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Part One

*Meet the Author for Your Voyage
“Inside Our Legal System”*

“Do what thou hast to do and to thine own self be true.”
*Parents of Brooke von Falkenstein (née) Wunnicke, in
guidance soon after her marriage, early 1940. Paraphrased
from William Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act 1, Sc. 3*

WELCOME. MY brief autobiography will introduce me to you, before joining me on our voyage inside our legal system, as I have long dreamed of sharing with my fellow Americans.



Figure 1.1. Brooke in 1919, age one.



Figure 1.2. Brooke at age two in the garden at her family home in Dallas, Texas.

I Am a Westerner

I was born in Texas and, at the age of three, moved with my family to Southern California, where I was raised and educated.

I married a fellow college student from Wyoming, where I lived and practiced law for twenty-three years. Then we moved to Colorado, where I practiced law for forty-plus years until retirement in 2011. As an adult, I was never farther east in the United States than Chicago until I was thirty-five years old, when I was in New York on business.

This book, therefore, explains for you how the majority of American lawyers practice law and citizens experience the law and courts in small and medium-size towns and cities. I have no experience with very large firms in major cities, where some firms have hundreds of lawyers and many branch offices here and abroad. I have no experience with nationally famous cases or as a judge on the highest court in the country.

Instead, I shall share with you an insider's look at the law in America from the second half of the twentieth century to the first decade of the twenty-first century. Our Founding Fathers emphasized that we have a government of laws, not of men. So, come visit with me to learn—or remind yourself—what we have done with that sage advice on how to live as a free people.



Figure 1.3. Brooke at age three is already photogenic for this 1921 professional photograph by Melbourne Spurr Portraiture, then in Hollywood, California.



Figure 1.4. Brooke's parents in back of their West Hollywood stucco house, in the late 1920s or early 1930s.

Early Life

GROWING UP IN THE GREAT DEPRESSION

The term “autobiography” seems too pompous for this brief sketch of my life, included as an aid to reading and hopefully liking my book. In 1918, I was born in Dallas, Texas.

My family moved to Los Angeles when I was three years old and that is where I lived until I was twenty years old, in a pleasant Spanish-style house with a large back garden, located in West Hollywood.

I was the youngest of three children, a brother seventeen years older and a sister six years older. I was fortunate in having a loving family, parents and my older siblings. I was unfortunate to be unathletic, and Readers with the same problem may be comforted to know that they can still have happy, successful lives.

MY FAMILY

ACCORDING TO what my parents told me, their backgrounds differed sharply. My father was born in 1878 in Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany, and came to the United States when he was twelve years old. My mother was born in 1880 in Atlanta, Georgia, orphaned when five years old and raised by maternal grandparents in their home, which was on Sherman’s March to the Sea during the Civil War. My parents were married in 1901.

My father was the youngest of five children and was christened Raphael von Falkenstein, being named after the great Italian artist. He told me that

