



**Edith Durr Reed**  
Contributing Writer

Telling fortunes was a fun pastime in my mother's generation. It was nothing as complicated as using a crystal ball or reading tea leaves; they had other entertaining ways to predict the future. No one really believed the predictions but it was fun going through the various rituals and waiting for the "magic answers."

Teenage girls were particularly interested in telling one another's fortunes, especially during overnight visits (or slumber parties) with their girlfriends from school or with the neighboring girls who were about the same age.

For example, before they went to sleep, girls assigned each corner in the room the name of a boy. Each girl had her own list of boys' names for each corner. The corner she was facing when she first woke up the next morning would be the name of the boy she would eventually marry.

Another ritual involved wool string. Two girls connected themselves to each other by tying wool string around one of their big toes. The string was easily broken during the night so it was always broken the next morning when the girls awakened. The girl with the shortest piece of string around her toe would be the first to marry (according to the string).

Another way to predict the future was to look in a dresser mirror first thing in the morning.

According to the "fortune teller," you would see the face of your one true love. Personally, I

have never heard of anyone seeing anything other than their own reflection.

I remember my mother telling me about one young lady who was laughing as she watched other girls looking in the mirror.

She said "I bet I have a better chance seeing my true love than you girls. I'm going to look out the window."

It was also common practice to use paper to tell fortunes. At the top of the page we wrote the vowels: a-e-i-o-u. Underneath those letters we wrote our name. Then we drew a line through each vowel that was in our name. When that was done, we counted the letters in our name that didn't have lines drawn through them. That was our lucky number.

Following that same principle, we wrote our names on the first line and our boyfriend's name on the second line. Then we drew lines through each vowel in each name and counted the remaining letters. That would be the number of children we would have after we married. If it was a two-digit number, such as 11, we added the digits. In that instance, the number of predicted children would be 2.

A couple's lucky number was determined by combining the lucky number for the boy and the lucky number for the girl.

We had apple trees in our orchard so my mother, Evie Darland Durr, canned a lot of the fruit. What do apples have to do with predicting the future? Allow me to share how the process works.

One day my mother was sitting in our screened-in back porch

as she peeled apples for canning. I was passing through when she asked me if I knew I could tell my fortune from an apple peeling. I did not know an apple peeling could do that so I perked up my ears and asked her how it worked. She told me if I could peel an apple all the way around without breaking the peel then throw the peeling over my shoulder, the initial it made when it fell to the floor would the initial of my future husband. I pulled up a chair and started peeling apples.

It took me quite a while to produce my first unbroken peeling but finally I did. I threw it over my shoulder then rushed back to see what letter it had made. I don't remember the letter but I do recall a letter was formed. I was so pleased that I wanted to do it again. I picked up the peeling on the floor, brought it back to my chair, and dropped it in the container with the other peelings. Then I sat down and started peeling apples again.

I was having fun and learning to correctly peel apples at the same time. And, just as importantly, I was adding more apples to the container for canning. As I peeled more apples it added to my efficiency and speed so I was on my way to becoming a "regular apple peeler." This was good for all concerned.

When I was older and married, I enjoyed peeling apples and preparing other foods for canning. It was fun and the final product was always delicious.

Another interesting game we played did not involve fortune telling. I guess it was more of a "parlor game." It involved a three-legged



Photo Submitted  
**Good friends at Fairview High School in the late 1930s may have used apple peelings or wool string to predict the future. These four "best friends" include Margaret Ann Sims (Adkinson) at the left, and Mary Will "Billie" Sanders (Griffon) in front. Also pictured are Nellie Yocum and Elizabeth Long.**

table. We didn't have such a table in our house but we did have a three-legged organ stool.

I moved it out into the center of the room and we arranged our chairs around it. We placed our open hands, palms down, on the top of the stool. Then I said, "Watch this leg and see if it rises from the floor so it is not touching the floor."

Of course none of us believed one leg of the organ stool would miraculously rise. You can imagine our surprise when the leg slowly moved upward and off the floor. All of us pulled our hands away from the stool as if we were touch-

ing something dirty. I can't explain why that organ stool leg left the floor...and I am still wondering why and how it happened.

*(Editor's Note: The late Edith Durr Reed attended Bohon School and graduated from Cornishville High School in 1939. She enjoyed writing about growing up and living in Mercer County.)*



REED

## Home

From 5B

You can't help but feel it when you go to the Olde Bus Station for breakfast on Saturday morning, or when you attend church, or even go to a school ball game. There are a lot of very friendly people here, and believe me, it is not this way everywhere.

