

CHEF MAMIE

Dreams Of Her Own Food Preparation Business

By ELIZABETH STEWART
Womans Editor

"Have faith in God and you can go through the most trying time of your life."

This is the philosophy of Mamie Lee Rogers, 60, a "cured" cancer patient who said her "faith in God kept her from worrying because she put all her confidence in Him."

Mrs. Rogers and her husband, James, sat in the living room of their home on Belvedere Circle this week and reminisced of their abundant life, reflecting on how the hand of God had guided throughout the 17 years of their married life and guided them through their recent experience with cancer.

"Mamie", who has scores of friends in the Kings Mountain area and enjoys the reputation of being one of our finest cooks, will serve visitors to her home whatever they like to eat, from "soul food" to mouth-watering desserts.

For several weeks before she reported to her doctor for a checkup last summer, Mamie said she dreamed of hospital beds and could literally see herself in a hospital room. "I am convinced the Lord spoke to me in those dreams and directed me to Dr. Sam Robinson who prescribed major surgery at once."

"He (Dr. Robinson) told me," said Mamie, "if I hadn't had the surgery I may have been dead in three weeks."

Both Mamie and James Rogers nursed Dr. Robinson and all the nursing staff of the local hospital and Mamie said they prayed together that God would guide the surgeon's hand.

Mamie Blalock Rogers was born and reared in Kings Mountain in a little house on King Street to Nannie and Pink Blalock, the eldest of six children. The family lived in Grover for a number of years during her early years but returned to Kings Mountain when Mamie was 12. Her father died when she was 11 and Mamie worked as a maid for \$1.25 a week for Mrs. Annie Falls to help her mother raise the children.

Mamie recalls vividly pulling her little red wagon to Plunk's Store to purchase 25 cents worth of sugar, 10 cents worth of coffee, 25 cents worth of beans, at that time "large helpings of food" as compared to today's prices. Some of her first savings, \$6, went for shoes which cost \$1 per pair.

"There was never a hungry day at our house," smiled Mamie. Her mother, also a good cook, baked sweet bread and pies every day and the house was always filled with the aroma of good food.

Mamie followed in her mother's footsteps. She left for New York at the young age of 15 and served as housekeeper-cook for multi-millionaire families in Long Island and Port Washington, serving up Southern dishes which were her specialty.

She recalled how she introduced some of her Northern friends to polk salad, white beans, ham bone, buttermilk and cornbread around a fancy swimming pool, chuckling about the modern day definition of this brand of cooking, "soul food."

"Why, we've always served soul food in the South," said Mamie, from Hopping Johns (blackeyed peas with rice) to collard greens and dumplings, chittlings and pigfeet.

Mamie worked for a wealthy, Texas couple in New York and the man-of-the-house preferred gourmet food. When he was out of town the family stuffed themselves with Mamie's Southern vittles.

Mamie met her husband, a professional dancer, at Holy House of Prayer For All People on New Year's Eve in Brooklyn. It was not love at first sight, however, but it was love. He married her twice. The bride and groom were wed in a Philadelphia ceremony at the

bride's aunt's house, a beautiful wedding, learned after exchanging "I Do" to their shock that their wedding was not recognized as legal by the state of Pennsylvania. Said James, "we had gone through the wedding ceremony and cut the cake but then had to delay the honeymoon until another license was obtained and we were married again, this time in Brooklyn, New York."

Mamie is confident the Lord brought them back to Kings Mountain and "home" in November of 1963, where the Lord subsequently gave them two beautiful sons, Sammy, an 11th grader at KMSHS, and Timmy, a sixth grader at Central School.

Her Kings Mountain friends can remember Mamie from the days she worked at Dixie Village Cafeteria in Gastonia and at Kings Mountain Country Club. Mamie's late mother, Nannie Blalock Tinsley, and her aunt, the late Lizzie Lee Blalock, cooked at the city's first Country Club, former home of Tolly and Charlotte Shuford and Mamie worked at the new KM Country Club for seven years until her recent hospitalization and for three club managers, Joe Costner, Betty Mitchell and Jerry King, all of whom she remembers fondly.

Mamie recalls she baked 22 apple cobblers, 52 big pans of biscuits and cornbread, 200 old-fashioned "stickles," and numerous desserts on an Easter Saturday for a big Easter Sunday dinner attended by 1,000 people at the Gastonia cafeteria. Her homemade "stickles" became a house specialty on Thursday.

Aspiring for a catering service of her own or a "Bean House," Mrs. Rogers learned how to prepare fancy dishes as an art at Great Neck, Long Island School for Cooking when she was 15, a homesick Southern gal in the big city. She "knows" the taste of food and doesn't throw her food together which she says is the success of "good cooking." Growing up in "hard times", she is also thrifty and never wastes food. Some of her most delicious "delicacies" are leftovers she has served in beautiful dishes. "Pretty" cooking is also the secret of a good chef. "Mamie's Goulash" was a favorite of Rotarians at weekly luncheons at the club.

Mamie has prepared food for many wedding receptions and parties over the years, said she especially enjoyed catering the wedding reception of Elaine Tria and Scott Hill, describing the menu as one of the finest "New York style" receptions in this area, explaining that in the North receptions include "lots of food" as compared to "party pickups."

Does she follow a recipe? Not all the time, says Mamie. She likes to use "a pinch of this and that."

She and her husband operated briefly Tiny Tim's Place, a small restaurant on Parker St., which specialized in hotdogs and hamburgers, later sold groceries for about a year.

Mamie envisions that a Mamie's Beanery in Kings Mountain would offer beans of all kinds, hot sauces, pickles, and homemade breads while a catering service would offer party foods.