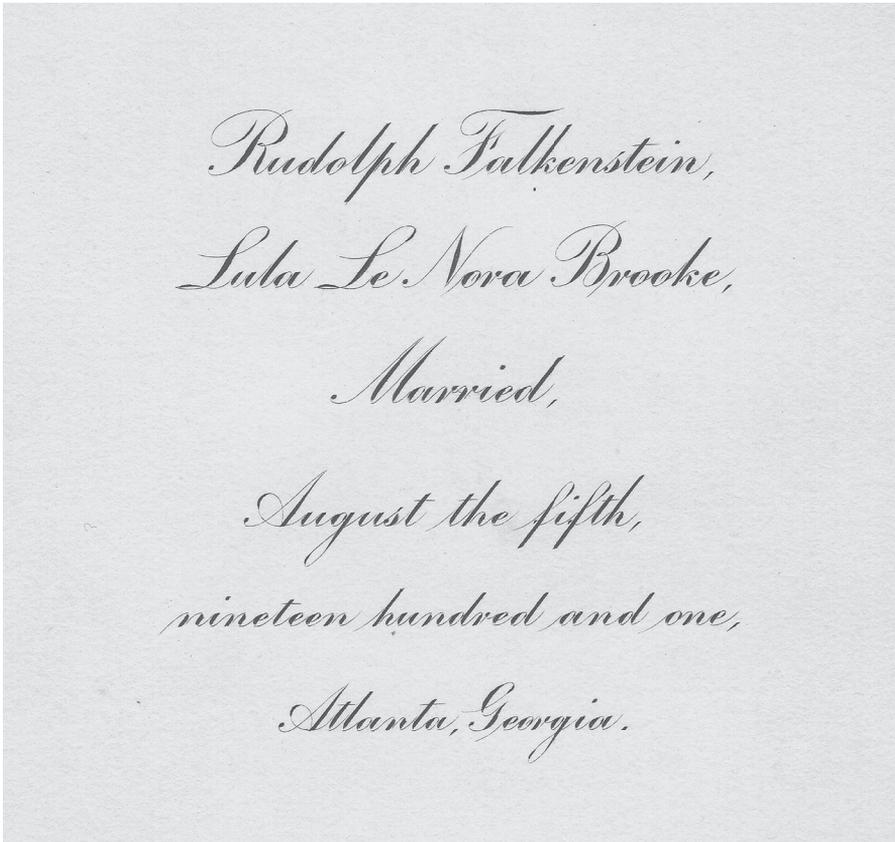


Figure 1.5. Announcement card that Rudolph Falkenstein and Lula Le Nora Brooke married on August 5, 1901, in Atlanta, Georgia.

his father's uncle was General Vogel von Falkenstein, who served with Otto von Bismarck. I was quite impressed when I learned about this and checked on my father's family in genealogy books at the library. When I told my father how impressed I was with the family history, I shall never forget my father's reply. He told me that the von Falkensteins were the second oldest German family, only the Hohenstauffens were older. Then he said that German people had given us three of the world's greatest musicians, Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms. They had also given us giants of literature, Schiller and von Goethe. But, he said that all the von Falkensteins had done through the centuries was fight, "warriors, nothing but warriors."

My father's father, who died long before I was born, loved art and did not believe in war. At the time of my father's boyhood, Germany was conscripting boys at age thirteen for military service. My paternal grandfather sent his

sons to America before they were thirteen, my father being sent at age twelve. At Ellis Island in about 1890, the immigration authorities “Americanized” his name to Rudolph von Falkenstein. Alas, decades later when the Nazis came to power, they tracked down my father in California and pressured him to support the Nazi regime because of his family’s “great military history”! My father was appalled. He was always so proud of being an American citizen, very patriotic, and insistent that his children must always exercise their right to vote. Then the Nazis began threatening him and his family, insisting that he was German, and his family’s centuries of notable military service required his return to Germany. He understandably became frightened. My family had never had any involvement in politics or with the law. I was away from home at this time, in my senior year of college at Stanford. When they called to tell me of this frightening situation, I said that they needed to notify the FBI and volunteered to do so for them. The FBI was wonderful, sent two agents to my family’s home, and gave them adequate protection. I found out later that they became fond of my mother, who was charming and made delicious food, and they kept her free from fear. I shall always be grateful for the safety that the FBI provided to my dear, unworldly parents.

An interesting note: while Nazis were threatening my parents, I read in the *San Francisco Chronicle* about a big party honoring a Nazi high-ranking officer visiting in the Golden Gate City. People in our country had not yet realized that the mounting Nazi military victories and the imminent invasion of England posed a threat to our national security.



Figure 1.6. Lula Le Nora and Rudolph von Falkenstein in about 1904 with Brooke’s brother Rudolph Jr., who used the first name Robert or Bob.

I have many memories of my father, several becoming fond only with time. He was very artistic, and business was always an alien world for him, with consequent unsuccessful results. He was impractical, always kind and gentlemanly, except when offended artistically. He also had an unfortunate inability to recall the surnames of my dates and later, even that of my husband.

