Chapter Nine

Dogs, Dogs, Dogs, Dogs, Dogs

Dogs are not our whole life, but they make our lives whole.

—Roger Caras
President of the ASPCA (1991–1999)

Our little ol’ daddy had hunting dogs when we were growing up, bird dogs and hounds, that sort of thing,” Ruth recalled. “And we loved every one of them. We’d roll our doll carriages up and down the street, and if anyone had puppies, we’d put the dolls out and put the puppies in and roll them up and down the street. We’ve always loved dogs.”

“Over the years we have had lots of dogs,” Ruby continued. “We had the three poodles, Celebrity, Sweetheart, and Sugar Boy. All told, we’ve had thirteen dogs. The poodles were the last ones.”

“Celebrity was the one who had clearance to the White House. We inherited him from a man at Jekyll Island who had passed away. He was about seven years old when we got him. He went everywhere with us whenever he could. He campaigned for President Carter. We took him on all the trips where we could drive. When we had chartered planes like going up to New Hampshire and Vermont, then Celebrity couldn’t go. Ruth stayed with him and worked at the headquarters. In Tennessee, Florida, Georgia, and the surrounding states, where we could drive, we took Celebrity, so he wore the green and white colors of the campaign. He had a pretty little green coat with white fur and we put stickers on his pretty little long hairy ears that said Carter-Mondale. He was on television a lot, too.”

“We used to take them with us to the Peachtree, you know, the Road Race, every year.”

“Our little doggies just loved it. They’d get so excited. Now people say ‘Where are the poodles?’”

“We love dogs. We always have. Growing up, we always had all kinds of them, every shape and size. It didn’t make any difference to us, we loved them all.”
“When we were working years ago,” Ruby said, “we had our little doggies, and Daddy and Mama kept our ‘babies’ during the week. We were at the bank during the day and going to school at night and we just couldn’t keep our little doggies over here in Atlanta with us. So, they kept the babies.”

“Kept the ‘grandchildren,’ you might say,” Ruth added.

“After Celebrity,” the poodle who helped elect Jimmy Carter, “we had two other dogs. We went to the same kennel where Celebrity was born. He was such a fine dog. His maternal and paternal grandparents and parents were champion dogs. We drove six hundred miles up to Delaware to the Round Table Kennels.”

“The lady who owned it had won all kinds of awards and trophies from all over the world for her dogs. The big dog had puppies, seven little darling poodle puppies, and we drove up, and it took us from Sunday to Monday afternoon to decide which two to take, because we wanted to take all of them, and we should have.”

“We adopted two of them and brought them home with us. The kennel people gave us carrying cages, put them in the car with our little dogs in each one. But that didn’t last any time at all. By the time we left the place we had one on each of our shoulders as we shared the driving home. They were such good dogs that we didn’t have to put them in the cage at all the whole way back to Atlanta.”

“So we spent the night in Salisbury, North Carolina, and the next morning we went to McDonald’s, which was adjacent to the motel, and our little doggies had their first Egg McMuffins. When we got back home, we shipped the carrying cases back to the lady at the kennel. Those dogs simply didn’t need them. Their maternal grandfather was international champion and the father was a national champion poodle, so we were kind of spoiled about having fine little poodles.”

“They were with us for fifteen years. Another dog we had lived to be nineteen years old and we hoped these would too, but we lost little Sweetheart. At first we called them Piddles and Puddles, because at the time that was the appropriate name for them, and then we felt they needed more mature names so we named them Kandi and Kisses, but later we called them Sweetheart and Sugar Boy.”

“Mayor Hartsfield’s wife said, ‘Ruth and Ruby, that’s the cutest thing you all have ever done, having little twin poodles. What are you going to call them?’ and I said, ‘Well, it doesn’t matter what name we give them because we’ll just call them names like Sweetheart and Honey Boy and Sugar Love and anything else we can think of. They probably won’t ever hear their real names as far as
we're concerned.’ So they were named Kandi and Kisses. Little Sweetheart, the one we thought was the healthiest, died of a heart condition. We knew he wasn’t feeling well and we took him to his doctor. He said, ‘I’m just giving you medicine for about three days,’ and I said, ‘Oh, don’t tell me that we’re going to lose our baby.’ But we did.”

The ladies buried their beloved pets in little caskets from the H. M. Patterson Funeral Directors. “We bought a cherub casket for each one of ours. Spring Hill was so nice as to offer to come and dig the grave and put them in the casket for us, but we said, ‘Thank you so much, but we’ll ask our yard man to do it.’”

“And we did. We buried all of our dogs out in our rose garden. They were such fine little babies. We looked for a long time for twin poodles to replace the ones we had who went to Heaven. We kept looking for replacements at the Humane Society. We would have gone back to the same kennels, but that was the last breeding. The lady was ninety-four years old then, and she couldn’t get anybody to take over her kennels and so she was going out of business. So we couldn’t have gotten any more from the same kennel, or we would have gone immediately and gotten more. We just never did find any we wanted.”

“Now, we are godparents to poodles down in Longwood, Florida. They send us cards saying ‘Guess who went out to buy this Mother’s Day card’ and on the inside, ‘Your cute little godchild, that’s who.’ So we love other people’s dogs. We love to start talking about our babies. They really were like our children. We took them every place. We bought a van so we could all travel together. We were never happier than ‘Us Four and No More’—the two of them and the two of us.”

“It’s one of those GM Explorer vans with rose-colored upholstery and a television.”

“We had it custom made.”

“For the dogs. Well, truth be told, for all of us.”

“We loved it. Little Sweetheart would sit on the sofa, and the chairs, and up front. But little Sugar Boy didn’t want anybody to get where we were going before he did, so he’d stick to that front seat, right up there with the driver. He didn’t wander around in the van. He would occasionally, but most of the time he stuck to his seat. But Little Sweetheart would wander all over the van. We just enjoyed those trips so much.”

“We traveled all over the place.”

“We went to Lansing, Michigan to the International Twin Convention, to Washington, D.C., up through New York and over to Chicago. We just traveled and traveled with our little dogs.”
“We’re members of the International Twin Convention. For a while, we went every year, unless it was some city we didn’t particularly care for. It’s Labor Day weekend every year.”

