

**MISS MC BEE'S MEMORIES OF THE EARLY DAYS OF ASHLEY HALL  
AS TOLD TO  
MARY BISSELL Mc IVER THOMPSON '28**

"Must you do it alone", asked her father as the slim, auburn haired girl of 29, eyes alight with determination announced her decision to start a girl's school in the year 1909. This was not a sudden resolve of Mary Vardrine Mc Bee's but one born in the rain five years before as she came down the steps of Smith College after three grueling days of entrance examinations. Vardrine Mc Bee decided then and there that the girls of the South should have the same privileges granted the Northern girls on entering college. This determination to do the seemingly impossible and the unexpected was not new to the Mc Bee family for Vardrine came of a stalwart and enterprising father who always seized every opportunity life offered.

Silas Mc Bee was a student at Sewanee in Tennessee when one afternoon as he was astride his horse ready to ride in a lancing tournament, he espied a lovely young lady entering the spectator's arena with her chaperone. Never one to let convention interfere with ripe opportunity, upon winning the tournament he went to his unknown lady and crowned her the "Queen of Love and Beauty." Such gallantry could not be denied and from then on Silas Mc Bee and Mary Estelle Sutton were destined to join forces.

Upon Silas' graduation from Sewanee the two were married and in Lincolnton, North Carolina, three children were born -first, Estelle, then Mary Vardrine and lastly Silas, Jr. Soon afterwards Silas was asked by his devoted friend Dr. William Porcher Du Bose, dean of Sewanee Theological School, to take charge of Fairmont School for Girls at nearby Mont Eagle, Tennessee, where the three children grew up amid the happiest of surroundings. It was a home where the strictest obedience was demanded but where laughter could and did ring out often to destroy whatever tensions might charge the atmosphere.

Before the second child was born there was talk of honoring Silas' prominent father whose father had established the town of Greenville, South Carolina but when that child turned out to be a girl it was decided that she be baptized "Mary" after her mother, for who would have the heart to inflict the name of Vardry Alexander on so small a female? It wasn't long afterwards that sitting in the parlor, admiring his new born, who was bouncing on her mother's knee, Silas said, "You know Molly, we could call our Mary, Vardrine". And so she became Mary Vardrine Mc Bee, honoring both mother and grandfather and destined to influence the lives of countless young girls as the head of Ashley Hall.

Estelle and Vardrine attended Fairmont as day students, receiving a thorough grounding in elementary subjects and learning through rote much that could be remembered all through their lives.

The little town of Mont Eagle was a proud community whose people valued an education more than most. The Episcopalians, of whom there was a majority because of the proximity of Sewanee and its Divinity School, were dissatisfied with their habit of holding services in one of the class rooms at Fairmont and so decided to build their own church. Their desire for a church changed the life of Silas Mc Bee for in helping to erect it he found he had a talent for wood carving.

Grandma Sutton was a frequent visitor to the Mc Bee house-hold at this period and when she heard that the church was to be built she offered to use her knowledge of wood carving to create an altar if Silas would shape the huge oak beams and fix a workshop under the house.

One day while the carving was waiting for Grandma's busy hands to complete their task, Silas idly picked up the tools and started to whittle at the design. To his amazement, he found the work easy and he rushed to tell Grandma Sutton, who, when she saw what he had done ordered him to finish the altar as his carving was superior to hers.

After the lovely little stone church was completed with its hand carved altar and pews, others wanted Silas MC Bee's carving and he became an authority on church architecture. He carved the altars of and was one of those who protested the loudest at the terrible errors in the plan of St. John the Divine in New York. The little church in Mont Eagle carried three stars beside its name in Baedeker's Guide.

When Vardrine was ten, Mrs. Mc Bee became ill with a lingering sickness and was confined to bed. The next year was tinged with sadness, for Mary Sutton knew she was not going to get well and she tried to prepare her brood for the inevitable. Often lying in her bed she read the children stories and she made certain that the tale of the mother hen who raised not only her chicks but the babies belonging to another hen became familiar. In that farsighted way she instilled in her three the feeling that though she might not be able to care for them throughout their childhood there would be another mother to carry on the job.

So, when in Vardrine's fourteenth year Dr. Mc Bee remarried, the adjustment was made easier by a thoughtful mother's unselfish love.

Seeing that Mrs. Mc Bee was too ill to care for the family, Dr. Mc Bee moved them back to Lincolnton where his parents could watch over them. He resigned his position with Fairmont and became a traveling representative of Sewanee while he continued his work as a church architect. After Mrs. Mc Bee's death Estelle and Vardrine completed their

education as boarding students at Fairmont and Vardrine was graduated as the sole member of her class.