As to my father's intolerance for "bad art," I remember when dear neighbors invited all five of our family to dinner to see the new picture that the wife had bought for their newly redecorated living room. We always enjoyed going to their home for dinner because we liked them very much, and she was an excellent cook. The husband was the well-paid head of the local division of a major corporation. They liked us, had no children, and enjoyed having our family with them. This night, however, we worried because the couple had no interest in art, and her home decorating taste was at best unfortunate. So, we urged our father not to say anything derogatory about the new picture she had bought, no matter how dreadful. He assured us that, of course, he would not be rude or hurt her feelings. When I saw the new picture, I feared that we were in trouble. It was painted in garish colors on black velvet! My father walked up close to this framed travesty, pulled out the small magnifying glass that he kept in his coat pocket, and peered at the picture. I held my breath, but it was not necessary because my father promptly said in an accusing tone: "Eva, who sold you this thing?" Not responding to his question, she made matters worse by saying, "I thought the picture would be nice because its colors go with the new carpet." Nonetheless, after this chilly interchange, our hostess served us a delicious dinner. My father's extreme lack of tact gave me a lifelong lesson to be polite and tactful.

My mother's background was entirely different from that of my father. Lula Le Nora Brooke was born in Georgia to a very old American family, with an ancestor who had signed the Declaration of Independence. My mother, the next to youngest of five children, was orphaned when she was only five years old and does not remember either parent. The Brooke children were not brought up together. As a result, I never knew aunts or uncles or cousins—the family was splintered. I remember my mother telling me that she never knew her two oldest siblings. She had heard that her oldest brother, Jasper Brooke, became a lawman in some western territory. Her older sister, Roxane, had married an Englishman and moved to England. The next sibling, Arthur Lee Brooke, lived in Atlanta, and occasionally he and my mother corresponded. The youngest child, O. A. Brooke, became a physician and practiced in the

Midwest. He would never disclose the names for his initials, and I started to tell them here—but I don't blame him, and my conscience would hurt if I told. My little orphaned mother went to live with her maternal grandparents, who still lived in their old plantation home that had been ransacked during Sherman's famous (and in the South, infamous) March to the Sea. She was raised by grandparents who had lived through the invasion during the Civil War. Thus, she was brought up in an earlier generation than if she had been raised by her parents. Her maternal grandfather was Zachariah Pinckney, a strict Scotch Presbyterian and a fervent hater of Yankees. The Pinckneys were loving grandparents but inculcated my dear mother with a distrust of Northerners and a lifelong detestation for General Sherman and his ravaging March to the Sea. When I was a child driving with my parents, we had to detour around a Los Angeles suburb that had the unfortunate name of Sherman Oaks. This was so unlike my mother in all other respects because she had a capacious heart and mind. She read widely, primarily history and biography with an occasional classical philosopher. I tell you truthfully: my mother was the loveliest person who I have ever known. I never heard her raise her voice in anger; she was always loyal and loving, intelligent, and eager to learn more. She was the epitome of a Southern lady of the nineteenth century in her taste, manners, and charm.

Many years later, when she was a sad new widow, I took her for her first visit to Washington, DC. She proudly watched my 1958 admission to practice before the Supreme Court of the United States; because of my Wyoming appellate practice, I had applied. My mother much enjoyed Mount Vernon and was thrilled to visit the home of Robert E. Lee, whose multivolume biography by Douglas Freeman she had recently read. I was still living in Wyoming at the time of our Washington trip, and I had prearranged a visit with our then senator, Frank Barrett. He invited us to lunch with him in the Senate Dining Room. He introduced us to a Southern senator, stating that my mother was from the South. My mother acknowledged the introduction in her usual gracious manner, and I still remember what ensued. The Southern senator excused himself and returned with two more Southern senators, later joined by still two others. Senator Barrett and I just looked at each other—we were nonexistent! Finally, he murmured, "I guess it's true, what they say about the charm of Southern ladies." Yes, it is true. My mother, free from any affectation, graciously made you feel good and want to be with her.

My mother tried very diligently to bring me up as a lady, in my manners, taste, and attitudes. I never acquired a fraction of her charm, but her teachings have always remained with me, even as to such details as a lady did not go forth without a hat and gloves. I did not realize how deeply she had inculcated the requirements for a lady until after my marriage and move to Wyoming. Then a lawyer, I was driving from Cheyenne to Casper to argue several motions, when I had my first and only serious auto accident. I learned the hard way that a hill that is clear on one side can be icy on the other. As I came to the top of the hill, the heavy dark red Hudson Hornet convertible went into a four-wheel skid, sailed into the air, and rolled over twice. As traffic stopped, and drivers rushed down the hill to pick up the body, I emerged from the total wreck. I was shaking, with my hat askew, and when asked, "Are you all right?" I responded, true to my mother's teachings, "No, I left my gloves in the car."

