Sun's in the Treetops

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SUN’S IN THE TREETOPS

A story of the life of a young girl in rural Kentucky during World War II.

Story by
Jewell Florea

Edited and Revised by
Lee J. Florea

GREYHOUND PRESS
DISCLAIMER

The characters within this story are real. They were my neighbors, my friends, and my family. I have tried to portray them accurately. The events in this story also are true; however, they are combed from the six-decade-old memories of a young girl. There, unfortunately, are notable gaps in my memory and my timeline has become blurred. There are several examples in this book of actual world events that are misplaced in time, but fit in my memory where they are placed in the text.
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NOTES ON PRONUNCIATION

The dialogue in this book is written as we hear, and often strays from proper English. Our purpose is to capture the local flavor of the spoken word, and fully realize that others may have other interpretations or would prefer an author to refrain from writing in dialect. The few notes included below are intended to help the reader understand a couple of critical, and perhaps confusing, components of phonetics in eastern Kentucky. This list is certainly not designed to be comprehensive or authoritative. Finally, the peculiarities of pronunciation vary from person to person and from situation to situation. In other words, language is personal.

Words that contain the vowels o, ou, or e are often pronounced with a soft a sound, such as what is often heard in thought or bought. For example, you, to, and the, written as ya, ta, and tha in this book, should not be pronounced with a strong a, such as in bait or bat.

In contrast to the preceding, some unexpected words contain a strong ai sound. For example, haunt becomes haint.

The final g is omitted from gerunds. Thus, running becomes runnin.

Past tense verbs that end in ed are commonly pronounced with a strong t. You may therefore see some words such as killed written as kilt. Similarly, the final d is not pronounced in other words, such as and, written as an in this book.

R sounds are pronounced very strongly. Additionally, the final vowel e is commonly silent. Thus, we write the words such as there and dare as thar and dar. Again the a is not a strong sound in these words.

Contractions and word combinations are common. Beyond the typical contractions such as don’t for do not, are those less typical like o’er for over, gotcha for got you, and s’posed for supposed.

The letter h is sometimes silent at the beginning and end of words. For example, him becomes ‘em, and with becomes wit. Interestingly, other simple words add an h to the beginning. For example, it becomes hit. The diphthong th may or may not behave similarly. For instance, them also becomes ‘em, but this does not become ‘is.
This is a continuing saga of childhood stories depicting how it was in Pulaski County, Kentucky, during the turbulent World War II era.

Each day brought a battle cry for freedom as the country united to win WWII. The folks at home were working overtime with one purpose in mind, “WIN THIS WAR.”

While young men were sent to foreign lands to fight the enemy, at home, everyone, including women, was rapidly building new and sophisticated defense weapons such as ballistic missiles, tank destroyers, war heads, jet aircraft, and the atomic bomb, all vital in winning the war. Synthetic rubber became a large segment of manufacturing.

A new medicine, penicillin, was invented by Florey and Chain, and became the new treatment for battle wounds.

It was a time of unity, purpose, and prayer as we all worked together to preserve our freedom.
This simple book is humbly dedicated to the memory of the men and women of the World War II generation, including members of my own sweet family. My three brothers, Coyd, Leonard, and Hyle, who all so proudly wore the uniforms of the United States of America and served with distinct honor; my father and sisters, who worked in defense plants in Ohio to do their part for the war effort; my dear mother who stayed at home in rural Kentucky and sacrificed and worried her heart sick over her family, neighbors, and all of America’s sons and daughters engaged in the ugliness of war. To them I will remain forever thankful. The war instilled in the hearts and minds of a generation of Americans, including me, the certain knowledge that “freedom is never free.”
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply indebted to so many who have given me encouragement while furnishing pictures and information as I traveled down memory lane. First and foremost, this book could have not been written without my nephew, Ron Holt, who did most of the research and constantly reviewed and encouraged my writings. I give credit to the \textit{Somerset Journal}, whose newspapers carried the home front and war news to the citizens in Pulaski County. The history and research for my book during the years of 1942 through 1946 was substantiated through their daily papers. I wish to thank Jane Holt Whitis for her help in giving information and pictures of our past. I especially owe Janice Harris of the Writer's Alliance and Erin Stephens of Somerset Community College for their editing, and, of course, my son, Lee John Florea, for the completion of the project. Tom Rea of Greyhound Press skilfully converted my manuscript to a printed book.
FORWARD

World War II was not like anything ever experienced by mankind. A war of vicious destruction unleashed on a global scale, barely a human living on Planet Earth would escape the catastrophic effects of this angry conflict. These, our United States, founded on the hard-fought twin promises of democracy and liberty, and her peace-loving citizenry, were seemingly required to prepare overnight for entry into a life and death struggle of epoch proportion against evil, authoritarian dictators.

I observed the war through a child’s eyes, too young to completely understand the times and the conflict. However, I felt the pain, hardship, and heartbreaking effects that it had on my family and my neighbor’s families. I lived through the worry and the unrelenting need for war news and the paralyzing uncertainty.

Sun’s in the Treetops is the sequel to the book Rise and Shine.

In this book, I tell the story of the effects of World War II on rural Kentucky and of how people of all ages had a job to make this country a well-oiled machine to preserve freedom for all. Some may feel the stereotypes in this book harsh, but these were as they existed during this challenging period of American history.

The story begins after the attack on Pearl Harbor. We gathered scrap metals from the fields and tin cans, scrap papers, grease, and many other items that could be used in producing war materials. We continued with our daily life though our thoughts were consumed with our loved ones on battlefields in far away places.

It is my wish that you, the reader, will find the story interesting and informative and mostly you will understand the sacrifice the whole country made to win in this noble cause.
PART I

STITCHING THE PAST
A casual review of the historical record for the period 1918–1939 would appear to reveal a series of events and anecdotes leading the world inexplicably toward and down the “long march to war.” However, a more accurate, if simplified, viewpoint might be that the period 1918–1939 represented only a temporary respite from The Great War, or World War I, an opportunity for certain belligerents to retool their arms factories; mobilize and train their military forces; manipulate and anger their populations; advance their military technology; further develop and refine their political philosophies; and most importantly, consolidate their iron grasp on government and establish firm totalitarian control over their citizenry through the mechanism of a ruthless police state.

On August 23, 1939, Adolf Hitler and Josef Stalin signed the German-Soviet Treaty of Non-Aggression. It enabled Germany and the Soviets to invade eastern Poland, Finland, and the Baltic States.

September 3, 1939, Britain, France, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand declared war on Germany. Although the Poles put up a valiant fight, 26 days after Germany’s invasion of Poland, the capital city, Warsaw, surrendered.

On November 30, 1939, The Soviets invaded Finland as had been previously agreed in the Russian-German Pact. A territorial absorption of tiny Finland would provide the Soviet Union with access to a warm-water port, something Russia desperately needed. Although Finland fought valiantly, she was up against a giant military power and was forced to capitulate in March, 1940.

In the spring of 1940, German military forces continued their invasion in all of Western Europe, including France. All of Western Europe was falling under the bloody heel of Der Fuehrer except for Great Britain, a tiny island nation now in clear range and sight of Adolf Hitler and his armies massed just 21 miles away across the English Channel. Great Britain was in desperate need of a courageous leader to save her from brutal conquest and so she turned to the irascible Sir Winston Churchill. In May, 1940, Sir Winston was thrust into his historic role as Prime Minister in the midst of war, facing imminent invasion of his beloved British homeland.

In July, 1940, following Germany’s occupation of France, 84-year-old Henri Petain, the much celebrated “Hero of France” in The Great War, became Premier of the Vichy Government in central and southern France, an area not directly under the control of Germany.

In August, 1940, Italy’s Mussolini flexed his country’s military muscles in support of Axis objectives by opening another front in the war and invaded British Somaliland, Africa. In August and September, Italy invaded Egypt, and in October, attacked Greece. By December, Italy had thoroughly proven its military incompetence through its defeat in both Greece and Africa. On the 12th of August, 1940, the German Luftwaffe began their now infamous blitzkrieg on Great Britain in an attempt to destroy the Royal Air Force preparations for invasion. The “Battle of Britain” had begun in earnest and the very heart and soul of the British Empire was at stake. On September 16, 1940, Hitler altered his blitzkrieg strategy in dramatic fashion by bombing the capital city of London in an attempt to convince the British people to capitulate. Great Britain quickly retaliated by bombing major population centers within Germany. The European dogs of war were now howling at full pitch. America remained on the sidelines desperately clinging to a policy of neutrality although providing substantial material assistance to Great Britain.
Japan, Germany, and Italy signed the “Tripartite Treaty” in Italy on September 27, 1940, forging the evil troika of Axis Powers.

On April 6, 1941, Germany invaded Yugoslavia and Greece; both countries quickly capitulated although each maintained an active resistance effort.

Then, on June 22, 1941, making perhaps his most crucial mistake, and setting aside the Soviet-Nazi Non-Aggression Pact (never more than a diplomatic ruse by the Nazis), Hitler’s military forces invaded Mother Russia.

German troops rapidly advanced into Russia capturing important cities. Then the brutal winter of 1941–1942 intervened with Napoleonic déja vu and Hitler’s armies were caught unprepared to fight in the winter extremes of Russia. Accordingly, in December, the attack on Moscow was brought to a halt. America began to deliver war and other “Lend-Lease” materials to the Soviet Union in an effort to bolster Russia’s capability to wage war with the Nazis.

By 1939, Japan had brutally “closed” China, and was actively working to isolate and remove British, French, and other “foreign” influences from Asia. Japan was particularly launching belligerent threats toward America.

Then one quiet Sunday morning, December 7, 1941, a “day that shall live in infamy,” Japan’s naval air forces launched a vicious surprise attack on the United States military located in Hawaii, catching the U.S. by surprise and leaving in their ignominious wake destruction on a massive scale including nearly 2,500 Americans dead. Japan’s dishonorable attack on Pearl Harbor was immediately followed by an attack and invasion by imperial forces of the Philippines, Wake Island, Guam, Siam, and Malaysia. President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared war on Japan, and in turn, according to the Axis treaty, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States. On December 26th, the Japanese captured Hong Kong.

So January, 1942, finds the world embroiled in a frenzied and truly global conflict. America’s citizenry were recovering from the shock of Pearl Harbor and coming to terms with the enormity of the challenge and sacrifice confronting them. America’s inner strength, proud character, and tireless resolve were to be sorely tested.

Meanwhile, I was coming to terms with my childhood.
Jesse Dodson Holt in uniform during his military service at the time of the Phillipines Insurrection.
If I could recall all the heartaches,
Dear old Daddy, I caused you to bear
If I could erase, those lines from your face
And bring back the gold to your hair
If God would but grant me the power
To turn back the pages of time
I’d give all I own, if I could but atone
To that silver haired Daddy of mine.

— Gene Autry, 1932

I

My Father
January, 1942

“Hurry, Jewell! Hurry! Tha Boogerman is right behind us!” My sister Geraldine dashed ahead of me as we sailed over the sand-rocks and humps in the forested path. The sun had settled below the horizon and the cold grip of Old Man Winter took hold upon the land. My bare feet were numbed from the cold and crunched upon the frosted leaves, a sound that fell dead in the towering stand of hickory and oak.

“Jewell, where’s your dress? Did the Boogerman eat it?” Geraldine called. I looked down and saw that my dress was gone revealing my slip. Looking over my shoulder, I caught a glimpse of the dress in the gathering gloom hooked on a root. Shame flooded my soul and burned red upon my cheeks.

A loud grunt.
Emerging from the dark came an enormous boar with a Cheshire grin pinned on the corners by gleaming white tushes. Fear escalated as the boar gained on me. Each grunt produced a plume of white steam, and blood dripped from its chin. I screamed, hooked my foot on a root and crashed upon the forest floor.

The boar rose above me upon hind legs. It waddled closer. Its belly crackled and popped. Drips of cooked fat dripped from its hindquarters. The overpowering scent of frying bacon permeated the air. My shame dissipated into abject terror. Suddenly the ground evaporated and my body began falling... falling... falling...

into a deep abyss. Below, the void was without bottom. My mouth opened in a breathless scream, the whistle of wind in my ear the only audible sound.

“Jewell! Jewell! Wake up! You’re a moanin like you’re a hurtin.” My sister Georgia’s voice emerged into my half-conscious mind. The falling stopped abruptly as I opened my eyes to a view of the bedroom ceiling. The smell of breakfast bacon saturated the crisp morning air.

*  *  *

I arose from the awful nightmare with a thankful heart. My feet lighted upon the cold wood floor and carried me quickly into the kitchen where my sisters, Georgia, Geraldine, and Jessie; my brother Jimmy; and Mommy sat eating breakfast consisting of fried fatback, biscuits and gravy, eggs, and blackberry jam. Georgia stood, self-consciously leaning slightly forward, head tipped to one side, holding a cast iron pan filled with gravy. Poppy had finished eating and paced the kitchen floor. He was engaged in conversation with Mommy about the
terrible war in distant, far-away countries.*

“There were a lot of people at the prayer meetin las night,” Poppy said, slurping steaming coffee from a shallow saucer. “Everybody’s worried bout us gettin into it with Japan and Germany, what with Roosevelt declaring war last month and all.”

Mommy merely grunted through a mouthful of gravy.

Poppy continued. “Didya know tha Britain’s battle cry is ‘The Yanks are Comin,’” Poppy chortled. “I heard that Roosevelt promised Britain a large air force fleet. They need our help. Lord knows, I don’t want us to go to war, but we don’t have a choice after Pearl Harbor.”

I sat down between Geraldine and Jimmy. Georgia ladled gravy onto my plate from the pan she still clutched.

“Brother Willis’s son, Allen, was in that attack. He was in the thick of the fight that day and wrote his mother five days later sayin his wrist was still sore from the terrific strain of handling a big gun as a gunner’s mate.” Poppy paced uncomfortably to the other side of the kitchen. Mommy never looked up from her plate.

Poppy continued, “I hear they’re raising money to finance the war selling war bonds.

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A large crowd attended the community prayer service this morning at 11 o’clock at the court house in connection with the observance all over the nation of New Year’s Day as a day of prayer, as proclaimed by President Franklin D Roosevelt. The service was arranged by the three Somerset clubs affiliated with the Kentucky Federation of Women’s Clubs, The Chautauqua Club, Somerset Literary Club and Younger Woman’s Club. Representatives of all faiths and races attended. In a special proclamation, Mayor W.C. Norfleet this week urged all citizens to join in offering prayers for spiritual aid at the beginning of the New Year, requested that churches be kept open during the day and that individuals be urged to enter for prayer and mediation. Short addresses at the meeting this morning were made by the Rev. O.B. Crockett and the Rev. L.D. Fisher. The invocation was pronounced by the Rev. Crockett, and the benediction by the Rev. W.R. Munday, colored. The Rev. W.B. Wood, colored, offered a prayer. Boy and Girl Scouts gave the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and the Scout oath and the audience joined in singing “America,” led by Frank Ellis, Sam Adams of New York, who is home on a visit, sang two solos and the audience sang the national anthem. Mayor Norfleet presided. A number of local churches are keeping their doors open all day today and the public is welcome to enter for prayer and meditation. Gov. Johnson has also designated today as a Statewide day of prayer to ask “for strength and courage sufficient to make the sacrifices which will be demanded of us as we prepare to crush the pagan power Japan and the Godless Hitler.” Mrs. R.G. Williams, Jr., Somerset, president of the Kentucky Federation of Women’s Clubs, sent messages Sunday to clubwomen throughout Kentucky urging them to arrange prayer services in their communities New Year’s Day or to cooperate with other agencies in complying with the President’s request. Mayor W.C. Norfleet’s proclamation follows: “Whereas, President Franklin D Roosevelt has designated Thursday, Jan. 1, 1942, as a national day of prayer, I, W.C. Norfleet, Mayor of the City of Somerset, proclaim Jan. 1 as a day of prayer in Somerset, and request that places dedicated to the worship of God be kept open during the day and that individuals be urged to enter for prayer and mediation. And, whereas the three Somerset Clubs affiliated with the Kentucky Federation of Women’s Clubs, named The Chautauqua Club, the Somerset Literary Club, and the Younger Woman’s Club, have arranged a community meeting at the Courthouse at 11 o’clock Thursday morning, I earnestly request all citizens, who possibly can, attend this service held for the purpose of prayer and meditation, and in the words of our President, “of asking forgiveness of our shortcomings of the past, of consecration to the tasks of the present, and of asking God’s help in the days to come.”
People are standin in line ta buy um. And they’re raising money fer the Red Cross, cause they’ll be tha ones who’ll take care of ...” He let the sentence drift unfinished, eyes blank. With a start, he took another long slurp from the saucer.

In a lower voice, he continued warily, “Tis a shame we don’t have money ta give cause they’ll shore need a lot fore this war is over. Sure, sellin them bonds will insure ya get your money back after tha war. Of course, we’d have ta win first. If we lose ... it won’t matter anyway.” This last sentence faded to a mutter as he paced back to the back door gazing out into the gloom of the early morning. Etches of frost crosshatched the corners of the windowpanes. Pulses of condensation on the cold glass followed Poppy’s every breath.

Mommy stood up and her chair scrapped across the rough wooden floor. Quickly Georgia collected her dishes along with Jimmy’s. Mommy pulled a bag of pinto beans from the cupboard and sieved some through her fingers into a stockpot. Every so often she would snatch small gravel from the pouring beans, an artifact of the commercial shelling process. As I watched her, still eating my breakfast, I noticed that her eyes were red. Briefly looking up from her work, staring at the wall and brushing her sleeve across her eyes she said, “I’m so fraid

Allen Holt in naval uniform around the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor.
Coyd'll be sent overseas and git kilt. Ya know how wild he is. He'll never make hit home alive.”

The room became silent. Georgia, who was beginning to wash dishes, paused.

Poppy turned to face Mommy from across the room. Sighing deeply, and taking another drink of coffee, he chose his next words carefully, “Oh, I don't know bout that. Our boy's pretty resourceful. But yer right about one thing. He may get his deployment papers soon. I was talkin with Bill Bob yesterday and his son, Leo, who joined the same time with Coyd, has already been sent to Europe.” He tapped a silent tune on the saucer with his fingers.

Mommy finished sifting the beans and added water to the pot. “Ya know everythin's gonna git scarce Dodson.” I rarely heard Mommy use Poppy’s name. I knew that this was serious. “They're already sayin tires are, cause they need the rubber fer war materials.”

Poppy cracked a small smile, “Course that won't hurt us—I mean bout the tires.”

Mommy flashed a warning glance at Poppy, “There’s talk of rationin most everthang, maybe even these here beans.”

