

# Fuqua's Shown to be Real Home-Loving Family

Dorothy Day

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## **Mrs. Fuqua Gives First Interview**

### **Evidences Pride In Telling of Her Family**

#### **Reared Together**

#### **Too Busy in Home To Learn Bridge, Mah-Jongg**

*The following article, upon Henry Fuqua, his home life and his family, is the first of a series of three stories by a member of The Item's editorial staff. The other two will appear during the week.*

“Mr. Fuqua and I have known each other ever since we were born right around the corner from each other in this neighborhood. And we've loved each other all the time although I don't suppose we knew it till we were twelve—anyway,” and Mrs. Henry L. Fuqua, of Baton Rouge, laughed and blushed as she spoke.

She blushes delightfully. That was one of the first things we noticed about her, after we had chased her around for almost 30 hours. She did her best to avoid being interviewed and she didn't tell us this about herself and her husband until we had talked with her for three hours.

She didn't want to be interviewed she said, first because the election hadn't been decided yet, although she admitted on pressure that of course she knew the outcome was sure. Second, because she was a busy woman and had so many engagements, —and then she hastened to contradict herself, saying that she was indeed busy, but it was about her household affairs, and that she wasn't a giddy-gaddy woman. Third, because it wasn't seemly to talk to a newspaper reporter until her husband had told her she should.

Finally, when we had reached the ear of Mr. Fuqua and he had laughingly persuaded his wife to help us out, she admitted that she didn't like the idea of talking to the press—“not nervous exactly, but just sort of fluttery.”

#### **Mutual Confidence Established**

When eighteen-year-old Henry junior, who had come out to the porch with his mother to see if the mail had come, squeezed her arm and assured her of his own nervousness when called upon to face the dean, for instance and we assured her that we were not quite so brazen as we seemed, what with telephoning her and pursuing her all around town, mutual sympathy and confidence was established all around.

Nunky, a horribly scarred and brazen fox terrier was not so sure about the confidence, however. He sniffed around suspiciously and then leering out of his rheumy old eyes, turned and scampered into the house at the heels of his young master.

“You really must excuse Nunky’s appearance,” apologized Mrs. Fuqua. “He’s thirteen years and he will fight, and not long ago while we were at the receiving station of the penitentiary with Mr. Fuqua, he got into an awful battle, although it was Sunday, and he won although he doesn’t look it, does he? He’d like to say ‘you should have seen the other fellow’ ” she laughed.

Mrs. Fuqua is a middle-sized woman, chubby, but not stout, she was neatly dressed in a black and white sport skirt, grey sport sweater with pale yellow embroidered collar and cuffs. Her feet were neatly shod in black patent leather, and her silk-clad ankles are slim.

“Be sure and say that my eyes are grey and that I’m an old lady—not a middle-aged one, or anything like that.” She twinkled at us. “Because you know I’m fifty-eight years old, and Mr. Fuqua is only three months older than I am.

“He was born right down the street here and he had one brother and one sister. His brother is in the army, stationed in Hawaii and has been away for years, but it’s expected that he is coming back to the states soon. His sister married Thomas D. Boyd, president of Louisiana State University. Her daughter and my daughter were the first women to register at the University when it became co-educational.

### **Childhood Sweethearts**

“As I said, I was born around the corner from him and my name was Laura Matta then. I had two brothers and five sisters. Henry’s mother was born in Mississippi and his father in Baton Rouge. The name Fuqua is a Scotch one and is pronounced with a long final vowel.

“My mother used to play with the daughters of Zachary Taylor who was afterwards president. That was right after the Mexican war, and army officers weren’t in very good standing with the mothers and fathers of marriageable daughters. Mother often tells us how opposed Mr. Taylor was to his daughter’s association with young army officers. One of his girls fell so much in love with one, Jefferson Davis it was, that she made some excuse to visit her relatives in Kentucky and he joined her there and they were married. It wasn’t an elopement, or anything like that. It was just a secret marriage and they started out immediately to travel by stage back to Baton Rouge to inform Mr. and Mrs. Taylor about it. It was a long and tedious journey then, and they had to put up at night in the small towns along the river. And when they reached one town where there was yellow fever, young Mrs. Davis caught it and died on her honeymoon. Her grave is still there.

