

Ruby and Emerald Rings

By Marie O'Donnell



I cherish the good times spent with Uncle Otis and the time living at Kentlands.

Looking back, it was the happiest and most care-free time of my life. I never wanted for anything because, if I wanted it, either my grandparents got it for me or I mentioned it to Uncle Otis and it was like rubbing the lamp and making a wish; it would just appear. He got me a ruby ring—a real ruby for a four year old. I looked at it, and, with the honesty that only a child possesses, told him it was nice, but my favorite color was green.

Shortly after that I had a ruby ring AND an emerald ring. When winter came, I had a green snow suit that he got me with real leopard skin collar and cuffs.

I told you earlier about the pram he bought me to push my dolls (and my poor, long-suffering cat) around in.

I think I told you the story about the school bus. I had to meet the bus at a little store along Route 28, called Burnlee's. (They had one of those Coke coolers that used cold water, and the greatest penny candy. It was run by an "older couple." Of course, they could have just been in their 20's and they would have been older to me. But, I think they were probably in their 50's or so.) It didn't seem like it was that far from the front gate of the estate, but it meant that every morning my grandmother would have to drive me there and then drive back and wait for me.

She contacted the school and asked if they could at least drop me off at the front gate, but was told the bus did not run that far. Then, Uncle Otis contacted the Board of Education and reminded them of how much he paid each year in school taxes, and that he would like for his "granddaughter" to be picked up closer to her home.

The next day the school bus dropped me off at my back steps, and that was where I was picked up and dropped off for the few weeks that I went to school before we moved to my great-grandmother's. I remember the "oohs" and "ahhs" of the other kids on the bus as we turned in the gate and drove up and around Inspiration Lake and to my house.

I was such a little snob. I remember we were "up at the big house" one day, and it came up that I had asked for something that my grandmother thought was too extravagant. I spoke up and said that I should have it because I was special and should have whatever I asked for. She got very upset, but Uncle Otis chuckled and told her that I was a Princess and should have everything I asked for, and that he would make sure I got it. No wonder I was such a spoiled brat.