

Alice



A
True
Life
Story
of an
Exceptional
Woman
of our
Times

James P. Wendler

Alice

To

Jaffa Berner
to you and
I say for
your many
courtesies in the
past to both me
and my Alice.

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James B. Wendler

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Alice

IN LIFE
AND
THEREAFTER

*A True Life Story
of an Exceptional
Woman of our Times*

James P. Wendler

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Alice

DEDICATION



This book is dedicated to

ALICE COLE WENDLER

My soul-mate, confidant and
love of my life for 54½ years

*She was the most beautiful, best educated
and smartest person I have ever known.
Marrying her was the smartest thing I ever did.*

DEDICATION



This book is dedicated to
JAMES P. WENDLER

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

MY Alice was a person of outward beauty as well as one of great understanding and compassion, as I soon found out after our marriage June 12, 1938, in Miami Beach Community Church.

Since there was no Episcopal Church on Miami Beach and the Community Church was in the center of town in 1929 when my family moved there, it also was the religious and social center for we students of Ida M. Fisher High School.

Dr. Elisha A. King was the pastor, and made every Sunday meeting of the Young Peoples Social League an interesting event.

It must have been destiny, as Alice and I met at the Community Church at a Sunday 1936 wedding of mutual friends, Elsie Miller and Walter Groning. Elsie and her sister, Ruth, were the daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Ray Miller, who lived on Euclid Avenue, near Seventh Street. Mr. Miller was the city tax assessor and I saw him daily when I covered city hall as a newspaper reporter.

Walter Groning was in the group that my older sister, Elizabeth, associated with and often came to our home on 30th Street off Sheridan Avenue.

Alice, being six years older than I, naturally was in that group, but we never met until the Miller-Groning wedding. She was a bridesmaid and I was an usher.

After the wedding ceremony, several of us went to Mother Kelly's nightclub on Dade Boulevard, and destiny

showed its hand once again. Alice and I sat next to each other, and when my eyes got used to the dim club lights, I saw a beautiful young lady, with a great figure, good looking legs and a winning smile. Needless to say, my heart started to beat double time. That was it!

Here was a girl I wanted to know better and when she said she lived on Flamingo Drive at 35th Street (just six blocks away) I took her home and asked permission to call the next time I was taking my younger sister's dog out for a walk. Well, "Trilby," Aileen's apricot-colored Cocker Spaniel, got more nightly walks in the direction of 35th and Flamingo for the next month than she ever got in her whole life.

Alice's mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Nelson Cole, were just the nicest people you ever met. I was smoking a pipe at that time and so was Alice's father. So the kindred spirits were working again. Her mother, Janet, was very much interested in what kind of a fellow Alice had met and in a short time was a real friend. Her little sister, Janet, was always snickering and had me on the defensive a lot of times.

Now that the ice was broken I invited Alice to our home for Sunday dinner and she was a big hit with my mother, Elizabeth. When my father, J. H., found out that she was a good pinochle player, that was it. Dad thought of Alice as a daughter. My brother, Harry, was married and lived in Surfside with his wife, Ruth, and newborn son, Harry, Jr. They liked my girlfriend.

Cecil B. DeMille couldn't have orchestrated a more perfect scenario.

Alice and I dated for two years and found out that we had so much in common that I asked her mother and father for their blessings.

Mrs. Cole smiled and said, "Just take good care of Alice." She was thinking of the time when Alice was married

while in school and still in her teens. The marriage failed after Alice had a miscarriage, due to her husband's reckless driving.

I promised both Alice's parents that I would take care of their daughter and love her until death do us part.

We became engaged on Valentine's Day 1938 and married June 12 at Miami Beach Community Church by Dr. King, before many of the same friends we had seen there just two years before.

After a bout with cancer of the left lung Alice passed away December 6, 1992 in the sixth floor care unit of Catholic Hospice at Miami Beach Community Hospital.

We admitted her on December 1st, after she had been home for four weeks following surgery at Miami Heart Institute, where she had daily visits from Father Holcombe and Deacon Louise Baker, of All Souls' church.

Dr. Stanley Jonas of Catholic Hospice arranged for the transfer from our Surfside home to the hospital and care for her final days.

Jeffrey G. Draesel, M.D., our family doctor, had made arrangements with Hospice the end of October when Alice's condition seemed terminal.

