

May 30, 1984

IN MEMORIAM



JANE HEDDEN COWARD
(16 Jan 1897 - 20 May 1984)

Our beloved Jane Hedden Coward passed away at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, May 20, 1984 at C. J. Harris Hospital, Sylva, North Carolina. Words cannot express our loss. Moody Funeral Home in Sylva was in charge of arrangements. Funeral services were held at 11:00 a.m., Wednesday, May 23, 1984. The Reverend Joe Davis officiated. Burial was in Keener Cemetery.

A native of Webster, Aunt Jane was the daughter of the late Nathan and Sophia Hedden Coward. She was a graduate of Fruitland Institute in Hendersonville, N.C. and received a degree in business education from Women's College in Greensboro. She was a charter member of the Webster Historical Society and a member of First United Methodist Church of Sylva.

For 30 years she was co-owner and operator of Jane and Dot's Flower Shop. Prior to that, she was assistant secretary-treasurer of Builders Supply and Lumber Company for 23 years. She served as Deputy Register of Deeds for Jackson County for four years.

Not only was Aunt Jane a civic and business leader, but she was a political leader as well. According to an article which she wrote in 1966, she said, "My first vote was cast in the year 1920 - the year that women were first permitted to vote. Since that time I have never failed to vote in every Primary and in every General Election save for one second primary when I was enroute by bus to Fort Bragg to enlist in the WAC's during World War II.

"In 1928 I ran on the Democratic ticket for Register of Deeds of Jackson County, led the ticket in the Primary and then was defeated when the entire ticket went down in the State-wide Republican landslide that Fall."

In 1950 Aunt Jane was elected first vice chairman of the Jackson County Democratic Executive Committee and served continuously in that capacity under five different chairmen. In 1962 she was chosen District Democratic Woman of the Year. In 1963, upon the death of Chairman Charles Price, she served as chairman for the remainder of his unexpired term. Then in 1964, she was elected as chairman of the Jackson County Democratic Executive Committee and became the first woman elected, in her own right, as county chairman in the State of North Carolina. Jacqueline Kennedy presented her with an engraved crystal medallion.

At the funeral of Aunt Jane, the Reverend Joe Davis mentioned her leadership in the political and civic life of her community, but also he told how tenderhearted she was and how she loved children and animals. Yes, Jane Hedden Coward had a big heart and a lot of love for all.

She was the youngest of Nathan Coward's fourteen children, and she loved all of the members of her family. The annual Coward Family Reunion was a highlight each and every year of her life.

This reunion was begun on the 12th day of June 1892, Nathan Coward's 74th birthday, and has been held each and every year since that time. In the early years, it was called "The Big Birthday Party" and was always looked forward to by all members of the family. By the time Aunt Jane was born on January 16, 1897, there had been five of these celebrations held, but six-months-old Baby Jane attended her first "Big Birthday Party" on June 12, 1897 and was there for each one through 1982. Unfortunately, she became ill a few days before the 1983 Coward Family Reunion and was unable to attend.

She and her business partner Dot Williams bought a cabin at Norton with a good fishing pond as a place to go for rest and relaxation. And Jane saw it as a great place for the Coward Family Reunion to be held. Except one year (1970?) when the Reunion was held at Whittier, it has been held at Jane and Dot's "Old House" at Norton for many, many years.

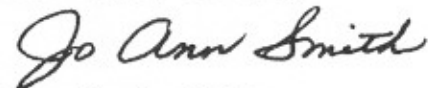
I well remember that Aunt Jane mowed several acres of grass on the property - in preparation for the Reunion - on her riding lawn mower after she was eighty years old. She always had everything ready for everyone.

Supporting her in preparing for the Reunion have been Dale and Bobby Coward, Elda Coward, and Jule Coward, all who live in the Norton Community. And during her long illness at Skyland Care Center and C. J. Harris Hospital, they continued to be supportive of her. They have been faithful and loving, as have R. L. Glenn and many others of the family.

Dale has advised that we will have the Coward Family Reunion this year. It will be held on Sunday, June 17, 1984, at "The Old House" in Norton Community, Jackson County, North Carolina. Knowing how Aunt Jane loved her family and how much she enjoyed the annual family reunion, as a special tribute to her, let's all attend the reunion this year. Look for the signs, and bring your picnic baskets for food and fellowship. Come in the morning and stay all day.

Aunt Jane had a great sense of humor and a loving heart. It is true that she will be missed by all of her Coward relatives and her many friends here on earth. However, at her homecoming in heaven, I am sure there is a great Coward Reunion going on there.

The family scribe,



Mrs. H. A. Smith