



*Essence
of a Man*



**BROWN
GREENE**

Essence of a Man



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GREENE**

Red Shoe

Red Shoe Publishing brings together a number of professional skills in presenting this family story. John Greene, with a master's degree in urban planning and experience in market research, combed archives and trending data to explore the differences between his dad's small rural hometown and his own hometown of Washington, D.C. With a background in publishing and a master's degree in journalism, Robin Schuette provided creative direction, editing and interviewing.

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Revised 2015*



*Roosevelt Greene, a young man eager to find himself and his life in Washington, D.C.
This photo was retouched by hand at that time to darken the hair.*

PROLOGUE

Spring 2015

His eyes reach out to me still from this cover photo. How proud and energetic they are. Perhaps reflecting a young man in his early 40s—family man, business owner and dreamer. Or an ordinary guy living in a totally different era seldom visited other than through the lives of notables?

It is now 10 years since I first published this tribute on my father's centennial birthday, and fortunately all of his children (grand and great) are alive and pursuing their life's adventures. My brother, Browne, after sharing this booklet with his seven-year-old son, Teal, was the impetus for this new edition. I also had encouragement and guidance from my wife, Robin, along with our loyal and professional publishing friends, Suzanne Askren and Kathy Skobel.

The exciting news in this 2nd edition is that we had the opportunity to have a new contributor round out the perspective on Brown and his siblings' lives in Washington, D.C. That new contributor is Brown's niece Daisy Cusick Kiley. Daisy is the youngest daughter of Brown's sister Mary Beth and grew up in Chillum, Maryland, a bedroom community of the District of Columbia during the late 1950s and '60s. Her chapter, *Planting the Seeds*, speaks to our family's perseverance moving from the rural south to the city. She also contributed new family photos, identifications of relatives and corrections to the original text. So a big shout out to you, cuz.

John P. Greene
Evanston, Illinois



Surprised and happy to be a father again, Brown with his youngest son, John Philip, 1946.

INTRODUCTION

Essence of a Man Project

Had he lived until 2005, Roosevelt “Brown” Greene would have been 100. For most of us, our historical perspective has been found to be only a scant 10 years, and we lose sight of those who are gone. This Father’s Day is a fitting time to celebrate Brown’s short life from 1905 to 1959. He experienced tragic events including World Wars, the Great Depression, the death of his youngest brother, Harding, in World War II, and much, much more. Unfortunately, these stories and their meanings are not being told, and today we have lost some of the ability to relate folktales.

This project was born out of a conference call made on Brown’s birthdate, January 28, by his children. We spent time telling our favorite stories of people, places and things. Some of us were much better at yarn-telling than others, but even these initial attempts didn’t touch on the legacies that we, his children, carry forward today and may have passed on to you.

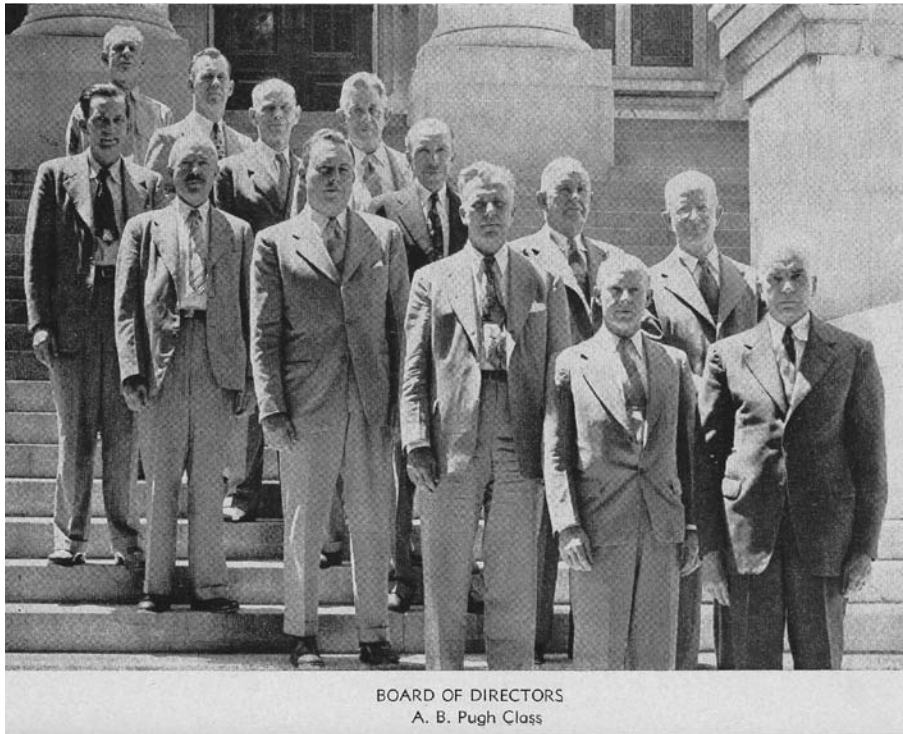
So the “Essence of the Man” project was born. Short essays by his adult children are presented in their own styles and attempt to answer, “What of this person’s life do you carry forward today?” This type of question produces a great deal of soul-searching.

Interlaced through this piece are photos and narratives that present a small portrait of Brown Greene’s life. They define the period of his early youth growing up in North Cooleemee, N.C., in the early 1900s, his family life in Washington, D.C., during the 1930s-1940s, and his final years beginning a new life adventure at age 49.

Perhaps this may begin to answer some questions you have about yourself, such as where a family trait, interest, feature or quality comes from. For me, who knew him for only 12 years, this was a great experience and something I would not have been able to accomplish without the encouragement and skills of my partner, Robin Schuette. My hope is that you will linger through these pages and take time to reflect.