Silence fell once more. I didn't feel like eating anymore. In my mind I pictured my brother Coyd lying on the ground in someplace called Europe clutching his stomach with hunger. I didn't feel like I'd ever eat again. Next to me, Jimmy waved his spoon in the air, and watched with an anxious face. He was impatient, because his plate was gone and eating was his favorite activity.

* * *

My father, Jesse Dodson Holt, was born in Whitley County, Kentucky, on April 8, 1884. His parents moved north to Pulaski County when he was a young boy. He was the oldest of seven brothers. His father, John Holt, a Baptist minister, died of consumption (tuberculosis, or TB) at the age of 39, leaving Catherine, my grandmother, with seven boys to raise by herself over by Buck Creek. Simple survival for a widow with a large family was a challenge to say the least. They ate fish from the creek, game from the woods, and corn and garden vegetables
they grew along the creek bottoms. The brothers, once old enough, worked for local farmers to help put food on the table. All of them became self-educated.

Poppy was a tall, thin man with light brown hair and blue eyes. He had served in the Philippine Insurrection (1899–1905) and spent time in the Philippines. He married my mother, Winnie Georgia Vanhook, after he returned from the service in 1912, and they moved to Arkansas where he worked as an assayer for a timber company. They returned to Pulaski County before their first child was born. Upon their return, they bought several acres of timberland near my mother’s parents where Poppy built a one-room cabin. They lived there for a time while he cut timber and cleared the land for farming. In 1918 they sold the land to Barney and Martha Snell, and that land remains in the Snell Family today. From 1918 until 1935 Poppy bought and sold several tracts of land and moved the family four different places including Long Hollow, Dykes, Hound Hollow, and Poplarville. I was born in Poplarville, in a small house called the Brogan Place, and it was the only place, at the age of six, that I knew as home.

*  *  *

After another night filled with scary dreams, I was glad to hear voices in the kitchen. Hurriedly, I crawled out of my featherbed and rushed to the warmth of the fire where everyone was eating breakfast.

“Little Hog, yer eyes are as big as saucers!” Poppy said with a smile as he sipped coffee from his own saucer, “Ya musta had another bad nightmare. What was it about? Did ya see tha Boogerman?”

I shook in fear and tried to smile, unsuccessfully, and merely shook my head. I didn’t want to talk about it. Was that a Boogerman after me? NO! The Boogerman only came out in the dark. The scene flashed through my mind of that awful morning when I witnessed the slaughter. NO! I couldn’t think about that now. Maybe I wouldn’t have any more nightmares if I could forget.

“Dodson! yer’re makin hit worse.” Mommy scolded, “Them nightmares are awful. I have ‘em all tha time, specially if I’m worried over somethin. Hit’s worse when I dream of turned up dirt cause I know hit’s a sign of diggin a grave. Never fails that when that happens somebody dies.”

I felt a chill in the air and tried to remember if there were any fresh dirt in my nightmare. Not this time, just that ole mean hog coming to eat me.

*  *  *

Nightmares continued to haunt me to the point of my being afraid to go to sleep at night. The mornings were fuzzy and I tried to ignore the disagreements that seemed to exist among the whole family. Arguments frequently exploded between my parents since the war had erupted. I didn’t understand what Poppy did that made Mommy so mad because he was always so good to me. I did notice, however, that Poppy stayed away from home a great deal.

Poppy was high strung and prone to pacing the floor while teaching or thinking. His wanderings around the community were legendary and he therefore became a source of news, forecasting the weather, and especially informing the neighbors about the geological features and customs of countries where their sons were fighting in foreign lands. Stomach problems plagued him. Neighbors were not surprised if, when walking by, he stopped to ask for a seltzer of vinegar, baking soda, and water to relieve indigestion.

As my mind wandered, Poppy walked to the back room where he kept his heavy coat and hat.
“Well, Dodson, whar ya goin today?” Mommy cleared the table as she talked. The past few days she suffered from the toothache and was in a foul mood. “We need wood sawed fer tha heatin stove and the cow is ‘bout out of bran.” She wiped her forehead and continued unabated. “We’ve got ta have milk ta drank. Hit ain’t no use walkin all over the country talkin bout the war wit the neighbors. Yer gonna wear out yer welcome.” Her thin face was still clear of wrinkles even though she was 50 years old, but decades of hard work had taken its toll. She scraped the leftover gravy out of the skillet and into the slop bucket we kept in the kitchen to keep the table scraps for our pigs.

I heard the door shut and Poppy was gone for the day. Mommy sighed deeply. Jimmie still sat at the table waving his spoon in the air and humming a tune in a nervous and soft wail. Arguing bothered him. It bothered me too. Little Jimmie was my companion in many adventures and although older than me, he was always in my care. This morning, his brows were deeply furrowed. I suspect that mine were as well.

*  *  *

In 1932, my family traded their farm on Silvers Branch to Neil Bolton for the Dykes Post Office and Grocery Store on the east bank of Buck Creek. They lost everything running that store. At fault was Mommy’s big heart, though you would not know it talking with her. She extended lines of credit to family and friends knowing that during the depression they would be unable to pay it back. She also opened the home to family members who needed a place to stay such as my Aunt Mary (Mommy’s sister) and Uncle Embrey Bolton. Embrey lost his job, and with eight children was desperate for a place to live. They spent the summer of 1932 with Mommy and Poppy and other family members just to have food to eat. I don’t know how they all slept.

By 1934 my parents had to give up the store, and they began again from scratch with a house full of kids. Poppy taught school, but he was paid very little. They first moved into a three-room log cabin near Hound Hollow west of Buck Creek. Here, my oldest sister,
Maydell, married Jesse Dykes, and they lived with my parents until after their first baby was born. It must have been a problem trying to find a place to sleep. Then Mommy and Poppy crossed back east of Buck Creek and rented a five-room house in Poplarville called the Brogan Place, the place where I was born.

The Brogan Place was not much, but it provided a roof over our heads, a barn for the livestock, and enough cleared land for some pasture and a garden. We raised vegetables to eat in summer and preserve for winter.

Poppy was well known throughout the area for his school teaching and also his teaching singing at many of the local churches. Because the Pulaski County School System required that teachers had to have a high school diploma, and since Poppy and other teachers were self-taught, he attended Mt. Victory High School long enough to take tests to qualify to teach again. Many times he and Theodore Meece, who lived on Poplarville Road, walked together from their homes to Mt. Victory High School.

Mommy’s formal schooling, in contrast, consisted of completing the third grade, an accomplishment for a girl at that time in Appalachia. Most children attended school only long enough to learn to read and write and do some simple math; some didn’t go at all. Often times, the Bible was the only book that some, including Mommy, read after leaving school. Mommy respected, but never understood, Poppy’s fascination with books and learning. She once told me that when she and Poppy were courting, she and her sister Mandy visited for dinner after church one Sunday, a distance of 5 miles on horseback and saw a boy sitting at every corner of the small cabin with a textbook. Most of my uncles pursued their livelihood in the ministry or teaching school.

* * *

This morning I awoke to find Poppy sitting in a chair near the wood stove. His right foot, shoeless, was awkwardly hooked over his left knee. His toes were displayed as he trimmed his yellow and thick toenails with a razor blade.

“How come your toenails look like horse’s hoofs?” I asked with less sincerity than I meant.

“Because Jericho has stepped on them so many times,” he snickered as he answered and turned his head to cough roughly. Then he held a tattered black leather shoe up for me to see. I could see his eye through the large hole in the leather sole, a testimony of the many miles he had walked. He proceeded to use the razor to cut the leather, converting the shoe into a bizarre type of sandal.

Mommy noticed what he had done and huffed disgustedly from the kitchen door. “Jus look at them shoes, Dodson. You ain’t had them more an a month. That beats all I
ever saw! Ya git a new pair of shoes an then take a razor and jus cut em inta strips. Jus how’re ya gonna git another pair?”

“Winnie,” Poppy said as he cut a piece of cardboard to fit inside the shoes as an insole and to plug the hole. “My feet are sore from walkin so much an I can’t stand shoes that hurt. I’ll git a pair taday down at the store. Maybe they’ll fit better.”

Mommy sighed and walked back into the kitchen, her eyes growing suddenly glassy. Soon the clang of pots and pans indicated that she was putting pinto beans on the cookstove that was still hot from breakfast. Georgia and Jessie, who were washing the breakfast dishes, noticed her mood and gave Mommy a wide berth. The clanging stopped and Mommy reappeared in the doorway again, this time with tears running down her cheeks.

“Howard’s gonna cut us off cause we owe him too much!” She blurted. “Here we need money and you’re still borrowin ta spend on them no-good inventions.” Poppy opened his mouth to respond, but was not able to cut in as she continued. “An I’ll tell ya, we shore ain’t gonna use tha government allotment we’re gettin fer Coyd’s war service, cause ever bit of that is goin inta tha bank fer him when he gits home ... if he gits home ...” This last she let trail off as she wiped the tears from her cheeks with her sleeve.

“Some day we’ll make a lot of money from my work” Poppy said as he walked toward the front door with his shoulders slumped. “I’m goin ta Dayton, Ohio, soon to work in a defense plant. They’re beggin fer help. “I’ll carry a load of corn ta tha mill this mornin and bring back bran tomorrow fer tha stock. Tomorrow I’ll cut firewood. I’ll stay with Mother tonight after I do my business in town.”
Poppy reached for the door handle, and Mommy called out to him as he left, “Dodson, ya watch fer them mad dogs cause tha paper said that eight people wus bit jus las week.” She sighed again as his footsteps faded. “He’ll never be able ta work at them public works up north,” Mommy muttered under her breath. “With his temper, he’ll not take all that cussin an drankin that people up thar do.” Like his wandering, Poppy’s intolerance for profanity and alcohol were also legendary. If he were alive today, he might have been sued for assault on multiple occasions; getting into arguments, causing tempers to flair, and resulting in physical contact with the nearest available weapon. As it was, the community tolerated, if not supported, his vigilante methods since local law enforcement was practically non-existent.
II Spitting Contest  
March 1, 1942

As a result of the attack on Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt signed into effect the mandatory draft stating that men between the ages of 20 and 40 were subject for military service.*

My brother Coyd had foreseen the coming of the war and had already joined the Army in 1940. He hoped to use his fighting skills to help save his country from the evil Adolf Hitler. Coyd’s nickname was “Scrub,” because he was a small man but strong as an ox and could whip someone twice his size. He had many friends and always fought for the underdog.

Leonard, another brother, was 21 in 1940. He had been called for the draft but had been turned down the first time because of a lazy eye. He was in the spring semester at Lindsey Wilson College, but he knew it was just a matter of time before he would get his second call.

Hyle, my oldest brother, was married and had a son by 1940; therefore, he was exempt from the draft for the time being. He frequently talked about joining the Marines, but he was torn between his dedication to his family and his obligation and desire to help protect his country at its moment of desperate need.

Most families in the country had sons who were in the armed services, and every person, including boys and girls, was involved in the effort to win the war. Meanwhile, I was seven years old and in the third grade. I was five when I started school, partly because my father


William H. McCarthy, editor of the Postmaster’s Gazette, has written one of the outstanding editorials on the war situation, since the attack on Pearl Harbor. It is being widely reproduced and we have been asked to publish it for the benefit of Pulaskians. Here it is and our hat is off to Mr. McCarthy: Four months have passed since the news of the dastardly Pearl Harbor attack broke the calm of Sunday, December 7th, to shock, horrify and stun the people of the United States. The first shot fired above Fort Sumpter, and the sinkings of the Maine and of the Lusitania were not comparable in their effect. Overnight the nation was aroused. When, on the following day, President Roosevelt read his war message to the joint session of Congress, as never before our people stood united, determined to avenge the slaughter of our men, the destruction of our ships, the invasion of our territory, and the insult to our Flag. That was four months ago. Admittedly, in the interim, we have seen some dark, gray days. But what has happened to our morale — our courage — the Yankee Doodle Dandy never-say-die spirit — in the meantime? Since when did it develop that we Americans cannot take it? You hear the criticism on almost every corner, in club, church, and home, and in most every place where men and women congregate. Capital is unsparing in its denunciation of Labor, and Labor is even more emphatic in its bitter tirade against big business and the kings of the counting house. The distinguished radio commentator, Henry V. Kaltenborn, literally rent the ether only a few Sundays ago with his bitter denunciation directed, at least by inference, at the President. The Cabinet must be revamped! Leon Henderson and his price control and rationing program should be suppressed! Why cannot Secretaries Stimson and Knox agree on recent enemy aerial activities in Los Angeles? Why don’t we fight an offensive war? Will Britain fight to the last Yank and, if not, what is she doing with the three million men reputed to be wintering on her soil? Why did we desert MacArthur, Singapore, Sumatra, Java, and why do we leave Australia and New Zealand to their fate? Germany, Italy, Japan, and the devil himself could not have invented a more vicious or diabolical crusade. What joy these symptoms of dissatisfaction and defeatism must bring to the Quislings, the Fifth Columnists, the Cliven Set, and the Benedict Arnolds of our day. For this is on the borderline, if indeed, it be not treason! Certainly such loose lip service is giving aid and comfort to the enemy when we (continued)
was the teacher. I already knew how to read because I was taught at home by my older sisters and listened to them doing their memorization and other homework. I hated spelling with a passion. Playing with my dog, Jack, and my cat, Tom, and all the farm animals was much more fun.

Sometimes Poppy would take me with him at night to visit our neighbors, Robcat and his father, Jonathan Sears, to listen to the news. We didn’t have a radio of our own, and Poppy was always eager to know how the war was going. After the news, the three of them would sit and talk into the night about the war, what they had heard, and its meaning and implications for the future. The conversation would usually revisit the belief that Americans would have to bow down to Tojo and Hitler if we didn’t win the war. I knew what both of these men looked like because every time Poppy brought a newspaper home their pictures were usually on the front page.

Jonathan was a frail, elderly man with extraordinary deep blue eyes and a deeply tanned and weathered face that revealed his many years working outside in the sun. He kept a cane by his chair and sat near a spittoon as he constantly kept his jaw jutted with a wad of Red Twist. Ambeer ran down both sides of his mouth and he would occasionally wipe it off with his sleeve.

Robcat’s rustic log home had a front porch and front room that seemed large to me with other rooms in the back. This house had once held the joy and laughter of a large family. All had married and moved away except Robcat who had never married. He took care of his sick, old father.

(continued) we should be rolling up our sleeves like free, white, sane Americans and digging in and working day and night for the ultimate victory, no matter what it may cost in blood and toil and tears and sweat. Leave the actual conduct of the war to the Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Corps! Remember if we only do our part one half as well as our armed forces do theirs, no one need fear the final day of accounting or that Pearl Harbor will not be avenged. There is scant comfort in the knowledge that Washington knew the same caustic criticism, and so did Jackson, Lincoln, McKinley, Wilson, and every one of our War Presidents. To say that this is a different war is to utter a commonplace. It is a world war the like of which has never been known before. It is a conflict in which enemy propaganda and fifth column activities have played a part heretofore unthought of in the mechanics and strategy of war. Divide and conquer is the credo of the Hun and his allies. That separation is by no means a matter of geography, or of men and munitions, but rather one in which the divided sentiment and allegiance of a people under attack is even more essential to success. Think of France, if you doubt this. Postmasters of the United States, it is your duty to discourage this unjust, ill considered, and unpatriotic criticism which has apparently become the order of the day. Every drug store cowboy has become a general, and every barfly an admiral. Some of this is thoughtless. Much of it is prompted by personal and political hatred. Some of it is inspired enemy propaganda. All of it is subversive and destructive of that high morale and courage so necessary to victory. The man or the woman who in this crisis would doubt the loyalty and integrity of our leaders is unworthy of the name of citizens of the United States of America. And hell hath no fury sufficient for the man or the woman who would slander our Commander-in-Chief, as he bravely bends his back beneath the heavy burden of his responsibilities and sets the highest example of moral and physical courage ever witnessed in this or any other age. Postmasters of the United States, it is your duty to endeavor to stop this cowardly comment and criticism. In your separate communities, it is your job to try to arouse the courage, devotion, and dedication to duty, which not only is vital to success and victory, but which our soldiers in the field, and our leaders at home, have every right to expect and demand. Discipline, courage, confidence, devotion, these are the virtues which we need. Remember Pearl Harbor! But remember also, the day after wherein a fighting, two-fisted, do or die America was born! Keep that spirit alive! Keep the faith and fear not.
I lay down on the floor by their dog, Shep, in front of the huge fireplace that encompassed one whole side of the room. An iron piece was fastened to hinges on one side of the fireplace so a kettle could hang over the fire, and this was where they cooked pots of food. In the corner of the room was a bed with a feather tick mattress. Like some of our own beds, there were no springs under the mattress, only ropes fastened on each side in a woven fashion.

Long nails had been driven into the walls and held overalls, coats, shirts, and other clothing items. I knew there had been no woman in the house for a long time because the place smelled earthy.
On this night, Poppy walked back and forth between the fireplace and a spittoon Robcat had moved so all three could use it. From my vantage point, I watched the maneuvering of the chairs and the centering of the most important object in the room, the spittoon. I had seen this many times before, and it amused me that they seemed to take these preparations so seriously. I could hear the metallic ring as Poppy passed by it marking a place with a piece of firewood for them to stand to spit the slimy amber that would be aimed at the hole in the center. Each worked a wad of tobacco from one cheek to the other, to create enough spit to compete in the game. No one said a word as they went about their business of spitting from each designated place to try to hit the center hole of the spittoon without splattering. Of
course, often enough, the outside of the spittoon would get half of the intended load and spit
would splatter several feet from the target.

Jonathan had the hardest time trying to stand steady enough to aim correctly, but he
would put his walking stick in front of his frail body, widen his stance, and hold the top of the
cane with his bony hands. Then he’d take a deep breath, purse his wrinkled lips, and suddenly
let go with a yellow stream that made me wonder how he could store that much or where in
the world it came from. I could see the pleasure on his wrinkled face every time he hit the hole. I never really saw any score, but I’m sure they knew who won by the time the evening was over. The spittoon was the center of activity, and all the while the radio was blasting the world news. Jonathan was nearly deaf and the radio was so loud everything seemed to reverberate with the sound:

This is Gabriel Heatter with a summary of the CBS evening news. On the war front in the Pacific after the fall of Wake Island and Manila to the Japs, the U.S. Navy announced a surprise attack on the Marshall and Gilbert Islands. Japs lost their bases on these islands. The United States and Netherlands sea and air forces have sunk or damaged at least 19 enemy war ships and transports in a three day battle in and around Java. The enemy’s submarines shelled Standard Oil Company refinery on the island of Aruba on February 2, the first attack on the Western Hemisphere in World War II. Shells fell on the Mainland for the first time when
enemy submarine fired on an oil refinery in Santa Barbara, California.