‘Mayor Hartsfield said that the next best thing to going to Heaven was being one of the Crawfords’ dogs. And the Mayor of Temple used to say, ‘When they’re talking about leading a dog’s life, they’re not talking about the Crawfords’ dogs.’”
Chapter Ten

Matters of Taste and Entertainment

It’s difficult to think anything but pleasant thoughts while eating a homegrown tomato.

—Lewis Grizzard

We love to eat,” Ruth happily confesses. “I’ve always told everyone I never wanted to die indebted to my stomach.”

“I’m a meat and potatoes gal,” Ruby says. “I’m not overly fond of too many herbs and spices and things, but there are some things I just couldn’t cook without, like broiled steak seasoning and lemon pepper and garlic. Those are my favorites. Steak is my favorite food. If there’s anything better, I’ve never discovered it. I like steaks and roast beef and prime rib and all that. And I like it rare. I want it to moo at me when it comes out. I just want the body heat restored.”

“We like pork, lamb, and chicken, too,” Ruth adds. “We’ve been chicken-eating Methodists all our lives. I’ve loved fried chicken all my life, but now I don’t choose chicken quite so much. We lean more toward seafood since we’ve been going to the coast so much, shrimp and lobster. Lobster is my favorite.”

“Steak and lobster on the same plate wouldn’t offend me,” Ruby continues. “That’s my choice. Surf and turf. I really like Southern food better than any kind of cooking, French or Italian or Mexican.”

Ruth recalled, “I’m a little more champagne and caviar than Ruby. I really enjoy a glass of good champagne.”

Such eclectic tastes are not limited to champagne, caviar, or steak and potatoes. In their interview with Dr. Betty Siegel on Kennesaw State University’s Meet the President, the Crawford sisters reminisced about their indulgences, one of which is a regular visit to The Varsity, the Atlanta drive-in founded by Frank Gordy.

Ruby related that, “We know the Gordys quite well. This year (2008) was the eightieth anniversary of The Varsity. Mrs. Gordy liked some of the stories we had told her and she had us include some of them in the book they were
writing about The Varsity for their seventy-fifth anniversary a few years ago. So I wrote two of the stories. One of them concerned our late beloved Mayor Hartsfield. He and Tollie, his wife, and son Carl used to love to go to The Varsity to eat, as did many other hundreds and thousands of people, I guess. Many afternoons when Tollie would go over to pick up the mayor, they would come back to The Varsity and have a hot dog. When the prices were raised from ten cents to two for fifteen cents to two for a quarter and then to a quarter, Mayor Hartsfield said that, ‘If they keep raising those prices at The Varsity, they’re going to drive us back to the Capital City Club.’”

Ruth laughed when she recalled that when the new First National Bank building was under construction the bank employees were “farmed out to other office buildings” all over the city. Ruby’s temporary office was “down at North Avenue only a couple of blocks from The Varsity. So she’d go down and eat her hot dogs and things at lunch and then she would get me mine down through either the [bank’s] courier or Brink’s, you know, in a big brown manila envelope to number 10 Pryor Street where I was. So she would send me my lunch. Of course, everyone thought they were hauling securities, or bonds, or stocks. But it was very valuable.”

“I sealed them up,” Ruby adds, “in a heavy brown envelope, very securely, so they couldn’t smell the onion rings and all the hot dogs and the chili, and then I would send them by the first available courier, the porter, or Brink’s or whatever, whoever was going first to Ruth. They thought they were hauling something very valuable, but we knew it wasn’t stocks and bonds; it was just Varsity hot dogs.”

Ruth and Ruby love food and pride themselves on eating nearly everything. “We have zero tolerance for finicky eaters, and even less for their children. We grew up in an era when you ate what was put in front of you, and you were glad to have it.”

“When we were little. Daddy and our brother would go hunting all the time,” Ruth remembered, “We’d have just about anything you can think of. It wasn’t unusual for us to have rabbit, squirrel, venison, a wild turkey, you name it and we probably had it. And we’d have whatever kinds of vegetables we grew, greens, beans, potatoes, okra, corn, tomatoes, just about anything.”

Ruby adds “There’s nothing that I won’t eat. I guess the only thing I’ve never eaten is rattlesnake. I’ve eaten alligator but never rattlesnake. But if I were offered rattlesnake, I’d give it a try.”
Anyone with less prodigious energy than Ruth and Ruby might wonder: With all they had to do professionally, as well as their civic and church activities, and all the cooking and entertaining they have done over the years, and the travel, politics, and various and sundry other activities, how in the world would Ruth and Ruby have had time to do anything else? But with these two, there was more.

“We had all sorts of hobbies,” Ruth recalled.

“There wasn’t anything we didn’t like, except bridge. We felt that every minute we spent playing bridge was time wasted in our lives,” Ruby added.

“Now we don’t mean to offend anyone by saying this,” Ruth explained. “We have lots of friends who play bridge, but it was just not to our taste.”

—

When I’m asked why I am not married,
I reply that I have a chimney that smokes,
a dog that barks, howls, and growls, a parrot that
swears, and a cat that stays out all night.
So why do I need a husband?

“I think it’s because to play bridge well, we have to sit still too long, and we like to see something tangible for the time we spend doing something.”

“Our hobbies were doggies, first of all. We loved our little dogs.”

“Flower gardening and cooking was my favorite thing to do. Cooking has never been a chore to me. It’s just relaxation. I’ve never been too tired to cook in my life. I love to fix food and have other people enjoy it.

Of course, we were also musical. We studied piano and voice.”

“We sang primarily hymns, sang in the glee club,” Ruth remembered. “We used to play the piano at church, and we sang in the choir. We love music. We’ve gone to the musicals for years, the All-Star Concert Series. We love operas and classical, but we like music played and sung like it’s written.”

“We’ve even been in movies and on television ourselves.”