JPG

April 25, 2005



*The Pugh Men's Bible class at Mt. Vernon was very important to Brown in fostering relationships with local businessmen and government officials. Brown served as its elected leader, which was a real honor.
(Brown, 1st row, top left)*

Faith, Hope and Charity. And the Greatest of These is Charity.

Personal Essay by Daisy Jane Hamlin, January 2005

That was my father—a deep faith in God and Jesus Christ. A reality impressed upon his young mind and heart in his devotion to God, family and country.

Dad's faith in his Maker was evident in his commitment to his beloved Pugh Bible class, a Sunday school group of men at Mt. Vernon Place Methodist Church in Washington, D.C. He would spend Sunday mornings attending class and most evenings at church. Brown was a pillar of the church, following in the steps of his ancestors, George Washington Greene and Adam Swicegood, who had given land for their churches and who were all committed Christians.

My father grew up in North Cooleemee, N.C. His father, William, would take the older children in the horse-drawn buggy to the Methodist Church while his wife, Daisy, took the younger ones to hers, the local, closer Episcopal Church. Observing the Lord's Day was the most important activity of the week, and that has been passed down from generation to generation.

The church was the center for our cultural life in downtown D.C. as well. The disciplines of learning music and singing with outstanding vocalists and instrumentalists prepared us for participation in activities later in life that we could hardly imagine. Dixie and I could read scores, sing on pitch and follow choral direction. We were the complete performance package.

Dad's Pugh class banquets, watermelon feasts and barbeque picnics provided us with many extended family events. Family and friends were very important to my father. We were always included with friendly hugs and smiles. When I popped into the café, his eyes beamed, and he would follow his "Whadayahave?" by serving up the world's best pancakes, fried chicken or ham given freely, and always with a loving heart.

He delighted in his relatives dropping in for extended stays, which sometimes could mean years, especially during the World War II years of 1941-1945. Both sides of the family, Mom's sisters and Dad's siblings, had stints at 1216 Massachusetts Ave.

Dad also served his beloved country as a Civil Defense Warden, complete with whistle, flashlight and hard hat. When the alarm siren signaled a practice air raid, lights out were required and dark green opaque shades were pulled. His job then was to patrol the zone and be sure no lights, including those from cigarettes, were visible, until the all-clear was sounded, sometimes hours later. He did his part, and stood and was counted for in his service to his country at home.

His mother, Daisy, said to me on his death that of her nine children, of Brown she was most proud. I lovingly smiled and thought how blessed we were to have him as a father.

My Dad passed to me the love of faith, family and country, which I carry forward so proudly today. ♦



D.C. transplants Mildred (from Indiana) and Brown (from North Carolina) in front of the Belvedere Apartment building looking toward 13th St.

North Cooleemee, North Carolina

Roosevelt was born in a simple six-room clapboard house in North Cooleemee, N.C., a stringtown of the mill town of Cooleemee. His parents, William Samuel and Daisy Charles, had moved from the country to take advantage of the business opportunities that the booming mill generated. The third of nine children and one of five boys, Roosevelt was named after the 26th president, Theodore Roosevelt, a somewhat common practice of that day. His brother, Harding, was named after the 29th president, elected in 1920. His other brothers were Jack, George and Charles. His sisters were Mae, Madeline, Mary Beth and Sadie, who died as an infant.

But Roosevelt was mostly called Brown, a nickname taken from a popular comic-strip “Buster Brown,” published in 1902 in the *New York Herald* and widely syndicated in newspapers across the country. The image of the mischievous young boy and his talking dog, Tige, later became a logo for the Brown Shoe Co. Brown would be a distinct moniker for young Roosevelt, and a way to distinguish himself in the restaurant business of Washington, D.C.

Cotton mill towns were the castles of the Reconstruction after the Civil War. Created in the 1880s to take advantage of the worldwide need for cotton, Cooleemee’s mill sat on the edge of a planned community and along the cascading Yadkin River from which it drew its power. Cooleemee was an ancient place, settled some 8,000 years before by Native Americans who delighted in the river’s cooling effects.

It was a prosperous time for the town, and its conveniences attracted the country folk to the stores, street lights, rail, telephone and medical care on the Square. Other entrepreneurs began to develop towns adjacent, or stringtowns, where they could escape the supervision of the factory town officials. One was North Cooleemee, known for its taverns and saloons as well as its ice plant and laundry. “Heading up the road” was a common expression for the men at the mill.

Brown’s father, William Samuel, was a farmer and distiller of spirits before moving to town. He ran a store and it was probably there he met his spouse, Daisy Charles, on one of her shopping trips from the cotton plantation where her father was foreman. Both were part of the first wave of southern migration of town development. Daisy raised nine children (one would die at the age of 2) in a small two-bedroom house. A genteel person with little education, she had a sweet personality that carried her well throughout her life. William was different, expecting his sons to make it on their own and probably encouraging them to seek their fortunes in larger Northern towns.



This Sunday's Best 1920s photo of the family at the Cooleemee homestead is a rare item, perhaps a type of reunion for the brothers returning from D.C. Mary Beth, Charles, George, Brown, Madeline, Mae, Jack, Harding (standing behind his parents), Daisy and W.S. Greene.

Brown reportedly left Cooleemee by 1918, spending several years meandering his way to the nation's capital. His younger brothers George and Charles would soon follow. As teenagers with grade-school educations, all of them worked any type of jobs to be found. Arriving in D.C. by the early 1920s, Brown would spend the next five years working in the restaurant business and mastering the basics of short-order cooking. In the early 1930s, he met Mildred Hendrix at a Saturday night dance at the Warner Theatre on downtown 13th St. He was ready to settle down and open that café of his own.