“Just a few months after I was born, my father was made manager of the state penitentiary which was in a huge building here in town where the Community Club now stands and from that time until I got married to Mr. Fuqua, my home was really in the penitentiary, although of course I was away at school a good part of the time.

“It’s strange how that state penitentiary has been bound up in my life. My mother’s father was superintendent of it, then my own father, and now for the last seven years, Mr. Fuqua

has been manager of it. So you see I'm in a position to know all the good Mr. Fuqua has done while he has held the position of manager.

### **Lives Closely Connected**

“As I said, I was away at school a good part of the time and an aunt of Mr. Fuqua's was one of my teachers. From the very beginning, you see, our lives were closely connected. We played together, fought together, went to parties together all through our childhood. And then when I was twelve years old, I knew that I was in love with him. I don't know about him. He has said since that he fell in love with me before I fell in love with him, but of course I didn't know then.

“We got married thirty-five years ago, and Mr. Fuqua brought me here to live in this house with his mother. He had lived here since his early boyhood, and his mother handed it over to him when she died. When we started housekeeping together, she moved into a wing and we had the rest of the house. But the place wasn't then as it is now. There were servant's quarters out at the end of the block where the lawn and bushes are now, and the house itself was a long, low rambling affair, huge rooms that you couldn't keep warm. We had it done over just before my last baby was born, and now the rooms are smaller and there is a hall between the rooms on each side.”

The house in which Henry Fuqua has lived since he began to walk is a white frame house of a story and a half. There is a veranda across the front of it, pillared to the top of the building and there are green shutters at the long windows. Swinging chairs and rockers give the porch, which was fresh scrubbed, a most habitable appearance.

The house stands on a triangular block of property and has wide lawns and a noble grove of elms extending the length of the block.

“If you had only been here before the cold spell so that you could have seen how green and pretty everything was,” Mrs. Fuqua mourned. “My poor flowers! And there were such gorgeous poinsettias along the side of the house!”

### **Home Modest and Retiring**

To get to the Fuqua home from the center of town, you must walk up North Boulevard which dips, then rises again in a hilly manner most pleasing to one used to the flatness of the country around New Orleans. Napoleon street, where the Fuqua home stands is about ten blocks up from the river, then south from North boulevard and up another hill which rises slowly for three blocks. The house is in a pleasant neighborhood where the homes are modest and retiring, some of them even a little battered. They have none of the sleek look of wealth common to the mansions along North boulevard. The Fuqua house is indeed more imposing than others in the neighborhood, but is not to be compared to the big white houses along the boulevard. For Henry Fuqua is not a wealthy man, as wealth goes.

“When I was going to school,” Mrs. Fuqua went on with her story “Henry was going to the state university but he left there to work for the railroad with a surveying outfit which was laying tracks between Baton Rouge and Vicksburg. At the end of that job, he went into the hardware business with a firm which was right across the street from where his store is now and when he had risen as far as he could there, he organized a stock company in which

he had the principal stock and made himself manager of the Fuqua Hardware company. Of course he isn't manager of it any more. He's got too much on his hands for that, and has had for the last seven years. But he still owns a large part of the stock and still spends time there with his friend, Frank Jones who is now manager and who went into business with my husband when he started over 30 years ago. Mr. Jones is one of his best friends and every year they go hunting or fishing together. Neither of them have had a chance at it this year, but as soon as Mr. Fuqua can settle down and get a little rest the two of them will be in the saddle and out shooting quail for days on end. And goodness knows he needs the rest."

### **Three Children Born**

Henry Fuqua has two children, a married daughter, Mrs. Walter M. Scott who lives with her husband and baby boy at Tallulah, Louisiana, where they have several cotton plantations, and an eighteen year old son Henry Fuqua Jr., who will enter the state university next fall. There was another boy, born a few years after the daughter, who died at the age of eight. It was when talking of her children that Mrs. Fuqua became really expansive.

"I don't know what I'd do without my boy," she smiled, "with Mr. Fuqua away so much as he has been these last years while going to one or another of the three plantations which make up the State penitentiary. During the flood two years ago at Angola, he was away for an entire month! And of course this campaign has taken him all over the state, so that I would have been entirely alone here if it hadn't been for [my] son and my brother who lives here with us.

