

Anniversary editorial -- Zoo Outreach Organisation's Other Biggest Donor and Admirer – My lovely Mother, Doylouse Adams Raulston

When I wrote an excessively long obituary for my father in July ZOOS' PRINT, I received many emails and even some snail-mail complementing him on his life and character, and me, even, for writing about him. Some people asked about my Mother, why I hadn't written about her and suggested I do so. I thought it was a good suggestion but was kind of locked into the idea that it had to be an obituary and she passed away in September 2007. At that time, I would never have written something so personal in a specialty (meaning a magazine devoted to zoo, wildlife, etc.) that I edit. Now, just a few years later, I don't give so much of a damn; I just do what I want. This is one of the advantages of getting older, as in elder-older – and it's almost worth it.

My mother was 93 years old when she died and had lived a relatively full life. I say "relatively" because being a lady during those years, she could or would not do all she wanted to because it did not "look right". Those days women should not be missing from home & hearth too often, particularly to pursue a hobby or their own interest. It is a pity because she was very quick and smart and excelled at anything she took up.

Her name was Doylouse with a nickname 'Doy' (pronounced like joy, a very odd name. She (nor I) ever met another 'Doy' in her long life and I've never seen this name in print anywhere also. She was second oldest of 7 children who were offspring of a Baptist preacher, Rev. Hoyt Adams, and his wife Desilu or "Desi". Preachers didn't make much money then and much of their payment was in kind ... the congregation used to bring food — a chicken, a big pot of beans, etc.

My mother talked about financial hard times during her growing up (possible everyone's parents do to make sure we offspring know how good WE have it!) but she spoke mostly about the good times when they were kids together and some of the mischief they got into. They had a washwoman (name forgotten but call her Mary) who did laundry for this huge family as Desi wasn't always fit. When Mary had wrung out a piece of laundry and gone to hang it on the line, one of the kids would go to her washtub, hold up a handful of dirt, put the other hand in the wash-water and say 'Hey! Mary! I'm puttin' dirt in your washwater'. They fooled her a few times but soon she just pretended to be mad so she could chase the kids around the house and whack them with a 'switch' she kept handy. 'Switch' in American 'parent- language' meant a long, very thin branch you break off a bush and strip it of leaves. If the 'switch' was from a bush with very thin and flexible branches, it hurt like the devil. Parents or any kid-minders in those days in the American South, could just say 'Ahm



**Mr. and Mrs. Norman E. Raulston circa 1942.
Biggest supporters and donors to Zoo Outreach
Organisation, adoptive parents of Founder**

gunna get me a switch!' and all the kids would just run away screaming (and laughing because they got away, but they didn't come back soon either!).

My mother was a very beautiful woman. She was movie-star beautiful and my father was equally handsome. The photo here was taken two years before I came into the picture. She and my father were introduced by a mutual colleague, went out on some dates and after some short time my father started saying casually 'when we get married...we will...(for example) always have cheese in the house' or some other thing. My mother used to think these things were very sweet ... but she never got a proposal as such! My father just assumed since **he** had found his love, she would go along; it's a man thing I guess.

What happened to me ... with such attractive parents!? Well, they couldn't have children the natural way so they adopted one, and that was me. The way they adopted me was so bizarre. They must have wanted a child very badly. This was during wartime when American girls might have felt sorry for their boyfriends (or dates) going to war and put aside their principles in order to give some comfort to these young soldiers. In a certain city there was a doctor who headed a big hospital

(whose name sounded straight out of Dicken's novels but I won't use it here). He felt sorry for these girls who conceived, as the incipient fathers were at war or even dead by the time the pregnancy was discovered. And this was a very, very staid and conservative suthin' city. It was not unusual for the girls to be sent far away, or to commit suicide ... it was the end of life as they knew it. This doctor offered a way out ... he asked them to come in when they were in their last days of pregnancy and he would take the baby by cesarean method. If they didn't want to keep it or couldn't, he would find a nice couple who wanted a child. Then he would write up the birth certificate saying something like 'a woman came in complaining of severe abdominal pain and it was thought she had a tumor. In an emergency surgery it was found, instead of a tumour there was a baby, which was given to Mr. and Mrs. N.E. Raulston to care for and love'. That is a true story and wording even, told to me by my aunt who had the certificate of my birth. I love having this history actually as I enjoy being in any way unusual but also because it is a wonderful story of courage of that doctor who could have lost his practice, his hospital and his very freedom if authorities had come to know. Now he is no more so he got away with what was a kind and brave deed but might have brought recrimination if known to his professional community and the legal community.

Later my parents adopted me legally but I never knew anything about this or my biological parents. I heard this story very late in life and after some time of being angry and confused, understood that the significant fact of the matter was that my parents, particularly my mother, were really desperate for a child. To adopt a child in this manner was so against their conservative nature. So I am very lucky not to have to go to an orphanage and also lucky to have good parents and lucky they had only me, as I enjoyed being an "only child".

My mother loved southern etiquette and doing nice things for people. She was very kind to everyone. She was the type of southern lady who looks forward to being invited somewhere so later she could write a sweet 'thank you' note. Writing the note was more satisfying than the event! The same thing applied to gifts she got, and even visits to our house from friends and relatives ... she wrote thank you notes and enjoyed that most of all. She even wrote thank you notes to our next-door and across-the-street neighbors. She was a good writer and the years I was away from home she wrote me every few days.

She was very sensitive to what other people wanted or needed and made so many gestures of kindness without being asked, ever. She was quintessentially thoughtful of people and always kind, even to people she did not really care for.

This is a southern trait but my mother was particularly, uniquely thoughtful.