Daily visits were heartbreaking but the loving care given Alice by supervising nurse Florence DiPietro was very comforting. She would stroke Alice's brow, straighten her hair and hold her hand.

One evening while I was visiting, Florence said, "I've never seen anyone your wife's age with such soft hair and beautiful skin. There is not a wrinkle on her face or neck." I am sure Alice smiled back.

On Saturday the 5th, I knew the end was near and called for The Reverend Scott T. Holcombe, our new rector at All Souls' Episcopal Church, to come and give final rites, which was at 3:30 p.m.

Alice

Sunday at 4:15 a.m., I received the anticipated telephone call from the hospital; my Alice had died.

Alice suffered from claustrophobia, and wanted to be cremated, which Walsh & Wood handled. We have a six-grave family plot at Woodlawn Park, so when I die, Alice's ashes will be placed in my casket and we will be interred together.

We were together in life for more than half a century and will be together in death thereafter.

Memorial services were at noon, December 9th, at All Souls' Church, of which I am one of the two surviving founders and to which Alice devoted many weeks of service in 1957 during the Consecration Fund Drive.

Our dear friend, Valerie Hart, honored Alice with a reading from St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians and also prepared the reception following services, while Lay Reader Dee Dobson read the second lesson.

Father Holcombe selected Alice's three favorite hymns for the service, "Onward Christian Soldiers," "Nearer My God To Thee," and "Rock of Ages."

*Without tears in the eyes,
there would be no rainbow
for the soul.*

Chapter Two

THE EARLY YEARS

ALICE was born Alice Warren Cole on Julian Street in the township of Roxbury, Dorchester Center, Boston on the seventeenth day of the seventh month in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eight.

The first child of Janet and Howard Nelson Cole, she was a chubby little thing as the picture I have of her at age one shows.

Her father was born in Marblehead, Massachusetts and her mother, Janet, was one of two girls born in Charlemagne, Province of Quebec, Canada, to Mr. and Mrs. William J. Pope of the Pope-Talbot lumber company, and Dorchester Popes.

In June of 1891, the Pope family moved into the large three-story frame home in Roxbury. Alice brought a photo of the Roxbury home with her when we were married and it still hangs on the wall of our Surfside home in the den.

My Alice was a great saver and always believed that anything historical should be preserved. I still have a packet of family letters she saved, one from her Aunt Gertrude M. Neil, sent to her aunt, Ethel Neil Pope, from Montreal, dated June 1, 1891. An interesting remark was "I hope you had a good time on the Queen's Birthday!"

Another letter, dated August 5, 1904, sent to her Aunt Alice at "The 'Reach', " Deer Isle, Maine." Postage 2¢ from East Machias, Maine. The 1891 letter from Montreal to Boston was 3¢.

My Alice was named for her oldest aunt, Alice Warren Pope. Her youngest aunt was Ethel Neil Pope, head of the art department of Roxbury memorial (girls) High School until she retired thirty years later. Her aunt Ethel was a part of the art colony of Boothbay Harbor, Maine and to assure herself of a good place to paint, bought a lot at the top of Mt. Pisgah, kept it vacant, and willed it to My Alice when she died.

Alice often remarked that the happiest days of her life were the summers she spent at Boothbay Harbor with Aunt Ethel and her art colony friends.

On the one occasion, I had the opportunity to take My Alice to Boothbay Harbor, via Portland, Maine; the Prince of Fundy Ferry to Yarmouth, Nova Scotia; Cape Breton Island, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Campobelle Island (the summer home of FDR's family) was a most enjoyable time and My Alice was so happy that I was able to see the place where she grew up.

It had been ten years since Alice's Aunt Ethel died and we kept paying the taxes on the vacant lot, with no immediate hopes of ever getting to Boothbay Harbor, so we let the town have the property.

Well, I wanted to see what I suggested Alice let go, one afternoon we drove to the top of Mt. Pisgah to find the lot.

It was well that we let the town have the land, as they had used it for a water storage tank and, just as My Alice remembered the site, it was all slate. No place to build, as there could be no sewage outlet. The real estate lady, Ethel Giles, kept telling us the property was of no building value every time we wrote to her trying to sell the land.

Among Alice's treasures was a Holy Bible given to her by Isiah W. Sweath, Pastor of the Wollaston Congregation Church in Wollaston, Massachusetts, June 11, 1916. She was only eight years old, but had

memorized some special section of the Bible. She mentioned Reverend Sweath many times in recent years, always with a big smile on her face.

