

## Barbara Kelly

We first met the Hensley's in Johnson City shortly after Atticus and Caroline became engaged. Yours is a family that is easy to love and we really felt good about all of you. After our visit I wrote to Steve and Julie. Steve replied with a wonderful letter that I will share with you here. He sent us other letters and Christmas letters. I enjoyed my 1998 visit with all of you and also the July 4<sup>th</sup> picnic the next year. Steve was such a wonderful person and of course Julie is a super lady too. Steve and Julie came over and did some of their storytelling routines for Vince's Methodist Men's Group on another occasion. The men all liked them both a lot and were very sorry when they learned he was sick. I am sorry that our precious Stephanie will only know her two wonderful Grandpa's by what we tell her. I am thankful that she has her great-Grandpa Robie. He will have to fill the place for Steve and Vince. I am sorry I have been so long complying, I have no excuse except that it's hard for me to deal with the tragedies of this life. I appreciate all of you being such a sweet warm family to Caroline.

*This letter to Barbara from Steve in 1994 was enclosed.*

Dear Vince and Barbara,

Thank you for writing. I love getting letters and I always answer with another letter, even during tobacco cutting season. In this age of fax, phone, and answering machines, I'm afraid we will forget how nice letters can be. I know they are better handwritten than typed, but it was a choice between the personal touch or legibility.

I spend some of my spare time transcribing letters that were written in the 1890's by a former Chuckey resident. I have come to know him intimately from his style of writing and his choice of words and phrases. How will future generations know us if we only talk on the phone? But then maybe we won't want to.

We are so pleased with you folks. We were carried away with Caroline the first time we met her, and were just as excited about getting to know all of you. And I guess it was just good luck that you were Methodists. We would have still loved Caroline if she had been Hindu, but somehow it just set our minds at ease. I guess people are most comfortable with what they are most familiar with.

We are very proud of Atticus. I guess you could tell. He's a good boy, or rather, young man. It's hard to think of them as grown-up isn't it? The only criticism I've ever had was that Atticus is too serious. Maybe Caroline can teach him to relax and have a little more fun. He was always that way. Even as a child, he worried about homework, social problems, and the meaning of life and stuff like that, while other kids played ball. I don't know where it came from. Nobody has ever told me to relax and have more fun. Judy's parents were Humpston's, people of German descent. I guess that's it.

It's been a busy time here in Chuckey. I've acquired 3 more Cessna 150's needing work. One has been overhauled, annualled and sold; 2 more are sitting out there in the yard waiting.

My brother, Ted, suffers from a delusion that he is a farmer. He lives next door and is hard to avoid when the crops need attention. Dad and I just helped him put up one and a half acres of tobacco. Dad, who turns 72 on November 1<sup>st</sup>, still insists on hanging the top tiers in the barn.

Each year I lecture on the evils of tobacco, quote statistics I hear from those health-care people and claim I can't work in the tobacco for moral reasons. But it does no good. In the end I always end up in the patch, ready to work. It's tradition I guess. We've been raising tobacco on this farm since 1952. My only hope of getting out of it is that congress will outlaw cigarettes, and that's not likely.

Ted helps me by keeping the grass mowed on the runway, but he likes to let it get tall enough to make hay before he cuts it. I flew over last week and found a round bale of hay on the runway. Well. At least he tries to help.

My sister, Sherry, now has a permanent job. She's the assistant director of the Tipton-Haynes Farm, a small state park near Johnson City. She's very happy about it. She has a degree in art education, which makes it hard to get a job around here.

The Jonesborough Storytelling event is on the weekend of October 7<sup>th</sup>. You will find me and Julie in the information booth, answering questions, directing traffic, telling folks where the bathrooms are and which tellers are the best. Look us up and we will give you the straight scoop on what to see.

We are still trying to plan a trip up that way. Julie has just finished her first year as the church and feels that she can slack off a little now and delegate some of the work. I'm hoping she can back off to about 40 hours per week. Then, maybe, we will have an opportunity to visit.

You must write back. We will begin to get better acquainted that way, until we can spend more time together. I recently reminded Atticus of the old adage claiming you can study the mother to determine how your bride will turn out. We agreed he was indeed a very lucky young man.

Write soon,

Steve Hensley

*Atticus and Caroline were married in 1995. Baby Stephanie Kelly Hensley was born in November of 2000.*