It was probably made very clear to all the Greene boys that they had to leave Cooleemee because mill work and local businesses did not supply enough opportunity. New business practices beginning in the 1920s, combined with the drop in wartime cotton demand, irrevocably changed the relationship between worker and management. This was followed by the Great Depression of the 1930s, which resulted in an unprecedented number of unemployed. The Greene boys did indeed have excellent timing by moving to the new factory town of Washington, D.C.

Sepia Memory

Personal Essay by John Philip Greene, March 2005

Through the alley, past the fortress built by the local Christian Science soldiers and next to that herald of truth, the *Washington Daily News*, stood my Dad's diner, the Brown Greene Café. Café life began much earlier than this seven-year-old ever imagined. Coffee brewing in its urns, potatoes sweating on the grill, and the constant clanging of huge steel serving pans being prepped for the steam table were essential parts of the morning ritual. A Smithfield bone-in ham regally displayed on the counter waited for Dad's deft hand and scimitar blade.

Simple, glorious Southern cooking recipes were passed down orally from one cook to the next. Dad always had the creative special of the day—2 Lamb Chops, 35 Cents—served in small booths on Formica-topped tables and on counters in front of those in-your-face, live-action stools. A big smile and the greeting of "What can I get ya?" from Mr. Impresario welcomed you to his corner of the city.

In the '50s, most restaurant cooking was from scratch with only a few exceptions. One was Mrs. Curtis' lard-crust pies, manufactured in southeast D.C. and delivered daily fresh out of the oven. Fruit, coconut, lemon meringue and to-die-for French apple were all waiting to be sliced and served *à la mode*. For me and my grade-school chums, there were other treats kept in the glass case under the register—Hershey milk chocolate bars, Baby Ruths and Wrigley's Spearmint gum. I could easily be the most popular kid in school with this kind of ammunition.

I knew Brown for only 12 years, and most of that time escapes my memory today. My reflections always go back to those moments at his café, and his soiled white cotton jacket, shirt and tie. Or a Sunday noontime meal, after church, serving one of Mom's culinary adventures. These are the moments that linger with me.

The District in the '50s was simpler then but with a strong sense of neighborhoods and their institutions. The café was a center of communication, attracting the locals, soldiers, and often a well-dressed traveler or two. Some paid, others had a tab, and others ate for free. Dad's generosity was monumental, which I learned about only after his death.

Like many fathers, my Dad was a wonderful unassuming soul, living daily to put bread on the table for us and always believing in mankind: a smile, a meal or possibly a few dollars to get you on your way.

After nearly 20 years, he had to close his café in 1954 due to a tower of debts. This entrepreneur had experienced many changes—the Depression in

the 1930s, World War II rationing, and the local arrival of the Hot Shoppe chain drive-in restaurants. But he kept at it because he was in control and doing well. I believe it had to have been a very uncertain time for him, his creative energy spent, the question of his breadwinner role challenged, and the quandary of what to do at age 49.

I often reflect on a very memorable Christmas in 1956 when a young boy received an extra special gift, his first bicycle. Everyone had gathered in the small living room and were playing coy, laughing at their sulking younger brother while he so impatiently waited. It was a special moment for us all, filled with love, generosity and a concern for each other. A beautiful time, a wonderful memory, and a very special gift from my Dad. ♦



A “we can’t believe it snowed!” day at Edmund Burke Statue park. This favorite getaway spot was a short stroll from the Greene home, which now included Dixie and her husband, Bill, new baby Carol, and 12-year-old in-house babysitter, John Philip.

Cooking with Brown

My enjoyment of food, the rhythm of kitchen prepping and cooking the world’s recipes, I trace back to those early exposures with my Dad. How I would like to be sharing my Beef Bourguignon with him.

“Is that all I can get ya?”

Here’s a recipe my Dad could have used in the café, minus the lard and with my modern updates. Enjoy with your Sunday chicken. —JPG

Smothered Greens and Corn

6 servings

1 1/2 lbs of Swiss Chard, washed and dried
 3 T vegetable oil
 1 1/3 c chopped onions
 1/4 c diced ham
 1 lb of Mustard Greens or Spinach, washed and trimmed
 3/4 c chicken broth
 2 c corn kernels
 1/4 c minced parsley
 Salt, pepper, lemon juice, cider vinegar, hot sauce

1. Separate chard ribs from leaves. Chop leaves and ribs.
2. Heat oil, add onion, cook until soft. Add ham, chard leaves, mustard greens and broth. Simmer 10 minutes.
3. Uncover skillet, add corn. Simmer until tender. Add parsley, salt and pepper, and lemon juice. Serve with cider vinegar and hot sauce on the side.



Family Years

In 1930, the District had a population of 486,869, with one in four being of African-American ancestry. It seemed that quite a few rural towns had just emptied out its youth as the migration to northern cities increased. The New Deal swelled the ranks of federal employment and along with it, the service industry of restaurants, cleaners, barber shops, etc., all catering to these younger workers. Both the jazz club and dance hall scene thrived as entertainment venues in this segregated Southern society.

Brown and Mildred married in June 1932 and took up residence in the Belvedere, a classy apartment building at 13th St. and Massachusetts Ave. They would not stray far from this central location, moving a half-block to 1216 Massachusetts Ave. in early 1935 after both daughters were born, Dixie Jan (1933) and Daisy Jane (1934). Being in their late 20s and with their lives just beginning, the couple rented this narrow townhouse, which was a real sign of their hopes and dreams.