I very much want the Reader to be able to visualize my mother. A friend of my big brother's, who had become a successful playwright in New York, told me that when my mother was in her twenties, "She was the most beautiful lady whom I have ever seen." All my life she seemed beautiful to me and apparently to all around her. Every plant in our garden seemed to respond to her. We had a large bush covered with pink Cecil Bruner roses, a lovely big lilac tree, yellow roses, large hydrangeas, big ginger flowers, fuchsias, and many more humble and exotic flowers. Everything bloomed in profusion, as if to please my mother. Our fruit trees reacted the same: a giant apricot tree with the best apricots I have ever eaten, purple and white fig trees, orange and lemon trees, and a favorite peach tree. Again, like the flowers, the fruit grew and ripened in profusion. I always think of my mother when I read *The Sensitive Plant*, a memorable poem by Percy Bysshe Shelley that describes a beautiful garden and the lovely lady who tended and loved it. So many cherished memories of my wonderful, elegant, loving, and lovely mother, who so influenced me and my life. I wish that you could have known her. I now say good-bye here to my mother, whose death in 1967 left a permanent hole in my heart.

My childhood home was unusual in one notable respect, which I did not realize until after I had left my family home. All of us loved to read, and we had books everywhere: our living room, two bookcases in our dining room, the top two shelves of our linen closet, the top shelves of our kitchen cabinets, and of course in each of our bedrooms, both in bookcases and on bedside tables. Books, books everywhere. A culture shock for me was finding out that a houseful of books was not always to be found. Indeed, I was astounded when

as an adult I visited in homes that apparently had no books. Classical music was also part of my family life. Even during the depths of the Depression, when we could afford meat only once a week, we had season tickets to the Los Angeles Philharmonic and to the Hollywood Bowl Summer Season, the latter then charged only twenty-five cents per individual ticket! Classical music was a necessity for us. Art, every form of it, was loved by all of us. We used to visit the Huntington Library and Art Museum, which had a far better collection than our city's then art museum.

The most vivid memory of my childhood and early teens is of the Great Depression. In 1929, along with millions of other Americans, my family suddenly went from financial comfort to utter poverty. Soon thereafter: the family printing and engraving business became insolvent; the trauma cost my father his hearing, and his business partner absconded with the few remaining assets; and then burglars stripped our home of all family heirlooms, including silver, fine china, and paintings; and the burglars even poisoned our dear spaniel Tyloe.

THREE YEARS IN GRAMMAR AND MIDDLE SCHOOLS

BY 1929, my brother had completed his education. My sister had been educated by private tutors, a highly competent Englishwoman and a French tutor. I had been home schooled; my first clear memory is of my loving and lovely mother teaching me my letters and how to read, together with basic arithmetic. By age four, I was able to read and have enjoyed reading throughout my life. I also audited my sister's sessions with her tutors. When I was five, my brother taught me the Greek alphabet, and I enjoyed learning all the (what I thought of as "cute") little alphabet characters. I learned from *Harvey's Rules of Grammar*. When I was ten, my father's business partner absconded with all the firm's assets, my father lost his hearing, and my big brother left college to help support the family. The next year, the Great Depression erupted. So, at age ten, I became the first girl in either of my parent's families to attend a public school. I was placed in the fifth grade. I hated it because it was boring, being already a fluent reader with a basic knowledge of French, Latin, and Greek.

My father declared that I forgot more in my first year of public school than all I had previously learned.

I was enrolled in Rosewood Grammar School, grades one through six, and it was a horrid experience for me. I hated school from the first day. The school was a long five block walk from my home, an unpleasant trip in chill, rainy

weather. Because of my age, I was enrolled in the fifth grade. My first day at school, in a room with twenty-nine boys and girls, we were ordered to go into the schoolyard for morning recess and exercise. I had been a frail child, had not played outdoors, and the schoolyard was covered with gravel, whereas the garden at home had soft green grass. I looked at all that gravel with hot sun beating down on it and yelled, “No!” This led to my first, but not last, trip to the principal’s office. The principal was unsympathetic to my plea, so outside I went, slipped and fell, and I still have a scar on my knee from my first day in public school. This was the first of my problems with having no athletic ability and the requirements of public schools—a separate discussion follows in this narrative of my life in “Fizz-Ed’: A Tragic Tale of No Athletic Ability.” This was my first encounter with, to me still, the basic fallacy of “If we do it for you, we would have to do it for everyone else.”

