

**Emma Lee Felkel Holman**  
(Recorded interview September 9, 2000)

I was born in Anderson January 18, 1925.

My father, Fred Wilson Felkel, was from Orangeburg County. After he graduated from Wofford he stayed in the Upcountry. His great-great-grandmother, Mary Sephronia Heatley, was the first white child born in Orangeburg County. They were early residents – early 1700s.

My mother, Altahlee Bewley, was born in Union but frequently visited my aunt and uncle, Luta Bewley and Charlie Sullivan, in Anderson. She met my father in Anderson. My mother's forebears came originally from Tennessee.

The Holmans, my husband's family, and the Felkels came over at approximately the same time from the Bavarian section of Germany. The Charlestonians wanted white people to come and be a buffer between them and the Indians.

I think my ancestors came into northern ports. My husband, Arthur, observed that many town names from the North were duplicated in the South such as York, Pennsylvania, and York, South Carolina. He said the wealthy people came by Pullman and the not so wealthy came by horse and buggy. Others walked. There was class distinction. I am sure my ancestors didn't come on the Pullman.

My father's father was a tenant farmer. My father grew up on a farm and loved land. Land was almost an obsession with him. He felt that was the one thing that would always be here. When he died, attorney Everett Newman went into his safe-deposit box and said he had never seen so many deeds. My father had 7,000 acres of land. I think some acreage probably didn't cost more than a few dollars an acre. He would just pick it up when he could. We were always land poor, and didn't like it.

When my father went to Wofford to college his father sold a horse, gave him \$75, and said, "This is it." My father milked cows for the professors and did any kind of work he could to stay in school.

After graduating from Wofford, he came to Anderson. He stayed with a family named Brissey on Calhoun Street. They had a wonderful boarding house with sleeping porches – screened-in porches. A number of young men who came to Anderson to work stayed there. My father said Mrs. Brissey always had a table full of ham, turkey and all kinds of good food. He lived there until he married.

Many people back in those days took in boarders. More recently than that teachers would come to town and stay in private homes. There weren't a lot of places otherwise available.

My father was in the business of selling life insurance. He worked a lot at Clemson selling Clemson boys life insurance. He was the first member of the Million Dollar Roundtable in South Carolina. He really believed in life insurance. Having come from a poor background he thought it was an important asset.

My father's goal was to leave each one of his children 1,000 acres of land. Then he decided there wasn't a fair way to divide it up as some was more valuable than others. He dreamed one night he should incorporate his land and he formed Felkel Farms, Inc. He left shares of stock to his children and his grandchildren.

My three sisters, my brother and I were all born at our home on Woodrow Circle right behind the hospital. Dr. Olga Pruitt delivered my sisters and me. Mama always had a trained nurse who came and stayed two weeks. There was a black girl, Beatrice Holly, who started working for my mother when I was born. She was at my mother's house the day I was born. She was my best friend until she died. Her sister worked for my grandmother.

I am the youngest of five. I have three sisters and a brother. We were all raised on Woodrow Circle. My mother died in the home after living there 60 years. My father built the home. It was a bungalow type house with high ceilings and a long hall, a big porch and a swing. It had two flights of steps from the street up to the house. We were on a hill with terraces on the side. If you go through Woodrow Circle you will still see the stone wall that was the base of our property.

Being in the city we had electricity and plumbing and had central heat. We had what we called steam heating with radiators. Our house was always centrally heated, which was rather unusual at the time. We had a telephone and I think we were on a party line. When I was a child you would get central and say central get me 624 – that was the Suggs' number. They were on Summit Avenue right around the corner from us. Sarah Suggs Clinkscales and I have been lifelong friends.

The ice wagon came by drawn by horse. You would put your card in the window and mark 25 or 50 or whatever pound ice block you wanted. The ice wagon would stop. They had big tongs. We had an icebox on our back porch that was lined with metal. They would put the ice in the icebox. That was before we had refrigerators.