The next year found the two girls living in Philadelphia with their aunt, Mrs. W.E. Mikell, and her husband who was the dean of the University of Pennsylvania Law School. This was a sad period in Vardrine's life for coupled with the loss of her devoted mother, and the separation from her adored father, was the day to day trial of living in an uncongenial home with an unfamiliar aunt and uncle and two strange young cousins.

At the end of the year, Dr. Mc Bee, who by now was established in New York as a church architect and was writing articles for the *Churchman*, an Episcopal magazine, decided that his family should be reunited. It was a happy day when Estelle and Vardrine arrived to take up a new life in a delightful family hotel in New York. Now their horizons began to be broadened for each Saturday they attended the matinee of the Opera and countless were the visits to art galleries and museums. Life was delightful but lacking in purpose, and Vardrine longed to attend college, an almost unheard of ambition, for young women at that time were considered definitely odd if they felt their heads to be still unfilled after "finishing school." Realizing that her father could not afford college she toyed with the idea of kindergarten training but wisely decided against a profession for which she would have been unsuited.

Two years later Dr. Mc Bee re-married and the family once again was uprooted. This time Great Neck, Long Island, was to be home base as it was their step mothers' residence. Dr. Mc Bee was now editor of the *Churchman* and writing articles expressing his most forthright opinions with the approval of the editor, a crotchety old soul who much have found the outspoken brazenness of this young man quite refreshing. It was in this period in Theodore Roosevelt's presidency of the US that he appointed a Negro as the Collector of the Port at Charleston. Dr. Mc Bee was incensed and proceeded to write an editorial exposing the folly of such a choice. To the surprise of everyone except Dr. Mc Bee he received a summons to visit the White House where he discussed the appointment with President Roosevelt and had the satisfaction of hearing the president admit that an error had been made. However, no change could be affected as the Negro was already in office.

One morning when life seemed at a particularly upsetting standstill for Vardrine, who was once again in New York City due to the illness of the new Mrs. Mc Bee's uncle, she was startled to have Dr. Mc Bee say, "Vardrine, why don't you go to college? I can afford it now."

Letting no grass grow under her feet, Vardrine wrote immediately to Smith College whose halls had beckoned her ever since those days at Fairmont when she had read a

girl's periodical describing the various women's colleges. She had now been out of school for four years and she found that because of Fairmont's lack of certificate privileges she would be obliged to take three days of examinations before being admitted to Smith. Horror of horrors, Fairmont had neglected to teach her any of the sciences!

With careful thought she purchased a science book containing the science information required for entrance and was able to read one half of the book while on the train to Northampton. Three days of writing answers from nine to six left no time for science study until the night before the examination when she opened the last half of the book and "crammed".

The following day, weary with fatigue and nervous over the outcome of her torturous exams, she refused to go to chapel until she should know the entrance board's decision. At long length her room-mate over-persuaded her and as they walked towards the chapel they were joined by a Miss Cushing who informed Vardrine that she had conditioned two subjects, Latin and Algebra. She had passed the dreaded science! Miss Cushing advised a tutor and told her the re-exams would have to be taken within ten days. To Miss Cushing's surprise and with her father's confidence, Vardrine announced that she thought she knew Algebra and would like the re-exam at once. The result of the exam was so favorable that Vardrine was accepted immediately and it was as she left the office that she made her decision to found a girl's school.

The years at Smith were busy ones, filled with studies, and the young Vardrine took her place as chairman of the Missionary Circle and various other student organizations besides entering into many forms of sports.

Realizing upon graduation that she was not quite ready for the task of starting her girl's school, she taught for a year at Fairmont and then continued her studies at Columbia University where she earned the Master's degree in History and Education.

After attending the commencements at Sewanee and Smith, Vardrine found the exercises at Columbia most disappointing. Nicholas Murray Butler, as president of the University sat on the platform surrounded by heads of departments and only persons earning the highest degrees were called to the forefront. The names of college graduates and candidates for the degree of M.A. were rapidly read and they were told to go to a certain office where their diplomas would be waiting for them. However disturbing the proceedings might have been to one accustomed to far more pomp and ceremony, it was as nothing compared to the fact that Dr. Butler combined a blue shirt and tan shoes with his pink and red robes!