Brown took over the old sandwich shop a block and a half away near 13th and K Streets. Around that same time, he joined the local K Street chapter of the Freemasons, which was historically a secret society of well-educated, upwardly mobile men. This group traced its origins to England beginning in 1717 and included leaders in Colonial America and signers of the Declaration of



The young Greene family enjoying the daily lunch special. From left, Mildred, Dixie, Brownie, Daisy Jane and Brown. This photo was probably taken by one of the newspapermen from the Daily News, next door to the café.

Independence. In the 1930s, there was a move to open the ranks to other young men of character by adopting the popular fraternal model to increase its membership.

The Masons and Brown's fellow parishioners at Mt. Vernon Place Methodist Church provided a rich network of potential customers for Brown's café as well as an opportunity to serve others. He would spend several years moving through the many tests and rituals that ultimately led him to become a 32nd Degree Master Mason, with the 33rd being the highest. This was a real accomplishment that launched Brown into an elite group of political and local leaders that included his future brother-in-law, Leroy Decker.

The birth of Brown's first son, Roosevelt Brown Jr., in 1936 changed the dynamics of the 1216 Massachusetts Ave. household. Not only did the sisters now have someone to supervise, but they would take the leadership role in socializing this gangly child. With Mildred working 9 to 5 at the U.S. Census Bureau and Brown putting in long hours at the restaurant, there was limited family time other than on Sundays.

The times in D.C. were changing, and the war years of 1941-1945 expanded the city's worldwide role and propelled its growth. While the war imposed certain restrictions, Brown's role as a Civil Defense Warden, long-term visits by family guests, and the beauty of the city parks provided inspiring settings of urban life for the young family. The end of WW II was a cause for celebration, and so was Mildred's surprise pregnancy. John Philip was born at Doctor's Hospital in September 1946.

By 1950, the city's population had swelled to 802,178, with the African-American segment reaching over one-half of that, to 411,377. While total population grew by 65 percent during this 20-year period, the growth in African-Americans was more than 200 percent. This Southern town was in the midst of a dramatic class struggle that would impact the neighborhood, with whites moving out of the city. The customers for Brown's business dwindled. Although his hours were long and his commitments were deep, he did enjoy the Washington Senators baseball games with Brownie and church events with his teenaged daughters.



Brown in his Freemason's garb, which was only rolled out for big occasions. He achieved the 32nd degree in the Scottish Rite, one of the highest Mason ranks, which entitled him to wear a gold braid, sword and parade hat.



Brown in front of his café near 13th and K streets in Washington, D.C. The Daily News was located next door, and across the street was a Firestone Tire Store and the Central Fire Station.

Mt. Vernon Place

Personal Essay by Dixie Jan Yeatman, March 2005

She sits majestically facing the rising sun over a square designed by the architect of our city, Pierre L'Enfant. A white monumental marble staircase of 30 steps leads to the second-floor sanctuary hall where notables have worshipped for a century. This light-drenched space, protected by the heroes of the New Testament, is where Dad sought his peace and fellowship.

As children growing up three blocks away, we were fascinated with the city filled with these mighty edifices of state and society. Mt. Vernon Place United Methodist Church on the corner of Massachusetts Ave. and 9th St. held a special fascination because of its outpost position at the edge of the dark side. Two blocks from the bus stations, the businesses served the city's travelers in cheap hotels, bars and strip clubs. Standing strong beside that quiet tabernacle was the place of our first ethnic cuisine, the Nanking Café, with its mesmerizing whole sweet-and-sour fish with bowls of steaming rice. Today, all but Mt. Vernon has been lost in the renewal of the last three decades.

Besides its striking edifice, the church possessed a labyrinth of special chambers and anterooms where all types of mystical things occurred. Brown would leave by 9 a.m. to attend the Pugh Bible class, where the leaders sat in high-backed chairs on a small stage. Everyone else sat in wooden theater-style seats that had wire holders containing the essential song books and paper fans advertising the local funeral home. That same space would evolve into a magical



Mt. Vernon Place Methodist Church was a focal point for many Southerners new to D.C. Brown and George regularly attended, and Brown's children performed on its stage.



The royal visit of Grandma Greene to D.C. in 1959-60 (far right). We gathered at Madeline's (2nd from left) for a Sunday supper with Jane (standing), Dixie holding her daughter, Carol, Mildred holding grandson, William and Browne.

setting on weekend nights as the Mt. Vernon Players performed dramas to full local audiences. Some of the Greene girls' performances were on that Sunday morning stage. I also later made my appearance as an actress in a wonderful French farce.

Going to Mt. Vernon with Daddy was a night and day experience compared to Mother's routine at National City Christian Church. Like his father, Dad attended his Southern-style church and Mom her more Midwestern one. With Dad, it followed two basic themes: Come early and leave late. Brown knew everybody and was always ready to shake hands or exchange a story. It seemed that the service was twice as long, and that we would never make it back for our Sunday supper extravaganza. In the evenings, he would often travel south 20 miles to hold services for inmates at Lorton Prison.

Growing up, there was not often a lot of quality time with our parents between their work and church schedules, which is something I've dedicated myself to with my children and grandchildren. The war years had its own mix of sacrifices, which we, like everyone, shared. After the war, we were able to renew the opportunity to be more generous to ourselves and to others.

Brown had a network before it was fashionable and commonly accepted as a must for success. He probably never tapped into the power of this network of local leaders, but instead served it as a willing disciple, to the glory of God.

My father instilled in me a keen desire to serve and praise others, nurture my own network of family and friends, and to be generous and follow the teachings of the Bible in my daily life. His grandson William Greene carries his name forward—a constant reminder to me of him. ♦

#487 Diamond Cab

At age 49 and with debts lingering from the restaurant, Brown signed up with Diamond Cab. It was 1954. His brother George was a driver for the competing Yellow Cab Co. and was well known for his unique abilities with cards and ponies. Since he also sold seasonable vegetables and other items from the cab's trunk, it was a distancing that was for the best.