We always raised our own chickens. Bea Holly would wring their necks, dip them in hot water, take the feathers off and fix the chicken. We had a goat too. It was not a milk goat. It was a pet. We had a cart.

Mrs. Wren, Dr. Frank Wren's wife, was head of nursing at the hospital, and used to buy figs from us. We had fig trees. She always wanted to put a fig leaf and three figs on each plate they would serve to the patients – just little amenities that are interesting to remember.

The trolley ran down River Street. I am not sure if it went down Summit Avenue. Buses came later. I don't remember riding the trolleys. They went right down the center of the street. They were connected to an electric wire.

Just about everybody was poor during the Depression. We knew there were certain things we couldn't have and we accepted it. My mother made a lot of the dresses for the girls and my brother delivered the *Greenville News*. He would get up at 4:30 in the morning. My brother earned the money to buy a bicycle for delivering the papers. It was a boy's bicycle so it wasn't ever available to me.

Sarah Suggs Clinkscales and I had the same kind of baby carriages. We had dolls. If I couldn't get a new doll for Christmas, my grandmother would make me gorgeous handmade clothes with tatting, smocking and all of that, so the doll would have beautiful new clothes. We had a little clubhouse under some bushes.

I went to North Fant Street School. We just walked around the corner. All five of us went to North Fant Street School and had the same teachers almost entirely. Then I went to old McCants Junior High School at Fant and Whitner Streets. We walked to McCants, also.

Girls High was on Greenville Street. Mr. T. L. Hanna was our principal. I would walk to school and usually Mr. Hanna would be walking up the sidewalk with us. It was, I guess, a kinder and gentler society then.

Elizabeth McCown was my English teacher. I always made all A's in my courses but I never did make anything except B or C on deportment. I talked a lot. Mrs. McCown said, "I am not going to recommend you to be editor of the paper because all you are interested in is boys." I said "Mrs. McCown, I made A's." She said, "No, I am not going to recommend you."

We had wonderful teachers. We had two Harriet Sullivans. The elder Mrs. Harriet Sullivan taught us Latin and her daughter taught us French. When I finished North Fant Street School, my grammar was better than most anchors on television.

Miss Eddie Davis was our principal at North Fant Street School. She had taken the grand tour of Europe. People used to go and stay three months. She had a projector in the basement and brought back pictures of the *Mona Lisa*, the Eiffel Tower and other world icons. We knew a lot of world landmarks through her teaching. She was also a great bird lover. We had a Junior Audubon Society. She came in one day with tears running down her cheeks and said she just learned that the last heath hen was dead.

They had a big old victrola and we marched in accompanied by "Stars & Stripes Forever." We then would have music appreciation programs and play all kinds of music.

In high school we would get together with the boys when we were working on the annual, newspaper or other projects. We had what are called proms now – a Junior-Senior dance and similar programs in the gym at Girls High. We had dances out at the Legion Hut.

In the earlier grades we had prom parties. You would have a little prom card and boys would ask you for a prom and you would fill out your prom card and just prom up-and-down the sidewalk. We would do that on Summit Avenue. Boys and girls got together at somebody's home and then would promenade – walk up-and-down the street and visit. Then you would change partners when you had another prom. The fate worse than death was to not have your card filled up, not have enough people ask you for prom. That was a big social event.

We all went to the soda shop. The soda shop was downstairs at the Calhoun Hotel. For 6 cents you could get a Coke and you could just hang out with the crowd. We could walk there. People didn't have cars. I could count on one hand with a couple of fingers cut off the fellows I knew who had cars. Ken Saylor had a car, Bill Wright had a car and I think Bill Osteen had a car. I had a friend, Patricia Gilmer, who had an old, beat-up car. We did have a wonderful time.

There was the old Strand Theater downtown and there was an Osteen Theater. We loved to go to the movies. They had a midnight show on Saturday night. I was not allowed to go because it ran over a little bit into Sunday. That was a no-no in my family, that you could view a movie on Sunday. It just broke my heart because I couldn't go to that midnight movie. My mother grew up a Baptist but my father was a Methodist. I attended St. John's Methodist until a year or so after I married when I moved to Grace Episcopal Church with my husband.