When Silas Mc Bee was elected a delegate to the Pan Anglican Congress in 1908 he invited the girls to accompany him and Mrs. Mc Bee and they accepted with alacrity. The family sailed on a North German Lloyd liner which had just completed her maiden voyage from Germany and the MC Bees had a very festive trip over to Le Havre.

London was fascinating to Vardrine who attended a garden party given by the Prince and Princess of Wales to meet their majesties the King and Queen. The party was given at the home of Lord Strathcome, the man who put through the Canadian Pacific railroad from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Lord Strathcome lived in Bulwer Litton's old home and he arranged for special trains to convey his guests the thirty-five miles from London.

Vardrine also had tea on the terrace of the House of Parliament as the guest of Bishop Wordsworth and the Negro Bishop of South Africa (Bishop Oly Woly) whose presence lifted the experience into the plane of the unusual. The service in St. Paul's cathedral, when she sat high up in the rotunda and could watch the grand procession of Lord Mayor, Bishops and dignitaries in full regalia, made a deep impression on Vardrine and she thrilled with pride to see her father walking with those prominent personages.

While on the boat to France the girls met Dr. Mc Bee's friend, the US Ambassador, who invited them to have lunch with him on the train to Paris and also invited them to the reception customarily given on the Fourth of July to visiting Americans by the US Embassy.

Upon leaving Paris, Vardrine attended summer school at the University of Jena, Germany, after which, with her family, she toured Germany and Switzerland and then started for home.

Just at this time the Clergy of South Carolina, under the leadership of Bishop Alexander Guerry, Vardrine's uncle-in-law, were anxious to establish a church school. Hearing of Vardrine's ambition they invited her to meet with them in Charleston. The meeting proved fruitless for the Clergy seemed unwilling to make definite decisions, and Vardrine returned to New York.

The following winter she again visited Charleston, this time to watch over Bishop Guerry's family because of Mrs. Guerry's illness.

With an eye to a suitable location for her desired school<sup>1</sup> she went throughout the city looking at vacant real estate. The large Witte home on Rutledge Avenue was for sale and seemed ideal but the price was far more than the \$16,000 she could scrape together. It was a distinct shock when Mr. Earl Sloan, a next-door neighbor to the Guerry's and a son-in-

law of Mr. Witte, came over to ask that Vardrine make an offer for the house. The Wittes preferred that the home be used as a girl's school rather than other proposed uses.

Mr. Sloan accepted- Vardrine's offer and thus in 1909 she became the proud young owner and founder of a boarding school for young ladies in Charleston. The almost insurmountable problem of furnishing the house, securing teachers and generally making a start in a business world that considered young ladies definitely "detrop" seemed not to daunt Vardrine who felt she could see the Lord's hand directing her at every turn.

A large, handsome house was a splendid beginning for Vardrine Mc Bee's dream but only a beginning. She hurried to New York to inform her family and to formulate her plans. Summer found her back in Charleston living alone on the top floor of her school while she hurriedly ordered furniture, sent for her family belongings long stored in Lincolnton and advertised for her pupils.

She persuaded one teacher to come from Fairmont, talked Miss Dunbar into joining her after leaving Columbia, where she was doing graduate work, and found several other women willing to take their chances with her in the adventure. Mrs. Lucas, the mother of a prospective student was engaged to over-see the housekeeping and preparation of meals.

The curriculum had to be planned and here again .she turned her thoughts to Fairmont. Some of the splendid training she and Estelle had received should be incorporated in the new school's agenda along with the courses recommended by her Education professors at Columbia and those demanded by the college entrance requirements. Unable to find the text books she needed in Charleston, she ordered them, as well as the adjustable desks, from the North.

Supremely important was the selection of a name and Vardrine spent many hours in thought before she decided that the house was big enough to deserve the distinction of being called "Hall." If it were to be a "Hall," what could be more logical than to name it for the nearest of the two rivers flowing around Charleston? Thinking it over, she felt she had found the perfect name, "Ashley Hall". It wasn't until years later that she discovered that there was another Ashley Hall, a plantation some distance from Charleston, on the Ashley River.

With a sudden exhilaration she realized that she had her building, her teachers, a satisfactory number of student applications and now a name. Ashley Hall was assuming shape and substance.

All too quickly the day arrived in September when she stood alone at Ashley Hall's gracious door to welcome her girls. Frightened, yes, but happy with the knowledge that a beginning was being made and confident that she could see through whatever pitfalls lay ahead. Bishop Guerry was there to ask a blessing as the school began its first day and the 14 boarders and 30 day students took their places in the Assembly Hall.