Grammar school was downhill from my knee injury. I was bored as the lessons covered what I had previously learned. The only subject that I could not learn was the Palmer method of penmanship. The Palmer method, as taught to us, required filling pages with loops and squiggles of remarkable similarity, made possible we were told by a small muscle on the underside of the forearm. To this day, I believe that my arm does not have that little muscle. I could not learn that fancy penmanship. From my start and to this day, I always wrote a round, very legible backhand, with letters that slope to the left instead of to the right. This caused friction between the teacher and me, but I was incapable of doing that fancy slanting, illegible writing. Then Parents’ Night was scheduled, when the children’s “artwork” would be pinned up all around the classroom, with captions to identify what was depicted. The teacher asked me to write the captions because my handwriting was so easy to read! I refused. Back to the principal’s office I went. He was not happy to see me and made me feel unpatriotic if I continued to refuse. My reward was that no further criticism of my handwriting ensued.

The fifth grade had other memorable experiences for me. An interesting one was when a local bank sent an officer to speak to our class about the importance of “Thrift,” how important for us always to be “Thrifty,” and gave each of us a piggy bank to inspire us to “Save.” His message proved to be very important throughout future years of adversity.

Still a travail for me in the fifth grade was the sewing class, compulsory for all girls. We were each required to make a bean bag (I still don’t know what that is), a pair of bloomers (yes!), and a dress. I don’t know how huge my

bloomers would have been because we were told to measure from the waist to just below the knee, double that figure, and buy that much yardage. My mother's opinion was that the result would be an immense pair of bloomers. But I never progressed that far. When all the other girls were sewing on their dresses, I was still struggling with the bean bag. Finally, the teacher, who always wore a smock printed with large, bright designs of dubious taste, took me by the ear to the principal. She said to him, "I can't stand her one more day. She's hopeless in sewing." I hope that I have aroused the sympathy of every Reader who, like me, was born with no manual dexterity whatsoever. The principal was ready for me this time and said, "All right. She's out of sewing and in the boys' woodshop class." I found that the boys were all carving interesting little items for their fathers, but after two weeks, the instructor gave me a large piece of used plywood with which to do something. Anyway, he was nice to me. So ended the fifth grade. The school had me skip the sixth grade, and I have always been suspicious of the motive for this decision.

Grammar school had taught me that authority demands conformity without exception, and later world history confirmed this truth.

Next, I entered a public junior high school, grades seven through nine, with only one year of grade school behind me.

I walked two blocks to get a streetcar that took me two blocks from the school, Bancroft Junior High. Junior high school was another memorably unpleasant experience. The classes were designed to teach the most mentally dull students, leaving the others learning nothing and restless. Again, physical education was mandatory, and as always, I was hopeless. I was small, rather thin, and hated "fizz-ed," as we called this school requirement. The teacher was always sarcastic about my ineptitude, and I dreaded the class.

The one bright spot in junior high school was my very excellent English teacher. I wish that Mr. Field could know how he started me in writing well, so that I later adopted "Accuracy, Brevity, Clarity" as my ABCs for legal writing. At just turned twelve years old when I entered junior high school, I was proud of my vocabulary, acquired during home teaching. So, I affected the use of big words when I wrote a school composition, even using with pride "sesquipedalian." I was graded an "A" probably for effort, but Mr. Field wrote on my paper, "Don't wear all your jewels to an afternoon tea." I never forgot that advice, and even wrote a chapter in one of my law books about the basics of legal writing, stressing simplicity.



Figure 1.7. Brooke at age twelve, in second row middle, with her classmates in seventh-grade Room 204 at Bancroft Junior High School.