My father always had a Ford. I can remember a T model Ford. My father traveled in his business a lot, so we didn't have access to a car. We had a city bus. We could go down to the corner and catch the bus and ride to town.

We would slip the car out when our father was at home and teach ourselves how to drive. We had gearshifts and my children are impressed that I know how to gearshift. The Bewleys lived on the corner across the street and my grandfather used to tell my sister he would buy the gas if she would take him for a ride. I guess by then she had a license but they were sort of easy about licenses then.

I had three older sisters and an older brother and had some of the same goals they had. We all went to college. After college the girls wanted to get out and work before getting married. They didn't want to get married right after school. One sister did marry after college, however, because her boyfriend, Charlie Truluck, was going off to the Marines in '41.

I went to Anderson College for two years. My father had children in college for 20 years and we all started at Anderson College because we could go as day students and walk. I went to Wesleyan in Macon, Georgia, when I finished Anderson College and one sister went to the University of North Carolina. She was in the first coed class at North Carolina. My brother, Fred Felkel, attended Furman but then enlisted in the Naval Air Force because he knew it was just a matter of time before he would be called. He came back and went to the University of South Carolina after the war. Another sister finished at Furman. My oldest sister went to Scarritt College in Nashville. It is a Methodist school that trains directors of religious education. I picked

Wesleyan because I had always been somebody's little sister and wanted to go somewhere where I was my own person.

I had the most fabulous professor of English at Wesleyan, Dr. Warren Gignilliatt. His family was a very distinguished family from Seneca originally. English was my major and he was just absolutely brilliant and wonderful. He turned me on to Shakespeare. I had always made A's but I flunked my first Shakespeare test. He had told us to memorize the footnotes. I got the general idea but thought, "This is ridiculous, nobody is going to memorize these things." I got 65 on the test and Dr. "Gin" wrote on my paper, "You didn't think I meant what I said, did you?" I went to him and said, "Dr. Gin, this is my major and you are head of the department. Maybe I need to change my major?" He said, "Maybe you should," which was the perfect thing to say. I thought, "Over my dead body." He was really one of the most influential people in my life. Everybody has a teacher who is a mentor and somebody they look up to. Dr. Gin was mine. He had a beautiful colonial home adjoining the campus and would have his English majors over in the garden for tea. It was just a lovely time. I really did enjoy my time at Wesleyan.

The war had a major impact on us. I finished high school in '42 and things were really heating up then. I had three brothers-in-law and my brother in the service. It was a tough time.

My oldest brother-in-law was a Presbyterian minister. He served as a Chaplain in the Pacific. My next brother-in-law was a commander in the Navy. He served in both the Atlantic and the Pacific.

My brother went over to England with the first squadron and was initially under RAF jurisdiction. He was the pilot in an anti-submarine B-24 bomber. They patrolled the Bay of Biscay looking for German subs. He received the Distinguished Flying Cross for bombing and inflicting great damage upon a German convoy.

One brother-in-law was on Iwo Jima with the Marines, right in the thick of all that awful Japanese fighting. Charlie Truluck had played football at Furman and was a wonderful athlete. He had both eardrums burst by a grenade that fell at his feet. He had a tough time.

We would get letters from the men in service and everything would be cut out, censored. You didn't know where they were. Eventually you sort of knew where they were when they were leaving an area. It was all secret. All of them survived.

My husband, Arthur, went to enlist and it was a huge disappointment to him when they turned him down. They discovered a heart murmur he didn't even know he had. He stayed home and raised \$50,000 for the Red Cross. Since then the murmur has gone away, but that kept him out of the service.

On the home front there was rationing. I don't recall that being any particular problem. When Icey and George Hammett got married, Mr. Longshore (Icay's father) asked Arthur if he knew where he could get any sugar. Arthur said, "Yeah, I know somebody who sells it on the black market." He got the sugar so they could have a cake.

We used this awful margarine that just looked like lard. With it came a little package of coloring and you mixed that with that awful looking white stuff and had margarine. There was no butter. When we grew up we didn't have a lot of food to throw away anyhow so I don't recall rationing being much of a handicap.

When I came home from college a friend of mine in Greenville called and said that a bookshop wanted an English major to read and review books. I went to Greenville and worked at the Pinetree Book & Gift Shop. I loved that.

One day Wilton Hall, the publisher of the *Anderson Independent* and *Daily Mail*, called me and said, "Em, come on home and do what you know you want to do – write." His daughter was one of my best friends. Wilton had followed my writing through school. I said, "Mr. Hall, this is the fall and we are so busy over here." He said, "Em, you know Roosevelt died during the war." He was sharp. I said, "Okay." He said, "When you come home call Arthur Holman, because he knows everything that is going on. Get a membership at the country club and get involved with the concert association (of which Arthur was president)." One thing led to another. I was practically engaged to somebody in Greenville but I came home and fell in love with Arthur. (Interestingly, Arthur's father and my father grew up in the Lowcountry, 10 miles apart. They went to the same grammar school.)

With the newspaper I was what they called the society editor – woman's page editor. I wrote a daily column. Nobody now has to edit the whole page and then write a daily column on top of that. But you did as Wilton Hall told you. I loved it. You didn't get paid for it – well, practically nothing. I lived at home and I was able to survive. That was probably the early '50s, like 1952. Arthur and I married in 1953. I worked a couple of years down there.

I got some "brick bats" from writing. Bob Ballentine's wife, Ruby, just gave me down the country about her daughter's picture being over a black ad which I had nothing to do with. I told Wilton Hall and he said, "Well, just take as much as you can, then just tell them to go to Hell."

Wilton's daughter, Mitlie McCallum, is still one of my best friends. I grew up going over to their house. I remember we were in our early teens, barefooted and in shorts, and Wilton said, "Girls come in here, I want you to meet somebody. You are going to hear something about him someday. This is Strom Thurmond." It was a young Strom Thurmond. When Thurmond changed parties, that was it. Wilton could never forgive anybody for being a Republican.

Wilton always said, "We don't make the news, we just print it." The one thing he would not put in the newspaper was suicide. He put in the obituary but he felt the family had suffered enough.

I had an uncle, Walter Bewley, who worked on the newspaper and did everything. Wilton said he was the best newspaperman he had ever known. But he was an alcoholic. Most people would have fired him along with Slim Hembree and Hank Acker. They were alcoholics. But he sent my uncle off to rehabilitation and the job was there when he came back. He recognized

talent when he saw it. The turnover on that staff was negligible. People worked there forever. Frank Dickson, who stuttered, was a student of local history. He could answer the phone and never stutter but if you approached him he would stutter terribly. He was a good newspaperman too. He did a lot of features.

At that time the development of Hartwell Lake wasn't necessarily a popular issue because a lot of land would go under water. Wilton was an advocate of it – thought it would be good for Anderson and Anderson County.

It was fun working at the newspaper. You met a lot of people down there. I remember Eddie Rickenbacker, when he was president of Eastern Airlines, came in one day and I was going to interview him. We were talking and he said somebody called him and said, "Mr. Rickenbacker, my flight on Eastern Airlines was just wonderful, stewardesses were lovely, the food was good, the flight was great; but can you tell me how in the hell you can lose your luggage on a nonstop flight?" He said, "I don't know but I sure the hell am going to find out."

Hirohito's horse was brought into the newsroom once – a gorgeous, white horse – alive and well.

After I married, I would write a column just when I wanted to. Wilton wanted me to keep on writing it daily but I didn't. I loved writing and I loved doing that kind of thing but finally I just decided, I guess when I started my family, that I would let it go.