At Christmas time Estelle arrived for a short visit that stretched into a lifetime stay. From then on Miss Mc Bee had one of her own nearby in whom to confide and "Miss Estelle" as she was affectionately called, soon became an integral part of the school's life.

Providing the young boarding students with recreation taxed Miss Mc Bee's ingenuity at times and she often engineered charades, plays and games of all sorts in the Assembly Hall. Whatever suitable attractions Charleston offered were enjoyed by the student body, heavily chaperoned, of course. Knowing how important a part music should play in her school she engaged not only a teacher of piano but also a teacher of the violin, Miss Marie Baker, who became the concert master of the Charleston Symphony Orchestra. Miss Mc Bee joined the orchestra, too, and to the envy of her students, played the percussion instruments with great gusto.

Miss Mc Bee found as headmistress she must keep the financial affairs in good order, oversee the day to day problems of the school itself, maintain a congenial atmosphere among the students and faculty, teach her classes in History and keep a keen eye on the future. How often she must have wished herself twins to shoulder all the responsibilities that she had assumed because of her unswerving determination to help the girls of the South. Perhaps the very fact of having so much to do kept her from admitting to herself the possibility of defeat or maybe the end of the day found her too weary to take on unnecessary worries. Whatever it was, 1911 arrived with 70 students enrolled and the school ready and anxious to meet the challenge of the new term.

In June of 1911 the first preliminary college entrance examinations were held and in 1913 Mary Stuart Howden was admitted to Smith on the basis of those examinations. At the end of Mary's first year, because of her very high averages, Ashley Hall was granted certificate privileges, the only school south of Washington to be so honored.

Now Miss Mc Bee could relax a little for here was the proof for which she had been waiting. Her school had proved itself to be exceptional and would be recognized as such. When the larger colleges withdrew those certificate privileges some years later, and only the highest seventh of the senior classes of certain schools were permitted to enter without examination Ashley Hall, of course, was among those so listed.

With the school well established and her affairs in good order, Miss Mc Bee decided to spend her summers conducting tours of Europe for a limited number of girls. That explains why she and her five charges were coming down the steps of a beautiful little inn in Lucerne one fine morning in 1917. When she stopped to bid her host good-by he asked if she were not nervous about having five young ladies so far from home in such an unsettled world. Not having been able to keep abreast of the news through newspapers during her travels, Miss Mc Bee was surprised at his concern and determined to pay the US Ambassador a visit upon reaching Paris. That gentleman assured her when she saw him that the situation was not as tense as had been described, and told her not to be worried for should war be declared the US would most certainly send ships to convey its citizens home!

Having been reassured the little group continued their sight-seeing and in the afternoon decided to make some purchases in the fabulous shops of Paris. When Miss Mc Bee tried to cash a rather large Traveler's Check in order to pay the bills and was refused, she again became apprehensive and decided to try cashing one of a smaller denomination that she had in her room at the hotel. As she was on her way back to the stores with the check she noticed a general air of excitement in the streets and by the time she reached the shopping district the people were gathering around the posts on which notices had been nailed. They were reading the Act of Mobilization and with a sinking heart Miss Mc Bee knew she must quickly get her girls out of France.

Although the metal money disappeared as if by magic she was able to get \$200 in gold which she put in a bag hung around her neck and with that small capital she rushed to Cook's office to buy tickets for the boat train. The agent informed her that there were no tickets available and she must board the train as best she could.

As they made their way back to the hotel to pack, she had the presence of mind to pick up a large, strong, wooden box which she knew would be needed for the "extras." Miss Mc Bee persuaded Charles, the head porter at the hotel, to come with her to the station and he proved invaluable for it was he who was able to commandeer one small landau into which were jammed Miss Mc Bee, the five girls, thirteen suitcases, the wooden box, the driver, his dog and Charles himself. The station was a place of mad confusion with the crowds in such a distracted state that people were being crushed by the pushing and shoving. Making a barricade of the bags Miss Mc Bee and Charles protected the girls from the surging mass of humanity. Frantic for the girls: safety and wondering how she was to get them on the boat train, Miss Mc Bee was approached by a wild eyed young woman who was obviously chaperoning one small young lady. This stranger begged to join the group. Charles in the mean time had skirted the crowd and came back to report that he had found a train on a further track that he thought they could board. By superhuman

efforts they squeezed and shoved their way towards the train and were at first granted then refused permission to enter the baggage car. Just as they and the bags were safely crammed into the train proper the strange chaperone announced in a weak voice that she had left her luggage in the station. With admirable fortitude Miss Mc Bee put her in charge of the group and she and Charles once again fought their way back to the designated spot to find not suitcases but a small steamer trunk. She grabbed one end of the trunk, and with Charles at the other end, they managed to get to the train just as it pulled out of the station.