James Rogers is encouraging his wife to return to her kitchen after she recuperates from surgery. He shares her "dream" of one day owning a business of her own. The Rogers family is active in Mount Zion Baptist Church. Other members of Mrs. Rogers' family are her brothers and sisters, Margaret (Mrs. John) Leach, Magnolia Owens, and John Blalock, all of Kings Mountain, and Pink David Blalock and Robert Blalock, both of Philadelphia, Pa.

Mamie recalls tearfully the sad day for her family when their mother, Mrs. Nannie Blalock Tin-

sley, died in a house fire on Parker Street but remembered even in bad times the strong "hand of the Lord."

A favorite meal for the Rogerses is Mamie's fried chicken, string beans, hot rolls and potato salad.

As spring comes to Kings Mountain the whole Rogers family plans to plant a garden of okra, beans and lettuce. Mamie likes to serve piping hot grease from "fatback meat" over home-grown garden lettuce with piping hot hockcake cornbread. That's soul food and delicious!

Some of Mamie's recipes:

SCALLOPED OYSTERS

1 quart of oysters
1 cup evaporated milk
1 teaspoon dry mustard
1½ tablespoons lemon juice
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
1 teaspoon tabasco
2 tablespoons sherry
1 cup crushed "Escort or Waverly wafers

Combine all ingredients and cook about 20 minutes at 325 degrees F.

CHEESE SOUFFLE (Cheese Pudding)

12 slices bread
½ lb. cheese
2 2-3 cups milk
1 tsp. salt
4 eggs
Butter
Remove crusts from bread. Butter bread and cut into quarters. Grease baking dish (8x8 or 8x10 pan). Put bread in pan, then add a layer of cheese. Alternate bread and cheese. Let stand several hours or overnight. Bake at 350 degrees for 50 minutes. Sprinkle paprika on top. Serves eight.

CHICKEN DIVAN

Place two packages cooked frozen broccoli in baking dish. Cover with two cups sliced, cooked white meat of chicken.

Make sauce of:
1 can cream of celery soup
½ cup sharp cheddar cheese
1 can cream of chicken soup
1 cup mayonnaise
1 teaspoon lemon juice
½ cup toasted slivered almonds
Bake at 350 degrees until bubbly. Serves 6-8.

MEN LIKE IT SALAD

1 package cream cheese
½ cup pecans, chopped
1 cup celery, diced
1 pinch salt
1 small can crushed pineapple
1 package lime jello
1½ cups hot water
Mash cream cheese, blend in pineapple, add nuts and celery. Dissolve gelatin in water. When cool, mix with cheese mixture. Pour into salad molds and place in refrigerator until congealed. Serve with mayonnaise on lettuce. (10-12 molds)

CRABMEAT IN PASTRY SHELLS

Two 6 oz. pkg. King Crab Meat
2 tablespoons Oleo
3 tablespoons flour
1 cup milk
½ cup white wine
½ cup light cream
½ cup chicken broth
½ cup shredded sharp cheese
2 tablespoons grated onion
1 teaspoon salt
¼ tsp. paprika
Drain crabmeat. Melt butter in saucepan, stir in flour. Gradually add milk, cream and chicken broth. Stir until smooth and thick. Add cheese, onion, salt, paprika and wine. Stir until cheese has melted. Stir in crabmeat. Put in pastry shells. Heat just before serving. Must be served warm. Serves 18.

ASPARAGUS MOUSSE (good with ham, chicken)

1 can all green asparagus cut into small lengths



Photo By Tom McIntyre

Mamie Rogers, at 60, has defeated cancer and still dreams of establishing catering business and operating a "Bean House" in her hometown of Kings Mountain

½ cup mayonnaise
½ cup cream, whipped
4 T unflavored gelatin
1 tsp. salt
Juice of two lemons
Shelled blanched almonds
Heat liquid from can asparagus and pour over the dissolved gelatin. Let cool. Fold in mayonnaise and cream, salt, lemon juice, and almonds. Add asparagus when mixture begins to thicken. Pour into individualized molds and large mold.

BROCCOLI CASSEROLE

1 can cream mushroom soup
1 cup mayonnaise
2 eggs, beaten
1 onion, chopped
1 cup cheese, grated
2 pkg. frozen broccoli, chopped or one bunch, fresh
Cook broccoli until tender about 15 minutes. Drain and put in casserole. Mix soup, mayonnaise, eggs, onion, pour over broccoli. Top with cheese and buttered bread crumbs. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes.

CUCUMBER SALAD

½ cup grated cucumber

½ cup mayonnaise
1 T horseradish
Pinch salt
1 three oz. pkg. lemon jello
1½ cups hot water
½ grated onion
1 tsp. lemon
Dissolve jello in water. Cool. Add other ingredients. A drop of green food coloring may be added if desired. Serves 6-8.

MOCK CHEESE SOUFFLE

½ lb. cheese (cracker barrel mellow)
2 cups milk
1 tsp. salt
10 slices day old bread
3 eggs
Butter

Take bread, cut crust, butter, bread and cut into cubes. Put alternate bread and cheese. Mix milk, salt, eggs, and beat. Pour over bread and cover tight. Let stand in refrigerator. Cook in oven 275 degrees for 45 minutes or until souffle rises and browns on top.

MAMIE'S LEMON CHIFFON PIE

2 cups cold water
2 tablespoons lemon juice
½ cup sugar
1-3 cup corn starch
4 egg yolks

Beat all together. Cook over boiling water in double boiler until thickens. Remove from pan. Fold in egg yolks and put in cooked pie shell. When cool, beat 1 cup cream for topping.

MAMIE'S APPLE COBBLER

12 uncooked apples
1 cup sugar
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1 tablespoon cinnamon
½ teaspoon allspice

Mix with apples before putting in pan. Roll crust and put over pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour.