

## WHO ARE THE GIRL GOOFS?

### THE WRIGHT-DALE FAMILY TRIPLETS

In the fall of 1947, the Wright-Dale family was more than ready for some girls to be born into the family. The last three babies were boys: Phillip in February of 1945, Mark in May of 1946, and Clifford in July of 1947. So, the family naturally expected at least one girl from the pregnancies of three sisters-in-law with due dates around the same time for that winter. As due dates drew closer for Rudy, Eileen, and Eleanor, the family must have wondered if any of them would give them a baby girl to love on.

Rudy delivered first. She already had two girls and one son, so her individual family would have been just fine with another boy. On Thanksgiving Day, November 28, Rudy gave the family Debrah Lucille. The extended family's boy streak had been broken.

Eileen (most affectionately called Babe by the family) was next. This was her first, so there were no previous babies to figure in. Three weeks after Debrah was born, on December 17, Babe gave the family Audrey Eileen. The family was overjoyed with two girls in a row.

Eleanor was last. This was her third child, and the first two were boys. How she wanted to have a girl! But what were the chances for three girls in a row for the Wright-Dale family? Just two days after Babe's delivery, on December 19, Eleanor gave the family Jacquelyn Odette. The entire family was excited about their three baby girls in a row.

And those three girls did in fact belong to the whole family, who treated them like a set of triplets.

### THE TRIPLETS GET A NICKNAME

Their grandparents and their grandmother's three brothers had moved their families to Germantown in the late 30s and early 40s. The Big House was the main abode until family started building other houses nearby. When the girls were babies, they shared a playpen in The Big House. Living in this enclave of loving relatives, the three girls were raised as much by their parents as by their grandparents and all their aunts and uncles.

The family (especially Aunt Rudy) had a penchant for giving nicknames. Debrah had quite a few, but none of her nicknames replaced her name, Debrah, in regular usage. But Audrey was never called Audrey. Her mother nicknamed her Bidy early on, and that is what she was commonly called. Some family members had no idea what her real name was. She had plenty of other nicknames also, but the family considered those as nicknames to her name Bidy. Jacquelyn had plenty of nicknames, but she was generally referred to as just Jackie. So, Debrah, Bidy, and Jackie, they were; later an uncle added a group nickname.

Their group nickname sprang from their infectious joy of living. They were always together. And they enjoyed being together – always laughing, joking and giggling. Their giddiness earned them the

nickname Girf Goofs from their Uncle Paul. It stuck. Through the years they wore the moniker with pride.

#### ALWAYS TOGETHER

From their earliest memories, they always had each other – starting with the shared playpen in The Big House. As they progressed from playing together in the playpen, to learning to crawl and walk, to going to school, to dating . . . they always had each other.

Biddy's mother and the rest of their family did not always live in Germantown. Uncle Isaac was a minister, so the family moved often. Biddy would spend her school year living with Grandma and Grandpa in The Big House and attend school in the Germantown schools, and then spend the summers with her family in whatever city they were in.

When Biddy's family would take Biddy away (which is how Debrah and Jackie talked about it), it was traumatic. The two of them would stand on the Big House porch wailing as Aunt Babe's family would back their car out of the long winding driveway. Their travail was felt deeply by the whole family. When the Girf Goofs were sad, the whole family was sad. One summer, Aunt Zoe took the two of them to her house for a couple of weeks to try to cheer them up. She coddled them and bought them new barrettes to try to take their minds off their troubles. Maxine and Leroy Logan, related to the family by marriage, took them to their house in West Carrollton for a week one summer. They doted on them and made them pancakes in the mornings, to try to relieve them of their woes.

That tearing-apart scene got so ridiculous that Aunt Babe and Uncle Isaac started taking all three of them for at least part of the summer. They had six children, so that was an unbelievable sacrifice. Those summers with Aunt Babe were the BEST! She was loving but firm and clearly interested in helping the girls be all they could be. She taught them grace and poise -- and how to iron (she ironed everything!) and clean. They felt so proud when she would praise their work. Uncle Isaac challenged their creativity and imagination with games and stories. The other children welcomed these summer visits, and no one ever complained about the overcrowding.

In Germantown, the Girf Goofs played together every day, along with their boy cousins (mainly the three boys born just before them, mentioned earlier, and Corky, born the summer after them). The seven of them called themselves The Magnificent Seven – but that is another story.

They rough-housed and played sports with the boy cousins – no one could beat Debrah in a foot race. And the boys would play girly stuff with them. When they made mud pies, they would sometimes offer their delicious baked goods to the boys. The girls thought they were eating them, but in retrospect, were they really? Or were they just tricking them? They made the boy cousins take their paper dolls on "dates" and would make the most beautiful paper evening wear for them for those occasions, a skill they tried to copy from Debrah's older sister Sis and their cousin Snookie, who were much better at it than they.

Aunt Audrey made them practice walking up steps with books on their heads. She had them practice pointing their feet when they walked so they would land on the balls of their feet, not the heels. This was supposed to train them to walk lightly and daintily. It worked.

They walked up and down the dirt country roads with crinolines on their heads as they practiced how they would walk at their weddings. They sat in the old, abandoned truck near the old barn to talk privately about their girly business. When the boys tried to interrupt them one time and pulled them out of the truck, the girls drug the boys through the dried-up sewage dump nearby; they never tried that again.

Their parents were always surprised on Saturday nights when they would request to spend the night with each other. Hadn't they been together all week? The only house big enough to accommodate over-nighters was The Big House, which is where they usually stayed. But they were fine to occasionally sleep in one bed together in the bedroom Debrah shared with her two older sisters or in the bedroom Jackie shared with three younger sisters. Aunt Rudy's house was lively and fun, as she was, and the girls loved being there. Aunt Eleanor's house was full of games and more full with children, but two more girls were never a problem.

At The Big House, they watched Grandpa's favorite TV shows with Grandpa and Grandma – including the Lawrence Welk Show, Palladin, and Gunsmoke. Then off to bed to giggle and play with each other upstairs. Running water was always iffy in Germantown, but they could count on coming down the steps to the living room on Sunday mornings to find newspaper spread in front of the fireplace with three round washbasins of warm water on top of the paper, placed there by Grandpa for them to “wash up” with. Grandpa, who had a reputation for being gruff, had a soft spot for the Girf Goofs. Grandma, who always seemed to be in her chair in the living room, studying, with books piled on the table beside her, would monitor them to make sure they washed thoroughly. After washing up, they would have worship with Grandma and Grandpa. This was never a toil for them; their grandparents' passion about Bible study was contagious and they enjoyed these times.

They were ardent devotees of the religious materials provided to them. They always studied their Sabbath School lessons and prayed when together.

But Bidy was more intense than any of the other cousins about her religious studies. Sometimes on Saturday nights, Debrah and Jackie would hide her Ellen G. White books so she wouldn't read them when they wanted to play.

#### TRIPLETS -- FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

The whole Wright-Dale family enjoyed the specialness of the Girf Goofs.

Sometimes the parents would conspire to make sure they got the same Christmas gifts. One year they longed for the Lotus Blossom doll from the Sears catalog. Grandma and Grandpa ordered Bidy's first, and hid it in the house when it arrived. When Bidy found it, she told the other two. They all tried to act surprised when the gifts were opened, but they fooled no one.

Jackie's mother made them matching outfits a few times; once she made green felt poodle skirts they wore with white sweaters. Sometimes they bought matching blouses; they fondly remember a multi-colored long-sleeve blouse from their teen years. And who can forget the white Ben Casey blouses everyone had?

The entire Wright-Dale family treated the Girf Goofs with love and tenderness and deference, except for one glaring issue. Whatever age the Girf Goofs were, was the age of the people who washed the dishes

after family dinners at The Big House -- a realization that dawned on them in their later years. When they were children, children washed dishes. When they were teens, teens washed dishes. When they were young adults, young adults washed dishes. And washing dishes at the Big House was MAJOR. Grandma did not believe in washing dishes on Sabbath, so they could not start washing the dishes until the sun went down on Saturday night and sundown worship was over. But the Girf Goofs, true to their name, would giggle and laugh their way through the mounds of plates and pans with caked-on food until the job was done.

At a family reunion in their later years, someone asked them if they had ever had an argument. They thought perhaps it could have happened, but none of them could remember any time their disagreements erupted into an argument. Aunt Babe co-signed that she had never heard of an argument amongst them. They were different in many ways but alike in many ways also. One common trait is that each of them was a peacemaker. They didn't agree on everything, but nothing marred their treatment of each other. They enjoyed life, and the family enjoyed their enjoyment.

#### DIFFERENT PATHS BUT ALWAYS TOGETHER

They all married in the same year. Jackie married in January 1969 and Debrah and Biddy married one week apart, August 31 and September 7 of that same year. Practice with the crinolines had paid off.

Their lives took them on many different routes to many different places. But they remained together in spirit. Through the years, they mourned together a child's death, two husbands' deaths, parents' sicknesses and deaths, siblings' deaths. They rejoiced together at their own and their children's education achievements. They chided each other (the closest they came to arguing) to take their medicine and eat right and exercise. They prayed together for their children. They celebrated the big birthdays together – 50, 60, 70.

But most of all, they thanked God and their families for the best set of triplets ever – The Girf Goofs.