These two cab companies dominated the very lucrative for-hire business. Not only did they control the stands at all the major attractions, hotels and transportation hubs, but they also discriminated against African-American drivers and customers wanting a ride into D.C.'s segregated neighborhoods. It wasn't until 1957 that Diamond voluntarily integrated, breaking this old pattern.

Driving a cab combined the independent, entrepreneurial spirit of being self-employed (you rented your own cab) with Brown's real gift of being a people person and caring deeply for his city and its customers. He was a natural salesman, able to spot those out-of-towners and then hook them into a tour. The tour could be anything or anywhere, but it always required a bit of showmanship, patience and, most of all, the ability to wait in spots that were actually off-limits. Mt. Vernon, the White House, the Smithsonian museums and the Iwo Jima Memorial were all a part of Brown's tour repertoire. He was a natural and was always proud about the big wad of bills that a successful day produced.

In that same year, John Philip was sent to Ohio to live with the Deckers (Mildred's sister, Mary, and her husband, Roy) for three years to augment his educational shortcomings from his first three years at the local D.C. grade school. Daisy Jane was at Purdue University, and Dixie Jan was living at home, finishing at the local teachers' college and working at Woodward & Lothrop, an upscale department store. Brownie was starting his raucous years at George Washington University, thinking of his social life as opposed to academics.

Brown and Mildred had a lot to feel proud about, and for the first time, they were saving money and spending some time together watching the early years of television on their 13-inch, black-and-white Dumont television. John Philip returned for the high holidays and summer TV cartoon-watching. Daisy Jane came back during the summers until graduation, and the young love birds, Dixie and her husband, Bill, attempted to share some intimate moments in the living room backed up by the tunes of the drunken troubadours next door. We were all moving to a different level of self-sufficiency. Brown was able to share more of himself, especially during late evening drives, taking his family to the Hot Shoppe



Can you see Brown's cab, No. 487, in the Diamond queue at Union Station?

for Orange Freezes and on occasional family Sunday drives to the property on Backlick Road. This was one of the real assets they had, seven acres of land in Northern Virginia, a decade away from development.

These final five years were probably the most enjoyable for Brown as both daughters married in big ceremonies, his first grandchildren were born, Brownie finally graduated and spent his last year living on G St., and John Philip was back in the good old D.C. school system wondering what strange state might be his next location for finishing school.

Brown died unexpectedly of a heart attack in 1959. He was 54 and living at a time when little focus was on preventive healthcare. With Mildred surviving him for another 41 years, attention was focused on her and little ever paid to this man and his many accomplishments produced strictly on his own merits.

My journey to understand my Dad started after I turned 50 and had closed his files for so many years due to the painfulness of his death. His life is celebrated.

My Father's Gift to Me

Personal Essay by Browne Greene, January 2005

My father, Roosevelt Brown Greene, could only be described during his 54 years of life as a riddle. A humble, self-effacing, uneducated but perceptive man, he is seen by me as someone who seemingly was a failure at business, but who also was a clear success in life.

I look back 45 years later and see various gifts that he left me that abide in my own life, that were taught not by speeches or injunctions, but by his own actions. They include:

1. Respect for everyone, especially those who seem below your station in life.

Although he lived in a period of segregation in schools, public areas and businesses, I never once heard him refer to an African-American with a commonly used derogatory term. He had an uncommon ability to relate to people of all dimensions and in all levels of achievement, including lawyers and judges, as well as restaurant workers. He loved and was truly loved by all who knew him.

2. In the giving is the taking. He was the most giving person I ever knew in terms of helping others, especially people down on their luck who needed a helping hand or a boost. Although he did not believe that charity began at home in terms of his own family, he had no problem helping others and reaching out to them, giving them a free meal at the restaurant or trying to help them get a job or find work. Although it seemed his gifts to others were not returned in a material fashion, that never seemed to bother him because he had a deeper sense of giving. He was probably the greatest Christian I ever knew in terms of the fact that he saw true Christianity being the gift of loving and generosity to others.

3. Sport is not sport without sportsmanship. He loved sports, and I shared that love with him and still do to this day. He enjoyed attending my basketball games in high school and took joy in a game well played and fairly determined. He was there to support me when I won or lost and to give me a praising hand for my effort, which he saw as being the true measure of sport, not necessarily the final score. I believe that was his true measure in his own life, as his own



Brown with Daisy Jane and little Brownie around 1938.

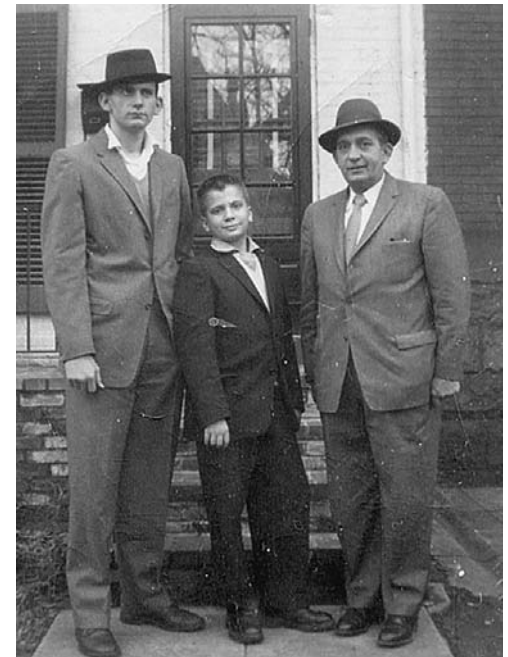
sense of integrity was such that I truly cannot recall any time that he ever evidenced a dishonest statement or act. In that sense, he recognized his own limitations and would use the words "I'm sorry" when he fell short or when he seemed not to measure up as he had wished.