We have two children. Emily Sands is married to attorney George Sands and lives next door. Our son, Elliott, is a bachelor and owned Holman Insurance Agency which has merged with Palmetto Insurance Agency.

Dr. Forest Suggs, a dentist, had a little insurance agency at the bottom of the Calhoun Hotel. He hired Arthur (I think Arthur said for \$35 a week) to run it because Dr. Suggs liked real estate and didn't want to fool with the insurance. Later Arthur bought him out and it became Holman Insurance Agency.

Julius Anderson called Arthur and said, "Arthur, the old Criterion Theater is up for sale". He said, "Buy it. It will make you a good spot for your office." Arthur considered Julius a mentor as was Francis Fant, Sr. Both of those men were wonderful to Arthur – took an interest in him. Francis Fant was terribly crippled by polio and Arthur's father was an engineer and made braces for him, a thing the family always appreciated. Francis and Julius advised Arthur to buy the property. We tore down the building. It was beyond repair.

There was a local man known as Walking Joe Shanklin who was forever walking around town flapping his right arm against his side. It was said that every day he went to the train station where his fiancée had been scheduled to arrive years before. She never came. The most surreal thing happened when Arthur and I went down and walked into the theater to look it over. We looked up on the stage and Joe Shanklin walked across the stage banging his hand against his side. It was like something out of a novel. We bought the theater. We borrowed \$50,000. It was

an awful amount of money to borrow from the C&S Bank then. We built the building and started from there.

Arthur grew up in the historic district on Franklin Street. He had great-uncles and aunts who had lived during the War between the States. They knew all of the tales about the Yankees coming through. He said, "They just didn't have a lot to do in those days. We sat on the porch and would swing and rock and listen to these aunts." Aunt Eula Hart was one – Francis Hart's mother. She was Arthur's great-aunt. He just absorbed the stories like a sponge. Arthur had that kind of mind.

After the war, Arthur organized the Community Concert Association and it was really a forerunner of GAMAC. He was president for about 10 years. It grew to have a membership of about 2,000 people. He brought some of the great stars to Anderson, people like Loritz Melchior, Risa Stevens, Robert Merrill and the Orchestra of Amsterdam. He always told everybody we could have anybody we want as long as we have enough members. We have traveled all over Europe to music festivals. It is one of the delights of our life.

Arthur also was president of the Anderson Library Association for at least 10 years. He made the friendly suit that gave the Carnegie Library to the Library Association.

A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of South Carolina, Arthur was made a life member of the Educational Foundation of USC. A state-of-the-art conservation and information laboratory at the university has been named in Arthur's honor thanks to a gift of \$100,000 by his classmate John Swearingen. He is a life member of the South Carolina Historical Association.

Arthur was president of the Anderson Junior Chamber of Commerce and then went on to be president of the Chamber of Commerce. He was instrumental in the building of the Chamber of Commerce building on Greenville Street.

There is a wonderful story about the house on the corner of McDuffie and Franklin. It was a big old house where one of Arthur's grandparents lived. The Yankee soldiers came in the yard. The family had buried all of their silver and valuables. The black people that were still there were very loyal to the family. I think it was Arthur's grandmother who was a baby. The black servant said, "Oh, don't hurt my baby, don't hurt my baby, don't hurt my baby." Arthur's great-grandmama went over and handed the baby to the officer. The officer said, "I have a little baby at home, don't hurt this house."

Arthur has had a love for history and the cultural life of the community. He has always said he challenges anybody to say they loved Anderson any more than he did. He said, "Anderson has been good to me and I love Anderson." He does. He really does.

I am a member of the South Carolina Academy of Authors, a life member. I love that group. I was on a board with people like James Dickey and interesting people like that. We encouraged young writers and picked an author each year to get an award. Frances Mims and Paul Talmadge from Anderson instigated the association. Unfortunately it moved to Charleston.



Now we are meeting in Columbia at Carolina. That is a very interesting group. I think Gayle Edwards, Frances Mims and I are the only three from Anderson who are involved in the group.

