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MAMA, 'Babe' and Me

Eddie Marie Jones Durham
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Many people don't appreciate their family members until they're gone, and even then memories tend to fade and fall into the hidden files of personal history. Eddie Marie Jones Durham, an educator and writer, takes pains to keep her own family history from fading with the publication of *Mama,"Babe" and Me,* a memoir about her siblings, aunts, uncles, children, and, most importantly, her mother, Nayme Everlena Hayes Weaver Jones Durham—or "Babe," as everyone called her.

At age thirty-eight, Babe was widowed with nine young children and very little money to take care of them. Luckily, the family had courage, strong will, good neighbors, and relatives to help them through the tough times. The author and her siblings managed to survive and thrive, even when their mother fell sick with depression and anxiety and had to live away from home for a while. Babe rallied and returned to raise her children with the help of her third husband, Luke Durham. Throughout her difficult life she looked toward God and her faith for strength.

Babe's story becomes the author's story as Durham focuses on her own life as much as she does on her mother's; she explores her college experiences, her marriage, the birth of her sons, and various family vacations. Durham also tells the bizarre story of how her Texas accent spontaneously turned into an unidentifiable accent, a condition that no doctor ever managed to diagnose or cure. "The answers were as numerous as the doctors," she writes.

By including plenty of family photographs and her own poetry, Durham makes her story and her mother's story, as personal as she can. The last chapter is a collection of memories written by other family members. Even the shortest of these are marked with sincerity and adoration that will certainly be appreciated by generations of Durhams to come.

While other family members will likely treasure Eddie Marie Jones Durham's collection of memories, readers without a vested interest in her family may not find this book as interesting. There are few details to connect their story to the larger world. While the book covers a good chunk of the twentieth century, there is little mention of the historical events that defined the times.

The text is slightly muddied by grammatical errors, which are a distraction. Dialogue is stiff and often overly formal. Durham would have done well to include a chart of her family tree; the lists of names and relationships can be very confusing.

While this memoir may not have a wide market appeal, family members are sure to appreciate the chance to reminisce about Babe.

ANDI DIEHN (August 25, 2011)

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