One southern trait she had used to really annoy me as a child but now I can't think of it without smiling. We would have afternoon company, usually on Sundays and they would stay and stay, and all of us, my Dad, my Mom and me, would be almost insane from boredom and impatience. Then one of the visitors would say 'Waaal (pronounced like gal as in 'suthin gal' – this is an American south thing—sorry), I reckon weed better be ago-en.' (That's we talk in the South.) My mother would then put out her hand as if to stop them and so 'Oh, no, don't go!' And usually that meant they stayed another hour or more while my father and I fumed and my Mother regretted her impetuous words! All southerners (the pucca ones) did like that.

My mother used to make all my clothes when I was a child with a sewing machine and then hand embroidery. She was very handy with anything to do with her hands and was expert in all manner of delicate handwork. She had many hobbies and shared some of them with my father. Both were lapidaryists, people who work with stones for jewelry, decoration, etc. They got equipment to polish the stones and made all kinds of jewelry, not for sale but for pleasure. They liked to see the beautiful grain of the stones come out and also to gift the jewelry to anyone they could. My mother taught my father to appreciate antiques and they also collected antique furniture as well as various smaller items like lamps, containers, etc. Both parents loved antique clocks and collected enough for a 'clock room' which I organized in our living room before they passed on.

My mother loved plants and flowers and was never happier than when she was up to her elbows in yard work, which Americans do as a hobby. Moving some plants, or weeding or whatever gardeners do. I didn't enjoy this to my parents' mutual disappointment. Most of all she loved Family and couldn't wait to see her 5.2 brothers and sisters from South Carolina, etc. every year as well as my father's matching (5.2) siblings from Hixson, Tennessee.

She only wanted me to do well as a human being. She wasn't interested in my making a lot of money or being famous... she just wanted me to NOT do bad, that's all. She was disappointed as I spent a very wild youth. Once I had seemingly settled down with a good husband, she and my father were flabbergasted when he supported my visit to India to study yoga and Sanskrit. I'm sure they wondered how that would mix up with Christianity. They were crushed when I stayed in India beyond my husband's tolerance level and he said come back or divorce. They were also surprised and confused when I became a zoo person almost

overnight but accepted it soon because both knew I'd always loved animals. She was very proud of me after some time for the things I did in Z.O.O. particularly the occasional award and long feature articles that appeared in the local newspaper. She was satisfied that I had settled down in something sort of respectable that I liked and that was right for me. She approved of my father's financial contributions to me so I could live and work in India without having a boss. Everything ZOO has done that is good would probably never have occurred if I had had to work under a boss.

My mother always said she didn't like animals but she was never unkind to animals and anytime she observed someone doing so, she became very angry. She tolerated my love of animals by permitting cats and dogs in her beautifully furnished house. And of course it was she, who 'didn't like animals' who ended up always having food on hand for them, feeding them on time and even nursing them when they were sick. My father actually was an animal welfare extreme enthusiast and he with two other people founded what is now the major humane society in Goldsboro. I didn't mention this before I think. He used to go out at night to check on the status of the animals at circuses and country fair armed with a strong spray to protect himself if the owners became violent. My mother hated this because she thought other people would think him a nutcase. She wanted to be just normal people more than anything ... and my father and I were just the opposite.

My mother was also a very complicated person and there are many things I will not go into. She had some hard times with health, early deaths of siblings, me (I was not easy to raise), and even my Dad. She faced it all and I admire her for the way she handled herself. I think she was a uniquely good wife and mother and I loved her deeply.

I was distraught when my mother passed away, more so because I was not present when she died. I was consumed with guilt and grief. I know that we can't always manage to be at a loved one's side when they die, but in this case, although I had made a decision to spend most of my time at my parents home to help care for them. I would do my office work via computer and email, but I felt I needed just one more short trip to India (which included a visit to Vietnam, and I would settle down). My mother begged me not to leave her then, but, I, thinking just that she would only miss me a bit, and I would be back soon, I left. I called home daily when I was away from home in those years, even from Vietnam, where I was attending a conference. One night my father said 'you have to come home; your mother needs you'. I immediately made arrangements and left on the first possible flight. I wasn't even very alarmed, as my mother had been having spells for some years and I

figured it might be so again, that a few hours only and she would be fine. But at one of the airports between flights I checked my email and got the awful news that my mother had just passed away. My Dad was too upset to call me so he got a relative to email. I don't even have words for how I felt not to be at her side then. 'Shattered' doesn't even begin to cover it. And I suffered extreme grief and guilt for three or four years and even now, if I think too hard about it.

I have included this very personal information although I know it may not be in good taste, because I just wanted to tell all of you who have an elder who one day asks you not to leave, look behind the worlds and maybe DON'T GO. You will be in for a world of hurt if you miss that important time because you didn't really hear them. My mother was trying to tell me she thought her death was imminent. That world of hurt must extend also to the dying elder. We can't imagine their disappointment and pain.

As I mentioned earlier parts of my mother's entire life was extremely difficult for many personal reasons, but still, her singularly best quality, among so many, was her attitude toward Life. She valued life more than anything, which we should all do, but I know lots of people who don't. She lost her ability to walk some months before but became bedridden days before I left for India. This was for her comfort as she had become weak due to loss of appetite and inability to swallow comfortably from reflux. She had no killer diseases, was not in pain and her mind was good; her doctor had told me just weeks before that with good care she could live to be 100. My mother was so happy when I told her that. Just before I left for India, I overheard her say to one of her close friends (her exact words, burned on my brain) ... **'I just love life. I want to go on living as long as I can'.** I admire her for this attitude although I don't share it and any of my difficulties in life pale in significance compared to hers. With all her difficulties and suffering throughout her long stay on earth, she continued to be up-beat about life.

Sally Walker