“In 1954, we were on What’s My Line?” and we stumped the panel. Of course, John Daly was the MC. A few years ago, some friends of ours sent for the tape of that show and asked us over for dinner. They surprised us and
played the tape of our appearance. I was shocked to death. On that show there was Dorothy Kilgallen, Arlene Francis, Bennett Cerf, Robert Q. Lewis and, of course, John Daly. Merle Oberon, the actress, was on that show as well. They always had a star, and Miss Oberon was the movie star on the night that we appeared. At that time we were the only twin-women-lawyer members of the American Bar Association. So we stumped the panel. Bennett Cerf thought one of us was Coca and the other was Cola, being from Atlanta. Dorothy Kilgallen thought we demonstrated twin egg beaters and Arlene Francis thought that we played twin pianos, and I can’t think what Robert Q. Lewis thought we did, but he missed it, too. Anyway, it was a delight to appear on that show.”

“In 2000, we were on Oprah, which was great fun. And we’ve been written about in Maryln Schwartz’s book A Southern Belle Primer or Why Princess Margaret Will Never Be A Kappa Kappa Gamma. That picture of us on page 26, with Miss Georgia, was taken at a meeting of the Gracious Ladies of Georgia.”

“We were also in a movie, made down at Jekyll Island, where we have a place and where we have gone for years. The movie was called Jekyll-No Place to Hyde and we had supporting roles. We also did all those programs for the American bankers in Washington, New York, New Orleans, San Diego, Mexico, and all sorts of other places. When the American Bankers decided they would do their own PR program, they elected Ruth and me to represent women in banking all over the United States.”

“In 1994,” Ruby recalls, “we were extras in the movie the Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All. It was great fun. We were in that scene where they’re carrying the widow out of the house to an ambulance. The director had us all standing around there and he told us, ‘Now this lady’s sick, so everyone should look concerned for her,’ and then the scene started. Well, for some reason he didn’t like that scene and he called for another take, and then another, and another. It was hot out there and the director must have called for about eleven takes. On the last take we were all just miserable, feeling like we were being roasted alive, so we looked even more glum. The director scolded us, saying, ‘She’s just sick, she’s not dead.’ Well, I piped up and said, ‘She soon will be if we don’t finish this scene.’”

“We loved to entertain. Putting on a big affair was one of our favorite things,” Ruth remembered. “We’d do all the cooking, the decorating, the hosting, and the cleanup afterward. It was something that we really enjoyed, having a group of people to our home to enjoy themselves; that was one of our greatest pleasures.”

“We studied all kinds of things, from ceramics to oil painting to china painting. Music and the arts are things that we really enjoy. We learned flower
gardening from the time we were children, and everywhere we have ever lived we have had flowers in the yard.”

“I can’t imagine living any place where we didn’t have at least a few flowers.”

“I love to fish,” Ruby states emphatically. “Ruth would always tell everyone, ‘If you want to get home before dark, don’t go fishing with Ruby.’ I like to catch any kind that will bite my hook, but I especially like fishing for trout and flounder down at Jekyll. Ruth didn’t fish so much, but she was good at minding the crab traps. But I’ve fished in Florida and Tennessee. I use a fly rod and I have been known to make my own flies.”

“Our daddy would put three fish hooks at different intervals. Sometimes he would come up with a little trout on each hook, three at a time. One time up at Gatlinburg we went fishing out at Douglas Dam. I never saw the fish bite so fast in all my life. We just thought we had the finest string of fish. Ruth and I had to quit fishing to string Daddy’s up. We wanted him to be the one to catch the fish because he was having such a good time doing it. When we got back to our motel with that long string of fish, we were going to cook them and the lady who owned the motel said, ‘Oh, you can’t eat those. They came out of Douglas Dam. There’s kerosene in that lake and the fish will taste like kerosene.’ So we couldn’t eat our fish.”

“We’ve been going fishing since we were children. But we kept it up even after we were grown. We used to fish on the creek banks out at Temple. That was the place that we had to fish then. Mother and Daddy loved to fish. There were a few large creeks and they’d catch carp. That’s kind of a strong-tasting fish, but if you just remove the skin from the carp, you had good fish. We caught crawfish and would take the shell off and fry them up. They were like little shrimp.”

“Whenever we had a catch, I’d skin ‘em and Daddy would gut ‘em. Daddy and I had ourselves a pretty good little fish cleaning business going on there.”

“We used to take Daddy and Mother every Saturday up to Lake Allatoona, and we’d fix fried chicken and stuffed eggs and pimento cheese sandwiches and potato salad. Ruth would cast out her line and get her chair, get the dog up in her lap, turn the radio on, and get her book open, and wait for lunch. She was a real serious fisherman,” Ruby laughs. “Ruth didn’t care whether they bit or not, but I was there to catch fish. And there would be Ruth with the radio
beside her, the dog in her lap, her book opened, and her line out waiting for me to tell her lunch was ready. Ruth wasn’t much for fishing, but she did like lunch. We always had such a great time. Mother and Daddy loved doing that. And Ruth did, too.”

“And, sure enough,” Ruby says, “Ruth was right. We didn’t get home before dark.”
Chapter Eleven

Things Political

Ruth and Ruby Crawford have been friends and supporters of mine for many years and were a mainstay of the Peanut Brigade in 1976. They are remarkable women who achieved success and respect in business during a time when this was uncommon for women. They continue to brighten any occasion with their wit, intelligence, and colorful matching dress. They are great supporters of many worthwhile causes and are a valuable resource for Georgia.

—Jimmy Carter

We just couldn’t wait to become old enough to vote. At that time, we had to wait until we were twenty-one years of age. After Vietnam all that changed, and now people vote at eighteen. We would have loved to have been able to vote at eighteen, but we had to wait despite the fact that we were active in politics.”

“Neither of us ever ran for any office, but we were both very interested in politics all our lives, from age thirteen on, and we still are.”

Ruth added, “I was tempted to run. Kind of. I thought about running for representative from Carroll County, but I didn’t feel like I would be able to spend all the time out there that would be required to be a good representative—something I would have had to do if I were in office—and do what I had to do here in Atlanta, too. As much as I love my hometown, I also loved Atlanta and wanted to be here.”