4. Wisdom without education.

Although he had a third-grade education and was one of the most grammatically incorrect speakers you would ever hear, he had a wide interest in history, politics and current events. He also was a true lover of lawyers and judges, many of whom were friends in his Bible class. Years later, I think now that this may be one of the reasons why I ended up in my field of calling, attending law school and working as a trial lawyer. I have a true regret that he never got to see me graduate from law school and become a trial lawyer.

5. Humor and its necessary use in life. My father had a great sense of humor and an impish delight in a good laugh. His very name, of course, bespoke humor, and he loved the play of words on the colors. He wore brown and green neckties, no matter the color of the suit, and he used two fountain pens of different colors to write his name. That gift to me has been a true bonus, as I have found that very few people forget my name. He gave me my name in spite of my mother's wishes, by writing it down after I was born. Many times I have had to put up with kidding because of my name, some funny, much of it tired, but now I find that it is a true bonus to have this name—a gift from my father.

I remember jokes he would pull in the restaurant: A waitress, Minnie Brewer, loved to bring her dog into the restaurant and tie the dog up. One day my father placed a plastic dog pile under a table, and he and I waited for her to clean the floor and find it. With great shock, she rushed to sweep up the mess, only to discover that my father, again, had left an April Fool's Day joke for her.



Dressed in his Sunday best, Brown spends time with his sons Brownie and John Philip.

My father also was a great giver of nicknames, which he gave to many of the restaurant patrons. I remember Spareribs, a man who worked at the *Daily News* next door. There were many others, including Slim, Tarheel, Smilin' Jack and Sweetcakes.

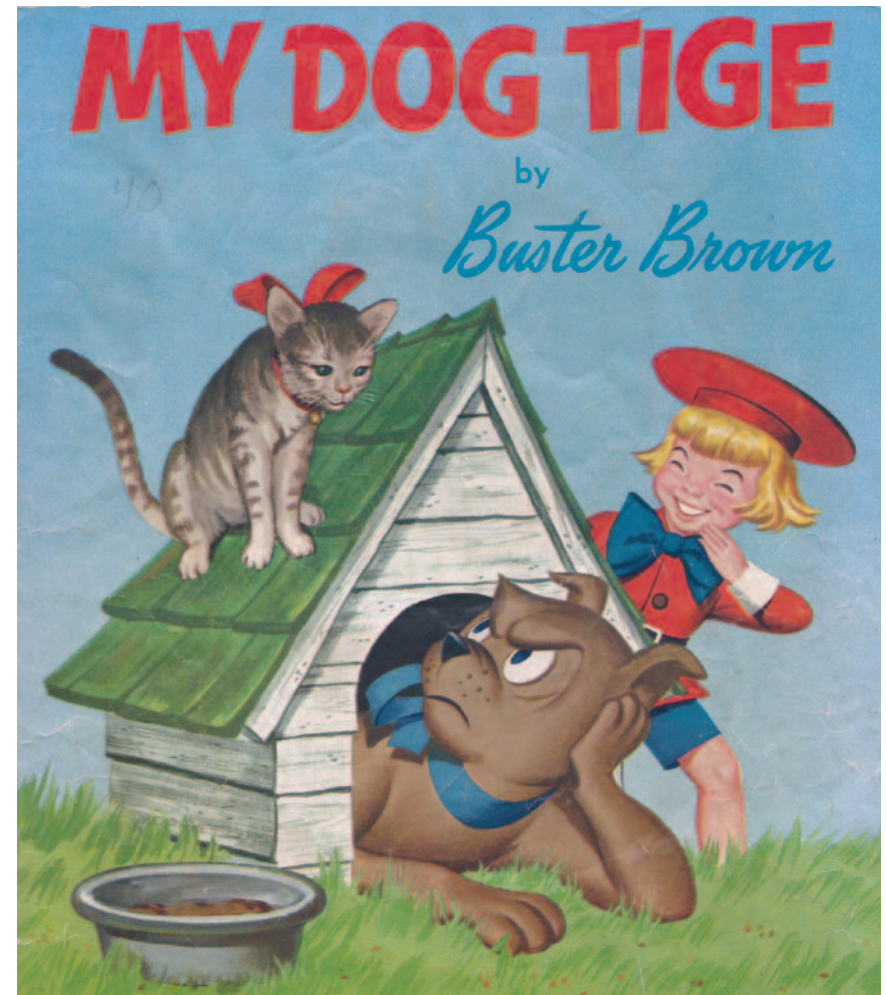
When driving his taxi cab, he would often take me to pick up his brother Charles, and invariably his beloved dog, Blackie. Dad would race the engine as if he were going to run over the dog just to see the shocked look on Charles' face.

6. Courage and persistence in life. My observation is that my father had a very difficult and perhaps disappointing existence in many ways. Like most marriages, there were difficult moments concerning expectations and results. My mother argued for him to close the restaurant since it was not succeeding and could not support his family. In spite of that, he got up every day and worked long and tedious hours—sometimes seven days a week from 5 a.m. until 9 p.m., with three hours off for a nap in the afternoon. In spite of the fact that he had little money coming in to show for his efforts, he would get up the next day and go back to his task and to his life's work. He was a loving father and husband who lent emotional support to all around him. He was always there for us, especially emotionally.