I listened intently to the news but the words began to trail off as my eyes grew heavy. In a few minutes I fell into a half-conscious sleep, listening to the unintelligible voices as Poppy, Robcat, and Jonathan discussed and generally agreed on the subject of their conversation.

Suddenly I saw something crawling toward me. No! It wasn’t crawling; it was sliding in red stuff. Oh no! No! There it was again! I couldn’t run because my legs wouldn’t work. After thrashing around on the floor for an eternity, my eyes opened and I remembered where I was. It was just that ole nightmare again. However, I couldn’t lie down again for fear of that awful thing coming back. As I sat there trying to get my wits about me, I could see Robcat moving around the room talking as he walked. “I shore feel like I oughta take up my gun and join the army to help win this war. Them Japs are sneaky varmints and need to be blowed off the face of the earth.”

Poppy took out the red handkerchief he kept in his back pocket and blew his nose making a high squeaky noise that reminded me of the sound I made when blowing through a blade of grass between my fingers. Ole Shep awakened with a start. He was lying in front of the fireplace having running fits in his dreams. I wondered if he might have the same nightmares I had.

Poppy wiped his nose, put his handkerchief back in his pocket, and said, “Well, I feel like that, too, but Uncle Sam wouldn’t have me or you. The new commander of the Southwest Pacific, General MacArthur, will do a good job. The Japs surprised us at Pearl Harbor and we lost over 2,000 men, but we won’t be asleep again. Our job here at home is to make war materials for the soldiers to use to whip Tojo and Hitler. Everyone feels like they need to help. “The Red Cross drives are raisin a lot of money. Some workers are contributing a day’s pay. They are a vital source in helping win this war. They’re already training girls to work in airplane and defense factories, some doing sheet metal work to take the boys’ jobs while they’re away at war. I’m thinkin bout goin to Dayton, Ohio, to work in a defense factory. At least I’ll be doin something for the war effort.”

“Did you hear bout Ben Vansant?” Jonathan asked.

“Yeah,” Poppy said, “He was with the U.S. Army on Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines when they were forced to surrender. Some who were fightin with General Wainwright were transferred to Corregidor, but they haven’t heard from Ben since.”


Poppy continued, “The Defense Council Commanders met Sunday in Gladstone Wesley’s office in Somerset and was asked to appoint air raid officers and commanders in their areas. Holbert Black was appointed for Mt. Victory.”

Old Shep had had enough and decided to find a quieter place. He struggled to his feet
and staggered out to the kitchen with his tail tucked between his legs and his head slumped between his shoulders. I heard his groan of contentment as he returned to lying in his usual trance.

I had been lying on the dirty hard plank floor with my head on my old tattered coat and when I moved, my bones felt tired and sore. In the shadow of the coal oil lamp, I could see Poppy sitting in a homemade chair leaning back against the wall. Robcat was standing with his back to the fireplace, casting a long, eerie shadow on the wall while warming his backside. The fire had died down and the room was chilly. Jonathan dozed in his rocker by the fireplace.

“I read in the paper where they’re sayin we’re right in line to be bombed in case of air raids in the United States,” Robcat said as he walked over to stir up the fire and add another log. “They pointed out that a bomber could reach this area from a base on the Virginia coast in an hour and three quarters. If a bomber flew from a carrier 250 miles at sea, it could reach Somerset in two and a half hours. They said that Fort Knox and Lexington were potential marks for air raids. There could be bombs dropped on cities such as Somerset. Bombers can’t land with several tons of bombs in their racks and must empty them somewhere before landing.”

There was a lull in the conversation, and I raised my head on my elbow and whispered to Poppy, “I’m tired. Can we go home?” Poppy lowered his chair to the floor.

“Come on, then, Little Hog. Let’s go.” He got up and started toward the door. “This new ‘war time’ or ‘daylight saving time’ Congress has enacted changes things, although we don’t see much difference on the farm. Ours is daylight hours no matter if it’s summer or winter. Fore I forget it, Winnie wanted me to ask if you’d turn our garden over in a couple of weeks.”

“Yep,” Robcat said, “Judy and Julie will need some workin out anyway.”

We went home by a footpath that led through the woods and over the hill with just the moon giving light to walk. I stumbled along half asleep trying to keep up because I was afraid of headless horsemen or mad dogs that might be traveling the same path. Sometimes Poppy would have to carry me over big ditches and large logs that had fallen in the path.
By April, 1942, the Pacific Theater was marked by a series of great naval victories as well as a series of devastating losses.

American forces defending the Bataan Peninsula capitulated on April 9, due to a lack of food and ammunition. Morale was low and men were weak and dying from disease and inadequate nourishment. The Japanese lacked sufficient motorized transportation to relocate the Bataan defenders to their prison camp in San Fernando so the prisoners were forced to march the 70 arduous miles to their new internment. The Japanese guards punished the men during the march and showed no mercy toward the POW’s. At one location over 30 POW’s were shot because they stopped to fill their canteens. Prisoners who could not maintain the vicious pace were bayonetted or shot.

By mid-June, Japanese forces had landed in the Aleutian Islands of Alaska and held American territory for the first time. Their invasion efforts were not considered an immediate threat to the Alaskan mainland or the U.S. west coast. They did send a wave of bombers and fighter planes over Dutch Harbor. Then in mid-May, a force of Japanese naval vessels including transports and supply ships were noticed moving into the Coral Sea north of Australia. The Allied navies attacked and the battle lasted for several days. The Battle of Coral Sea is regarded as a real turning point in the war in the Pacific and signaled the beginning of the end of the Japanese Empire.

The Battle of Midway was an epic sea engagement where American courage and resolve were tested and heavy Japanese losses critically limited their continued ability to rage war. The U.S. Navy lost the aircraft carrier *USS Yorktown* as a consequence of the battle.

Washington announced a freeze in order to tamp down on inflation. The program set maximum prices on “virtually everything Americans eat, wear, and use.” The program also limited war profits, promoted defense bonds, limited individual salaries, and placed a ceiling on war industry labor wages. All salaries were capped at $25,000 per annum while the average weekly wage in industrial plants stood at about $35 a week. Washington also banned the production of innumerable household items such as lawn mowers, toasters, percolators, and many other items. Consumers were required to turn in empty toothpaste tubes and shaving cream cans in order to purchase more. In June, it was announced that American housewives needed to save all fat and grease and other oils for war manufacturing purposes. New war production factories began to come online and some automobile factories finished converting to war purposes. Cargo ship production was still not matching wartime losses in the Atlantic. In April, it was stated that a wooden leg was no longer a barrier for men to serve in some capacity in the Army. Other causes for deferment, such as limited blindness, loss of a hand, flat feet, deafness, ulcers, etc., were no longer in effect. In June it was declared that illiterates would be inducted.

– *Somerset Journal*, 1943
We welcomed the warm days of April and the feel of spring in the air. “Jewell! Hurry up and getcha hair combed. We got ta git ta the church house when Poppy does,” Geraldine yelled at me as she washed up. My 13-year-old sister was beautiful with her big blue eyes and reddish brown hair. We were getting ready for church because Poppy was starting a singing school at Poplarville that night as he often did at various churches in the community. These singing schools were a part of an old tradition brought to America by Scotch-Irish and English immigrants called “Old Harp” singing. In “Old Harp,” a different shaped note represents each note, and sometimes they would sing the notes instead of the words. They learned new songs from the church hymnal and when the different parts were sung together, their voices blended together, creating beautiful musical sounds. Special quartets and duets were chosen from the participants. However, we never got picked to sing in special groups because Poppy was afraid people would think he was showing favoritism.

“I’m only goin cause Betty Ray’ll be thar,” I heard Geraldine tell Georgia, another older sister. “I’m wearing my new princess-style voile dress Mommy jus made fer me,” she announced. Betty Ray was her best friend who lived over on the next ridge from us. I was terribly jealous because Geraldine was so pretty and well liked; as for me, it seemed as if everyone wanted to pick a fight.

“You needn’t hurry cause Poppy won’t pick us to sang in his quartet no way,” said Jessie, another sister next to Geraldine in age. She had on a blue sailor dress with binding around the large collar and sleeves. She was combing her blond hair she had taken out of tin curlers while prancing around showing off her new dress. Jessie was tall and thin with blue eyes and a very fair complexion. “I know he won’t cause he done got his quartet picked. I hyard him tellin em las Sunday.” In one breath she changed the subject. “Geraldine, I see where you have took over the cedar chest and yer makin a hope chest outta it. When is the weddin?” With that she threw the comb down and marched out of the house saying, “I’ll be glad when I leave this place. Anyway, I’m pretty and I’m gonna make a lot of money and never come back! Ain’t none of you as pretty as me.”

“Just listen to her bragging on herself!” Geraldine said, her face was still burning from the remark Jessie made about the hope chest.

I asked, “Are you makin a hope chest?”

Geraldine answered, “I have just been puttin some of my needle work and a quilt I made in that chest to keep them clean.” (Most girls started a “hope chest” very young so when they married they had some things to start housekeeping.) This was a surprise to me. I made a mental note to look in the chest just as soon as I got back from church.

Geraldine picked up the Somerset Journal Poppy had brought home and I heard a quick intake of breath. She read aloud, “A Transcontinental and Western Airlines planes has crashed killing all on board. Carole Lombard, a famous movie star and the wife of Clark Gable was killed plus 21 others, including 15 Army Air Corps men.”

Geraldine kept up with all the movie stars. She slammed down the paper and muttered under her breath, “What a shame! She was so purty!”

I put on a new flour sack dress Mommy had just made for me. They were bagging flour and bran for the stock in gingham, calico, and print dress material. Most every household made their own clothes, so it had started a big rage. People would rush to Howard Hines’s store when he got a new shipment of feed so they could pick the prettiest design. Then, if you needed to, you could swap with a neighbor to get enough for a dress. Mommy made my dresses and her dresses from
the feed sacks, but my sisters wanted bought dress material. They didn’t want people to think we were poor even though we were. Some of the feed was bagged in a heavier white material that we used for towels. They were rough and scratchy but warmed us up after a cold bath.

Geraldine snickered as she combed her hair, “You still have ta wear bloomers Mommy makes. Mommy ordered me some step-ins and I won’t have ta wear them ole bloomers no more.” She pulled up her dress and showed me a dainty pair of silk underwear with lace around the legs. Oh! How pretty! When would I get a pair? I’d ask Mommy. But right now I’d have to wait and ask her where no one could hear me.

Before we got in sight of the church house, we stopped and put on the shoes we had carried from home. The ground was still cold, but we didn’t want our shoes dirty from the muddy places in the road. Several people were already there when we arrived. The classes would last for only three nights this time.

People wanted to sing, although not all could carry a tune. The bass, tenor, sopranos, and altos were placed in groups. Poppy began with teaching values of the notes, bass, tenor, and treble clefs. He taught us where to hold the note, and the slurs and rests. We sang the scales
“do, ra, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do!” He’d hit his tuning fork on his wrist and let everyone see if they could get the right pitch. Going down the scales was more fun, “do, ti, la, so, fa, mi, ra, do!” Again and again we sang rounds.

Three blind mice, three blind mice
See how they run, see how they run
They all took after the farmer’s wife
She cut off their tails with a carving knife
Did you ever see such a sight in your life?
As three blind mice, three blind mice.

After we had sung that to his satisfaction we began another round.

Are you sleeping? Are you sleeping?
Brother John, Brother John
Morning bells are ringing, morning bells are ringing
Ding dong ding, ding dong ding.
It was so much fun with all the parts finishing at a different time, every part chasing the other. We were to study the scales for the next night. By the third night, we were getting pretty good. We’d practice next Friday and Saturday night, and then we’d sing for the church on Sunday.

* * *

There was a washtub of warm water waiting for me in the kitchen so I could get my Saturday bath and wash my hair. I sure needed one after playing in the branch all day; I looked like a mud turtle.

“Do I hafta?” I cried. “I hate gettin out of the tub cause its soooo cold.” Georgia had carried the water from the rain barrel (the government had allowed us to keep one per family because it was the source of our utility water) and warmed it up on the hot cook stove.

“Nobody likes me. I hear them snickerin and laughin behind my back,” Georgia said as she washed my face.

“Who was makin fun of you? I never hyard nobody say anythin bout you. Sides, if they did I’d beat ‘em up,” I retorted. “You’re so purty and nice; why would ya thank people don’t like you?”

The hurt look on her face disappeared as she changed the subject. “You look like you been a rootin with the pigs. Lordy! Look at that dress! Hit’ll never come clean!” How’d she know I’d been out playing with our two little pink pigs? They loved when I would get down on my hands and knees and show them where to root to get good grubs. They weighed about 20 pounds apiece and had cute pink ears and a long snout. Their tails curled up over their backs and they were always squealing and fighting over food. Their energy never ran out when there were soft places to root in. Then Ol’ Jack, my dog that followed me every step I made, would decide there might be something in there for him. That began a tirade of digging with his front feet, throwing mud and gravel in a steady stream right on top of me.

“Jewell!” Georgia yelled, “Lord have mercy! Get in that tub and quit day dreamin!”

I timidly put my foot in the water and it felt nice and warm, so I sunk my body into the zinc washtub that served for taking baths and washing clothes. She had heated the iron on the stove and was ironing my new pinafore dress while I played in the water. It was a pretty full skirt with ruffles across the shoulders trimmed in white rickrack.

Georgia was like a mother to me, but I took advantage of her. She was the one who looked after Jimmie and me. I knew she was very shy around people, even family members. It seemed as if all the family found fault with whatever she did. Her facial expressions revealed her confusion and lack of self-esteem. I didn’t want her to worry so much because I truly loved her. She gave of herself constantly to all of the family and especially to me.

I got out of the tub when the water grew too cold. Georgia wrapped my blue, goosebumped body with one of those white bransack towels, and rubbed me down while I danced around to make the blood flow. I put on my flannel nightgown while Georgia rolled my hair and then I jumped in the bed to dream land, praying I wouldn’t have a nightmare.

“Jessie!” I hollered. “Tell me a bedtime story so’s I can sleep.”

“You’re too big ta tell a story to, but I’m comin ta bed so I’ll tell ya jus one,” she agreed.

She began, “Once upon a time there was a young stork named Gentilis who lived in stork land with her parents, brothers, and sisters.

“Stork?” I asked. “What’s a stork?”

“Shhhhh,” she whispered. “Listen ta the story and you’ll see.”

She continued, “They were very busy deliverin human babies to Mommies and Poppies. But Gentilis was still very young and couldn’t tell east from west. One day, everyone was
gone when there came an emergency call from the messenger that a baby had to be delivered right now. There was no one available, so Gentilis said to herself, ‘Hummm, tha message says Emergency, must be delivered immediately. Destination, Poplarville, Kentucky, 2 miles from Howard Hines's store.’ She made the decision that it was time to act."

I thought a minute and interjected, “Sounds like close to where we live.”

“Jus listen ta the story!” she continued impatiently.

“She got her blanket and called to the messenger to fill it with the baby. Next, she looked at her world map and saw the appointed home.”

“Jessie,” I meekly questioned, “what did the baby look like?” I had a sneaking suspicion that baby was me.

She sat up in the bed, apparently agitated and said, “It was ugly, red, and makin too much noise jus like you! Do ya want to hear the rest of the story or are ya gonna keep on askin questions?”

I pulled the covers over my face and nodded my head.

“It was rainin cats and dogs, but she’d have to fly through the storm. She took her load in her beak and began her journey. She flew high in the air. Her wings caught in the wind and she was makin good time. Finally she saw, snuggled in the hills of Kentucky, the house where she was supposed to land. While lowerin her wings to slow down her speed, she felt a sudden pain all through her body fore she saw the flash of lightnin. This meant an emergency landin but her first concern was her cargo. As the pain seared her body, she fought ta keep her senses long nough to land safely. On a hill 2 miles from the house was an openin in the ground where

Georgia Holt.
she thought she could take refuge and figure out what to do. Her landin was far from smooth and the baby started to cry. When she looked round she saw a covey of big turkey buzzards lookin at her as if she was an apparition. She didn’t talk buzzard language so she jus pointed with her wing at the bundle and death came upon her. The rest is history.”

“What do you mean the rest is history?” I exclaimed.

“You know Mommy found ya in Buzzard Cave with the buzzards. She thought the ...”

“Oh phooey!” I cried, “I don’t believe a word of that whole story!”

I heard Jessie giggle as she turned over and closed her eyes.

The next morning I awoke to Mommy’s singing while she built a fire in the kitchen cook stove. It was a sad song from the Civil War era that I had heard her sing many times.

_I am a poor wayfaring stranger_
While traveling through this world below
There is no sickness, toil nor danger
In this bright land to which I go.

_I’m going there to see my father_
_I’m going there, no more to roam_
_I’m only going over Jordan_
_I’m only going over home._

_Although dark clouds will gather o’er me_
_I know my pathway is rough and deep_
_But golden fields I have before me_
_Where weary eyes no more shall weep._

_I’m going there to see my mother_
_She says she’ll meet me when I come_
_I’m just going over Jordan_
_I’m just going over home._

I raised my body to the top of the bed from the hole that I had laid in most of the night. I slept between Geraldine and Jessie in an old iron bed with metal springs and a feather mattress. The springs were old and sunk in the middle; by morning, my sisters were pulled to the center of the bed by gravity and landed right on top of me. Sometimes I’d wake up almost smothered to death and would have to fight my way to the top. Sometimes I’d just get out of bed and lie on the floor, if it wasn’t too cold.

My mother yelled from the kitchen, “Rise and shine! Sun’s in the treetops! Laws a mercy, you want to lay in bed all mornin’! The works’ gotta be done fore you go ta church. I’ve gotta kill and clean them two ol’ roosters under the killin tub fer dinner cause the preachers are comin after church! The house’s gotta be straightened and the stock fed.”

I sat up in the bed with the rag rollers Georgia had used to roll my hair hanging around my face. She wanted me to look like the child movie star Shirley Tempel. I had seen pictures of Shirley Tempel in magazines, and I had a blue and white Shirley Tempel cup that had come in a box of oatmeal. These rollers were much easier to sleep on than those tin can rollers we made by cutting tin cans into strips and covering them with paper.

“Jimmie’s gotta be cleaned up and the house straightened, and drinkin water brought from the sprang cause ya’ll didn’t do it las night, so’s I can cook dinner. All of you, git up!” As
she stood in the doorway, she smoothed her hair out of her face with flour-covered hands and left white streaks through it. I knew she was making those prized biscuits. She’d cut them out with a small Clabber Girl baking powder can after the dough was rolled out on a board. They baked to a golden brown.

Then Jessie said, “Why can’t Georgie do it cause she ain’t goin ta church?”

Suddenly I heard church bells ringing and wondered why so early because usually they rang the bells only when it was time for church to begin.