When we went back to Boston, My Alice's Aunt Alice, who was a director in the American Indian Affairs Society for over 30 years, lived at the Women's Republican Club on Commonwealth Avenue, where I had the pleasure of meeting her upon my first visit to New England in July 1946. Aunt Alice had invited My Alice, me and Aunt Gertrude M. Neil (with whom we were visiting) to her club for luncheon. She had selected the menu that was without prices of the entrees.

My Alice received her grammar school training in Boston and in 1919 the family moved to Braintree. She went to Thayer Academy 1922-25. It was a preparatory school, founded by General Sylvanus Thayer in 1877, also one of the founders of West Point, U.S. Military Academy.

Alice said the most vivid memory she had as a child, was while they lived in Braintree. She recalled, "It was on April 15, 1920; I was coming home from school and had just gotten off the streetcar and was heading up the hill to our house. I saw the street full of people and police were blocking off the road. They were looking for two men whom I was told had just killed two shoe factory men in a payroll holdup."

The men were Nicola Sacco, 29, shoe factory worker and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, 32, fish peddler and anarchist.

"Until the two men were caught, Mother would not let me leave the house or go to school, nor would any of the other children's mothers on our street."

"The men were caught days later. The newspapers were full of the story and we followed the trial and conviction with great interest," Alice added.

Because Sacco and Vanzetti were foreigners and World War I feelings ran high, their appeals ran through the courts

until August 23, 1927, when both were executed. Governor Dukakis granted a vindication in 1977 because of the great universal outcry.

The family had moved to Braintree so that Mr. Cole could be near the Rice & Hutchins shoe factory as he was the company's foreign representative and personally checked production.

Europe was a prime market for American leather goods, since nearly every factory in France, Germany, England, Russia and Italy were wiped out, and it would be years before they could be rebuilt.

Alice's father was fluent in French and German, which gave him entre to every retail and wholesale company he visited. He was a success and so good that he would be gone for six months at a time. Alice was only 12 years old at the time and said, "I thought Daddy had left us for good."

"But Daddy always brought home big presents for the family. My pride was a Schoenhut doll, which had moving arms, hands, legs, feet, neck and head. She stood on a round metal plate that had metal pins that fit into the round holes in the feet of the doll and I could do anything I liked with that wonderful doll."

It was here that Alice grew up with a lot of tender loving care that was to remain with her the rest of her life.

After we were married, we would be sitting up late and Alice would tell me over and over of her fond memories of an early childhood. She has a little sister, named Janet, born five years after My Alice, so she had a big, live doll to dress and play with.

Mrs. Cole said Alice was an inquisitive child, always wanting to see and do new things. "She also had an interest in French, which was to be her second language," Mrs. Cole added.

In 1925, Alice went to Brenau College, Gainesville, Georgia to complete her education, get a taste of the Deep South and how this part of the country looked.

For some reason, Alice never learned to drive a car. I tried to teach her during the two years we were courting, but she always steered the car to the left.

Alice said that as a child she ice skated and had special boots made at the Rice & Hutchins shoe factory. She also prized a special pair of riding boots the company made for her, which are shown in a photo I have of her riding along the beach at East Machias, Maine.

I recall very well her knowledge of horsemanship. After we were married and spent two summers at Cherokee, North Carolina, we drove down to Bryson City and rented horses from Mr. Hart, the gentleman who owned the stables, the best restaurant in town and also part of the local bank.

He was a republican and didn't like FDR and the way they were tearing up the countryside to dam the Clinch River to make the TVA's high dam. He didn't like the NRA, WPA and FSA neither.

Alice's sister, Janet, was married in 1939 to Hallett Matthews. We took them on their honeymoon, back to North Carolina and the fine riding trails Mr. Hart showed us through the mountainside.

In Cherokee, we stayed with Mr. and Mrs. R. F. Hall at their Newfound Lodge. There were eight double cabins stretched along the Oconoluftee River, and the only road going up the mountain to Newfound Gap at the Tennessee border.

In the center of the row of cabins was the restaurant, and housing quarters for the Halls. Their gasoline station was just next door and the Cherokee Indian School and hospital was across the road, along with a large vegetable garden run by the students at the school.