When they arrived at Bordeaux it was black night and Miss Mc Bee was faced with the necessity of getting her charges and their numerous bags off the train and onto an overcrowded boat. As luck would have it she found a porter and they began the long walk. As they were struggling along an American came up and demanded that the porter drop their bags and carry his, which the porter proceeded to do. Now the luggage became their problem alone. When Miss Mc Bee looked ahead and saw what a distance they would be forced to walk in order to reach the boat she made a quick decision to take a shortcut. By climbing over a fence and crossing another railroad track they could follow a narrow path that was at the very edge of the sea. Down the path the procession started when suddenly they were startled to hear a voice ring out "Attencion" and the lights of a fast moving train came bearing down upon them. Snapping orders like a general Miss Mc Bee commanded her group to "face the engine." They obeyed as seasoned soldiers and the train roared past their noses as with difficulty they kept their balance and refrained from falling backwards into the sea.

As they were the very last to board the boat they settled themselves in the only available space, which was under the lifeboats. But despite the physical discomfort Miss McBee knew that it was the most beautiful trip she had ever made for wasn't she getting nearer the English coast by the minute?

It was daybreak when they reached England, went through customs and took the London bound train. When they were all seated, the strange chaperone, with sickening repetition, announced that once again she had misplaced her luggage. This time being on English soil Miss Mc Bee advised her to go and find it herself and that was the last seen of the two strangers.

At long last the train reached London, they got into a cab and Miss Mc Bee and the girls started to laugh with relief. Before they knew it the taxi driver joined in and though disheveled, travel stained and weary, they literally laughed themselves into one of London's nicest hotels. The clean linen of the beds had never looked cleaner nor had any bath seemed more refreshing than that Sunday morning.

Miss McBee wanted to attend church but when she reached Westminster Abbey, because of the trouble London was experiencing with suffragettes, the door was shut in her face. She went around the corner to St. Margaret's and was allowed to go up a side aisle. In the middle of the Litany, to her amazement a young woman arose and asked in a loud voice that they pray for certain of the suffragettes. With measured steps, two ushers approached, stopped at the pew and the young woman moved over to the aisle and was escorted out of the church. Several similar interruptions made morning worship difficult and most unusual. Miss Mc Bee later found that the young women who had behaved in such an unseemly manner had not been punished in any way further than merely being removed from the church.

To Miss McBee's surprise when she returned to the hotel there was a message saying that the father and uncle of one of the girls were in London attending a doctor's conference and would see them shortly.

Early Monday morning Miss Mc Bee hurried to Pall Mall where she walked from office to office trying to get homeward passage for her charges. The boat on which she had made reservations being admirably suited, because of its size and construction, had been designated a troop ship and thus they were left without a way to get home. At the point of despair she saw an office of a Line of which she knew nothing. She went in and was told that she could get passage in the steerage but payment would have to be immediate. She pleaded with the agent to hold the places while she went back to the hotel for the money and he agreed to wait a stipulated length of time. No taxi being available she ran all the way to the hotel and back and was able to secure the tickets not only for herself and the five girls but for the two gentlemen relatives who were struggling to find transportation home.

The little party ate a quick dinner and then Miss Mc Bee once again packed her girls and their belongings into a train, this time bound for Liverpool and the returning ship. Reaching Liverpool's docks they were greeted with the news that because of a threat of a German boat in the nearby waters, the liner would not sail until the danger was past. After their recent hair-raising experiences in reaching Liverpool this final delay seemed slight and no one minded an extra night in a strange hotel.

The next morning two of the girls were able to find first class passage with some friends lucky enough to have such accommodations, but Miss Mc Bee and the remaining three were herded into steerage. It was remarkably clean but indeed rough. The so-called beds were merely iron pipes on which was thrown a mattress of new-mown hay. There were two chairs in the cabin and four hooks on which to hang their clothes. It was with considerable relief that they were soon able to secure second class accommodations but

this turned out to be an inside cabin and so the trip could not be called a luxurious one in any sense of the word. The crossing was rough and there were several submarine scares before reaching Montreal. As the boat made its moorings Miss Mc Bee looked down and wonder of wonders, there in the waiting crowd she saw her father's face.