Mommy paused with a frying pan in midair and I heard her mutter under her breath, “Wonder who died las night? Becky Wright’s been awfully sick. I’d thought we’d hyard hit if hit had been her, livin right over yonder in the woods from us. They’d had to tell bout it.”

There was only one other reason for ringing church bells besides time for church to begin and that was for a death in the community. Usually they rang the bells for people to come and help dig a grave for whoever had passed away. Poppy hurried up and left right after breakfast to see what was going on.

When we arrived at church, we saw a group of men standing outside the church closely engaged in conversation. Others were knotted together, worry and apprehension displayed on their faces and in their voices.

Jessie whispered, “Ya think Hitler or Tojo bombed us?”

“Nah,” Geradine answered, “they’re just talking bout it.”

When church service began, our pastor, Brother Green Rogers, rose to the pulpit and said, “I rung the church bells early so we could have a special prayer service fore Sunday School.”

He asked Mr. Farmer in the congregation to start the prayer service and my mind went back to the prayer printed in the Somerset Journal Poppy read aloud this morning.

Father of all mankind. The heart that has been touched by love is appalled at the hatred and cruelty, the destruction and death that are now ravaging the world. The passion for freedom and justice in the hearts of multitudes seem unable to find expression except in war which is the enemy of freedom of mockery justice. A heroic willingness to die for humanity is perverted into the tragic city of human slaughter. In the presence of the unspeakable disaster, our hearts are bowed in penitence for everything we have done to make it instructable and in earnest entretry that divine light may illumine our minds, divine love purge our hearts and divine power endure. Our will is that we may act in the spirit and with something of the wisdom of Christ. We dare not pray mortally for the victory in this war, we love America more than life and, with even greater devotion, we cherish thy Kingdom. May the Kingdom come with its equal justice for every race, its liberation of every class, its emancipation of fettered minds, its cleansing of embittered hearts, its sanctification of all human life with gifts and tasks that are eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

– Somerset Journal

I was brought back to the present by Brother Rodgers’ high-pitched voice beginning his sermon. Emotion and intensity brought tears to his eyes and his voice trembled as he tried to hold himself together: “I can feel the pain of you families who have boys in the war. My boys are gettin ready ta join up so I personally know the worry. Ever day our boys are facin the enemy, bullets flyin all round while they lay in foxholes. We all know that Hitler is possessed with the devil, killin Christians and Jews, innocent women and children, wantin to rule the world. Wantin ta take away our right to serve our God. I know God is on our side and we’ll win this war cause our cause is noble and just. The old Bible tells us of the wars that were won cause the leaders trusted in God. He led em to victory. We have to be much in prayer.” By this
time there wasn’t a dry eye in the house. Some mothers whose sons were in the service hid their faces in a handkerchief to stop their tears.

Poppy jumped up from his seat and started singing and waving his hands in the air inviting the congregation to join in:

\[
\text{Mine eyes have seen the glory} \\
\text{of the coming of the Lord.} \\
\text{He is trampling out the vintage} \\
\text{where the grapes of wrath are stored.} \\
\text{He hath loosed the fateful lightning} \\
\text{of his terrible swift sword.} \\
\text{His truth is marching on.}
\]

The whole congregation stood and resounded the chorus. The rafters in the ceiling vibrated while the rattling windows seemed to join in the song.

\[
\text{Glory! Glory! Hallelujah} \\
\text{Glory! Glory! Hallelujah} \\
\text{Glory! Glory! Hallelujah} \\
\text{His truth is marching on.}
\]

After congregational singing, our special group sang three songs we had practiced. Brother Rogers preached about an hour, which seemed like three. Painfully I sat in the church pew fighting to stay awake, consequently I heard him talk about David slaying the mighty Goliath with his small slingshot because David was a man of God. My eyes crossed and I could see little David with his slingshot shooting out and hitting the huge Goliath between his hideous eyes. A punch in the ribs from Geraldine made me almost jump over the seat. She said I was snoring. My hunger pains reminded me that breakfast had been several hours ago, and I was anxious to go home for dinner. I knew Mommy was frying chicken and making chicken gravy. The gravy was always almost as good as the chicken.

It was a somber group that came out of the church house. I could hear the conversation between Poppy, the preacher and some neighbors. “Looks like they’re gonna be takin ever man that can carry a gun or push a pencil. I saw where they said they were takin men with dependents and even wooden legs for selective service.” Poppy said as he and two men headed toward the house. One of the men said, “Dell Edward’s son Bishop, left Friday fer the Navy.” They continued discussing the war as they traveled.

Brother Rogers mounted his horse at the hitching rail and started toward our house. It was customary for a preacher to ride horseback to church. We only had preaching services once a month so most preachers pastored more than one church. Therefore, he might have to ride several miles on Sunday to his next church.

I ran ahead to tell Mommy that we were having company. The aroma from the frying chicken overwhelmed my senses as I entered the house, and my salivary glands led me straight to the kitchen, the source of the pleasant smell. Mommy told me to go somewhere and play until everyone ate and that she’d save me a piece. I knew it’d be a wing or a neck. You didn’t serve those pieces to company because there wasn’t much meat on them. But they tasted mighty good if you were hungry. I could almost eat bone and all.

Mommy had baked a cake and left it on the table. It just looked so good with the big swirls of white creamy icing stacked high. It wouldn’t be noticeable if I just took a tiny taste. It was
soft and creamy and my finger made a big groove. Oops! I thought I’d better smooth it out so I took another swipe with my finger and licked it off. That didn’t help because now there were two grooves. I couldn’t leave it looking like that, so all I could do was to try to even it out by sneaking another finger full. This time was even worse. As I stood there taking swipes of that good creamy stuff, I was suddenly brought back to the present by my mother’s low hissing voice. She didn’t want our company to hear if they were near. “Jewell, what have ya done? You’ve ruined my cake. I can’t serve cake with all the icin licked off.” Her face was as red as a beet pickle and her eyes were dangerously bugged as if they were ready to explode.

My heart pounded and a dreadful feeling of despair weighed on my chest. I knew I had it coming because I had ruined the cake that was for company. I thought of running away but immediately discarded that thought because I knew Mommy could catch me. She sure could travel fast when she was mad. I’d better get it over with before everybody got there because I sure didn’t want to get a whipping in front of them.

As I crept through the kitchen I saw Georgia was beating another egg to try and redeem the cake. I paused for a moment silently crying and shaking because I knew I’d get sympathy from her. Her fallen face spoke of her sorrow for me as she whispered, “Jewell, why? Why do ya do them thangs when ya know Mommy’ll beat ya half ta death?” I saw Mommy reach up over the door facing where she stored her peach tree switches and knew my goose was cooked. I took my punishment and I swore I would never do that again.

With my stomach churning I waited for the first table to finish. Children always waited for company to finish eating before they ate. The conversation centered on the big war. Brother Rogers said, “The news says that when the Japs took over Bataan, they made their prisoners walk 70 miles to another prison camp without any food and water. Them who couldn’t, they just bayoneted them, they killed 30 jus cause they stopped at a waterin place to fill up their canteens. Killed them right thar.”

“That makes me almost hate these sneaky varmints,” Mr. Farmer said. “And I know the Lord says, ‘love thy enemies.’ The Germans are leavin a slew of mutilated bodies in their path.

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**Somerset Journal, October 15, 1942. Editorial: Children Doing Good War Job.**

School children throughout the country are joining the victory army and right here in Somerset and Pulaski County, the children are putting some grownups to shame with the scrap they are collecting for the big drive that started Monday and will continue through the 31st. The scarp pile at the school house is mounting, which shows plenty of activity on the part of the student body. From the first grade on up, they are learning the importance of scrap in the war effort and tiny tots can be seen on their way to school with a piece of metal to throw onto the junk pile. With millions of school children doing this same thing there is no doubt but that the goal sought in the drive will be reached. School children throughout the nation have been aiding the war effort by buying war savings stamps. Millions of dollars invested in stamps have purchased tanks, battleships, planes, and ammunition. Now the children are going to help in another way. They are going to keep the steel mills operating. In discussing the part being played by the children in this important drive the Harlan Daily Enterprise says: “War is a job that has no age barrier. Everyone must help. Bombs are no respecters of age when they drop in a city and neither is the suffering that always follows wars. In fact, children are the ones that must bear the heaviest brunt for years to come. Thousands are let without fathers and they must face a world handicapped from lack of opportunity or parental coaching. Therefore, it is their fight as much as anyone’s and they are getting into the spirit of it.” How true, every word said by the Enterprise, and it might be added that it will be the children of today who will pay for the costly conflict, and it is the duty of adults to impress upon them what war means. Scrap drives are an important phase of their education as are many other happenings of the day.
Men, women, and children, Hitler is aimin ta kill all the Jews.”

The conversation kept up about the war, but I was tuned in to when they would show signs of moving away from the table. It sure was hard to keep from hanging around with all that good food being passed and devoured by grown-ups. I knew I’d be asking for another peach tree limb if I took that route.

The conversation continued as they discussed more atrocities our enemies were committing. “We sure have to pull together with everything we can do here at home to make enough war materials and conserve what we have to help in winnin the war. Factories in big cities have switched over ta makin guns and bullets. We that have land enough, need to grow food for our family and enough ta send food to the boys on the battle field.” Poppy offered.

“Yeah,” they all agreed.

Mr. Farmer joined in, “The Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts in Somerset and even that Ramsey woman from Eubank, who won that there beauty contest, are raisin lots of money with their war bond drives all over the world. It’ll take a lot of money ta win this war.

Finally the grownups finished eating and moved away so the kids could eat. I had kept hidden from the company because I didn’t want them to see the red sniveling nose and eyes I had acquired after my run in with the switch. It had subdued my hunger pains for a while but they were returning in full force. I quietly took a place at the table and humbly began to eat. Manners were strictly enforced at the table at our house. You spoke only to ask to be passed the food and to say please and thank you. You never took the last of anything in the bowl and you only left the table when an adult excused you. We usually had enough to eat, but we never had enough chicken to eat all we wanted.

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_Somerset Journal, November, 1942. Editorial: The Anxious Night is Ended._

The long and anxious night is over and the first rays of sunshine of a new day are coming up over the hills to the eastward. The nervous hours of tension, of restlessness, and of suspense are at an end. The long awaited second front has been opened, our war machine is rolling with increasing momentum and at last we can see what our months of labor and of sacrifices have accomplished. This toiling in the dark without knowing just what your efforts are producing is hard, very hard. Now we can see clearly what we have been striving for and from now on it should be less difficult for civilian and soldiers alike.

Just 11 months to the day from the Pearl Harbor attack we opened in Northern Africa our second front drive. We know now that during the intervening months our President and military leaders were diligently preparing for this move and we are thankful that they were influence by neither politics nor criticism to plunge into such a drive before every preparation had been made and we were thoroughly ready down to the last detail. We can see why it was that our leaders could not answer the criticisms of the arm chair strategists who for months have been shouting from the housetops for us to give some telling aid to our allies. We know now it was a cowardly attack on our leaders, though perhaps unintentionally so, because they could not answer without telling our enemies of our plans. We can see now in action the machines of war which our bonds have been buying and which those of us in the sweat and grime of our factories have been producing. The long hours of training for those of us in the armed forces are producing results. The sugar we have all been doing without has been manufactured into powder which is clearing the way for us along the road to Berlin and Tokyo. Those new tires we did without are grinding the sands of the Sahara, carrying our boys to the final victory which we know will come and which at least can’t be as far off as it has been. Yes, the night is lifting and the promise for tomorrow is bright. We have climbed through the darkness to a better vantage point from which we can view the fruits of our labors, and they are pleasing to behold. The war, however, is not yet won. Many of our finest young men must yet go to their graves, and hardships and more grueling (continued)
(continued) hours of toil await all of us. What is yet to come, nevertheless, will be easier to bear because now we can see that we are getting somewhere. There is another reason why now there should be less grumbling because of hardships and why war production should increase rapidly with every worker exerting himself to the utmost. This reason, while it may be considered by some in an unpatriotic light, is nevertheless true because it involves human nature. Everyone likes to be on the winning side. We have all noticed time and again the way the voters flock to vote for the man they believe has the best chance of winning. Too, we have seen the bleachers filled to capacity when the home team was in the midst of a winning season; and we have seen them empty when the boys were having a losing streak. We have shouted ourselves hoarse when the home town boys were scoring touchdowns and we have remained silent when the other team was making the points and our boys were really in need of our encouragement. Human nature is pretty much the same even in war. Thus it is that we believe our workers, into whom we have been feebly attempting to inject a spark of patriotism in order to boost war production, will now voluntarily come to the forefront to produce to the utmost for the winning Allied team. There will be less skilled workers who take vacations from their war work because they are making more money than they know what to do with. Fewer of them will get drunk on pay days and either will go to work in such a condition that they only produce a small portion of their capacity, or, are unable to work at all for a few days. Because of this same desire to be on the winning side all of us will now buckle down to the job of buying more war bonds and accepting more readily the do withouts which are already here and those to come. Yes, it is the dawn of a new day and its brightening light is removing the shadows from our winding pathway ahead. It has been a long time since we have felt so encouraged.
Almost every man, woman, and child in all America knew that madmen were trying to take over the country. It was the subject of conversation whether at the dinner table or at bedtime. These evil, power-hungry rulers had turned the world into a living hell.

The country was one big machine working together to win this war. There was a job for everyone. The older women knitted clothes for the soldiers. 4-H Clubs salvaged metal, rags, rubber, and paper in cooperation with the “Salvage for Victory” drive.

All farmers were urged to gather and save plow points, pieces of farm machinery, nuts, bolts, and all forms of scrap metal. Not all of us could go to war, but all of us could help. Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts and many other organizations were constantly working on wartime projects. Every day the neighbors anxiously waited at the post office for news, even if it was merely a newspaper.

This morning, however, we awakened to the dreaded call, “Get up! We gotta have this dirty place cleaned up by night. It’s gotta be done fore time ta plant crops.” I could hear Mommy calling from the kitchen. We had known the time was near because every spring we washed down walls and cleaned every inch of the house.

What was she talking about? I wiped my eyes to get them focused in the early morning and made my way to the kitchen where breakfast was cooking. Georgia was stirring the gravy while Mommy took golden brown biscuits out of the oven. The milk and a big bowl of yellow butter were on the table as my sisters worked together fixing breakfast. Jessie was frying the fatback in the big iron skillet. Brown eggs were being fried in another pan. Georgia poured cold water in a wash pan we kept in the kitchen for people to wash their hands before they ate.

“Jewell,” Georgia said quietly as she was pouring the gravy in a bowl to put on the table. “Splash some cold water on your face. Hit’ll help ya wake ya up.”

I dipped my fingers about an inch into the cold water and wet my eyes with the water that dripped off.

“That’ll shore clean ya up,” Mommy said sarcastically as she was wiping Jimmie’s face with a wet washrag. Then she grabbed my chin and began scrubbing my face until it turned a bright red. “You’re big enough to wash your own face but ya act like the water is poison.” Then my ears suffered the same fate. “Next time ya wash yer face, be shore ya git hit clean or you’ll git another scrubbin.”

As she took the water to the kitchen she said, “A bird got in the house yestaday and I shore feel bad bout it. That means somebody close is gonna die.” Everyone looked down to hide his or her smiles. Geraldine and Jimmie sat at the table ready to start eating. “I know ya just don’t know how them old sayings come true. Why just afore brother Clyde died Mother chased a bird all over the house and finally had to kill it. An that’s worse.”

The Scotch-Irish believed in signs, spells, and spirits. Scottish people claimed to have “second sight,” meaning they could predict and foresee the future. If you accidentally put two forks at a place setting, you would have company. If you spill salt, throw it over your left shoulder for good luck. If you break a mirror you’ll have seven years bad luck. Don’t sweep under your chair or you’ll never marry. It is bad luck to walk under a ladder. Never open an umbrella in the house. Don’t let a black cat cross your path, bad luck. Don’t put a hat on the bed, bad luck; and on and on.

“I know ya hyard what I said while ago,” Mommy continued as she sat down to eat.

“It’s gonna be a purty day and we need ta start gettin the nastiness cleaned out of the house. Your Poppy’s gone ta town and he’ll be back today. He was gonna stay with your grandma las
night.”

Winter’s fire left the house all smoked up and we always washed down the walls and every inch of the house with lye soap that Mommy made from old lard and lye. We had linoleum on the floors that we had to pull up and take out of the house and scrub the floors underneath the rugs. I could see the sullen mood on Jessie and Geraldine’s face as they poured gravy over their biscuits.

“Do we havta take up the rug and scrub the floor?’ Jessie asked with her eyes cast down. We all knew not to cross Mommy when there was a job to do. She hated laziness and slothfulness. If someone was lazy, she had no use for them, so we knew not to complain too much or we’d get more work to do.

“Yep, ya shore do,” Mommy said, with her eyes daring us to argue. “Them bugs, they lay their eggs under and tween the rug and the floor and I want ta make shore we git em all. I jus don’t know why we have them ole thangs. Lord knows I’m embarrassed nough bout it.” She continued talking as she looked at us with concern, “I do everthang I know ta do ta keep this place clean. I better never hear bout you’enses tellin bout us havin bugs.”

Everyone’s eyes were on their own plate each thinking their own thoughts. I was thinking I sure didn’t want anyone to know, either. I had enough fights over things that happened with our family, like sometimes my friends would say something about why Jimmie was retarded and other things even worse. Boy, did that make me mad!

These bugs were the biggest curse we had. For years boarding houses were full of bed bugs. Hotels were full of them simply because people didn’t know that they went into the walls of old houses and laid eggs and waited for a warm body. They could do without food for weeks, even months. If there were no people around in an abandoned house they would suck on rodents and bats or any other warm-blooded animal. We didn’t know this and we were baffled because we fought them every day and they kept coming back.

When we made the beds in the morning we had to take all the linens off and kill the bugs that got in the feather mattresses and any other mattresses we had on our beds. We would run our fingers along the seams and kill all the little bugs and eggs that would be nestled there.

“After breakfast and when we finish milkin and feedin the stock, it’ll be warm nough ta start takin down the beds and carryin all of em outside includin the springs,” Mommy said as she got up from the breakfast table. “Jessie, go git the water buckets full of water from the branch so’s we can heat it on the cook stove. We’ve got ta scald everthang to kill the eggs. Don’t waste the soap cause the government is wantin all the lard we can afford to give for the war effort.” She was giving orders as she went out the door to the outside toilet. She hollered as she closed the door, “Georgie, git on them dishes. Geraldine, you and Jewell start in the back bedroom tarrin the beds apart.”