Politics in America took another ugly turn in 1968 when Robert F. Kennedy, younger brother of the assassinated President, was gunned down in Los Angeles while campaigning for the Democratic nomination. Civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. was shot on the balcony outside his room in
the Lorraine Motel in Memphis while on his way to supper. The United States coped poorly when Detroit, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, and Chicago began to explode in response to those tragic events making the Spring and Summer of 1968 one of the most unsettled periods in American social and political history. That Fall, Richard Nixon was elected president in a very close contest against Hubert Humphrey, Johnson's Vice-President. Student unrest filled the headlines and disrupted college campuses all over the country. The decade of the Sixties closed not with the proverbial whimper, but with a bang, and a rather loud one at that.

When James Earl Carter, Jr., from Plains, Georgia, announced his candidacy for President of the United States in December of 1974, he began a two-year campaign that started slowly but eventually gained enough momentum to propel him into the White House. People from all over the country, including Ruth and Ruby Crawford, worked as volunteers on a campaign that saw Jimmy Carter nominated on the first ballot at the Democratic National Convention that Summer. Ruth was elected as a delegate to the convention in New York.

President Carter had been Governor of Georgia from 1971 until 1974. He also served two terms in the Georgia Senate. A graduate of the U. S. Naval Academy, President Carter was former Naval Officer whose roots run deep and long in Georgia soil. James Earl “Jimmy” Carter, Jr., a self-styled “Washington outsider,” became the thirty-ninth Chief Executive, occupying the office from 1977 to 1981.

“Ruth and I had just retired from the bank when Jimmy made his announcement that he was going to run. We had always admired him, and we said if he's going to run for President, then we're going to help him all we can. So we started working here in the Atlanta headquarters first, and soon we were going on campaign trips for him.”

“When we could drive, we drove the car. For other places we flew. Ruth didn't like to fly anyway, so she usually stayed home and kept the poodles and worked in the headquarters. On one trip, I spent seventeen days in Vermont and New Hampshire. During that trip, they, the people at headquarters, called up there and asked, 'Would you go to Oklahoma and Texas when you get back?' and I said, 'Well, I'll be happy to, if you'll give me a chance to get my shoes half-soled'”

Recalling the rigors of winter in the Northeast, Ruby muses, “We worked in snow, sleet, and ice. I wonder why we didn't break our necks. Going from house to house, door to door, telling people about President Carter, giving them the literature and telling them that we were there at our own expense, working as volunteers for him, and people would say, 'Jimmy who?' They didn't
know a lot about him then, so we would tell them about what a fine person of integrity and intelligence he was and why we wanted him to be the President and why we thought he would make a good President.”

“We went to stores and shopping centers, and as people went in and out of the grocery stores, we were there to hand out literature. House to house, political rallies, football games, radio and television, meetings at city halls, everything you can think of. Wherever they were having a crowd, we showed up in town. It was great. We met a lot of wonderful people.”

“We covered New Hampshire and all the New England states, plus Oklahoma, Texas, Missouri, St. Louis, especially, and Florida, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia, just all over the place.”

“I don’t recall whether I ever did get those shoes half-soled. But I did leave one pair under a lawyer’s bed up in New Hampshire. What was so funny about it was I was in Manchester, New Hampshire, three different times, and I was to stay with a couple. We got off the plane and went to the Carter headquarters and everybody was farmed out to various houses. The local people were so gracious to let us stay in their homes like that. When they came to pick me up, they asked if I would like to go to a Christmas party, and I said, ‘Thank you, I’d love to, but you all just go ahead and go. I need to make some telephone calls.’”

“Well, don’t you know, the next morning there was a tap on my door and my host asked, ‘Do you like bacon and eggs for breakfast?’ and I said, ‘Yes, I’m getting dressed and I’ll be out to help fix breakfast shortly.’ When I came out, I didn’t see anybody but this gentleman. I didn’t see the lady of the house. Come to find out, she wasn’t there. So it was just the two of us.”

“Oh my, did our people kid me about that—spending the night alone with a lawyer in his house! I told them, ‘I hate to admit this, but the only thing that crawled in the bed with me was that big sheep dog.’ He felt so warm and soft and cuddly, and I was missing my little dogs so much.”

“And wouldn’t you know that the only time that I wore boots up there was that morning. I put on my boots and forgot my shoes and left them under the bed. Well, when the people at headquarters found that out they really started kidding me—leaving my shoes and hoping to go back. That was quite a joke. I don’t think I ever got those shoes back.”

“We met great people, all the mayors of the towns we visited and Senator Pat Leahy. They even got to kidding me about him. He met our plane when we landed in Burlington, Vermont, and the front page of the paper showed a picture of Sen. Patrick Leahy and me under an umbrella.”

“That day we reported to headquarters. We then drove down to Rutledge, Vermont and we made the front page there, so I was on the front page of two
papers in one day. We just had a great time with the mayor and the governor. At one of the banquets Senator Leahy came by and kissed me goodbye when he started to leave, and they really did start kidding me about him because he paid so much attention to me. So every time he comes on television Ruth will say, ‘Oh, Ruby, here’s your boyfriend!’ You know, he has a lot to say; he doesn’t hesitate to say what he thinks about things. He’s a great Senator. They love him dearly in Vermont. That was just the greatest experience, telling people about Jimmy.”

On January 20, 1977, when President Jimmy Carter, using his full name, was inaugurated the thirty-ninth President of the United States, Ruth and Ruby Crawford were there and at the festivities held later that evening, the first group to be entertained at the White House by President and Mrs. Carter.

“I remember coming back from the Inauguration,” Ruby says. “We all went up for that. Celebrity went because he had campaigned. That’s when he was interviewed on NBC on the six o’clock news on Inauguration Day, our little poodle, Celebrity. You don’t get any more prominent than being recognized at six o’clock on NBC! And they asked him what he thought about all those Democrats up there. Celebrity was just darling. He was so beautiful on the TV. He was just the most beautiful dog I’ve ever seen. Ruth used to say she hated to go to sleep at night and quit looking at him, he was so beautiful. And he was.”

“Celebrity was very much a Democrat,” Ruth would say. “I guess you could say he was a ‘yellow dog’ Democrat, except his fur was white.”

“We, the Peanut Brigaders of which Ruth and I were members, were invited to five different functions at the White House in the first year of President Carter’s administration.”

