

A Note from the Author on the Genesis of the Book Idea.

Their chores done the congenial couple sat together on the broad porch swings of their country home. The afternoon sun shone golden through the broad leaves of towering maples planted to shade the two-story farmhouse built long ago.

He was a tall, square-shouldered man, whose muscular strength reached to his fingers that resembled long brown sausages. Years of carpentry and farming sculpted his frame and hands. But for all his Herculean brawn, he could be soft as a feather. He was what people then called “a prince of a man.” Raised by hard-working parents in the late nineteenth century in the rural hills of Tennessee, he was a god-fearing man who read the Bible every night by the big coal burning stove in the family parlor. Each year he raised a pig, always kept a cow or two and a flock of chickens. In his tiny smoke house, he cured hams, delicious and salty.

She stood straight and sturdy but was not as tall as her husband. With her chestnut hair curled tightly and pinned up in the back with bobby pins, she was a country version of a flapper girl and the apple of his eye. She tended her big garden with the love of a shepherd for his flocks, picking a hungry caterpillar from a vine, shooing away critters from her cabbages and rhubarb. In her kitchen she plied her skills cutting out tall round biscuits, frying crisp chicken, and stirring a pot of beans. Her face pink with heat, white dusting of flour on her cheek and kitchen apron, she reigned supreme at the hearth of the big house.

Then came The Depression into the rural valley and all business came to an end. Hopelessness stalked the hovels in creeks and hollers. The couple managed to

feed themselves, their two children and many others in the village. But there came a time when they could barely manage to feed the four of them.

He left with his brother in a jalopy bought for a few dollars and traveled almost 1,000 miles to help build a gas station. That's how desperate times became, how few the paying jobs.

All seemed hopeless. That's how the two of them invented their game, Building Air Castles. He sat in the big swing, gently rocking and she joined him with icy glasses of sweet tea and lemon. She snuggled into the ample round of his armpit and thus the game began.

Rocking languidly back and forth on the big wooden porch, she deferred to him to begin as was the custom back then. "Let's see, where did we leave off?"

And she would remind him. "Oh, yes. Well it seems that...."

He built a new idea from his imagination, one sentence or two about the new world where there was no poverty and where opportunities abound! She added to it, probably something about gardens that never stopped producing or how some rascal of a person she knew transforms into an angelic being.

Thus, they spent their happiest hours, interjecting humorous possibilities, fervid hopes and wild ideas like free transportation for every citizen.

These two loveable human beings were my paternal grandparents, Edgar Jerome and Hattie May Feathers. They left my father, and now my family, a wonderful legacy of hope that we as people can use our imagination to build a world where no one suffers the indignity of poverty and where peace and friendship abound.

This book is dedicated to them with love and gratitude.