With long faces and deep sighs, we began the day’s work. We took the beds apart and took the springs outside to scald with the hot water from the cook stove. Bed springs were just a flat piece of wire woven together and fastened to the metal frame with some coiled spring to let it give when someone was lying on it. Most of our mattresses were feather ticks made from the fine feathers from the chickens we killed. Mommy also raised geese most of the time and she used the goose down to make pillows and mattresses. We had to go over these inch by inch to make sure there were no tears and then with a hot iron we went over the entire mattress to kill any eggs that might escape our eyes.

The sun was warm on our backs as we worked. Geraldine was holding up one of the side rails of a bed looking for little eggs while she spoke in a low voice, “Betcha don’t know bout what happened night fore last in the chicken house.”

I hated that smug look on her face. Her blue eyes were half shut and her head turned
sideways lookin down at me in that superior manner. “Oh, I hyard that cacklin goin on bout midnight. Did a fox git one of the chickens?” I asked. I didn't want her to have anything on me so I pretended I knew all about it.

She laughed, “Yeah, a two legged fox.”

I thought about that for a minute because I knew no real fox had just two legs.

“You don’t know nothin!” she jabbed. “He had black hair and brown eyes and stood about 6 feet tall and ...”

I thought, hmmm ... she means someone was stealing our chickens. “Who? Who was it?” I exclaimed.

“Who came by our house goin to the store and said to me, ‘Mommy cooked fried chicken last nigh and hit shore was good.’?”

“How do ya know it was him?” I asked with skepticism.

“Cause he left a trail of chicken feathers when the chickens tried ta git away. I followed the trail and it led straight ta his house. I even saw his tracks.” There came that superior look again as if I wasn’t worth telling the story to. She always did me that way. She thought that I was too young to bother with.

“Did ya tell Mommy?” I asked.

“Yea, she jus said they’re hungry. They’d had a lot of sickness and she wouldn’t say nothin bout it. She said he’d get shot gettin in some people’s hen house.”

I couldn’t wait to tell my friend Violet. What news that would be!

We worked while we talked, scalding all the springs. We then dried them to be sure all the eggs and small bugs were gone. We were taking our time because we knew that when this job was finished, there’d be another one waiting for us.

“Well, what have we here?” I heard a familiar voice say. “Shore looks like a lot of work ta me.”

I turned around and there was Poppy with a small paper bag extended toward me. “Here Little Hog,” He said, “I brought ya somethin your grandmother sent.”

I grabbed the bags and quickly opened it. “Give your little brother some,” Poppy said as he went on into the house.

He had brought some peppermint and I could smell the mint flavor as I took out one of the beautiful red and white sticks. I followed him into the house and heard him say to Mommy,

“I just read the newspaper this morning and it said there was no word of Ben Vansant.” He read from the paper in his hand:

There is no word of Lieutenant Benjamin Franklin Vansant, a 1941 graduate of the University of Kentucky who was stationed in the Philippine Islands training Philippine troops.”

- Somerset Journal

“You know he was with the U.S. Army on Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines when the U.S. forces were forced to surrender to the Japanese. They think he might have been transferred with General Wainwright. He's been in the Army since last July and in the Philippines since last September.”

Poppy laid the paper down and continued, “His folks were told that he was shot by the Japanese and left for dead. He bound his wounds and returned to his base. Later he was again shot and left for dead. He was rescued by a Filipino family and nursed back to health and then captured by the Japanese.
And then Robert and Delmont, George Nolen's sons, who enlisted in the Army, were serving as gunners on Corregidor. George heard from them and they said they were okay.” Poppy continued talking about the newspaper article.

John Cooper and Gladstone Wesley spoke to citizens on the courthouse steps about conditions of the war.* They said the army’d be takin all men with dependents by fall, that’s gonna get Hyle, and people with wooden legs and other disabilities for Selective Service. That’ll get Leonard.” Poppy sat in a chair rubbing his legs. “They put ceilin prices on ever commodity ta enforce the price control plan. When Wesley talked he said there were 880 Pulaskians in the armed forces already. He said we all needed ta do somethin like bein involved in drives fer old metal, paper, and rubber wheels that is desperately needed. Course our schoolchildren are already goin through the fields durin school time lookin fer old pieces of farm machinery. Governor Johnson is registerin fer Selective Service and is tellin all Kentuckians from the age of 45 to 65 ta register. Local registry places for us are Mt. Victory School, Shopville School, and Allen Sears’s store.”

Mommy had hung her head, but I could see she was dwelling on what he had said. With a look of sympathy, Poppy said, “Winnie, I know you didn’t want this war as most of us didn’t. But I’m proud of our sons wantin ta make our nation strong and keep our way of life. I know how they feel cause that was the way I felt when I joined up in 1904 for the Spanish–American War. I felt like it was my job ta fight for my country even though the war was almost over in the Philippines when I wus there.”

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**Somerset Journal, September 10, 1942. Senator Chandler Tells of Harrowing Brush with Death in Northern Waters.**

Washington, Sept. 1 – Senator Albert B. Chandler arrived back in this city Monday and shortly thereafter released a story of a harrowing brush with death. The incident occurred, the Senator said, while he and his party were aboard an American naval vessel in Alaskan waters. “Only the speedy blinking of signal lights between the ships prevented the vessel carrying Senator Rufus C. Holman, of Oregon, and myself, from being blasted by the powerful guns of other vessels,” the Senator declared. The vessel on board which the two senators were traveling was proceeding between Anchorage and Kodiak Island when the incident occurred. “The night was moonless and black as ink,” Chandler said. “We were traveling completely blacked out as all ships do in time of war. Suddenly there was a blinker signal off to the port side. Quickly the skipper of our ship issued the order to reply. As it went out, we could barely discern the black shapes of other ships not too far away. When it was over the Skipper said to us: if you don’t deliver the answer fast these days, start looking for a place to write a will.” Hours later the ship put into port and Chandler and Holman with admitted relief, went down the Jacob’s ladder and ashore. The experience was just one of the many which four members of the subcommittee had during their 20,000 mile trip by rail, plane and coast guard and naval vessels to inspect defense. “Blood never ran colder in any man’s veins than it did in ours when we realized what the commander had said,” declared Chandler. “We were on a trim ship, powerful and new. But we realized what a torpedo and a salvo or two from those guns off in the night would have done to us if our commander hadn’t been alert.” Senators Harold R. Burton, of Ohio, and Carl A. Hatch, of New Mexico, were not on this particular trip, having gone to Fairbanks. “The Navy allows just so many seconds to answer a signal,” Chandler continues, “and there aren’t many of those seconds. The slightest delay, the merest bit of poor timing and it would all have been over.” Twice during the trip Chandler said that he and Holman slept in their clothes while aboard ship. “You have no idea what a vast place Alaska is until you’ve seen it and seen it from the air,” Chandler asserted. “We flew over miles of tundra, muskeg, mountains, and fine land that stretched farther than the eye could reach. We saw country where no white man has ever set foot. We saw giant moose, big bear and other game in abundance. It is a sportsman’s paradise.”
“They’re gonna stop a lot of the WPA jobs till after the war. Like the Wolf Creek Dam project. They need all the funds for the war.”

I knew he was tired because he had just walked around 13 miles from his mother’s in Somerset that morning. “Winnie, Mother wanted me to ask if one of the girls could come and stay with her for a while. Ya know she lives alone above brother Jim and she’s been feeling poorly lately. She thought they might like to live in town fer awhile. She said she could pay em a little money.”

Mommy answered with a pleased expression, “Well, if that be the case maybe Georgie could go and make nough money to buy some material fer some new clothes. The other girls will just havta do her job, too. Maybe her and Jessie can take turns stayin. They shore ain’t no money here fer em.”

By this time all had come in the house to hear the news. Jessie said, “I want ta go first. Georgie needs ta stay home and keep the dishes warshed.”

Mommy, with a look of disgust, said, “Who do ya thank you are? Do ya think yer too good to warsh dishes? I’ve watched ya dust. It’s hard ta believe that ya blow off the dust rather than wipe hit off with a clean rag. No! Georgie’ll do a better job.” With that it was settled. Georgia was selected to go the following week.

(The end of the bed bugs came when Leonard brought home DDT in his army trunk after he was discharged.)

John Sherman Cooper, a Kentucky Statesman from Pulaski County.
Still sets the Schoolhouse by the road
A ragged beggar sleeping
Around it still the sumacs grows
And blackberry vines are creeping.
– John Greenleaf Whittier “In School Days”

V Flashback—Visit from Superintendent
August, 1939

When Poppy went to town, he would sometimes spend the night. His brother, Jim Holt, who had been superintendent of the public schools in Pulaski County, lived in town and Grandma Holt lived in a little house beside him.

I couldn’t remember ever seeing my grandmother or Uncle Jim because I never went to visit. The only time I had ever seen Uncle Jim was when he visited the schools when he was
superintendent.

I was only four or five years old and it was before I officially started to school. My sisters took me with them many times to spend the day. The teacher allowed them to bring me as long as there were no problems and I behaved.

All the young girls in Poplarville spoiled me and always wanted me to go home with them and spend the night. I took to this attention like crazy and would bring my little nightgown and go home with Elsie Gilbert, who lived up on a cliff off of Poplarville–Hail Road. We had to go up the side of the mountain to get to their house.

Then I would go to Cy Hamp and Ella Farmer’s, with Retha and Margie, their daughters, who lived down the Poplarville Road toward Hail. Their house was right in front of a big cave. Mrs. Farmer treated me special and would bake me a cake. Her voice was so beautiful, so smooth and kind. When she prayed I felt she was talking straight to God. She wore long dresses and her lovely white hair was done in a bun on the back of her head. I loved my visits with them.

* * *

It was Friday morning and we were on our way to school going down the wagon road. A gentle breeze blew through the trees, turning the leaves over to reveal lighter undersides.
Butterflies and birds were flying around the small stream in the branch looking for water. Rabbits hopped down the road in front of us with their white tails flopping in the air, running from one side to the other until they jumped into the woods. Wildflowers were scattered all along the side of the woods. Bright yellow buttercups, black-eyed-Susan’s, purple and lavender pretty-beds were a mass of dainty colorful blooms.

Just as we arrived, Mr. Farmer “called up books” and we sang three songs, and then pledged allegiance to the flag. Mr. Farmer announced that if we all did our lessons well we would do something special that afternoon. I was sitting between Margie and Retha Farmer while they were reading their literature book. The door was shut because sometimes little varmints liked to run in the house after our lunches. Then there would be a scuffle with the girls standing in their seats screaming and the big boys chasing the small rodent.

Just before lunch, we were putting away our books when we heard a knock on the door. We all would have run to the door, but Mr. Farmer raised his hands, pointed to our seats and without a word we all sat down. He opened the door and there stood a man in a suit with his hat in hand and a flashing smile that revealed a shining gold tooth.

Mr. Farmer welcomed him inside and said to us, “Children, this is Mr. Holt, our Superintendent of Schools.” I wondered who he was with the same last name as me. When he asked for a drink of water, half a dozen students wanted to get it for him. Mr. Farmer, who kept a quiet school, frowned upon that, so everyone just sat and watched, thankful for the break from studying. Mr. Holt brought from his pocket a small metal folding cup and poured the water from the dipper into this cup. I wondered why he did this since we all drank from the same dipper. I didn’t know that drinking after each other spread germs.

Mr. Farmer asked how far he had come. He said he had come from Jugornot and the hill was pretty steep. We all sat staring at him as if we never had seen anyone before. Suddenly I remembered that my Uncle Jim, Poppy’s brother, was the Superintendent of Schools, whatever that was.

What a friendly man! His smile was fascinating and his gold tooth in front shined every time he spoke. I kept wondering how he got the gold tooth. Surely it wasn’t something that ran in our family because my father didn’t have one. How exciting! Maybe I would get one.

The schoolroom was filled with nervous anticipation. After looking over the room, he flashed his smile and began to sing:

Froggy went a courting and he did ride,
Uh-huh, Uh-huh
Froggy went a courting and he did ride,
a sword and pistol by his side ...

Well, that song was one I knew by heart.

The next song he asked us to sing along with him that we were happy to do. The room was divided into two sides. The students on one side sang the first stanza, and then students on the other side repeated the words. This went on until we finished the song ending it at different times.

Several boys and girls recited poems from their literature books. Then Retha held her hand up for permission to speak. She stood up and said, “Mr. Holt, Jewell knows lots of poems by memory. Could she recite one even though she’s too little to be in school?”

“Come up front, little girl.” He said as he motioned for me to rise.

I walked up front and he asked my name. When I told him his smile became broader as
he said, “I believe I know your father.”

I was so tickled to have this special attention that I forgot for a moment that he was my uncle.

“Stand up here and lets hear what you want to recite.” Uncle Jim instructed. I had to think for a minute to decide which poem to do. Then I squared my shoulders and began in a clear voice:

*Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse...

After I had finished the last line of “The Night before Christmas,” I took my seat. It seemed like some were snickering. Then Uncle Jim said that was a tremendous job of memorizing for such a little girl.

Some students did ciphering for him so he could see their math skills. Uncle Jim told us there was going to be a county spelling bee for the older students. He encouraged them to work hard and Mr. Farmer would send a student to compete.

I told Mommy and Poppy about Uncle Jim being at school and I overheard them talking later.

Poppy said, “Brother Jim works hard makin sure every school is doin what they need ta do. He begins walkin on the other side of Buck Creek goin from school to school.

“You know some schools ya can’t get to only by horseback or walkin. He walks all day, even though some schools are far apart and then he stays with neighbors all night so he can get a good start the next mornin. He visits each school a couple of times a year.”

“Did they ever do anythin bout his house burnin?” Mommy asked.

“They’ll never catch them people that burnt him out. He knows who it was but he can’t prove it,” Poppy said as he paced back and forth.
“Well, that beats all I ever saw! They ain’t no law in this country. People just go round burnin people’s houses down and gitin by with it. That’s nough ta make you go on a killin rage. Specially when they got children to feed.” Mommy was pulling weeds out of a flowerbed and as she talked she worked harder and faster venting her frustration.

As Poppy watched Mommy throw weeds at an unseen enemy, he spoke quietly, “It seems logical that it was a close neighbor, cause the arsonist brought in fodder shocks from a field and stacked them round the house in the dark of night and set them on fire. The family barely got out with their lives. Some of the children were in their nightclothes. Course, it was all over Jim running for school superintendent. I tell you, when you get mixed up in politics, ya take your life in yer hands.”

With that Poppy stomped onto the porch and reached in his front pants pocket for his knife. He smacked at Ole Tom sleeping in the rocking chair. Tom looked up with his green eyes, wide and shining, in the semidarkness. He jumped off the chair and resentfully gave up his favorite spot. He stretched his long tail and legs in usual cat fashion, started clawing the wood floor with a vengeance and walked slowly off the porch.

As Poppy sat down in the chair, he reached in his shirt pocket and pulled out a cake of apple tobacco. He slowly cut a small piece and put it in his mouth. Watching him chew the piece of tobacco, I thought it looked good. He asked with a sparkle in his eyes, “Would you like a piece?”

I thought for a moment and decided I didn’t have anything to lose. “Sure.” I answered. Poppy cut a small piece of tobacco from the bar that had been sweetened with molasses and smelled really good. Under his steady gaze, I put it in my mouth and started to chew. Slowly I walked out in the yard and behind the house where I began to heave and gag, and the sweat poured off my face. To this day I’ll never forget the place where I got rid of that awful chaw of tobacco nor how sick it made me.
In those good old days all I had to do was act cute and be nice. Being a tenth child had its advantages for a while. But times were changing as I grew older. I had other responsibilities besides watching my little brother.

Poplarville schoolhouse was on the left side of the road going toward Merritt Town, around the bend from Howard Hines’s store. It still stands there today. There were a few acres of cleared land around the school between Green Roger’s place and Cy Hamp Farmer’s house, where we played at recess.

Jack Waddle’s family, the Wells family, and the Merritt family lived on around the road after you passed the school. Several of the Merritt and Wells children attended Poplarville School when I did. I especially remember Jewell Merritt because she and I shared the same name, and she was close to my age.

The small white clapboard schoolhouse included a tiny porch where the children entered. The windows were all on the lower side. In the summertime when the days were hot, we opened them and the door, which gave a cross ventilation that helped relieve the stifling heat produced by so many warm bodies.

There were two cloakrooms, one for the boys and one for the girls, where we put our coats and lunches. A water bucket and dipper sat on a shelf outside a cloakroom. We carried our drinking water from a spring down under the hill. A straw broom stood in the corner. Our restrooms were outhouses, one on each side of the yard.

The teacher paid a student a quarter per week to stay after school and help clean up, cut the grass around the house in the summer, and bring in the kindling and coal in the winter.

In the summer, after school was out, the county school system would give us a 5-gallon bucket of thick, black oil to spread on the floor so it would have time to dry over the summer before school began. This was supposed to help keep the dust down and keep from spreading disease.

The Merritt Family.
Our small one-room school had rows of seats from front to back with six in a row. The ones in front were small, built for only one child, while the ones in the back were larger and seated two people. They were made of hard maple or oak and had a groove in the top for pencils and a hole for a glass of water. There was a shelf underneath to hold books and papers, and they were slightly curved with black iron sides and feet.

A huge potbellied stove stood in the front of the room. We fed the fire through the door on the side or an opening on top covered by a cap lid. There was a flat piece of metal underneath to keep any sparks from landing on the bare oiled floor. It took a lot of heat on a cold day to reach the back of the schoolroom; therefore, the stove would become red hot. Some children walked 2 to 3 miles. Everyone gathered around it when they got to school to thaw out.

Children would be crying from freezing and aching fingers and toes. After school, on the way home we would have snowball fights and make a skating rink in the road. I would get a whipping if Mommy caught me skating because it wore out my shoes, and I only got one pair a year.

The teacher’s desk was in front of the room where important records and the little copper school bell were kept. When she rang the bell, it was time for classes to begin. We weren’t allowed to even whisper while classes were being taught because it would disturb the whole room.
We began the day by singing out of our blue songbooks that contained a lot of patriotic and traditional songs, such as, “My Country Tis of Thee,” or “Tramp, Tramp, Tramp the Boys are Marching,” and Steven Collins Foster songs like “Old Folks at Home,” “My Old Kentucky Home,” and “Oh! Susanna.” After we sang three or four songs and recited the Pledge of Allegiance, we started our classes.

Leonard had been assigned to Poplarville School at the beginning of the school year. I was so proud to have him teaching our school and I tried to be a good student. However, Leonard and his buddy, Floyd Farmer, were called to service on October 15, 1942. Miss Nell Farmer was recruited to take his place. Miss Farmer lived on Poplarville Road toward town. Her father Bill Farmer had also taught school.

Spelling was not my favorite subject. Our spelling class was the first of the day. Typically, no one in my grade knew their words, so Miss Nell would get red in the face and her body would twitch with anger.