A much less bright memory was the special yard recess to see a farm animal that the Board of Education had bought to take to all the schools so students could see one. The back of a small truck opened, a ramp was let down, and a man said as he led it down the ramp, “Children, this is a pig.” Alas, this was during the Great Depression, and the school board could not afford to buy a cow. I saw my first live cow when I went as a bride to Wyoming and saw a herd of cows that were all black! I had expected live cows to be brown and white like in picture books that I had seen. I misunderstood my husband and, when I later told him how surprised I was by “Agnes” the cow, he was shocked. He said, “And you a Phi Beta Kappa! It is Angus, not Agnes!” I later represented a fine Angus cattle rancher in Wyoming.

A final but unpleasant memory of my last year in junior high school: our ninth grade was allowed to elect class officers. In a contested election for class president, I received many more votes than my opponent, Betty (whose last name I shall omit mentioning). The election was over shortly before afternoon recess and, as I was leaving to go outside, a teacher stopped me. She said, “You cannot be president. Betty will be president.” I responded, “The class did not



Figure 1.8. Brooke in spring 1931, in front row, middle, with her ninth-grade classmates at Bancroft Junior High School.

want Betty. My classmates elected me.” The teacher replied, “Betty’s father is a member of the Los Angeles Board of Education, and so she will be president instead of you.” Furious, I went outside to the schoolyard. There for the first and last time in my life, I hit someone. I walked up to Betty, who was much taller than I, willowy and hopelessly pithy, stood on my tiptoes and hit her on the chin as hard as I could. This time, my parents had to join me in the principal’s office. My parents, of course, were shocked. I was very relieved when the ninth grade was over and that I need never see that junior high school again.

Junior high school had taught me that life was not fair, it was stupid to lose one’s temper, and the English language could be written well.

AGE TWELVE: I DECIDE TO BE A LAWYER

RESERVING THIS paragraph all to itself is my decision when I was twelve years old to be a lawyer and devote my life to the law. Why? No one in my family, present or ancestors, had been lawyers; my family had never used a lawyer, sued or been sued; and did not care for lawyers. I had checked out from



Figure 1.9. Brooke, about age twelve, at an entrance to the downtown Los Angeles County Library Building, then recently built with unique architecture.

the public library, which I visited regularly, biographies of several lawyers, including *For the Defence: The Life of Sir Edward Marshall Hall*, the noted nineteenth-century English barrister, and the life of our great American jurist, John Marshall. Next, I started checking out from the library such books about law as I could comprehend. And so, inspired by these books, at age twelve I made the decision that I have never regretted: I would be a lawyer and “The Law” would always be a cherished, integral part of my life.

HIGH SCHOOL: TEACHERS, DEBATE, ORATORY, GRADUATION

AT AGE thirteen, I entered Hollywood High School, with only three years of public schooling, the fifth, seventh, and ninth grades; I did not attend grammar school until the fifth grade and skipped the sixth and eighth grades. I soon was delighted with my new school, Hollywood High School, located on

Sunset Boulevard just two blocks south of Hollywood Boulevard. The school occupied a whole city block, with different buildings. We had over 2,000 students, with few exceptions, excellent teachers, and it was a haven for all of us. The Great Depression engulfed us all for years to come with grueling, frightening poverty. At least, we were all poor together.

For the first time, I was in a school where I was taught much about many new areas of knowledge. My English teacher, Mr. Black, was a former Canadian college professor who “retired” to Southern California. He was a superb teacher of grammar, rhetoric, and literature.

My Latin teacher deserves special mention. Our class of thirty students adored her, and we all learned really to like Latin. Although she was not pretty, we thought her cute with her cheerful, sparkling personality. As the Great Depression continued to make our lives harsh, our Latin teacher always made us feel happier. As teenagers will, boys and girls alike, we wondered why she was not married—we thought her a special prize. When our two weeks’ Christmas vacation was imminent, our Latin teacher told us that she had been saving money for many years to afford a cruise and that now she was going to spend her Yule holiday on a cruise. When we returned to school after the Christmas holiday, we learned that our Latin teacher had married the captain of the cruise ship. As impoverished as we all were, we were determined to buy her a wedding gift. For many of us, this would require missing some of our cheap lunches, but the sacrifice was worth it. One of our glamorous classmates said that she could buy a nice gift at a big discount at one of the stores on Hollywood Boulevard, which was only two blocks north of our high school. She said that the store had really pretty garments, and we all wanted to give a personal gift. We gave her our money, and the great day came when we put the elegantly wrapped box with a big shiny bow on our Latin teacher’s desk, together with a large card that every member of the class had signed with a short message of admiration. Our teacher was so surprised when she saw the box, and we called out, “Open it! Open it!” *So she did, and I can still see the gift that she took out of the box.* It was the sexiest black nightgown that you can imagine, extremely sheer with very open black lace.