James Dickey was something else. He was larger than life. He would come into the meeting with a big hat and I know the first time I met him he said, "Now who are you? Are you wealthy and influential?" I said, "Neither. I tell you what. I am a reader and writers are nowhere without readers." So we got along fine. Although popularly known for writing *Deliverance*, he really and truly considered himself a poet first and foremost. His son Christopher Dickey wrote a book called *Summer After Deliverance*. I went over to Emory to hear him speak but I don't know where Christopher is now. He was a foreign correspondent I think at one time. James Dickey was just a wonderful writer but a very heavy drinker. That is probably what killed him.

I think there was a real affinity between the local whites and blacks in Anderson. They lived close to each other and in some situations in the same neighborhood. Eva Kate McAdams, who later became a school principal, was the daughter of the main cook at the old Anderson Memorial Hospital. She used to come over to our house, which was right down behind the hospital, and play with my sister. They were great friends.

Bea Holly's nephew, who was very musical, would come to our house and play our piano. He didn't have a piano.

There was a blacksmith, I think his name was Dooley, who lived on Franklin Street in a large house right in the midst of Arthur's forebears. He was well respected and there was never any feeling of antipathy. We all grew up close to each other.

Mama used to get Fannie, who cooked at the hospital, to cook her turkey when she was cooking hospital turkeys.

There was an interesting story about a forebear of Arthur's. Like so many of them he walked home from Virginia after the War between the States. He had a black servant who went to war with him, stayed with him, and came back with him.

My great-great-grandfather Bewley came home from the War between the States and died from the lack of food and all he had gone through. His wife was a remarkable woman. She lived in a house where the Watkins law firm is now on McDuffie and East John streets – a pretty old house with columns. She had eight or ten children to raise after her husband died. She was a good businesswoman. She bought property in downtown Anderson and sent all of her children to college. She took in boarders. That was the way the women of the South survived because so many of the men were gone. It was really amazing.

Luta Keith was my mother's first cousin. She was a saint on this earth. She taught Sunday school for 72 years at Central Presbyterian Church and played piano for the primary department all those years. In later years when her health was failing Arthur Holman asked Cousin Luta how she was feeling? She said "Arthur, I will just tell you. Old age is just a son-of-a-bitch."

Arthur's favorite story was about an old Confederate veteran who sat rocking on the porch of the Waverly House. The Yankee troops would muster there every day. He would rock and say, "Them Yankees won the war but us Confederates beat the hell out of them at Chickamauga." Every morning he would come out there and say, "Them Yankees won the war but us Confederates beat the hell out of them at Chickamauga." This went on every day for about a week. The soldiers got tired of it. They picked him up and took him to jail. The food wasn't so great so he signed a pledge to the Union. The next day he went back out on the porch and was rocking. He said, "Us Yankees won the war but them Confederates beat the hell out of us at Chickamauga."

Attorney Red Miller was in court one time and Harold Dean was the judge. Red was inebriated. The judge accused him of being drunk. Red said, "Yes, Your Honor, I am drunk. But I will get over that. But you are a damn fool and you will never get over that."

Red Miller came in drunk one night and his dear lovely wife asked him where he had been at that hour of the morning, 2 or 3. He said, "My dear, I have been out bird watching." She said, "Bird watching? What kind of bird would you be watching at this hour of the morning?" He said, "Oh, my dear, a red-headed, double-breasted, mattress-scratcher."

Persuaded by his wife, Red Miller went to church one Sunday. He came out after the sermon and said, "Ah, my. *The Book of Common Prayer*, the mother tongue at its finest. Too bad that son-of-a-bitch in the pulpit had to ruin it all."

Red Miller was in court and had a fellow from the mountains who had been arrested for making illegal whiskey. The man's name was Joshua. The judge asked, "Joshua, are you the man that made the sun stand still?" Red Miller answered, "No, Your Honor. He's the man that made the moonshine."

They are going to tar and feather me and run me out of town.