“Third grade,” she’d call, as we reluctantly went to the front of the room. Jimmy Helton, Donald Wayne Rogers, and I were in third grade.

We had to stand up in front of everyone and spell the words as she gave them out. I’d spell the ones I had just studied while waiting to be called for class. Then there would come the dreaded word that I’d miss. The frustration and humiliation of being dumb before the whole school had its effect because I couldn’t spell another word correctly. After Donald Wayne and Jimmie missed their words, Miss Nell would be so shook up she’d start yelling.

“I give you words ta take home ta study and you all never look at ‘em. How am I supposed ta teach ya when you don’t care bout learnin?” Walking back and forth, she’d wave the book in her hand to emphasize her agitation while we stood in silence, burning with embarrassment. To make it worse, Donald Wayne would make faces when Miss Nell’s back was turned. For some, it was a source of entertainment.

She’d then send us to the corners of the room with our noses in a circle. At least she didn’t make us stand on our tiptoes. She’d say, “Study the words and we’ll go over them again. I’ve got seven more classes ta teach besides yours. You take up my time I need for other classes. Now, ya better study cause you’ll sit in at recess or I’ll have ta use this.” As she yelled, she
slapped a leather strap she kept in the desk drawer against her open hand for effect.

With my peripheral vision, I could see some kids in the room were amused, hiding their grins behind a book. It was worse for me because my father was a teacher and I was supposed to be a good student. After calling the next grade, she would let us come back and try again. The second time I always spelled them right.

Sometimes the boys would stand in the corner and chew paper wads to make spit balls and throw them at the other students. They couldn’t spell their words the second time, so she would get out the strap and slap it against the desk and then the whole room would become intensely quiet. She’d send them back to the corner and say, “The next time if ya don’t spell them right, I’ll use this.” That usually did the job.

She continued through with the eighth grade. Morning classes consisted of spelling, reading, and writing. All classes would have assigned lessons to be completed by class time. While the other classes were being taught we were supposed to be working on these assignments. We usually had homework, especially in spelling. In reading, we had to memorize poetry by some famous author. I already knew most of the poems just by listening to my older sisters recite at home. Arithmetic and history were after dinner. We didn’t study much science.

We played outside at recess. The games we played were physically tough, such as “Red Rover.” We’d choose up sides and make a line holding hands and the opponents would run, the objective, being to break the line with their bodies.

“Ante-over,” was another game played with two teams, one on each side of the schoolhouse. One side would throw a ball over the house and someone on the other side had to catch it. If successful, the teams changed sides and the person who caught the ball could tag runners putting them out of the game. The team with the most kids who had not been tagged was the winner. We played hopscotch and marbles, jumped rope, and played softball.

Sometimes we’d play house. We’d get green, lush moss out of the woods and make our floors under the little tree that grew on a knoll below the schoolhouse. Then we’d bring any broken dishes we could find at home. One day we went down to play, and the big boys had torn it up. I tried to whip them but they just ran away and called me “wild cat, straw hat” (the “straw hat” name I got from wearing a straw hat to school one day).

Our school had received commodities from the government to help children get proper nutrition. The Great Depression had left the country in extreme distress. Since we farmers were self-sufficient, growing most of our food and using the barter system at the local grocery stores (trading eggs and grain for sugar, flour, coffee etc.), we didn’t feel the effects as much as people who lived in cities.

When my family owned the store at Dykes in the early 1930s, Mommy’s sister’s (Aunty Mary’s) family of ten lived with them for a summer after my uncle (Uncle Embrey) lost his job in Louisville. Mommy’s brothers also stayed with them most of the time. President Roosevelt had started several public works programs, such as the Three C’s (Civilian Conservation Corps), to bring the country out of poverty and starvation by giving people jobs. Sublimity Bridge over Rockcastle River was just one of the projects they did in this area.

Miss Nell brought bowls and spoons from home and at recess we’d eat canned peaches or tomatoes with crackers, given to us by the government. I never had crackers at home, so they tasted good.

Most of us went barefoot so there were always stubbed toes and cut feet. Tough feet were a sign of strength, being manly for boys. They’d slide down all the rocky inclines and sharp rocks in the road with bare feet, causing thick calluses that looked like a shoe sole. Sometimes I would cut or snag my feet, and the wound would get infected. The pus would ooze. When red streaks would start to run up my leg, I’d have to soak it for a long time in hot Epsom
salts in water. Then Mommy would make a poultice out of tealeaves and Bamagila salve, and bandage it tightly to keep out the dirt. If this happened during the dog days (through the month of August when the dew was heavy with pollen) we’d have to keep the sore dry or run the risk of getting dew poisoning or blood poisoning.

My brother Hyle had a big scar on the top of his foot that he was really proud of. It seemed as if every time he’d visit I’d have a sore foot. He’d take off his shoe and show me his scar. As a child, he’d stepped on a sharp snag and it had broken off in his foot. Mommy had worked hours with a knife trying to get it all out. Years later, a large piece came out through the top of his foot.
“Hi-yaa! Hi! Get on ta the barn. I’ve had enough of you.” Poppy yelled at Ole Brindle, our cow, that he was leading by a rope tied around her head and neck. She was trying to stop and pick the nice green sprouts of grass that grew all along the edge of the woods that surrounded the yard. Poppy had come home sick from Ohio, running a fever, and coughing from congested lungs. Poppy, Georgia, and Jessie were all in Ohio working at public works.

Poppy worked at a chemical plant in Cincinnati, where he had to wade in water all the time making his feet constantly wet. There was always the threat of TB in our family since Poppy’s father and grandfather had died with this disease. There was no cure if the disease wasn’t treated early; therefore, people who contacted TB were likely to die.

Mommy was angry at Poppy over the incident that had happened Saturday in the back of Vola’s truck on the way home from town. Poppy had gone to town to see the doctor and had ridden in the back of Vola’s truck along with several other neighbors, including Jack Waddle, who lived out past Green Rogers. Jack was a Democrat, and he and Poppy were discussing world affairs while squatting down in the truck. The subject of President Roosevelt came up and, as usual, Poppy gave his opinion about all the spending and give-away programs and how concerned he was because he felt this would be the downfall of our nation. Jack loudly opposed this theory.

Words became stronger and louder because they were both accustomed to people agreeing with their views. One man told the other to shut his mouth. “Make Me!” was the battle cry. Who hit the first lick, no one knew. However, hit they did. Wallowing around on the floor of the truck, they each received a black eye and scuffed cheeks. After the scuffle, they shook hands and parted friends. Mommy got wind of the fight and was so embarrassed she wouldn’t go to the post office for a while.

Poppy had been at home a few days and was beginning to feel better. Brindle was on “high lonesome” or a “rip” so he had taken her over to Itam Sears’s to breed her to his bull. Itam
lived about 3 miles from us on Poplarville road by Buck Creek. He bought and sold cows and raised a lot of his own registered breed. He kept a bull to breed his cows and charged one dollar for anyone else who wanted to use this service. Most people only kept a milk cow or two so they didn't need to feed a bull if they could use Itam's. Cows need to come fresh (have a calf) every year to keep them giving milk. Itam owned a truck he used for hauling cattle to the stockyards.

“Winnie, I asked Itam if he’d take our calf to town to sell Saturday. He said he would but we’d have to bring it to him cause he didn't think he could get his truck over that big rock in the middle of the road comin past Fleece and Nanny Helton's. He wanted us to bring it to his barn Friday, then he'd load it in his truck early Saturday mornin with some of his calves he was takin ta the stockyards.” Poppy continued while washing his hands in a pan of water in the kitchen. “I tole him I’d talk it over with you and see what ya think.”

Mommy was in the front room sewing me a new dress on her pedal sewing machine. I could hear the clacking of the pedal and the hum of the wheel as she peddled in a rhythmic motion. She paused, turning the material to sew a seam under the arm of the dress. Looking up from her work she answered, “We’ll have to take all evenin ta git hit thar cause hit’ll be hard ta drive.”

Brindle’s three-month-old bull calf had been in the barn lot since he was born because we wanted to sell him for veal. He was now taking all of Brindle’s milk we needed to drink ourselves. He was a beautiful white-faced Hereford with long eyelashes atop his big gorgeous eyes and a feisty disposition, and he was my pet. I had named him Butter because his special game was butting. He'd shake his beautiful red and white head, and run with his hind legs kicking high in the air across the barnyard. I had spent many a joyful hour playing with him. Poppy volunteered to stay with Jimmie while Geraldine and I helped drive the calf.

“I need to do some work on my patent while I’m home so I can get it ready to sell,” he said. “Fred Sears and I are workin tagether on a waterproof sealed casket and we think we have a buyer for the patent.”

I heard Mommy mutter under her breath, “Just nother bunch of money throwed away.” Then in a louder voice she said, “I'M GONNA BUY A PLACE IF HIT HAIRLIPS CREATION.” A lot of money had been spent in previous years on patents that never panned out. Mommy was very bitter about losing money she needed to spend on the family.

After lunch on Friday, Geraldine, Mommy, and I prepared for our journey. We took along with us a bag of corn and a bucket of milk for the calf’s night meal. He would have to do without anything to eat Saturday morning.

Mommy and I walked into the barn lot with a rope looped in such a way that it made a halter when pulled around the calf’s head. And then we fastened it tight so Butter couldn't pull out of it. Up to this point he hadn’t put up any fuss. He thought I was playing like usual. Mommy pulled the rope in front while I pushed him from the back as we walked out of the barn lot.

Butter walked along until we got to the edge of the yard where he stopped. He looked back toward the barn lot and bawled. I stuck my fingers in the milk bucket and then under the calf’s nose. He sprang to his feet attacking the bucket, and taking me down with
it. I fell flat in front of the calf, spilling milk all over me. But I didn’t turn that bucket loose. Consequently I became a constant object of Butter’s affection. He began licking me with his rough tongue, trying to eat my clothes and my hair. I jumped up from my prone position on the ground and took off running toward Poplarville Road, with Butter right behind me.

As we passed the Heltons’, Jimmie, Bobby, and their mother Nanny, came out on the porch. Nanny asked, “Howdy Winnie, where ya goin with that ther calf?”

Mommy answered, “We’re takin him ta Itam’s so he can take him ta town tomorrow.”

Then Nanny said, “If you’ll wait maybe Fleece’ll take hit in the wagon after he’s done plowin this evenin. That’s a long way ta drive a calf. Hit’s liable ta run off and git lost or git in a briar patch whar ya can’t get him.”

“I know, but we’ll jus have ta take that chance,” Mommy said as we walked on. “He’s gettin tard and has settled down a lot aready. As long as we git that afore dark.”

I heard Mommy mumbling under her breath, “She acts like I ain’t got a lick of sense.”

I wondered why Bobby and Jimmy hadn’t offered to help. I saw them snickering and giggling behind Nanny’s back and wondered what they were planning.

We continued walking down the hill toward Howard Hines’ store. All the time the calf was trying to eat my clothes. Suddenly the Helton dogs came running around the house barking and snarling, running at us, baring their long fangs that could bring down a large animal and certainly a small calf.

I heard Nanny holler, “Who untied them dogs? Go catch’um, Jimmie. They’ll eat that little calf up.”

Jimmie and Bobby were holding their sides laughing behind their mother’s back. I didn’t have time to pay them back right then because I had a calf to drive, but I’d get them later.

Butter burst forth, ripping the ropes out of our hands, racing down the road with the dogs on his heels. All of us, including Jimmie and Bobby, ran after the calf and dogs, screaming and yelling, trying to keep the dogs from killing the calf. Mommy picked up a rock and hit Ole Red, the biggest dog, on the head. It started howling and rolling in the road, which scared off the other two. I ran after the calf with Geraldine right behind me. He ran almost to Howard Hines’ store before he stopped.

When we caught him, his eyes were glued toward a yellow tuff of hair crouched deep down in the weeds on the side of the road, emitting a shrill and piercing sound. Suddenly Butter pulled us closer to the two bright eyes and stiff standing hair. There sat Howard’s big yellow tabby cat with murder in his eyes. Butter was very strong and weighed about three hundred pounds so he easily pulled us toward the cat with eyes popping and muscles flexed, ready to jump. When Butter bent his head to sniff the cat, a bloody shriek erupted and a yellow flash jumped from the weeds and sank his claws into the calf’s nose. Butter jumped, bellowing and shaking his head while running down the road with the cat hanging on. As if on cue, the cat jumped off, climbed a small bush, and calmly observed the chaos he had caused.

We caught up with the calf at the bottom of the hill where the roads forked. Thank God he had run to the right. On the left was the way to Hail and on the right was Somerset and Itam Sears’s farm. I carefully approached him, extending my fingers that I had dipped into the milk bucket. While he was sucking my fingers, I grabbed the ropes that had miraculously stayed on during the escapade. By this time the calf was tired and a lot easier managed.

We passed Low Gap School, church, and cemetery. The Farmers, Sears, and Meeces lived on Poplarville Road. This road was accessible to automobiles because the neighbors faithfully repaired it after a washout from hard rains. However, there were a few big gullies and rocks that remained, impeding cars from moving fast. Also it was one way and if you met another car you would have to find a place wide enough for the two cars to pass. The road ran parallel
with Buck Creek until it merged into the Somerset/Mt. Victory Road, which is now Highway 192. If you turned left, you would cross an iron bridge over Buck Creek and travel through several communities to Somerset, around 14 miles away. If you turned right, you would go past Mt. Victory and cross Rockcastle River to Laurel County and on to London, Kentucky.

Itam lived on the right hand side of the road and across from Buck Creek that was about a mile from Howard’s store. As we descended down the hill, we could feel the cool air from the creek. The clean smell of the water excited the hot thirsty calf. It took both Geraldine and me to hold Butter back until we got to the creek.

The creek was beautiful, with its silver-trunked sycamores growing along the banks and its secretive dark pools of water concealing their hidden past. It was down to almost a trickle, but in the wet springtime it could be a roaring river.

We went over the creek bank with the calf. We were also thirsty and eager to get a cold drink from the ever-running spring on the bank of the creek. After depositing Butter, our plan was to play in the creek briefly before we went home.

As we came in sight of Itam’s house, the calves and barn lot were visible. Butter saw the calves and began bawling, and pulling us toward them. We stopped in front of the dwelling house and Myrtle, Itam’s wife, came out on the porch. Mommy greeted her with, “Howdy Myrtle. We’re here with the calf.”

“Howdy Winnie,” Myrtle responded. “Jus lead hit up ta the barn and turn hit loose in the lot with the rest of the calves. Itam will give hit somethin ta eats tanite when he feeds all the others. Stop in and have a cool drank of water and rest yerselves awhile cause I know you’re tard.”

Mommy answered as we walked on to the barn, “Thank you, but we’ll just go on cause I tole the kids we’d stop at the creek and they could wade in the water fer a while.”

Before we got to the barn, I opened the milk bucket and gave Butter what was left, plus I gave him the rest of the corn in the bag. He ate it all.

When we opened the barn lot gate, Butter bounded inside gingerly sniffing and butting the other calves. He turned around and looked at me and bawled. “I gave him a death sentence,” I thought as I headed for the creek, sobbing in my hands so Mommy wouldn’t see me. I would miss him.

As we came back by the house, Myrtle was still standing on the porch. She called to Mommy, “Have ya hyard from Coyd lately?”

“Yea,” Mommy answered, “I got a letter from him yestaday. He’s in Camp McCoy, Wisconsin. He said he was on crutches. He was trainin ta parachute out of airplanes with skis on and broke his leg. Said he was alright though.”

“Well ain’t that a sight!” Myrtle exclaimed. “My boys’re not old nough yet.”

“Well, I’d better get on,” Mommy said as she crossed the road to the creek.

We walked down the bank to the creek. The sun shone on the small mounds of white gravel where the water jumped and splashed as it flowed. There were many mussel shells and pretty colored pebbles to see and collect along the creek bed. The big catfish lived in the dark pools underneath the overhanging rocks. There were several varieties of bass, and in the spring, crappies could be caught as fast as we could throw the line in. I waded in the water, going upstream a little way, while Mommy rested for the trip back. My dress cupped around my waist as I waded in the deep pools, and I wished I could swim. Girls were taught to be afraid of water so we never learned to swim. Boys were allowed more freedom so my brothers would take off to the creek on Sunday afternoons.

I had learned that Hyle had almost drowned one day while swimming in a deep pool of water above the Dykes Bridge. One Sunday afternoon, a group of boys from Poplarville and
Dykes (Holts and Edwardses) were swimming, splashing, and throwing each other around in the water at the old swimming hole when they missed Hyle. Some said they saw him swim out to the big rock in the creek. He later said when he reached out to hold on to the big slick rock, his hand slipped causing him to go under the water. Someone swam to the bottom of the pool and found him already overcome. Roy Holt, my brothers Coyd and Leonard, and Virgil Edwards, made a human chain and dragged him out. They turned him over on his belly and pushed the water out of his lungs. He began to cough and vomit up the water. After he started breathing normally, they had to help him home.

They also told stories about how the boys hung around the iron bridge at Dykes, looking for excitement. They would walk across the rails that lined the sides and swing from the bottom criss-crossing with their hands while hanging high in the air above Buck Creek. On a dare, Coyd and another boy walked across the top on their hands. My mother never knew about that.

Buck Creek is the stream that all the water from the surrounding hills tumbles into. It is 99 miles long and twists around until it runs into the Cumberland River. In the spring it would be filled, and sometimes over the banks, with muddy rushing water. Most of the banks were steep, as the water had washed away the soil with the passing of time.

My musing was interrupted with a cry from Geraldine, “Help! Help me! Get these things off me!” I had been trying to catch little minnows that darted in and out from beneath the gravel and rocks in the middle of the stream when I heard Geraldine screaming up the creek from me. I hiked my dress as high as I could and started frantically running with the water splashing and swirling around my feet. As I ran, wild thoughts were rushing through my head that she was probably snake bitten. I knew snakes came to the creek to get water in the summer and sometimes we could see them swimming on the surface.

Mommy was right behind me when we reached Geraldine as she screamed and cried, “My legs! My legs! Somethin’s on my legs! They’re suckin the blood out!” She stood in knee-deep water scratching and clawing at her legs. There were muddy blobs all over them that didn’t look dangerous. Mommy began pulling them as they stretched to about two inches long and finally popped off amid Geraldine’s screams. The blood ran and then Mommy would pull another one off. My stomach was turning over as I stomped and jumped trying to raise my legs above the water to see if they were on me. Finally she got the last one off and we hurried out of the water.

“Mommy, what in the world are they?” I asked as we started home.

She answered, “They’re leeches. They wait in the water fer some warm-blooded animal ta come alone so they can suck their blood, cause that’s their food. It is said that long ago people used them ta help cure diseases. They attached them ta the sick person and let them suck their blood.”