In 1923 Miss Mc Bee decided that Christmas should be celebrated with more than her annual tree for poor children and that the presentation of a play would be appropriate. "Why the Chimes Rang" seemed a suitable vehicle for the young ladies and so it became the first in a long and continuing line of Christmas plays which are now firmly entrenched as a part of Ashley Hall's tradition. In later years, part of the Chester Cycle of Miracle Plays became the Christmas gift of the school to the community and each year it was produced at a local auditorium to overflowing crowds of people who came to look forward to it with joy.

Now came the lean years, those days of depression when businesses and schools had a way of disappearing and Miss Mc Bee faced the specter of financial ruin and the end of her beloved school. Each morning, not waiting to dress, she would hurriedly don a robe and rush forth to get the News and Courier to see, like Abu Ben Adam, if her name was "written there" in the lists of involuntary bankruptcy. By some miracle, she escaped the dreaded collapse and came through the period in a state of solvency but not without much prayer and a sprinkling of white hairs among the auburn.

Ashley Hall continued to grow steadily and surely throughout the "Thirties" with its kindergarten and normal school swelling the enrollment. Still Miss Mc Bee had no business manager, no dean of students, no maintenance man, for in order to save money for her teachers' salaries she continued to meld the jobs into that of headmistress extraordinary.

One morning in 1932 Miss Mc Bee received an invitation to be present at the Converse College commencement for the purpose of accepting the honorary degree of Litt D. Dr. William Way (rector of Grace Episcopal Church) accompanied her to Spartanburg and she was happy and proud when the hood was placed around her shoulders by Dean Gee, to realize that her life's work for the girls of the South had been recognized. Twice again she was so honored when in 1936 her alma mater, Smith College, added the degree of L.H.D. to her name and in 1937 when Furman awarded her the Litt.D.

As busy as she could possibly be with her school, Miss Mc Bee felt that a well-rounded principal should take part in civic affairs. She was one of the pioneers in establishing the Free Library and became its president. She was on the executive committee of Pinehaven (local Tuberculosis hospital), the Free Kindergarten, the Girl Scouts (Ashley Hall

sponsored the first troop in the city), the Inter Racial Relations Committee, the Poetry Society and the Civic Club. She founded and was first its president, then honorary president of the Charleston chapter of the American Association of University Women. She joined the County and State Teachers' Associations and served as a commissioner on the Charleston School Board (the first woman to do so). She belonged to the Chamber of Commerce and the Garden Club and was elected a member of the Head Mistresses Association of the East {a highly coveted membership and one not easy to obtain), the National Association of Principals of Schools for Girls, the American Association of School Administrators and the Southern Association of Private Schools. In 1958 Miss Mc Bee's name was added to the Hall of Fame which is maintained by the Charleston Federation of Women's Clubs.

Several times serious illness struck and with each recovery Miss Mc Bee realized she must loosen the reins and turn over some of the responsibility to others. She engaged a capable woman as academic head who relieved her of much of the actual teaching worries but by the end of the Forties she knew she must look seriously into the future and make definite plans for the continuance of her greatly loved school. Up until now Ashley Hall had been her school and hers alone – there was no endowment fund and no board of trustees on which to call – and the problem of how such a singularly owned school could survive without its founder, owner and principal was one that took clear thinking. She could simply close the school and retire but the thought of dealing Ashley Hall its death blow was abhorrent. What then should she do? After much prayer she decided to ask the father of four girls who had attended Ashley Hall to help her form a Board and turn Ashley Hall into a Foundation.

Calling her teachers together in the drawing room she told them of Ashley Hall's history and then announced to a breathlessly quiet circle, her decision to retire. The entire group sensed that the decision to walk away from her life's work and her home for forty years was a tremendously hard one. There being no "right" words at such an emotion packed occasion it was with considerable relief to all when someone called, "three cheers for Miss Mc Bee," and with the tension eased she could invite them to enjoy some refreshments.

For the remainder of her life Miss Mc Bee lived in a charmingly restored home whose backyard adjoined the Ashley Hall Lower School's grounds. As long as she was able, she kept busy with meetings of one sort or another. Her garden was a constant source of pleasure and each visitor felt her undiminished interest in everything around her. She thoroughly enjoyed the many visits from her "girls" and always remembered some incident to link them with their particular year. Not one to neither live in memories of the past nor pridefully look back on her astounding accomplishments, Miss Mc Bee was one of those all too rare examples of a "remarkable woman."