emulate during their careers.

It was at Appalachian State that Harley met Betty Cornette, a music major. "I had friends who knew her and pointed her toward me. And it worked," he said, simply.

"It worked," through 57 years of marriage, through grad school (a Ph.D. for him and an M.A. for her), through two children, Ben (MHC class of '73) and Stuart (MHC class of '86), through dual careers at Mars Hill College, through retirements, and through grandchildren, until Betty Jolley's death in 2007.

The Jolleys were married on Christmas Eve, 1949, because, as Jolley says, "tis the season to be Jolley!"

Known for their larger-than-life personalities and high classroom standards, the Jolleys each displayed a distinctive style in the classroom.

"I think all of us know that really good teachers have passion for their subjects and love it," said John Hardin '86, who is now a history teacher himself, at Mountain Heritage High School in Burnsville, NC. "Dr. Jolley was definitely like that."

Harley Jolley had a unassailable presence in the classroom that commanded students' respect, Hardin said. "The words 'distinguished southern gentleman' and 'scholar' come to my mind when I think of Dr. Jolley," Hardin said. "He always had

an extremely professional way about him in the classroom. All the students respected him, so behavior was just never ever an issue. He knew what he was talking about and everybody knew it."

While Hardin came to Mars Hill intending to major in history, he briefly considered business as a better path. Then, he took one of Dr. Jolley's classes.

"I loved it, every minute of it, and it became clear to me that I was a history major," Hardin said.

Betty Jolley, or "Mama Jolley," as many students called her, was known as a difficult but caring professor. Ricky Cooper '84, now a social studies teacher at Cane River Middle School in Burnsville, had several classes under Betty Jolley, and remembers her most for her heart for students.

"Mrs. Jolley came across as very stern in class, but we knew she had a heart of gold," he said.

She had high expectations for her students, Cooper said. "She worked us hard, lots of essays, presentations and group work. But, that hard work in her classes prepared me for my teaching career."

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Top: A young Harley and Betty Jolley play with their young son, Ben; Center: The Jolley family in 1965: Ben, Betty, Harley and Stuart.

Below: The history professors pose for the Laurel in 1986.



Jolley, continued...

Mrs. Jolley's concern for her students was displayed in Cooper's own life when he went to her one day to tell her he would have to drop out of college due to financial problems.

"No, you are not!" she said. "Come with me!" Mrs. Jolley took Cooper to the financial aid office and helped him get work study and loans to stay in school.

"Had it not been for Mrs. Jolley I would have had to drop out of school, because I had no idea how I was going to come up with money for tuition and books," he said.

According to Dr. Jolley, Betty loved traveling, and she loved to plan trips which would introduce her students to locations around the world. Many people in Mars Hill remember when Betty Jolley and a group of Mars Hill students got stuck in China temporarily during the upheaval of the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989.

"I remember when she got off the plane in Asheville, she got down on her knees and kissed the ground," Harley Jolley said. "That was one happy woman."

Jolley clearly misses his wife, and speaks of her great respect and affection. In a short conversation, he will describe her excellent teaching skills, her loving nature, and her sharp intellect.

Betty Jolley was outspoken about her Christian faith and its place in her life. That faith formed the foundation of her love for family, friends and students. When she passed away in 2007, Harley chose to honor her with a short but poignant epitaph on her tombstone: "Joyous Christian, Master Teacher."

Harley poured his gift for teaching and his love for history into an adult Bible class at Mars Hill Baptist church for over 40 years.

Through the church and other community associations, the Jolleys formed long and lasting relationships with the people of the Mars Hill community. That's why when, through the years, Dr. Jolley received offers to go to other universities, he inevitably chose to turn them down.

"This was a good place for my boys to grow up," he said. "The love and support of the people in this community kept us here, and our kids were adopted by those people."

In addition to his teaching career, Dr. Jolley spent 25 years (1958-1984) as a seasonal ranger with

the interpretive division of the U.S. Park Service, on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Jolley researched and wrote extensively about the history of the Parkway. Over the years, he authored eleven books and publications, most of which catalog the history, landscaping, and details of the world's longest and thinnest national park. His book, *The Blue Ridge Parkway* (Univ. of TN Press, 1969), is a volume which continues to be a favorite among both scholars and casual readers. He also authored one book about the Civilian

Conservation Corps, titled, *That Magnificent Army of Youth and Peace* (N. C. Office of Archives and History, 2007).

He has given numerous interviews as an expert on the Parkway, and he appeared in The History Channel's series "The 1930s," discussing his experiences in the Civilian Conservation Corps.

In 2008, Jolley was presented with the Order of the Long Leaf Pine. The award is bestowed by the Office of the Governor of North Carolina, and is the highest civilian honor in the state. In addition to his long service in the Park Service, Jolley's service as historical commissioner for the Parkway and as a member of the historical markers commission were among the considerations for the award.

Today, Jolley lives with Stuart's family in Mars Hill, in the same home that he shared with Betty. He reads voraciously, thanks to the Mars Hill library, and he keeps up with high school sports in Yancey County, where Stuart is an elementary school principal.

Jolley reflects on his lifetime of memories by saying that it's all been part of a very good life. "The Lord's taken care of me," he said. "I've been blessed."



The Jolleys in 1990