* * *

The creek meandered around through the Hail and Jugornot communities, to Hail Bridge where one could cross to the other side. Jugornot had become a place of interest because of the different versions of how it got its name. Old Jugornot Road was named, some say, from a legend that bootleggers would offer a lower price to those who brought their own jugs. Hence, they would yell through the door: “Jug or not?” Another version is that whiskey was traded for votes so routinely around there in the old days that folks who wanted to buy votes would approach people and simply ask “jug or not?” on Election Day.

Yet another account is attributed to the late newspaper columnist and Kentucky folklorist, Joe Creason, who said a serious crisis developed one year when no one remembered to bring
whiskey for the election. The sheriff, however, supposedly ordered voting to continue “jug or not.” In all three versions, the phrase “jug or not” was contracted to “Jugornot,” and became the name of this community 8 miles southeast of Somerset.
PART II

TALES FROM POPLARVILLE
The beginning of September marked the first week of the fourth year of the war. The direction of the war was slowly beginning to change. Germany had proven unable to defeat Great Britain and was suffering tremendous losses on the Eastern Front. It had been nine months since the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor and spread their war machine in all directions within the Pacific. But here too, the tide was slowly turning. The U.S. Navy was creating havoc in Japanese shipping and in China the defenders had stopped the Japanese from invading India or Russia through a determined and aggressive offensive.

In the United States, the President announced that the severe shortage of rubber would probably lead to the requisition of every auto tire in the nation if conditions grew worse. The Army requisitioned all civilian luxury airlines and had flown them 5 million miles in five months delivering war materials and men to strategic points in the Pacific. Only trucks essential to the war were authorized to purchase tires. Also, In the United States, the President announced that severe food shortages could be expected due to the large number of men under arms, and Americans would face “meatless” days and eventually, meat rationing. Citizens would be limited to 2.5 pounds of meat per week. The government announced that one in six Americans faced the prospect of being inducted into war activities, either military or industrial, during 1942–1943, and that 20 million citizens would be required to support the war effort. Casualties in the Navy totaled 12,143 and the Army 19,676. Casualties for all services totaled 44,413 for less than a year of global war.
Howard Hines’s store was the center of daily activity within the community primarily because Howard managed the Poplarville Post Office, and everyone was most anxious to hear from loved ones and friends fighting in the war. After mail call, folks would stand around reading mail and sharing news before returning to their work on the farm.

The store was a long building that sat near the road. The walls were covered with shelves that held merchandise for sale. On one side the shelves held kitchen pots and pans, lamps, lanterns, and various other kinds of odds and ends. On the other side were flour, meal, sugar, salt, and kitchen staples needed for cooking, all stored in metal containers designed to keep out mice. The back end of the store was filled with kegs of nails, rolls of wire, saws, hammers, axes, knives, and many more items too numerous to mention.

Long bolts of fabric goods and harnesses for horses or mules as well as other farm equipment were displayed. The front was used for keeping the post office boxes and anything else that pertained to that business. Most importantly, there were two big boxes of candy right in front of the cash register that held MY attention each time I was fortunate enough to visit the store.

In the middle of the room was a big potbellied stove where loafers would sit around in the wintertime trying to hit the nail keg that served for a spittoon. Splatters of ambeer dotted the floor around the stove. Some would spit intentionally on the hot stove to hear it sizzle.

Mommy and Leona, Howard’s wife, were good friends and sometimes we would go to her house and they would talk in private.

The Hines’ house was white clapboard with a front and back porch and was nestled in the dell of the wooded hill that rose from the back of the buildings. A cement walk led to the house from the store and to a front porch. A door opened into the living room. The

The Poplarville General Store.
room was furnished with a burgundy velvet couch and two matching chairs. There were
tables and lovely pictures hanging on the walls. A stairway descended from the bedrooms
upstairs. A pretty table and chairs equipped the dining room, with a crocheted cloth
covering the top of the table, and a china cabinet displaying beautiful dishes. Most all
dishes at our home were chipped and broken from many years of use.

The kitchen was separate. The pots and pans were shiny, with a cook stove trimmed
with white doors. The house had a long back porch that went all around the backside and
faced the woods. It was cool in the summertime.

I claimed Bobby Edwards, Leona’s adopted son, who was three years older than me.
We had written notes to each other for a long time. I felt special that he gave me attention
because he was so smart and sweet. My sisters thought it was cute that we passed notes at
our age and they would read them to me and help me write an answer because I couldn’t
read or write much. It was certainly a diversion from class work at school.

Today Bobby and I walked in the back door of the store together as Poppy came in the
front door of the post office. I knew he had come home for the weekend on the Southern
Railroad passenger train from Ohio, and had hitched a ride from Somerset. I hurried
to his side as he stood at the counter waiting for Howard to get his mail. There was a
burly looking man standing behind him who I recognized as a Mr. Farmer who had been
working in Cincinnati for about a year. Poppy and Howard were exchanging words about
the war.

Poppy said “The Japs are cunnin and strong. They captured Bataan and took 36,000
American prisoners, God help them. They’re known to be cruel to prisoners.”

“Yeah,” Howard was getting the mail out of the post office boxes behind the counter as
he spoke, “But, our air forces damaged 20 of their ships in New Guinea, and we bombed
Tokyo, Yokohama, Kobe, and Nagoya.”

“That’s right,” I heard my father say, “But the Japs took Corregidor. Looks like we’re
gonna haft ta whip Japan all by ourselves since Europe is all tied up with keepin Hitler and
Mussolini in check.”

I could see that Mr. Farmer was getting agitated waiting for a lull in the conversation.
Then he pushed his way to the counter and asked for his mail. While waiting for Howard
to get it, he said in a big booming voice,” I don’t care how long this hyre war last. I’m makin
good money and my girls are makin good money. It ain’t gonna be long fore my place is
paid off and I shore hope hit lasts long nough for that.” He turned around to see who was
listening.

Several people were in the store and all had heard his bragging. Most had sons in the
service or were likely to be drafted, and they knew Mr. Farmer had all girls and didn’t have
to worry about sending a child to war. There was a dead silence, and I was a little scared
because I didn’t quite understand how this man could talk like that. I knew something was
going to happen. People’s faces were red and there began a murmuring amongst them. My
father had sat down on a nail keg to look at his mail, and I saw his white face as he lifted it
to look at Mr. Farmer. I had seen that look a few times in my life and knew the end result.

Poppy got up from the nail keg and abruptly walked directly between Mr. Hines
and Mr. Farmer. Between his teeth he hissed, “You low-down no-good scoundrel! How
could ya talk that way in front of all these aggrieved people? You need to be took out and
horsewhipped. You need to be put in the front of our brave soldiers and shot by Hitler’s
army. That’s what they do for their traitors!” A crowd started gathering around the two
men, muttering under their breath.

Mr. Farmer’s face became bright red, and he lunged for Poppy with both fists as he
yelled, “You’ll not talk that-a-way ta me!” Poppy sidestepped his lunge and in the same motion picked up a bottle from the counter and struck Mr. Farmer across the side of his head. The bottle landed on his collarbone with a thud. He fell to the floor holding his neck. No one moved to help, and everyone looked vindicated.

Poppy put out his hand to help him up, but Mr. Farmer clamored to his feet and rushed for the door. When he reached his horse tethered by the porch he began yelling obscenities. Poppy came over where I had hidden during the scuffle and whispered, “Little Hog, would you like some candy?” I sneaked behind him and nodded my head. He bought me a cinnamon stick. I broke off the end and saved it for Jimmy, my little brother.

I licked my candy stick all the way home while Poppy was silent. I was wondering what Mommy would say when she heard about what had happened with Mr. Farmer. I knew

Howard and Leona Hines.
Leona Hines in 1924.
she’d have a fit but I could hardly wait to tell her. I had heard her fussing before about Poppy’s hot temper and his lack of patience. But I knew if she’d been there she’d have been as proud as I was.

When we got home I felt guilty that I had only saved a small piece of candy for Jimmie because he greedily grabbed it and almost swallowed it whole.
Leonard was hanging around the kitchen with his guitar on his shoulders, watching my sisters wash the dishes. He thought no one could do anything as well as Mommy, so often I’d hear him say, “Mommy don’t do it like that.” I could see the angry look on my sister’s faces as they continued their work, expressing their displeasure by clanging together pots and pans and rattling dishes.

No one talked back to Leonard because he was always right in Mommy’s eye. He was the youngest of my three brothers and he was Mommy’s pet. She called him her little Joseph because sometimes the other boys were jealous and would pick on him. She said that Leonard was always good and did what he was supposed to do. He was smart and a good student. He wanted to make something of his life, and she was going to do what she could do to help him.

As he watched the proceedings in the kitchen he picked out a tune of a favorite song of the time. Sometimes he would sing it, as he did on this morning.

*Been running around*
*Seen many a town*
*but maybe you’ll find I’m not the kind of guy to brag.*
*But listen to me, and see, if you don’t agree,*
*No melody rolls like that old steel guitar rag.*

*And when you slide that thing*
*Across the strings*
*It sounds so doggone heavenly, you hear the angels sing*
*and when you start that beat*

*Leonard (right) and a friend playing music.*
our heart will meet
the rhythm to that old steel guitar rag.

You may be kind of choosey bout the kind of song you hear
You may like songs that’s juicy make you dry right up your tears
But if you like a song that’s bound to drive away your fear
Make happy your soul with that old steel guitar rag.

He was so good at playing the guitar and singing that he had a radio program once a week and he performed over the air from Knoxville, Tennessee. His program was on a Saturday afternoon. After he left to attend college, he had to drop the program. He chose music as one of his majors and had written some pretty songs.

Leonard was waiting for dinner. Afterward he would meet Floyd Farmer, his close friend. They sometimes went to Somerset on Saturday night in Floyd’s car with a load of boys to see a movie at the Virginia or Kentucky Theaters. Usually, it was only boys because girls were only allowed to go to church.

Most movies made at this time were westerns. Zane Grey, a famous author of western books, was Leonard’s favorite writer. Gene Autry was his favorite actor. Gene had just joined the service, and Roy Rogers had taken his place in Hollywood.

Mommy came in from outside and overheard Leonard’s remarks. Her face revealed her appreciation for his reference to her work, and pride filled her face as she rubbed his shoulder.

“Don’t slop round like ya usually do,” she cautioned my sisters. “You’ll just have to do your job again if you do.” I was glad I was the smallest and not expected to cook.

Georgia had been staying with Grandma Holt but she had come home for the weekend.


The following article appeared in Time Magazine, not as an editorial but as an advertisement by a Lathe Manufacturing Co. It is so fine and timely that we take the liberty to reprint it here in our Editorial Column. If You Were Defending Your Family From a Maniac. – Fighting for their lives against a madman who was on the verge of bearing you down, as you called on your last ounce of courage and energy, how would you feel if you heard your family behind you laughing and playing, some bickering and greedily quarreling, instead of handing you a club or pitching in to help you fight? Then how must our fighting men feel, as they read their home papers? If this war is lost (and it is dangerously close to it) don’t blame your soldiers and sailors, blame yourself. Not the man or woman in the next block or at the next machine or desk, but yourself. All wars are lost by the people back home who want somebody else to do the fighting, the dying, the sacrificing for them. The fifth column that is sapping America’s effort, sapping it perilously close to defeat, is less secret Axis sabotage then selfish American indifference. Read it any day in your paper, search for it every second in your heart. Lack of rubber may ground American planes, yet rubber is wasted by the ton on Sunday driving, trips to movies, card parties, anywhere to save a little energetic walking. Decisions vital to war must wait while politicians (not, thank God, the patriots among them) mend fences instead of ending holes in our country’s armor. The racetracks, bars, and ballparks are packed with men and women “getting a little relief” from war work, “relief” that will mean fewer guns, planes, and shells where and when they’re needed. (We’re very careful of our own “morale” what about the morale of men in Australia, Libya, on the deadly seas?) The list can go on and on. You know it. Each knows in which he’s guilty. If you think you can keep your social gains, your profits, your ease, your comfort, if you think that can be somebody else’s war, you’re right, it will be Hitler’s war. Isn’t it better to face your responsibility now than to face a Hun-Jap firing squad next year?
Jessie was to stay with her next week. They were really enjoying taking turns staying in town. Grandma didn’t have much work to do and they got to run around and visit the stores.

“Howdy folks,” I heard as the door was opened. Hyle and Hazel were walking through the front door with Boyce in their arms. I heard Mommy giving orders to my sisters to peel more potatoes and make more cornbread.

Later that afternoon, Hyle said he had wanted to visit before he left for Dayton, Ohio, to find work. Hazel and Boyce would stay at home until he was settled. Poppy was at home until Sunday, and then he would take the train back to Dayton.

“Little Hog, you want to go with me to Robcat’s? I want to hear the war news,” Poppy said after dinner was finished.

I had to decide real fast whether I wanted to go with him or stay home and play with little Boyce. I realized he would be going to sleep early, so I would go with Poppy, “Yes, Poppy,” I answered trying to be calm, but inside I was excited. Had I known the consequences of this trip, I would not have been so anxious.

We started up the hill with Poppy leading the way. As usual Ol’ Jack wanted to follow, but I ran him back into the yard. We always went through the woods because Poppy believed in the law of geometry that states the closest distance between two points is a straight line.

On the way Poppy took out his pocketknife and cut off a piece of slippery elm bark to chew. When the sap is in, there is a thick soft lining underneath the bark that when mixed with saliva turns into a mess.

With a grin on his face Poppy said, “Little Hog, Take a piece of this and chew on it. It’s good for all kinds of ailments.” I looked at the thick bark. It looked harmless enough. I wanted Poppy to approve of me so I took a piece and began to chew. When Poppy looked back at me I was gagging and slobbering about ready to puke. The more I chewed the bigger and slimier it got. His grin told me that he was enjoying my discomfort. He continued on up the hill with his shoulders shaking. I heard his low chuckle, “If ya take smaller pieces in your mouth, it’ll be easier ta chew.”

A few more steps brought him to a bush that grew alongside a small gully. He cut off a small limb with his pocketknife and motioned for me to come closer. “This willow limb makes a good toothbrush.” He said as he cut off two pieces about six inches long and smoothed them with his knife. Then he feathered the end of his stick, put it in his mouth and pushed it up and down against his teeth like a brush.

“Fruit tree limbs are better to use cause they produce a strong sap that helps to get your teeth clean,” he said as we climbed the hill.

We picked teaberry sprouts and chewed them. He showed me where to gather mayapple roots and also showed me sprigs of ginseng that were growing. In the summer Leonard dug ginseng roots and dried them to sell to help him pay his college tuition. They brought a fair price because they were used in some manufactured medicines.

At the top of the hill we had to cross a rail fence. I chose a spot to climb over where some branches covered the top rail.

I straddled the fence and had pushed aside a limb when suddenly black hornets began flying all around my head. Underneath the limb was the biggest hornet’s nest I had ever seen. I could see them pouring out of the hole at the bottom of the nest that was attached to the limb. The fluttering wings made such a loud unusual sound that I haven’t forgotten it to this day. In a few minutes, mad hornets were flying all around my body just waiting to take their turn to sting me. Petrified, I began to scream,” Poppy! Poppy! It hurts! They hurt! Help me, help me!” I frantically flailed my arms, trying to hit some of the hornets buzzing around my head while trying to hang on to the rail of the fence I was setting on.
I heard Poppy yell, “Get away from there! Get down and run!” But I couldn’t move. Poppy was there in a moment, grabbed me and started running away from the hornets while pulling my dress off and slapping at mad hornets as we ran. He outran the hornets, and then pulled them out of my hair and off my back. With the many stings I had gotten it seemed like my whole body was aching and on fire. Poppy grabbed some cold mud from under another fence and dabbed it on the stings as they began to swell. The cool mud made the pain subside a little. He wanted to take me home, but I began feeling better, just hot and sweaty, and I wanted to go on.

When we got to Robcat’s I laid my head on the cool hearth while Poppy and Robcat listened to the news. I heard the radio click as it was turned on. Then the voice of the radio announcer:

This is Edward R. Murrow with the CBS evening news. In the Pacific, the U.S. Marines landed on Guadalcanal without many losses. However the Japanese responded violently by sea and air. In North Africa, Rommel, the German commander has attacked the British forces and was forced to retreat. The American and British forces started landing in Morocco and Algeria under the command of General Dwight D. Eisenhower. The Germans have now
occupied all of France. Hitler’s march to Stalingrad has been halted by the lack of troops and supplies.

My head hurt as I listened to the commentator tell about all these places I had never heard of. I could imagine our soldiers running, surrounded by exploding shells, and hiding behind trees and bushes to keep from being shot. Poplarville was the only terrain I had ever seen. I did not know what the sea or desert looked like other than in a few pictures I had seen in The Grit. The biggest explosion I had seen was that from firecrackers.

Even though my head hurt, I could hear their conversation. Poppy said, “I read in the paper today that they are testing for TB. They’re making x-rays for free. I need to go and have one made cause my father died of TB years ago and I’m susceptible to it.”

Robcat answered, “The paper said they tested 350 people in one day. Out of that, 100 tested positive. I think there were 33 that had already been diagnosed with the disease.”

I was glad when we finally left. The stings I had received from the hornets were swollen and beginning to itch. I survived that ordeal, and it never deterred me from wanting to go with Poppy. It just made me much more cautious about where I stuck my head.

* * *

It was the middle of July and the weather was hot. By noon I was hunting for shade until the sun went down. Today Mommy was picking beans to can. I knew that job would take a while.

I could hear her sweet voice as she sang one of her favorite songs.

* * *

Oh that dear and faded picture on the wall,
It’s been hanging there for many, many years,
It’s a picture of my mother,
and I know there is no other
Who can take the place of mother on the wall
On the wall, on the wall
How I love that dear old picture on the wall.
Time is swiftly passing by,
And I hang my head and cry
But I know I’ll meet my mother after all.

This was one of the Carter Family songs that Mommy dearly loved. She would visit Lerlene Mounce, our closest neighbor occasionally on Saturday night just to listen to the Grand Ole Opry on WSM, the radio station out of Nashville, Tennessee. She loved Mother Maybelle especially, and sang a lot of her songs. Today she was wiping the tears on her apron as she sang.

I could hardly bear to see her so sad. Coyd had been home for two weeks on furlough but left yesterday for camp. She didn’t cry when he left because she didn’t want him to see her in tears.

“I’ve got ta talk to someone to get my mind off Coyd and the war,” Mommy said as she came in the house. “I need ta go to the post office anyway, so git cleaned up and you can go with me. I’ll work in these beans when we git back.”

That prospect sure suited me, so I was ready right away.

Mommy and I didn’t talk as we walked to the store because I didn’t know what to say and Mommy had a lot on her mind.