By this time, Ruth and Ruby Crawford were as much fixtures in Atlanta as Coca-Cola and boiled peanuts. Their involvement in the life of the city and across the state of Georgia saw them at mayoral and gubernatorial functions, along with all of the other work to which they were devoted. George Busbee succeeded Jimmy Carter as Governor of Georgia. During that era, Sam Massell was elected in October 1969 as the first Jewish mayor in Atlanta history.

“We went to law school with Sam Massell,” Ruby recalled. “We worked on the yearbook together. He’s been our good buddy for years.”
Mayor Massell's administration is credited with creating Atlanta's mass transit authority, MARTA, and building the Omni, the first enclosed coliseum in the city. Woodruff Park, named for Robert W. Woodruff, President of Coca-Cola from 1923 until 1954, opened in 1973. Mr. Woodruff purchased the land and donated to the city in 1971. The park is located in the heart of downtown Atlanta, between Edgewood Avenue, Peachtree Street, and Park Place, a place where only a few decades before Ruth and Ruby rode streetcars to and from the bank, law school, and home. There are two fountains there now, a pavilion, and several monuments, the most visible of which is the bronze sculpture of Phoenix Rising from the Ashes, symbolizing the city's rise from the fires of the Civil War.

In 1973, Maynard Holbrook Jackson, Jr., Mayor Massell's vice-mayor, defeated Massell in a runoff to become Atlanta's first black mayor. Mayor Jackson served three terms. One hundred and twenty-six years after its formal chartering as a city, Atlanta in 1974 had a mayor whose forebears had been in bondage when the first three mayors of Atlanta won their one-year terms.

After a very eventful first term, President Carter stood for reelection in the 1980 presidential election. Ruby recalled, "Now the second time around they were telling us that people were not as receptive as they were in 1976. We worked both campaigns. It was the greatest experience. Sadly, we didn't make it the second time around."
Chapter Twelve

Investment in Community

A nation, as a society, forms a moral person, and every member of it is personally responsible for his society.

—Thomas Jefferson

When the twins retired from banking in 1974, they earned their real estate licenses and became affiliated with Northside Realty Associates in its Buckhead office where they again made names for themselves. Among other awards, Ruth and Ruby were named “Humanitarians of the Year” while at the same time being inducted into the “Million Dollar Roundtable.” Founded in 1927, the MDRT recognizes real estate professionals who epitomize successful sales ability and client service while maintaining the highest ethical standards.

“It was in the real estate industry where we were finally paid on an equal basis with men. It was the first and only time we enjoyed equal pay. We were paid for what we did. There wasn’t any issue between the pay of men and women. You got what you earned.”

The March 2002 issue of Atlanta Real Estate Executive carried the following about Ruth and Ruby:

“It was recently announced that former Northside Realty agents Ruth and Ruby Crawford will be inducted into the next class of the Hall of Fame of the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau. The new class, to be inducted on September 20th, will double the size of the current class to eight members when it adds Ruth and Ruby, along with other Atlanta notables Billy Payne and Ritz Carlton’s Horst Schultze. They join a short but elite list that includes Ted Turner, Andrew Young and Tom Murphy.

They may not seem like household names like their fellow Hall of Fame members, but in hospitality circles,
the Buckhead twins bear the unofficial title of “Atlanta’s Goodwill Ambassadors to the World.”

“I think of all the nice things we’ve had written and said about us, that is the nicest,” Ruby observes. “To think that the people who know you say that about you. Well, it just made us so proud.”

Not only were Ruth and Ruby known as trailblazers for women in the banking industry, they also blazed trails for women in the legal profession. Each served as President of the Georgia Association for Women Lawyers, and both were active in the legal profession for over sixty years. In 2006, GAWL named its endowment fund The Ruth and Ruby Crawford Scholarship Fund, and Ruby was awarded the organization’s highest and most prestigious award given to a woman lawyer, The Kathleen Kessler Award.

Mayor Hartsfield often referred to Ruth and Ruby as “the twenty-four-hour Crawford twins.” He also said of the sisters that “the reason Rome wasn’t built in a day was because Ruth and Ruby weren’t there.”

The roster of organizations counting Ruth and Ruby Crawford as members is as distinguished as it is lengthy. Every organization that these remarkably energetic women joined could count on the fact that neither lady would join unless she believed in the cause and could make real contributions, giving of her time, industry, money, and that special Ruth-and-Ruby way of doing things, which has been likened to a force of nature. In 1967, Ruby was selected to appear in that year’s edition of Outstanding Civic Leaders of America, in recognition of her outstanding ability, accomplishments, and service to community, country, and profession.

Ruby reflects, “Since 1974, I’ve been a member of the Board of Directors of the Atlanta Humane Society. And I am still a member. Just got elected for three more years. That will make thirty-five years I’ve been on the Board of Directors.”

From the Board of Directors of the Atlanta Humane Society to the Gracious Ladies of Georgia and many stops in between, the Crawford sisters for over six decades have been icons of service and dedication, very active and effective icons, in civic affairs, community projects, charitable enterprises, and professional organizations in Atlanta, around the State of Georgia, and on the national stage. It is something in the blood, the way that they were brought up, the influence of William Hampton and Mary Elizabeth Crawford that instilled in them an unquenchable sense of duty and a desire to serve others.

In addition to their numerous activities, hobbies, civic pursuits, and service commitments, Ruth and Ruby also served on the Board of Directors of the Miss
Atlanta Beauty Pageant and as judges in numerous beauty pageants in other Georgia cities. In addition, the twins assisted their dear and good friend John Ferrell, Jr. when he took over as owner of the very popular Atlanta restaurant Mary Mac’s Tea Room. Relying on their experience in the restaurant business from having done every job that needed doing in their father’s restaurant when they were girls and young women, Ruth and Ruby served as hostesses, consulted on the menu, and Ruby “tested” all the dishes, critiquing the food, service, and atmosphere of the eatery. Their pictures adorn the walls in many places throughout Mary Mac’s. The sisters explain that if the paint in Mary Mac’s ever chips, they just put up another picture of Ruth and Ruby because it’s cheaper than redecorating.

Recalling the many other organizations to which she and Ruth donated time, talent, and touch, Ruby remembers, “We’ve been in the Rotary Club for years. Every year at our home on Jekyll Island we would have a big Rotary Club function. We also had magazine food editors from time to time, and once we were visited by Better Homes and Gardens and Southern Living. All of them came down to Jekyll Island, Georgia and we hosted them at our house, fed them all, and bedded them down.”

