His Baby-Sitter Spoiled Him Rotten

By Hugh Grubb, Purcellville, Virginia

I WAS BORN December 6, 1920, in a farmhouse just east of the village of Hillsboro, Virginia.

In those days, what is now Virginia Route 9 was a one-lane dirt road with perhaps a dozen cars going by in a day. Our mailman traveled in a two-wheeled buckboard with one horsepower (inasmuch as it was pulled by one horse).

A widower named John Slentz lived across the dirt road from us with his three daughters, Mabel and Addie and the youngest, Virginia, who was enthralled with the baby across the road—me.

When I was old enough to be cared for by a baby-sitter, Virginia, now 12 years old, was pleased to serve in this capacity when my parents were away from home. Virginia would take me to her house and was my principal caregiver, sometimes assisted by her sisters.

I was also a great favorite with Mr. Slentz, his children being all girls. When I was at his house, I was more or less king of the hill.

I don't like to say I was spoiled, but I was never in a great hurry to see my parents come home. All of the girls were accomplished cooks, and they delighted in preparing nice things and feeding them to me.

In a farm community like ours, the term "baby-sitter" had not yet been used, but Virginia filled the position quite well. She rocked me as a baby, and later, we played croquet and fished in Mr. Slentz's pond.

At that time, Virginia was what I called a "roll-'em-up girl," because

she wore long stockings that she rolled down to just above her knees. She spent hours learning dance steps and tried to teach me how to dance the Charleston.

Virginia is now nearly 98, but I tell folks that I go to see her “to get my battery charged.” She is so full of vitality that she puts this old guy in his 80s to shame.

We’ve loved each other like brother and sister and have remained friends all of my life. She is what I call “the goddess of all that is good in this world.”