

The Life Story of Mrs. Ruby J. McCollum!

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Editor's note: This is the fourth article in a series dealing with the life of Mrs. Ruby Jackson McCollum of Live Oak, Florida. Mrs. McCollum has been found guilty in the slaying of her alleged lover, white Dr. C. LeRoy Adams, and sentenced to death. The series so far has dealt with childhood days of Ruby Jackson. In the following article she meets and weds Sam McCollum.

The sun had gone home, leaving its footprints in the sky. The drifting mists gathered in the west to arm with thunders and march forth against the world. Lightning flashed against the horizon and the thunder rolled into crescendos. Ruby Jackson stood at the front gate of the Jackson home in Martin, Fla., seemingly unconscious of the approaching summer storm.

She stood there questioning fate. For some time now she had been living at her own front gate, ready for departure. Internally, she had outgrown the confines of Martin, Fla.

The horizon of the world was her hatband. Ruby longed for fulfillment of her natural desires and so she was restless beneath her always outward calm. Neither relatives nor friends suspected the intense fires that raged within her.

Ruby now was twenty years old, and yes, she wanted a mate. She was of a good respectable family in Martin, unsoiled by the lap and wash of slander. She was considered physically attractive, and what there was to choose from in her community she could have had.

But by nature, Ruby did not walk in footprints. Secretly she saw no reason why her life must follow the pattern of her surroundings. Her family and friends did not know the real Ruby and she was conscious of it. "Often," Ruby said, "you can make people follow you, but almost never can you make them understand."

Yes, like all girls of her age she had flirted briefly here and there. She found something dead about the young men she had known, so inside her she

drew way as mortals do from a corpse. She was looking for LIFE.

Now she had met Sam McCollum, a young man a little older than herself. The McCollums were prosperous farmers over at St. Peters, a small community near Ocala, Fla. That had been nearly a year ago and Ruby was still thinking Sam over.

She was attracted to him, but she debated whether or not he had what she wanted. She wanted many things that her life and surroundings so far had not afforded her. At times she felt that Sam had in him that which would bring fulfillment of her dreams and then, again, she wondered.

Was Sam McCollum masterful enough? That was what she debated within herself as she stood at her father's gate that day at sundown. Internally, she was ready to set out on her journey to the big horizon. Was Sam the vehicle to take her where she wanted to go?

Sam attracted and charmed her more than any man she had met so far. He had both mental and physical vigor. Secretly he stirred her tremendously. He was full of things. Sam made a little summertime out of a seemingly nothing and they both lived off it for the hours they were together.

Silently unsatisfied by her narrow surroundings, she had been fumbling around the door-knob of life and Sam McCollum had opened that door! If only she could be sure of his capacities, she would love him for it. But so strong were her desires that she felt that she was not yet ready to commit herself. Better wait and see.

She had met Sam McCollum at her church. He had come to attend a special program that Sunday afternoon nearly a year ago. Ruby had a leading part in the program in addition to her group singing. Sam saw her and he liked what he saw.

It took nearly two more years for Ruby to finally make up her mind to marry Sam McCollum. In that time she discovered Sam had what she wanted. He was witty and gay, and beneath his casual exterior Ruby found that he had drive and ambition in him. He had a way of commenting and saying things that were always entertaining. And his small community did not satisfy him, either.

Though the McCollums had a going farm, Sam took to picking oranges—quick and generous pay—and construction work. He often went away from home on jobs like that and came back with a pocket full of money and stories of what he had heard and seen in the larger and outer world where he had been.

Outside of her own requirements in her future husband, Ruby had another obstacle to overcome. The McCollums were something less than enthusiastic about her. After she began to go steady with Sam, his brother, Buck,

and his father came over to Martin frequently, but the rest of his family held aloof.

But even Buck warned Sam that Ruby was inclined to be too possessive and domineering. They accused her of seeking to cut him off from his family. She must be the “be-all” and ruler of his mind, and Buck saw his brother crumbling before the determined Ruby Jackson, for all her quiet ways.

“I told Sam years ago that woman was going to kill him,” Buck raged when he heard of his brother’s death. “He had got so under her influence that he wouldn’t listen to me.” Sam McCollum died of a heart attack after his wife killed Dr. Adams.

Ruby Jackson felt certain of two things when she became Mrs. Sam McCollum at a quiet home wedding at Martin in 1931: she was sure that she had a go-getter, a winner in economic ways and a vigorous mind, and she felt certain that the opposing McCollums could be no trouble to her with Sam.

Sam had a construction job in New York and he and his bride went North immediately. In the years to follow, they went many places together. In those years Ruby was almost completely happy. Her world had expanded marvelously and, by comparison, she handled plenty of money.

From the very beginning, Sam brought home his money and handed it over to Ruby and she managed things. There was only one tiny dissatisfaction in Ruby’s love for her husband . . . Sam did not rule her enough.

The great tragedy that engulfed them in 1952 might have been avoided had Sam only understood Ruby better! From the beginning of their life together the tiny seed of despisement had already been planted.

Ruby proved a good and industrious wife. She was a wonderful cook, sewed well and kept a clean house. She was a very devoted mother. Without too much taste in clothes, she was neat and attractive in her clothes.

But there, perhaps, she was wiser than most people thought. When a female body is too gaudily dressed, it is possible for the male mind to lose the connection.

Ruby, brought up in a very religious home, knew even before she married Sam that, though he always worked, he gambled on the side and thus increased hi[s] income. Her femaleness is such that she accepted all parts of her man. She did not gamble herself, but she was with him in spirit.

If she cut him off to an extent from his own blood relatives, she also cut herself off from her own, in her loyalty to her man. Their families knew nothing of the relations between Sam and Ruby.

Her attitude was such that her even stern, religious parents came to look upon Sam McCollum as the perfect husband and son-in-law. The young cou-

ple led their own life as they moved about from job to job, now Florida, now North again and back.

What with his work and successful gambling, they were boarding up money without as yet making any flash. Both were proud and happy about their son, Sam Jr., who came to them more than a year after they were married. He was born into a loving, affectionate, charmed family circle.

Courtesy Pittsburgh Courier Archives.