"Henry takes me out as though I were his best girl," she laughed. And then blushed as she admitted that the evening before when she was trying to avoid the representative of the press, the two of them had run away to a moving picture show.

"He's the baby of the family of course, born fifteen years after my girl, and she says I spoil him. At least she used to until she had a boy of her own, and I tell her that he's the most domineering morsel that ever lived. But we're all so crazy about that baby that he can't help bossing us around. He and my husband are inseparable of course, whenever my daughter is visiting us. Last time they were here that little 'imp' pulled his grandfather out into the other room and said, 'Let's go out here away from the women folks!' And he's only four years old."

Her daughter, Mrs. Fuqua said, had graduated from the teachers' course at the state university, although she had never taught school, nor intended to. Soon after graduating, she married and went to live on her husband's plantation.

"You can't imagine what a good housekeeper she is. I had never taught her to do anything but sew—although I suppose I shouldn't say it. But I felt that young girls should have their good time and that it was time enough for them to take up the serious things of life when they got married. And as soon as she married, she showed herself to be as good a cook and housekeeper as her mother. Of course I pride myself on being a good cook and housekeeper!" Mrs. Fuqua boasted. "In this day when you can't get good help and are liable to be without a cook any time, a woman just has to be able to do anything. In Henry's mother's time, there were plenty of colored folk within calling distance so that in case of emergency you could get extra help. And the girls were far better then than they are now. All she had to do was to sit on her balcony and superintend the management of her house. But now I've

got to start right in every morning and help. Very often servants don't know how to dust, or straighten up a room and when they get through with anything, they're just half done. Sometimes I have to go after them and finish up.

Daughter Good Housekeeper

"Yes, I'm glad my girl is a good housekeeper. I don't think much of a woman who isn't. We take turns spending Christmas and Thanksgiving with each other and last Christmas we spent with my daughter. And just before the holiday, she was suddenly without help, but she didn't write us a thing about it, but had us just the same, doing everything herself. And she might just as well have come here." And Mrs. Fuqua looked around the neat parlors we were sitting in, out into the spotless hall where school books and a boy's cap graced the hat stand, and her face was lighted with justifiable pride. "I don't know how to play bridge or Mah Jong and I don't think I'll ever learn," she added. "I've got enough to do."

And as for Henry the younger, a great big brown eyed fellow with long, lank hair, he met us at the Union station that afternoon and while we walked up and down the platform, waiting for the train which was to bring his father home from New Orleans he told us a little about himself.

"Don't you make my husband late for lunch," Mrs. Fuqua had scolded. "He's always late for meals now, when he's in Baton Rouge at all. He just won't take care of himself, and he's lost pounds and pounds campaigning."

### **Henry, Jr., Real Boy**

Henry, Jr., had the same eagerness for his father that his mother had, but he didn't show it in the same way, not being a housewife. He was filled with a youthful eagerness and excitement which made it hard to elicit from him facts about himself.

"I've been going down to Gulf Coast Military Academy for the last three years," he said. "Mother didn't much want me to go, but she thinks I should use my own judgment about things so she never interferes with me—at least in big things like that. But I'm glad I'm home again and going to the university in the fall. You never get enough to eat when you're away from home.

"I would have entered the university last fall except that I had to make up some courses tha[t] I missed out in at the academy—English for instance. My sister entered when she was fifteen," he added.

The train which was coming in that noon was the Frisco, bound for Mexico City. Mention of it brought out the fact that Henry, Jr., is a lover of travel and a collector of time tables than which no collection is more fascinating.

But as to his ambition in life, "I want to be an engineer and am going to take the course in engineering at the State U. Mother says I probably don't know yet what I want to do, and that I shouldn't hesitate to change my mind and change my course as many times as I want. She say[s] it's better to really find out what you want to do when you're young. She's a peach, isn't she," he added boyishly.

The minutes passed and the train came in, but Mr. Fuqua wasn't on it. "Darn!," said Henry, Jr. "Won't mother be sore!"

But Mrs. Henry L. Fuqua, with her curly greying hair, twinkling blue grey eyes and girlish blushes, doesn't look as though her wrath is of a kind which could intim[id]ate. Besides they've been in love since they were twelve years old.