“I can’t remember how many church groups we’ve hosted, but there have been a lot of them. Peachtree Road Methodist Church groups and Sandy Springs Sunday School class and St. Catherine’s Choir from our church, those little twelve-to-fourteen-olds, came. There were eighteen of them, and we fed and bedded all of them down, too. They were so cute, thanking us for that wonderful weekend when we had them in our home. They just kept telling us what a great time they’d had and what wonderful hostesses we were. They’d say, ‘We just want to thank you for having us in your beautiful house this weekend, and next year we’d like to come back and stay a week and a half.’”

“The STAR Students used to take a week-long trip around the state. They would start out in Atlanta, go to Six Flags and Stone Mountain, Georgia Tech, and Lockheed and all the other places of interest around the city. Then they would be off to Rome and Berry College and North Georgia and all the scenic attractions there. After that they were over in Augusta at the Medical College, and then they would travel down through Savannah and out to Tybee, St. Simons Island, Sea Island, and Jekyll Island. Over to the Okefenokee Swamp and Waycross they’d go, and then head up to Abraham Baldwin and LaGrange Colleges. It was a wonderful trip for a week’s time.”

“The STAR Students of Georgia come from the best students in nearly every school in the state. The teachers and the STAR Students gather here from all over Georgia at the beginning of their trip and then again at the end.
I was fortunate enough to be in on the embryonic stages of setting up the STAR Student Recognition when I was on the Board of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce. When they reached Jekyll, we had them all come to the house for either lunch or dinner. They came on a Greyhound bus, and members the local Chamber of Commerce came along with them. One of our neighbors called one day after the bus had gone and said, ‘Oh, did you live through it?’ and we said, ‘Of course we did. We had a great time.’ And she said, ‘I told my next door neighbor that the day a Greyhound bus drove up to my house I would go jump in the ocean, but I knew it wouldn’t faze you all.’ We said, ‘Well, no. We’re already cleaned up and ready for the next party.’”

Ruby remembers, “One of the things that was so great was that the STAR Students would write the loveliest notes about what a good time they had, and they voted every year on where they had the best food. Several times mine was voted the best food that they had on the whole trip. I felt that when we nosed out the Cloister that I had arrived in the world.”

“The wonderful thing is going to those meetings every year with the STAR Students. These days some of the STAR teachers come up and say, ‘I was at your house in 1968 as a STAR Student and now I have been chosen a STAR Teacher.’ And it’s such a thrill to see them now as STAR Teachers, after they had been STAR Students. Someone once asked us, ‘When in the world are you going to quit doing all that?’ and we said, ‘It’s not any trouble. We love fixing lunch and dinner for all those students, and they are such wonderful students and so appreciative and write such lovely notes about what a good time they had; so as long as they do that, we’re going to continue to do this.’”

“These days, since the State shortened it to a weekend trip, they don’t go down to the islands or all over the state any more. They restrict it to the Atlanta area. But it is still a wonderful experience for the students, the teachers, and everyone else participating in it.”

“Usually there were about fifty or so, a busload. And some of the local representatives. We’d have about fifty-six or fifty-eight, and we did all the cooking, Ruth and I. And all the preparing. We had a great time—loved it.”

“Oh and then there’s the Rotary Club. We would have a continuous cocktail party and buffet when they had the meeting in Jekyll for the North Georgia group, the Buckhead Rotarians, and Rotarians from Bremen, Carrollton, and LaGrange. We know the people so well, so we had the party and reception from 1:00 in the afternoon until the president’s reception at 6:00 in the evening. So whatever time someone arrived they could come, eat, and enjoy themselves. We did all the food for that, too. And it wasn’t hot dogs and hamburgers; it was a spread, a real feast. We made all sorts of things: filet of beef, ham, a turkey
breast, and all the things you could have for a buffet, including salads and casserole and desserts.”

“Every year on New Year’s Day we would have a continuous open house and we had all those good old Southern dishes, you know. Usually there were three or four or even more meats: country fried steak, pork, chicken, chicken and dumplings, pot roast, collard greens and turnip greens, sweet potato souffle, and black-eyed peas, of course, along with salads, desserts, and all the trimmings. Recently one of the ladies down on Jekyll who used to never miss our party told me, ‘I do wish you would get back to having your annual New Year’s Day parties. We’ve missed them every year.’ I’ll tell you this, if somebody left one of those New Year’s Day parties hungry, it was their own fault.”

“We belonged, first of all, to the Women’s Chamber of Commerce because the men wouldn’t let us belong to theirs. Women could not belong to the Atlanta or to the Georgia Chambers of Commerce, so in 1937 women formed their own Chamber of Commerce, primarily devoting time and attention to making Atlanta a cleaner and more beautiful city. It was ‘clean up, fix up, paint up, and make Atlanta beautiful.’ That was the main objective. We joined in 1940-something. The Women’s Chamber is nearly eighty years old now. They still meet, but it’s not like it used to be. I don’t know whether it’s going to be going out of existence or not. There really is no need for having a separate Chamber since women can now belong to the Atlanta and the Georgia Chambers.”

Ruby recalls, “From there, we did a lot of things, holding offices in the Women’s Chamber of Commerce. I was Parliamentarian and then was elected President of the Southeastern Conference of Women in Chambers of Commerce. We had our annual meeting and banquet in Little Rock, Arkansas. While we were there, as a courtesy, Gov. Orval Faubus commissioned me an Arkansas Traveler. At that time I was only the second woman to be commissioned an Arkansas Traveler. That’s an ambassador of goodwill for the State of Arkansas. So I’m an ambassador of goodwill for the State of Arkansas.”

“We also attended meetings of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Every year, Ruth and I helped host the Congressional dinner for the Georgia delegation. Then I was appointed, as a result of my work on the Southeastern Conference of Women in Chambers of Commerce, to the public affairs committee of the United States Chamber of Commerce. I served three years on that committee with forty-six corporate CEOs. I used to say that this could not be little old me from Temple, Georgia, up here with all these CEOs from General Motors, General Electric, U. S. Steel, Republic Steel, The Oakland Times, and Bill Knowland, Senator from California. Little old me from Temple, Georgia, sitting up there with all that bunch.”
“And then I served three years on the subcommittee of Women in Public Affairs. That necessitated trips to Washington about every month and was quite an honor. I guess it was one of the greatest honors ever given to me.”

