

Dorothy Delia Rowan Drake—Eulogy

Delivered by William H. Outlaw Jr. at Her Memorial Service
2 p.m., Wednesday, April 24th, 2013, at the First Baptist Church, Nashville, GA¹

Thank you, and good afternoon.

*(Preliminary Comments.)*² This is a solemn occasion. We have come together to mourn our loss and to celebrate Dorothy's life and commit her mortal remains to Earth. My comments will reflect the Dorothy that we knew and loved. And, whereas I am saddened especially to think of Johnny, Gail and Diana, who feel the loss most grievously, we take joy and pride in having known Dorothy and the knowledge that her life will continue in our hearts as long as we live. Following my remarks, assurances concerning her spiritual life will be addressed. In that regard, I will say only that the doors on this church did not open on Sunday morning without her passing through them. She attended to her own salvation and was an important foundation member for the church and its ministries.

*(As an **Overview**).* Dorothy was born May 7th, 1923, the second child and first daughter of John Cornelius Rowan and Lena Belle née Outlaw Rowan. Dorothy died in her home on her Centennial Family Farm on April 21st, 2013. I will remember Dorothy, **first**, and most briefly, in the larger context of an extended and historical family (*mfr who target ~375 words*) and, **second**, as a young Dorothy with a brief characterization of her upbringing (*mfr who target ~475 words*). **Third**, I will remember the adult Dorothy with her own family, responsibilities and contributions (*mfr who target ~475 words*). We each have unique perspectives and naturally my comments will reference areas of particular knowledge to me. Thus, as will be alluded to, Dorothy was related to me on her father's side and through both maternal and paternal lineages on her mother's side. During my youth, I also worked on the J.C. Rowan Farm, which was on the Homerville Highway, and at Drake's Service Station, which was located in the southeast quadrant of the intersection of McPherson and Davis Streets. In practice, I thought of Dorothy's mother, Aunt Lena, as the paternal grandmother I never had and Dorothy as an aunt. Thus, I knew Dorothy personally and, as mentioned, that is how my remembrance will be cast.

*(With regard to **Extended Family**).* A person is made of his or her stock, circumstances, and what he or she is willing to make of it. (*who: emphasize stock, circumstances & initiative throughout.*) From very early, Dorothy must have known that she "belonged" to a time and place—she came from venerable wiregrass pioneer families. **Dorothy's father** was the baby boy of John Thomas Rowan (1853-1917) and Clarissa A. née Knight Rowan (1860-1935). The patriarch of this family, Uncle Cornelius's paternal grandfather (William Berry Rowan³, 1824–1892, and his spouse *Rosanna, who was the widow of Richmond Mullis, brother of Fairby Sutton*) left many descendants—including names familiar to many of us here today, e.g., Alvin, Julian, Ralph, George Uncle Corny—as I called him with respect—enjoyed many colorful older siblings—who among you can think of Aunt Rosetta or Mr. Morgan without smiling? Uncle Cornelius's maternal grandparents were Aaron Knight and his second wife, Sarah Ann, the younger sister of my 2d great grandfather Fountain, *James I. Fountain*. **On Dorothy's mother's**

¹ Minor editing 2013-04-25. Delivery included some off-script narrative.

² Italicized text not delivered.

³ According to one descendant, the homeplace was at the junction of the Herbert Watson Road and Rowan Road, somewhere about where Ralph Rowan lived. I have not confirmed with legal records.

side, Dorothy was equally rooted, and even more locally, if anything. Dorothy's great grandmother Polly Lewis, a war orphan, was my great grandfather Sutton's sister, and a descendent of Moses G. Sutton Jr., an Old Berrien pioneer who donated land for the Poplar Springs Church. Dorothy's great grandfather Steven M. Lewis built the basic log structure and lived with his family in the house on the present-day Larry Watson Farm and owned several hundred acres of land that join and include where Dorothy lived until her death. This large property spanned from the Wallace Warren Road to the Ten-mile Creek (*formerly known as the Allapacoochee*) in places and across the Homerville Highway in places. Dorothy's grandmother Ardelia Outlaw died more than 100 years ago in the old house—then known as the L.G. Outlaw homeplace—which was just across the public road from Dorothy's last home. This old house was also the last home of her indigent great grandfather Outlaw, a widower who lost his means of livelihood from war injuries. Her mother Lena lived in the “new” house there when she died nearly 27 years ago.