Our dear teacher exclaimed in words that I have often found useful, “Thank you. I have never seen anything like it.” She smiled through sudden tears and said, “Tomorrow is my last day with you because my husband must return to his ship. You will have a substitute teacher for the rest of the term. My dears, I thank you from my heart.” The next day was a sad one, but our

beloved teacher brightened us when she said, “My husband thought your gift was splendid and said that he would really like to meet this Latin class. Thank you again, my dears, from my heart. I shall never forget you.” And I am sure that she never did.

As always, my school life was tainted with mandatory physical education. In tenth grade, the girls were put in dancing class that was the first class of the day at 8:15 a.m. I still remember standing at the bar, being required to bend over to touch the floor and then bend back as far as one could—this before breakfast had been digested. Ugh! Also, in tenth grade I had my only two dismal high school teachers. My geometry teacher could have made Euclid hate geometry. My history teacher simply made us learn dozens of dates, leaving me with a disinterest in history until I married a history devotee and realized how fascinating history was.

In the eleventh grade, my then record in public speaking caused the school to plan to send me to various men’s service clubs as a speaker to raise funds to buy an organ for the school’s fine 2,500-seat auditorium, completed in 1928. Also, in eleventh grade, the required Physical Education class for girls was basketball. I protested against playing because I would get hurt, due to most of the girls being bigger than I was. As usual, my protest was to no avail. On the second day of the hated basketball class, I was accidentally hit so hard in the mouth that it loosened one of my front teeth. So this time, I took myself to the principal’s office to tell him that I could not speak to raise funds for the school organ because of my loose front tooth—due to the required basketball class. He was understandably upset and said that the school would pay to send me to a fine dentist to see what could be done. The upshot was no speeches for six months, “leave that tooth alone”; later, I spoke repeatedly and raised money for the organ.

Eleventh grade was notable in two more respects. First, I shall tell you briefly about my chemistry class, where I quickly proved that science was not my intended area. One of our laboratory activities involved hydrogen. My maiden surname was “von Falkenstein,” and my one-half Germanic inheritance caused me to want everything to be what I considered orderly. So, with the chemistry experiment, I did not follow the instructions given but neatly plugged every outlet in the widget I was using. It exploded with a loud noise. One of the girls in the class screamed and another one seemingly fainted. Emergency equipment came, sirens screeching. In retrospect, I probably made a small prototype for the hydrogen bomb. Enough of chemistry!

Eleventh grade also brought me my assured ticket to a college education. I doubt if any public high school class in my area ever had more straight “A” students than mine did. We knew that we could not go to college unless able to get scholarships, so all college-ambitious students worked very hard to get excellent grades. To assure a scholarship, therefore, the student had to have top grades, *plus*. For boys, the *plus* could hopefully be found in athletics or the sciences. For girls, the *plus* was difficult to find. So, in the eleventh grade, I decided to take Debate and Oratory, where I was the only girl in the class.

I was on the debate team that won the state high school debate contest, and I was the winner of the state oratorical contest. Then, in my last semester of high school, I participated in a city-wide high school extemporaneous speaking contest, sponsored by a local William Randolph Hearst newspaper, the evening *Herald-Express*. The contest was held on a wretchedly rainy night in the large auditorium of the University of Southern California. After drawing my topic from a fishbowl, I was taken through the rain to another building where I was locked in a small cubicle for one hour in which to prepare my speech. I was determined to win.

The auditorium seemed huge, with the second balcony very far away, and we had a then state-of-the-art microphone with a temperament of its own. I gave my all to that audience—with arms outstretched and a voice that reached to the very top row of the top balcony. After all the contestants had spoken, the wait began for the judges’ decision. The wait was long, grew longer, the audience became restless, the newspaper sponsors could be seen arguing with the judges. Then we could see that both the judges and the sponsors were angry with each other, and more argument ensued.