“Now, I don’t know whether it was a result of that or the publicity about the fact that I had been appointed to that Committee, that a delegation came over to the bank one day and Brigadier General Raymond Davis, the most highly decorated Marine in the United States, had accepted the job as Executive Director of the Georgia State Chamber of Commerce, and Jasper Dorsey, the President of Southern Bell/BellSouth, now AT&T, was with him. My secretary came in and said, ‘Miss Crawford, there’s a delegation out here to see you,’ and I said, ‘A delegation? Who in the world would be coming to see me?’”

“When they came in and got settled, General Davis said, ‘Miss Crawford, as you know, the Georgia State Chamber of Commerce has been looking for years for the right woman to become a Director of the Georgia State Chamber of Commerce, who is most representative of all women in Georgia, both business and professional, and you are that lady, and we want you to serve on the Georgia State Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors.’ The first and only woman at that time. That was in 1972. So I did, for three years.”

“That was also when I became a member of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce, when I went on the Board in about 1972. When I took that job, I was the only woman. At the time, they would meet sometimes at men’s hunting clubs in South Carolina, and the wives of the members had never even been permitted to go. I knew that was going to be a problem, and I didn’t want it to be, so before we went, I said, ‘Don’t worry about a place for me to stay in the lodge because my twin and my dog and I will be staying in a motel.” I didn’t want it to be a problem, and I didn’t want the men to get in trouble at home since their wives hadn’t been permitted to come. I wasn’t one of those pushy women who insisted that I stay in the lodge with all those men. It might have been nice, but I didn’t insist on it.”

“We were never ones who wanted to invade a man’s territory. If they want to have this or that club, that’s all right. We weren’t not going to be suing them to gain admittance. We never wanted to be anywhere we were not wanted. Just like a few years ago over at the Masters. I think women should be permitted to play, if they can play at that level. I don’t think they should be excluded. And I think they should be members of the club, in spite of Mr. Hootie Johnson.”
Throughout their lives, the Crawford sisters have been part of church. From their earliest upbringing until the present, missing church on a Sunday was virtually unheard of, no matter where they were. In their home churches—there were two really, Atlanta and Temple—they were as active as any members, and they worked in concert with other churches and denominations on all manner of community service projects. Long before the term “faith-based initiative” became the stuff of political and social debate, Ruth and Ruby Crawford, never ones to proselytize, preferred to allow their lives and their treatment of other people speak their faith for them. They lived what they believed and believed what they lived, all the while working as hard as they could at any task that needed doing.

---

Single girls like to get the church before the “hymns” give out.

“I guess we’ve been kind of fixtures at Peachtree Road United Methodist Church,” Ruth recalled. “We’ve been full-time members ever since Mother and Daddy died in 1968. When they were living, we used to go out and spend every weekend with them. Nothing kept us from going to Temple to spend the weekend with our mother and daddy, unless we were off on a trip. If we were going on a trip, we’d go to Temple the night before we left and then we would see them the night we got back, and we’d call them every day. For a long time, after we joined at Peachtree Road, we could go to church here to the early service and still make it out to Temple where we went on the weekends to the family home out there.”

“Outreach has always been our favorite,” Ruby said, “helping others, the homeless and hungry and all that we do at church. Every March we do a Great Day of Service and primarily my choice has been to have parties for people in nursing homes, the elderly. We have bingo and brunches in which we feed them all and have bingo parties and buy prizes for them and have a pianist playing and we just entertain them while we are there.”

“Every year,” Ruby announced, “I do about a thousand sandwiches for Must Ministries out in Marietta. I’m the Chairman of that. We don’t just do the ham and cheese, we do chicken salad, pimento cheese, and all kinds of sandwiches for the homeless and hungry. I like to make good thick ones. Mine are more the “Dagwood” type. I mean a real sandwich. I’ve threatened several times to have a course in sandwich making for our members, but I haven’t gotten around to doing it, yet.”
Each year, WXIA Television Channel 11 in Atlanta recognizes ten people who are contributing significantly to community service, making life better, helping the poor and disadvantaged in any way they can to make the community a better place to live, and who do so without any hope or effort given to being recognized for it. Ruth and Ruby were given that award in 2004.

“We were also inducted into the Atlanta Hospitality Hall of Fame. We were the only women at that time. Our pictures hang prominently in the Georgia World Congress Center. Have you ever seen a picture of that stained glass window down at the Senior Citizens Center on John Wesley Drive? It’s all done in red, white, and blue. That’s us. We were the first women in the Atlanta Convention and Business Bureau Hospitality Hall of Fame, too.”

In October 2008, Ruby was invited by the American Bar Association to become a Fellow of the American Bar Association. “It is just the highest honor. When I read the lovely letter they sent me,” Ruby observed laughing, “I thought I must be reading someone else’s mail. But it was real, and I am just so honored.”

In April 2004, Ruth and Ruby Crawford appeared on the Kennesaw State University program Meet the President, hosted by Dr. Betty Siegel, then-president of the University, who introduced Ruth and Ruby by listing their many accomplishments, beginning with their careers as bankers, lawyers, and accountants. Dr. Siegel also pointed out that Ruth and Ruby had been “honored by the Court of the Most Gracious Ladies of Georgia in their meeting in Columbus, Georgia. They were presented with the Deen Day Smith Tribute of Service Award for their contributions to others. They have been in the Atlanta Hospitality Hall of Fame.”

On March 24, 2004, Ruth and Ruby Crawford were honored by Kennesaw State University’s RTM Institute for Leadership, Ethics & Character at the fourth Annual Phenomenal Women’s Conference. The twins from Temple, Georgia each received the Jeanne B. Cook Phenomenal Woman Award.