(*With regard to **The J.C. Rowan Family.***) The core values of the Outlaw-Rowan union were passed to Dorothy and to their other children, viz. Donald, Frances, Helen, and Patricia, the latter two among the bereaved today. I will go through a list of attributes that I believe are important and characterize this family. **First**, Uncle Cornelius and Aunt Lena valued education and made sure that their children had the opportunity of formal schooling that they did not.⁴ Young Dorothy attended Deep Ditch School—located where Griner's Trailer Park is now. The Rowans supported the school in several ways. They boarded teachers, e.g. Flora Bell Knight, later Conner); and, Uncle Cornelius served as a trustee. In the latter capacity, he and other trustees made the painful decision to close Deep Ditch. (The building was in serious disrepair and the last classes had to be held in Ruth Forrester Church, just up the Teeterville Highway, *AND revenues were a problem because then taxes were simply redistributed to the generating district and the Deep Ditch area lacked commercial areas and rails.*) In short, Uncle Cornelius (along with Mark Sutton and my grandfather Watson) went to Atlanta and met with the state superintendent, Dr. M.D. Collins, and it ended well, following just a little bit of chicanery. **Second**, the Rowan family valued community and were founding members of the Deep Ditch Community Club, long since gone. **Third**, they valued family. So many examples beg for our attention. Those family get-togethers were each an occasion and memorable, standing out being Dorothy waiting the table. If they had fresh sausage, so did we. If they had greens, so did we, and the list goes on in small ways and large ways. **Fourth**, The family worked hard; in fact, I do not know of a harder working couple than Aunt Lena and Uncle Cornelius. When I say working hard, I mean Aunt-Lena-dipping-turpentine hard. When I let the sun sneak up on me in the morning, I without fail ask myself, “what would Uncle Cornelius think?” **Fifth**, I have saved for last the most important attribute. They were honest frugal people, who added to what they inherited (viz., acquisition Mrs. Ada Stodghill's place, adjacent). Let me tell you a story that encapsulates this trait. When L.G. Outlaw died intestate in 1918, Aunt Lena (his daughter, and, recall, Dorothy's mother) and my grandmother (his spouse) divided the property. No recording at the Clerk's Office, just an agreement, albeit written, a copy of which I have, possibly the only extant. More than 20 years passed before Daddy was legally required to establish ownership of his inheritance from his mother, and it was done through depositions attesting to his exclusive use in an “open and notorious fashion,” &c. Thirty five more years passed, and Aunt Lena had a deposition recorded for posterity. I challenge you to give me a better example of the value of the word of an honest person.

⁴ 4th and 5th grades, respectively, self-reported on 1940 Federal Census.

(With regard to ***Dorothy's Adult Life and Character.***) In fact, I have told the story of Dorothy's adult life through her family in the preceding narrative; it only needs to be fleshed out with facts. Dorothy met a handsome, charming soldier Robert Gordon Drake, and the rest is history. Dorothy's transition on May 5th, 1945, into Mrs. Bob Drake was her defining moment. It was a synergistic relationship, and Dorothy clearly gained strength from the union. Bob was civic minded—one of the youngest Deacons of the First Baptist Church, stretching back to the days of Garnie Brand, and he stood tall among other community leaders, Drs. Byrd, Carlton, Clyatt, Rentz, to mention a few. As another example, he was a scoutmaster. Dorothy complemented and extended Bob's interests (and her own) in numerous way, e.g., in the church and in community activities, like Demonstration Clubs.

Bob's charisma and Dorothy's support contributed to their running one of the most successful small businesses in Nashville, Drake's Service Station. I emphasize "contributed" because it was the innovative business practices, hard work, and long hours that comprised the essence of their success. To the best of my knowledge, theirs was the first service station in Nashville to maintain service records for customers, the first to utilize a pneumatic tire changer, the first to balance wheels kinetically As one of my correspondents noted this week, they were icons of the community, remembered fondly. I couldn't have said it better. As an employee, I couldn't have wanted better. I'm sure that Johnny remembers one Saturday night when Bob approached us and suggested we take off early so we could get to the races on time! How many times has your boss come up and suggested you go have fun?

Were we to sum my comments to this point, we would say certainly that she had a successful life, was a contributing member of her community, a supportive spouse and business partner, a loving daughter and mother. But, were we to stop there, we would have missed Basic Dorothy. This is the Dorothy who attended to her mother day in, day out (as did, I emphasize, other family members). This is the Dorothy who visited my mother so often in my mother's decline. This is the Dorothy who volunteered at the nursing home and brought cheer to the residents. This is the Dorothy who showed so much grace toward her family and faithful caregivers during her own decline. This is the Dorothy with a gentle soul, who was so easily injured by dissention, the Dorothy who would sacrifice her needs, comfort, and goals to keep peace. She loved her family—all—unconditionally and nonjudgmentally. She didn't demand "right or wrong" because her love was unbreakable. In fact, I've learned much simply by reflecting on Dorothy over the last few days.

Summary. Dorothy has passed and once again is by Bob's side. Precious memories, and a template for how we should conduct our own lives. Rest in peace.