Finally, the awards were made. First place went to a young man whose family was prominent and who attended a socially prestigious high school. Second and third places were awarded—and I had won nothing. Then the sponsors stepped to the front of the stage, called me up, and presented me with the huge horseshoe-shaped bouquet that had been the stage decoration for the occasion—I felt like a winning horse when they sort of draped it over me. One of the sponsors announced that the newspaper thought I was the best and would ensure me a proper award, and the audience’s loud applause gratified my young heart and pleased the sponsors. And the newspaper did later give me a fine award of a trophy and cash.

Our debate and oratory coach was a recent arrival from Iowa to Hollywood High School. He was a fine teacher, and a kind, decent man. We wanted to



Figure 1.10. Hollywood High School 1935 graduating class in their matching sweaters on the front steps of the school. This is an excerpt from a larger photo, so we can identify Brooke in front row, center, kneeling.

do something special for him, despite the depths of the Great Depression, like take him out to dinner. In 1933, Prohibition was still in effect, and one of our group said that speakeasies had good, cheap food, making their money on the illegal sale of liquor. The decision was thus made to take our admired debate coach out to dinner at a speakeasy two blocks from the school, and one of our group made prearrangements with the place of our choice. Our teacher looked very surprised when a slot was pulled open in the locked entrance door to where we were dining. The appetizer that evening was a delicious steamed baby artichoke, which led to my shameful deed for which I can never forgive myself. Our teacher had never seen an artichoke before and

asked what it was. He looked at it for several moments and then, because he obviously trusted me, leaned over and whispered: "How do I eat it?" I shamefully replied, "With a knife and fork." I truly hope that somewhere and somehow, he has forgiven me.

Twelfth grade continued an excellent high school education and with more debate and oratory for me. Our senior class wanted to enjoy some of the pleasures customary for a senior class, but we were all very poor. Our usual lunch was an undersized "pint" of ice milk for which we paid a dime. We decided that we could manage class sweaters and, because we had many more boys than girls in our class, the boys made the choice. The sweaters met the requirement of cheap, but I have never seen the like, before or since. They were an odd shade of gray with long strands like hair hanging down so that we looked like grizzled apes in them.

We also wanted a high school annual book like previous senior classes always had, but we could not afford photographs. One of our classmates said that her uncle was a fine artist who did portraits and that he would do a portrait of each of us for only \$1.00 apiece. We happily accepted and cheerfully put together the text for our annual. So off to the printer went the text from us and our portraits from the artist. I still have that high school annual and will show it only to very close friends. All of our senior class look alike: large, almond-shaped, slightly slanted eyes and identical mouths.

We were appalled when we first saw them and finally decided to laugh, saying to each other that we had the only really unique high school annual. Still true!

The last day of class we could not, of course, afford a party such as is the custom today in many schools. We so wanted to do something together after last class that would cost nothing. I had an idea: we all had, or could borrow, skates. Bicycles were an expensive rarity at that time. So I said, let's all bring



Figure 1.11. Brooke's February 1935 high school graduation book's portrait; as were other classmates, her eyes and mouth were altered by the photo-artist.

skates tomorrow and after last class, we can all skate together, blocking traffic, down Hollywood Boulevard. The “yes” vote was unanimous, and the next day we had a fine time as we skated for some distance down the famed boulevard, until finally police herded us back to the high school, where the principal awaited us. I still remember that kind man’s name, Mr. Foley. He told the police that they could leave and that he would “take care of us.” He looked at us, suddenly downcast, in our shabby clothes and shoes, and said, “Well, that was not the right thing to do. But you had fun, and now it’s time to look forward to your graduation tomorrow evening. Class dismissed.” Bless him!

Our high school graduation ceremony in February 1935 was different. We were our high school’s first class to graduate in caps and gowns. The high school had rented this attire because so many of the boys had no jackets, and the girls no nice dresses. Instead of the former big baskets of flowers on stage, we had garden marigolds laid flat in front of the footlights. I was the commencement speaker, and my dear mother had made me a pretty new dress for the occasion. After the ceremony, the school had a party for us of punch and cookies made by parents and teachers. In contrast, today on high school prom night, parents tell me the boys buy corsages for their dates and that their graduates rent limousines and are limousine-driven to a fine dinner, followed by dancing until the wee hours of the morning. No comment.