Reflecting on that award, Ruth recalled, “One of the questions we were
asked when we were out at Kennesaw State was if we thought people were different today. I said that I didn’t think people were as courteous or as mannerly as they once were. With things like road rage and people not wanting anyone to get ahead of them at a traffic light, they just don’t seem to care what anyone thinks. That’s a small thing, but it tells a lot. It’s such a shame, because life is so much easier, so much better, if you have good attitude, think of others, and keep a smile on your face.”

Ruby added, “There is a lack of civility that I think is one of our major problems. People are just not as considerate of one another like they used to be. We find that very disturbing.”

“We weren’t raised like that, not at all.”
Chapter Thirteen

Gracious Ladies

gracious (grā-shōs) adj. 1. Characterized by kindness and warm courtesy. 2. Characterized by tact and propriety. 3. Of a merciful or compassionate nature. 4. Courteous; indulgent. 5. Characterized by charm or beauty; graceful. 6. Characterized by elegance and good taste. 7. Archaic. Enjoying favor or grace; acceptable or pleasing. — graciously adv. — graciousness n.

American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition

We were always friends with President Carter, even before the Peanut Brigade, since he was in the legislature here in Georgia. That’s when we first met him, and then as Governor. We are good friends of the President and his family. I still am. I went to Crested Butte February first through the fifth [2006] with them. I just got back. Every year for fourteen years they have invited Ruth and me to go on that winter ski family vacation trip where they include other people. Last year Ruth and I said, ‘Oh, it’s just so expensive.’ We didn’t ski. We would go for the people we love, the camaraderie, and to see the Peanut Brigaders and old friends, so we said, ‘Maybe next year.’ So this was the next year, and about two or three weeks before time to go I got to thinking seriously and thought Ruth and I should both be going, but Ruth isn’t with me anymore, so since Ruth can’t go, I’m going to go myself. And I did."

“We had the best time. We had a chartered Delta jet and a lot of the Delta officials went with us. I’m telling you, the champagne started flowing from the time we left the runway and Jimmy came through the plane shaking hands with everybody. When he got to me, he kissed me twice. I guess one was for Ruth. That was so sweet. I’ve never seen so much snow in all my life. It was about fifteen inches deep on all the roof tops. The Mayor of Crested Butte took me on a sightseeing trip that I thought was kind of funny, because sightseeing in snow, if you’re not used to it, looks the same on this street as on another street. All you could see was snow. On Saturday night we had a big banquet. We took over Club Med out there. There was a big sign up saying ‘Closed for a Private
Party February 1–5. Saturday night all those three hundred people sang Happy Birthday to me, because February 5 was our birthday. They had a big birthday cake. It was a big angel food cake with whipped cream and strawberries. They only put three candles on it, because if they’d put them all, it would have melted all that snow out in Crested Butte. They certainly didn’t want to do that. I cut the first piece and gave it to the President and the second for Rosalyn.”

“One of the things that I thought was so interesting Saturday night was that they always have a big auction to raise money for the Carter Center. As I said, there were about three hundred people including a Royal Highness from Iran, who I think maybe might have been the son of the late Shah of Iran. There were also many people who contribute to the Carter Center. It was just a wonderful delegation of interesting people from everywhere. The Saturday night auction was full of all of kinds of things that had been donated, along with things from the Carter Library that have been on display for quite some time and were to be replaced, and also gifts that had been given to the Carters. As you know, the President has started painting, in addition to his woodworking and book writing and all the travels that he does observing elections and trying to bring peace and hope and medical attention to all the world, curing diseases—particularly River Blindness, Guinea Worm, and AIDS.

President Carter had painted a scene of the Japanese Garden at the Carter Presidential Center and it was auctioned and sold for $40,000, even though he’s an amateur painter. He’s just started painting. He also built a cabinet, like a kitchen cabinet. It had three shelves and two doors down underneath and it was highly polished. He made it out of persimmon wood. The persimmon tree had been across a little creek on that property for years, and they got that tree out and had it all done up so that they could use the lumber. They started the bids at $300,000 and John Moore from San Diego, who was seated second from me at our table bid One Million Dollars for that cabinet! They didn’t ask for any more bids after that. I don’t know how far above a million it might have gone if they hadn’t stopped. I was flabbergasted that they raised $1,710,000 for the Carter Center. I later saw the President on television talking about the cabinet, and he said the man who owned the tree made golf clubs and had saved it for that purpose, but then everyone had switched to metal clubs and so persimmon was no longer desirable and he got the tree. We had a great time out there.”

It’s a shame that when you finally get your life together, you forget where you put it.
Of all the accolades, awards, and attention Ruth and Ruby have so justifiably earned throughout their lives, the most important and most cherished for the Crawford sisters is their induction into an organization known as The Gracious Ladies of Georgia.

—

The reason a woman's mind is cleaner than a man's is that she changes it more often.

"The Gracious Ladies of Georgia was begun by Roselle Fabiani, a local television personality in Columbus, Georgia. She did the With Roselle in Columbus television program every day for years. We went to her—I want to say ten thousandth broadcast in Columbus."

"When she founded The Gracious Ladies of Georgia, Roselle's aim was to recognize women who have contributed so much to helping other women without any expectation of remuneration or recognition for themselves, making life more beautiful for other people. That became the goal for The Gracious Ladies for all the years of its existence. We were so proud to be selected, and we've been members for twenty-nine years."

"We were invited to join in 1977, and we attended every meeting for twenty-eight years. They were the most beautiful affairs that you can ever imagine. There's nothing that we have ever been to in Atlanta, or anywhere else for that matter, that was more beautiful than a meeting of The Gracious Ladies of Georgia."

"Roselle did it, she built The Gracious Ladies. She was the most gracious lady."

"Roselle passed away in March of 2005, and The Gracious Ladies of Georgia have disbanded now. They had the final salute to her and all the Gracious Ladies in September of 2005. They, those who were members, are all Gracious Ladies, but there won't be any additional ones."

"Ruth was in the hospital when the final salute was held and I was hoping—and even thought the doctors were going to let her out—that we were going to go. I even took my party clothes to the hospital, hoping to go, and hoping they were going to let her go, but she wasn't able to. I just wish so much that she could have gone to that with me."

"I would guess Roselle and Ruth are up there in Heaven comparing notes on me now, which might be a little dangerous for me."