As the years went on and the restaurant years became evermore financially difficult, he still gave a good effort, and that has remained with me as a tremendous message. My own life has presented its own pattern of triumph, as well as defeat and disappointment. I look back at the times in which I have tried a jury trial and have come away empty in defeat. I recall how Dad would get up the next day and go back to work, as indeed I do. He was a believer in the wisdom of Abraham Lincoln, who said at the beginning of the Civil War to the Union, "My fellow Americans, we must remember that behind the clouds the sun still shines." I also take Lincoln's words to heart when I think of my father's courage. The next day will be a new day, and the promise of that day can be evermore blessed than this one day when you're disappointed.

In that regard, although he was a man with no education, he passed on the need for education, which has been a great blessing in my own life. I am so mindful of the opportunity that I was able to graduate from college and law school, and the blessings that have flowed to enrich my own life and existence. In contrast, my own father did not have this opportunity.

It is said that the acorn never falls far from the tree, and in my own case, I have flourished under the shade of his beautiful tree of life. ♦



Brown's nickname was a reference to Buster Brown, a cartoon originally published in 1901, and then used as a logo for the Brown Shoe Co. The name was a unique choice for Brown's restaurant located at 1011 13th St. NW in Washington, D.C.

CHILDREN OF W.S. AND DAISY GREENE



Marvin (Jack) (1899)

Eva Mae (1901)

Madeline (1903)

Roosevelt (Brown) (1905)

Sadie (1908)

George (1909)

Charles (Dick) (1912)

Mary Elizabeth (Mary Beth) (1914)

William Harding (1921)



Brown's Siblings Beyond Cooleemee

By Daisy Cusick Kiley

My mother, Mary Beth, was tied to each of her siblings, especially Brown. Sadie, who died as an infant and many years before my mother's birth, continued to be a presence. When her mother died, Mary Beth assured that Sadie's small coffin was reinterred at their mother's grave, and had her baby marker polished as her mother had requested.

Jack moved to Carolina Beach as a young man and raised his family there. For many years he and his wife, Naomi, ran a tourist home on the beach. What a lovely spot it was.

Mae moved to Welcome, N.C., in the adjoining county of Davidson while still a teenager. Each time the family visited Cooleemee, a visit to Welcome was an important part of the trip. Mae moved when my mother was a very little girl, and she longed for her. In many ways, Mae was a mother to Mary Beth.

Madeline moved to Washington, D.C., around the same time Brown did. Eventually she settled on the other side of the Potomac River in Springfield, Va. Frequent phone calls kept them in touch.

George and Charles eventually moved to Washington, too. George drove his cab after returning from World War II. Charles worked for the Railroad. For a while, he and his wife lived only a block away from my parents.

Harding was the brother closest to Mary Beth in age. He was thrilled when she was chosen to be Miss Davie County in 1933 when he was 12. She had great hopes for what he might accomplish when he eventually returned from World War II. Sadly, it was not to be. He was killed in action in Germany only weeks before the end of the war. The telegram announcing his death was delivered to my parents' house. My mother was devastated.

Of them all, Brown was the one she most admired and respected. When he became a Mason, it conferred a special esteem. It also enabled her to become an Eastern Star, which she proudly did. ♦



In the '50s, the Greene sibs often gathered to share special occasions with food and laughs. Charles (far right) thought he was a movie star, with his sisters, Mary Beth and Madeline, there to tell him otherwise. (Brown, far left, George in the middle)

The Legacy—Planting the Seeds

Personal Essay by Daisy Cusick Kiley

A remembrance of my mother, Mary Beth Greene Cusick

Meditating on your relationship with a parent is difficult—even when there are those times when you say something to your spouse or child, and have a moment of recognition: “I have become my mother!” Of course we don’t actually become our parents. As poets write, we are each unique, as unique as snowflakes.

We become who we are for reasons often difficult to understand. We are a conglomeration of our experiences—the friends we have had, the books we have read or the cultural activities we embraced. We are also fruit from all of the generations that have preceded us. Whether we have known these individuals or perhaps have just heard about them, they have made an impact. In some cases, we may not even know their names or whether they were generals or privates or participated in the wars of our history. Some have been on the winning side and some on the losing side. However large or small, they contributed to the history of their times. That history has left us a legacy of who we are from our religious traditions and politics to economics and our education. Whether we share nature and nurture, one or both of those has directly influenced our makeup, physiologically and psychologically.

Here’s how I first see my mother, looking at the surface. She was beautiful and shy. I am neither of those. But looking deeper, I see that my mother had an innate stubbornness. That trait can be useful, especially in overcoming hardships. She finished high school in the midst of the Great Depression of the 1930s, after leaving home to help support her family following her father’s death. Only someone with a strong will to persevere and the support of people who cared about her could achieve that. For me, it was completing my college degree many years after high school (although in honesty, that was easier to achieve in my time than completing high school was for her in her time).



Two-year-old Mary Beth on the porch of the ancestral home site in Cooleemee, N.C. Notice the cute pageboy cut that highlighted her face. This was a professional shot with a boy doll in the chair—the final touch from the photographer.

The death of her father, W.S. Greene, was an impactful time for Mary Beth, the eighth of nine children. He was a much older father and had died immediately of massive heart failure on his small farm. Although she spoke little of him to me, I will always remember her recollection of being called to the principal’s office and told, “Your father dropped dead.” She soon dropped out of high school and took a job in the local cotton mill, though she eventually returned to Cooleemee High School and graduated.

