



# **Night and the Whippoorwills: A memoir of growing up in the American South during the 1930s**

*Jean Burt Polhamus*

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Jean and Sara Katherine played and fished together and had a close call in the Big Ditch. Jean and Nina roamed far and wide on their bicycles, exploring and enjoying the fruits they found along the Old Natchez Trace, especially Aunt Liney's. Jean and Ida Belle went to their first funeral and learned to appreciate life. "Night and the Whippoorwills" is a collection of stories about the life of a country child in Mississippi during the 1930s. In contrast to today's busy, structured world, life was simple and freedom and independence were plentiful. Families were close, protective and widespread, extending to great-aunts and uncles, cousins to the nth degree, and all ready to hold a reunion at the drop of a magnolia blossom. Children were welcomed underfoot. Fishing, like church affiliation, was hereditary. Small-town stores closed on Wednesday afternoons in summer so everyone could go fishing. Front porches bristled with fishing poles, and catfish, especially blue and channel, were regulars on the dinner table. Money on farms was a scarce commodity during the Great Depression, but food was homegrown and abundant and ahead of its time--it was all organic. Chemicals were far down the road. The homely, bare-bones schoolbus rumbled down dusty and often muddy roads to a country school that meant business--make the grade or repeat it--and Bible verses and prayer were included in weekly assemblies along with the Pledge of Allegiance. The Southern part of The Greatest Generation was being formed. These stories span an era long gone, but the heritage remains of family, freedom and the joy of living, to be passed on to those who will treasure it.

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