**The least?** As beautiful Harrodsburg is, I believe some businesses and residents could do a better job of cleaning up their properties. This affects the whole town on how we present ourselves to the world for the upcoming 250th birthday celebration.

**What's the largest obstacle we have to overcome to make the 2024 celebration a major success?**

I think the most immediate obstacle we have in front of us is being able to pull together all of the different agencies, civic organizations, industries, businesses, city and county governments, the schools, churches and surrounding communities...and oh yes...the people. Everybody included! This is the "herding cats" scenario that is in front of us now, but I am impressed with what I am seeing and hearing thus far. I think that once June 2024 gets here, everyone is going to be pleased about what we were able to accomplish and proud to be a part of the history of Harrodsburg and Mercer County.

Harrodsburg, with some impressive 21st century successes, has more than just the history of this place to celebrate, tell us about this: Yes, we do like to refer to our history as being the "first" in Kentucky and this is something to celebrate. However this place has so much more to offer.

Corning is an innovative industry that keeps creating and growing. We have an aggressive industrial base and we recently hired a city economic developer. Harrodsburg now even has its own brewery! We have award winning BBQ and an exceptional jazz festival. We have a party every October that seems to keep growing.

Look at what is happening on the south end of town with Campbellsville University. Even though we all have heard the "I can't wait to get out of here and I am never coming back" speech, there are actually young couples moving back to Harrodsburg. I believe people are really starting to embrace Harrodsburg as a good place to be and a great place to raise a family.

**What's your vision for the 250th celebration?** My vision is for this community to come together and throw the best year long celebration possible. When this is over, I want people to leave knowing that they have witnessed a very special place. I want us to showcase Harrodsburg in such a way that visitors will want to return often. I want them to feel like they just got smacked with Harrodsburg hospitality.

**Biggest idea so far?** It's hard to identify one idea that I would call the biggest because so many great suggestions keep coming our way. It has been good to hear how the community pulled together with such great activities for Harrodsburg's Bicentennial celebration back in 1974; and seeing the many special events Fort Harrod, the Chamber, and Harrodsburg First are already doing annually, while looking

towards the 250th.

We had a great turnout at our first community planning meeting, where ideas were flowing like crazy. I really liked the one about a Harrodsburg Haunted Tour. Somebody suggested we needed a space for RVs. This one took off and I believe we already have some planning efforts underway.

**What would you do if you won the lottery?** I have always said I would get a lot of enjoyment of giving the money away.

**What's a perfect day when you are not working?** I love to grill, and then get a bunch of friends together and enjoy a great meal. There is nothing like good food to bring people together.

**Coffee or tea? Both.**  
**Morning or night person?** Both.

**Favorite possession?** My wedding band and the three children and six grandchildren as a result of it.

**Got a motto for life?** BE HAPPY..IT'S A CHOICE!!

*(Editor's Note: Lois Mateus serves on the Centre College President's Advisory Board, the University of Kentucky's Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues, and the Kentucky Historical Society Foundation. She lives and farms with her husband, Tim Peters, near Mayo.)*



MATEUS

From 6B

## 1928

design of the courthouse buildings have changed but we still have a judicial center in the heart of downtown.

The first row-house in Kentucky is still standing one block away from Main Street and is called Morgan Row in honor of its builder, Squire Joseph Morgan.

Janie Rice Brothers states in her "North Main Street District Report," available on her "Gardens to Gables" website, "the first street laid out [in Harrodsburg and probably Kentucky] ran east and west and was named Water Street, later to become Broadway." Broadway remains a busy thoroughfare.

Beaumont Inn near Main Street was known as Greenville Springs Spa from 1806 to 1827 when it became a Christian Baptist School; from 1841 to 1856 the building housed the Greenville Institute and from 1856 to 1893 it was known as Daughters' College. It was called Beaumont College from 1895 to 1915 then the name reverted to Daughters' College in 1916. The building, a tourist destination known for fine cuisine, lodging, and hospitality is still standing thanks to the Dedman Family.

The original fortification known as Fort Harrod was replaced by a classic replica in 1927 near the site of the original structure

and cemetery.

Thousands of visitors travel to Harrodsburg to see Fort Harrod State Park every year to learn about Kentucky history.

Although the names of the merchants and the variety of stores on Main Street in Harrodsburg have changed hundreds of times since the early days, the structures that are still standing remind us of one simple truth.

Our ability to weather the inevitable storms and changes in life rests on the strength of our foundation—a foundation that must be as strong as Kentucky River limestone.

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