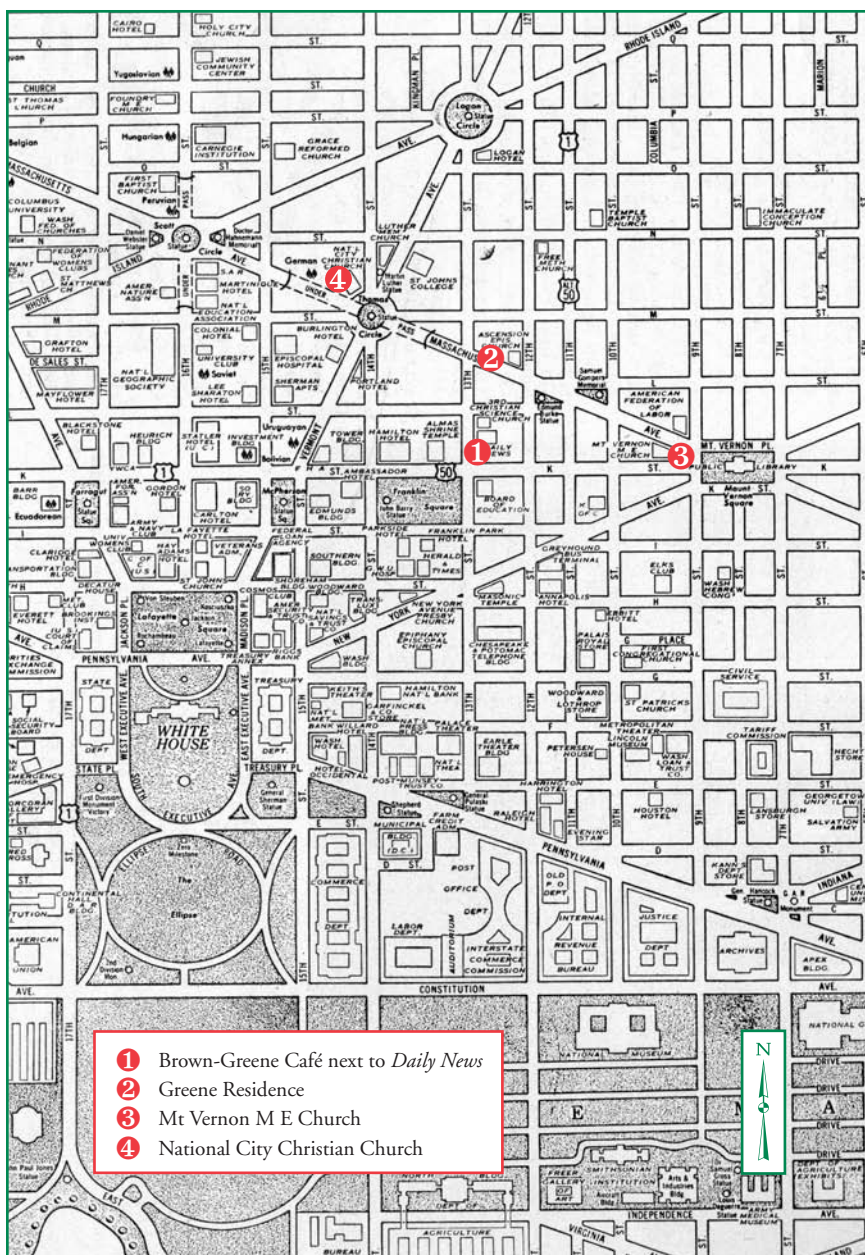
In 1933, Mary Beth was named “Miss Davie County”. Soon after that, she made the migration to Washington, D.C., where she first lived in the house of her brother Brown while she worked at the department store, Julius Garfinckel & Co. Later she was hired as a governess for a wealthy family with a summer home in New Hampshire. That was arguably the happiest time of her life. The bond she shared with the Guider family lasted for decades. Mrs. Guider later hosted my parents’ wedding reception in her Kalarama estate, and she and her husband were my brother’s godparents. My sister was named for both Mrs. Guider and her oldest daughter. They were family in the best sense of the word.

The most important thing I think I share with my mother is a strong faith and spiritual nature, a belief in something larger than ourselves, and a hope for a new day and a new life. My mother and I both have been searchers. Our faith searches sometimes led us on different paths. For my mother, it meant changing her religion. While I continue with my religion of birth, I am a student of my own and also of the religious heritages of others. In my mother’s tradition, questioning was verboten; in mine, it is part of God’s gift to me.

Planting seeds. Each of us plant them every day, sometimes in the children we raise, the careers we pursue or the friendships we cultivate. Hundreds of years hence, some of those seeds will bear fruit. While we won’t be here for the harvest, if we are responsible for the planting only, it is my hope that our descendants who learn about us appreciate us for that alone. ♦



As a young adult, Mary Beth lived with the Brown Greene family in Washington, D.C., after she left Cooleemee, N.C., where in 1933 she was named “Miss Davie County”. She was proud to be a member of the Eastern Star, enabled with her brother’s membership in the Masons.



Map of Washington, D.C., Featuring Points of Interest
World Atlas and Gazetteer, Rand McNally & Co.

EPILOGUE

Dear Reader,

Thank you for spending time with this piece of our family's mosaic. I am deeply proud of my father even though my time with him was so short, but it happens to many. What I hope you realize is that you are also part of this story and that it doesn't have to stop with Roosevelt Brown Greene.

My hope is that this can continue as a living memento, and that through your own contributions to our family story it can become an important link from the past to the future.

Peace and health,

John P. Greene

jpg@medfitpartners.com

Brown and his wife, Mildred, are buried at Fort Lincoln Cemetery in Brentwood, Md. His brothers Charles and Harding also are buried there, as Brown had encouraged family members, including William Cusick, Mary Beth's husband, to purchase plots during a fundraising campaign for Mt. Vernon church.



Brown's legacy lives in you.
In you, he would have been most proud:
His four children,
16 grandchildren,
21 great-grandchildren ...
and counting.



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