We arrived before mail call, so we stayed out on the small front porch. As we looked down
the road toward the Hail community we saw two women, both with sandy red hair, and we could almost see their bright smiles from the distance. It was Ogal and her daughter Miley, coming up the hill. Ogal and Mommy were good friends. Mommy’s face lit up as they greeted each other. Miley shuffled her feet trying to become invisible while the two talked about their sons and the war. Leo, Ogal’s oldest son, had enlisted in the service with Coyd.

I heard Ogal say, “Winnie, let’s go to town Saturday. Hit’ll only cost a quarter. We’ll take a dollar and get us a hamburger and coke at the Crystal Kitchen. We’ll run into people we know and that’ll help git our minds off the war and our boys. I know how ya feel, Coyd leavin and all. Leo won’t be back fer a long time, and Seldon will be gon any time.” she stated as big tears filled her eyes. “Just seems like ya love and raise yer boys and puff, they’re gone. Maybe hit’ll help us a little.”

I could feel the heavy weight of the burden of sadness, worry, and grief they were trying to manage. “And jus maybe we could see that picture that they’re showin at the Virginia Theater called United We Stand.” She continued, “They say hit’s all bout the war and is really good. We could maybe take us somethin ta eat and use our dollar fer the picture.” Ogal was a beautiful Somerset Journal, November 26, 1942. Receives Letter from Son in Egypt.

The following are extracts from letters received recently from Capt. John W. Wilkinson by his father, Mr. M.C. Wilkinson, of Burnside. Capt. Wilkinson is with the four motor Liberator bomber detachment located in the Near East. In a letter dated October 24 he wrote “All of us are getting along fine except that the general feeling of tiredness is more predominant. Perhaps this is only natural. It has reached the point now where many of us just do not care much. This of course is not as bad as it sounds for that is natural also. The RAF has a custom that when combat crews get a certain amount of time they are relieved for a certain period. Many of us are reaching the point but we can’t see any indication of a plan such as that for us.” He wrote October 28, “Of course all of us are wondering just how the situation in the desert is. (That is the Battle in Egypt). We have been expecting the present push to start for about six weeks so it relieves some tension to know it has finally started. It seems everybody is very optimistic about the outcome and many slogans with respect to time and distance are being circulated. Back this far we only get what is in the papers and the paper we read is very poor. You probably know more about the war in general than we do. The people around here marvel at the prices we will pay for things and then naturally they take advantage of us. Of course we have more money than the rest and then, too, there is so little here we like that when we do find something we want, the price does not mean a lot.” “If the battle going on now in the desert is successful,” he wrote October 29, “we should get some new targets which heretofore we have not been able to reach. I have been to all the targets they will mention in your papers. You may not understand what I mean by successful but everybody who seems to know anything about the matter seems to be very optimistic and with high hopes of a complete success. Some of the boys have rented radios and we can always listen to one of them. We listen mostly to London for that station comes in best. We like to get the British news, then the German and the Italian and compare the three. We get quite a laugh out of the comparison and perhaps you do yourselves.” Then Mr. Wilkinson did not hear from Capt. Wilkinson for three weeks and inadvertently learned his bomber detachment had entered the land battle with Rommel. Last Friday morning came an RCA wireless message from Sansorigine (A code name) stating “Everything fine. Am well and happy.” In the meantime, he wrote, “The water pipe I referred to is the old system of smoking in Syria. The tobacco is on top and you draw the smoke down through water before it comes through the rubber tube to your mouth. It is not a good smoke. In fact, it was like breathing air. Several cartons of cigarettes have been sent and none have gotten through. A few days ago we drove down to the Dead Sea. The water surely is salty. It feels much like glycerin and evaporates very slowly. There was a salt plant there and we could see where the pits were filled with water to be evaporated.”


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auburn-haired woman, tall and thin, with big blue eyes. Her gentleness showed even in her speech and soft features. She and Mommy had a lot in common as both had a large family and boys in the service. There was always a twinkle in her eyes and a smile on her face. They were close neighbors and used to laugh and have fun together before the war.

Mommy laughed and said “I hyard Guy Richardson bought $1,000 worth of war bonds yesterday fore he left fer service. Said he wanted ta have nough ammunition ta git him some Germans.”

Ogal returned, “I know, I hyard that too. He's got the money and that's a good thang ta do with it. Yea, I hyard Leon Richardson is home on furlough from the Navy. I bet his wife Ruby is happy, at least fer a little while.”

The mail truck finally arrived and the mailman took his bag into the store to be sorted, to hand out to the anxious people waiting.

After mail call, Ogal said to Mommy, “Winnie, you'll hafta let me know bout Saturday.” She held a newspaper clipping in her extended hand and said, “Oh! Winnie, I forgot ta give this ta ya. I cut hit out of the paper Bill brought home. It's a letter from a soldier boy I wanted


It is a disgrace to the nation that the youthful zoot suit gangsters on the west coast should have made war on members of the armed forces of the United States. It is hard to conceive of any American, even the lowest gutter rat of the larger cities, not having respect for the uniform of soldiers and sailors, even if he does not venerate the particular individual who wears it. Mass attacks on service men by these Americans of Mexican and Negro extraction indicate an unwholesome lack of respect on a large scale for not only the uniforms of our armed forces, but also for all that the uniforms stand for and are protecting. The Los Angeles area, where the zoot suit war flourished for over a week, has long been a hotbed of anti-Americanism, as attest the repeated warnings of post war years by patriotic groups. In spite of the fact all of the known enemy aliens have been evacuated from the west coast cities, there are no doubt many Axis sympathizers remaining. It is not difficult to believe that the uprisings against our service men were inspired by these Axis elements. Whatever the reason, swift and thorough punishment must be given the offenders. The gangs must be broken up. This must be done even if armed troops have to be called in. From all reports, the Los Angeles police and sheriffs were unable to cope with the situation and the fighting died only after army and navy authorities declared the entire area out of bounds for the service men. Not only is it a disgrace that these uprisings should have occurred, and that the law enforcement officers should be so absurdly unable to cope with the gangsters, but it is shameful that our service men on leave can't be allowed to utilize the recreation facilities of the Los Angeles area. It was well that the army and navy authorities called off the unorganized counterattacks of the soldiers, sailors, and marines. After they had been robbed, beaten, and their wives attacked by the wearers of the ridiculous garb, the service men were swift to retaliate. Groups of the service men nabbed a number of zoot suitors and literally tore all of their clothing from them. These retaliatory measures resulted in rioting, beatings, and stabbings. Rather than halt the disturbances, the action of the service men served to stimulate them. The soldiers, sailors, and marines can hardly be criticized for their action; however, for it was evident that the problem was out of the hands of the law enforcement officers and something had to be done. The FBI needs to step into the west coast area and clean out not only the zoot suit gangs, but all of the remaining Axis elements. It is not unlikely that the FBI is already on the scene, which we hope is the case. The zoot suit, with its high top, ankle-pincher, flare knee pants, extra long coats and pancake hats, has become the symbol for rowdyism, for anti-Americanism, and for all that is low and despised. We hope that the zoot suit outbreaks on the west coast will result in the disappearance of the outlandish garments from the rest of the nation.
you to read." She handed it to Mommy and began walking toward her home. Mommy replied, "I'll have ta see bout Saturday. If I can, I'll send Jewell down and let ya know."

After reading the newspaper clipping, Mommy wiped her eyes and said, "I sure hope Coyd fares as well as this feller. I know he'll do his part in winnin this war for his country. He'll lead the way ta victory cause that's jus the kind of boy he is." She squared her shoulders and her pride in her son was evident as she began walking up the hill toward home. Then she said, "Jewell, go catch Ogal and tell her I've changed my mind. I'll see her down at the store Saturday mornin and we'll take a day off ta meet some of our friends we haven't seen for a while. It'll perk us up."

* * *

Life had been hard, but Mommy was strong.* She would work all day in the fields if needed. She was 43 when I was born, and I was the tenth child. She had lost one child, Denis, the fifth child in line, to "summer complaint" or some called it "second summer" when he was two years old. Child mortality was high due to the many childhood diseases that ebbed and flowed, and sometimes surged, through our community.

Mommy’s resourceful care taking saw her family through many illnesses. There were no doctors nearby, so she had learned how to take care of sick people. Only Jimmy’s sickness was beyond her cure. He had been born with a condition that brought on convulsions and high fever. This kept him frail and sick most of the time until the age of three when a convulsion left him comatose for three weeks. My parents gave him up to die, but somehow he survived. But his mind didn’t grow. The high fever had damaged his brain and he would never be able to take care of himself.

We had to toughen up at an early age. It was deemed a weakness if the mother showed great emotion to their children after they passed the infant stage. Also there was usually another baby by then to take their place.

Neighbors helped one another. When a family had sickness, Mommy and Poppy would help them by sitting up at night and doing their work. No one could afford to go to the hospital.

Mommy was next to the oldest of her eight siblings and had she helped to take care of them. The only job for young women was staying with a family to help out during sickness or childbirth. Girls were expected to get married and start their own households at a young age.

* Winnie Georgia Vanhook was born November 8, 1892, in the Whetstone Community of Pulaski County, Kentucky. She was the second child born to John C. and Isabel (Hargis) Vanhook. She was a hard working woman who tended to the needs of her family through many rough times. Her heart was big as she administered to the hungry and sick in the community and the plight of her siblings and their families during the depression. Jesse Dotson’s school teaching led him to distant schools where he would have to stay weeks away from home. Being left alone much of the time to raise a house full of children took its toll. Winnie died October 6, 1959, of coronary heart disease in Ferguson, Kentucky. She was 66 years of age. Both Jesse and Winnie are buried at Providence Cemetery, Near Mt. Victory, Kentucky.

Children of Jesse Dodson and Winnie Georgia Holt were: Maydell, Hyle Arville, Coyd Irell, Leonard B., Georgia V, Jesse V, Dennis G., Vaila Geraldine, James Earl, and Jewel Edwaline.
Mommy talked a lot about her youth. She said after the crops were in, all the aunts and uncles and their families would gather at her parent’s house, and stay a week or so. Uncle Dave Van Hook would bring his fiddle and banjo, others brought musical instruments, and they sang and played songs, especially all the old ballads. There would be wagonloads of kinfolk who came. Most transportation was by horses and wagons and it took a long time to travel a very few miles. Everyone brought food to eat, and bedding to spread on the floor to sleep.

Mommy was the laborer of the soil. Poppy only did what he had to in that category. He was not interested in growing things but he was not lazy. He put forth extensive energy in doing other, more interesting things that challenged his thinking ability. He was constantly solving problems that required scientific knowledge for a unique solution.

Mommy believed the local superstitions that saturated the country folk at that time, but Poppy felt it was a lot of devil worship. One might hear my mother say, “Sarah had her baby last night. The baby was born blue. We knew there’d be something wrong with it because she was told not to look at the two headed snake” Or, “I dreamed of fresh plowed dirt last night. That means somebody died in the community.” Or, “Edith told me that they knew when her father drew his last breath because one of their ole hens jumped up and crowed right in the yard.”
School had opened for the year with my brother Leonard as our teacher. He had finished two years of college and was given a teaching job until he would be called to service.

The hot days of August and September were spent in the little schoolhouse. The cross-ventilation did furnish some relief.

Most of us kids spent recess outside playing games. Students in the upper grades usually hung around the room because they were beginning to think about courting and wanted to look good, not sweaty and stinky from the heat. Geraldine liked Cleman Sears who was in her grade at school. Her close girlfriends were Arlene Farmer, Betty Ray, and Betty Joe Farmer. Mostly I played with the kids my age.

One rainy day at recess, some of us were writing and playing around with ink refills that came in bottles. The pens had a sharp replaceable point and a rubber tube inside that extended up the length of the pen. When you pulled a lever that was attached to the side and placed the pinpoint in the bottle, the ink was sucked up into the rubber tubing. Then it would gradually flow into the sharp point, which provided an excellent writing tool. Those who knew how could accomplish beautiful writing. It was also an attraction for young children who seemed only capable of producing a mess when they tried to use them.

Bobby Edwards was always the smart one and his creative artwork was impressive, especially since art was not encouraged in our daily lessons. One day he was showing some of us his new pen set when he dropped the green ink and splattered it all over Donald Wayne Rogers. We tried and tried to get the ink off but his hands and clothes were covered in green ink. Then an argument began to determine just who was at fault and I took Donald Wayne’s
side. That ended the note passing and fledgling romance between Bobby and me.

The usual humdrum of classes made school boring, but once in a while excitement came to our little neck of the woods.

Many children in the country had suffered or died of typhoid and diphtheria. The medical field and school officials were making a concentrated effort to reduce and eliminate the great danger these awful diseases posed. Smallpox, typhoid, and diphtheria vaccinations were available to all children. Two or three times a year we’d have a visit from the County Health Department nurses. The shots were mandatory unless we were exempted through special permission from our parents. Kids hated the shots and if they found out that they were coming on a certain day, they would stay at home or hide out.

This day Leonard had spoken briefly to us about diphtheria, encouraging us to be immunized to ward off the disease. He read to us an article from the Somerset Journal written by the Pulaski County Health Department.

Diphtheria War Drive Launched. A Drive to stamp out diphtheria in this county was started this week by the Pulaski County Health Department, Dr. Joseph Lachman, director of the department, announced. He said the drive has the full cooperation of the county medical society and civic organizations. Only 15 percent of Pulaski County children are immunized against the disease, Dr. Lachman said, and if 60 percent receive the shot, the disease can never become an epidemic. “We are asking for 100% cooperation for protection of your child and the protection of your community,” the director said. The health officer stated that “we are appealing to all communities to get behind this drive as this is one health insurance plan to which all can subscribe.” He urged all persons to “visit your family physician or give the consent to have your child protected.” Every portion of the county will be visited with everyone having the chance to have his or her child free from this disease, he added.

Dr. Lachman said the decrease in diphtheria in recent years is one of the major triumphs of preventive medicine. The older generation can remember the disease sweeping in irregular waves throughout the communities, leaving a terrible swath of death and devastation in its wake. No other disease strikes such terror into the heart of parents, for over one-fourth of the children affected die. The drop in the death rate is entirely due to the antitoxin and immunizations to prevent the disease, as the disease itself is just as strong and dangerous as ever before.

– Somerset Journal, 1942

‘I just wanted you to know how important it is to take the shots when the nurses come. It doesn’t hurt much and will keep you from getting real sick. Be sure to tell your parents,” Leonard said as he put the paper away and started getting ready for his first class.

I was so very proud to have my handsome, popular brother as our teacher. Everyone liked him and he didn’t seem to have a discipline problem. I knew better than to act up because Mommy would give it to me when I got home.

Silence enveloped the little schoolhouse as we studied. Some classes were studying for a test while some were preparing for their next class. Suddenly, we heard a car door slam. From the back of the room someone yelled, “What was that?” as everyone quickly looked up from their books. “Shhhhh,” Leonard whispered, as he hurriedly pushed things into his desk drawers. We all began putting away our books and some kids were standing up on their seats trying to see out, while others were jumping up and down in their excitement. A scowl crossed Leonard’s face as he put his finger before his mouth cautioning us to sit down and be quiet. He tiptoed to the door just before a knock was heard. Everyone was straining their necks to
see who it might be when the two white dresses came through the door. The children couldn't
contain their moans and groans as they recognized the nurses.

The nurses came in with their smiling faces, but everyone's eyes were glued to the two bags
they held in their hands. I could smell the antiseptic escaping from their supplies even before
they opened them.

I couldn't take my eyes off of a wart on the end of the thin nurse's nose. It was as big as
my thumb and purple. I wondered if she blew her nose, and if she had been playing with
frogs. Sometimes I would get warts on my hands and arms and everyone said I needed to
quit playing with frogs. Geraldine took some off with black magic, and I thought that nurse
needed Geraldine to work on hers.

After Leonard greeted them, he turned to us and said; “We discussed just today the
importance of getting our vaccinations. I want you to come up as you're called and get your
shot and then sit back in your seat and be quiet till recess.”

The big nurse with the tube around her neck smiled at us and began to speak. “Good
mornin children! We’re here ta keep ya from gettin sick with bad diseases. We’ve got some
goodies ta give ya after ya take yer medicine.” With that she held up a bag with all kinds of
suckers and hard pieces of candy in it. “If you’re really good we’ll give ya two of these treats.
Who's gonna be first?”

I quickly held up my hand and she said, “Come on up here, little brave girl, and let’s see
what yer name is and what we need ta give ya today.”

My heart was pounding and I was shaking all over as I traveled that long distance from my
seat to the front of the room, nearly gagging from the sterilization scent that escaped from the
bags. Trying hard to act normal, I squared my shoulders and said, “My name is Jewell Holt
and my Poppy’s name is Dodson Holt and I ain’t fraid of a shot.” I could hear some of the
kids sniveling and snuffling in the back of the school while I continued to look at those long
needles.

The fat nurse started rubbing my upper arm with stinking stuff and examined it with care.
Then she said, “Hummmm, looks like we don’t have a small-pox scar. Looks like we need that
taday plus yer diphtheria and typhoid.”

At first I didn’t know what she was talking about. There was a glint in her eyes and what
looked like pleasure on her face as she was bringing out a big tube of liquid and a long needle
with a tube on the opposite end. She had little beads of perspiration on her brow and upper
lip and two tremendous, large humps on her backside. I disliked her immediately.

I felt the blood leave my head and my heart sank clear to the bottom of my feet. I knew
how nasty those smallpox shots were. I had watched the nurses give them to others, and I
didn't want one. They would load up a needle with liquid and stick it in your arm, and as
if that wasn't enough, they would use the same needle to make pricks all around the shot.
After about two days the affected area would become red and swollen and develop a big scab.
Within two weeks the scab would come off and you were left with a scar for life. Sometimes
kids would scrape it off accidentally and it would bleed and get even sorer.

Suddenly a pleasant thought came to my addled brain. I had had smallpox when I was six
months old when everyone at home had it. Although it didn't leave any scars on my skin, I still
had had the disease. My sister, Jessie, was so sick she had almost died. She was left with scars
from the sores she had had all over her neck and chest.

I told the nurse in a tearful voice, “I had smallpox when I was six months old.
The nurse looked skeptically at me and then at Leonard.
The nurse with the wart retorted, “Yeah, I betcha, did it hurt?”
“Yes,” Leonard said, “That’s my sister and we all did have smallpox when she was a baby.
She had it too.

I could see out of the corner of my eyes two boys from the back of the room down crawling on the floor toward the door. I pointed at them just in time for Leonard to grab one by the back of his shirt and hold on. I heard a rippppp! as his shirt tore up the middle while he scampered out the door just behind his buddy.

Leonard’s face was dark and furrowed, his eyes snapping back and forth as he looked over the room. He said in a carefully controlled voice, “Don’t anybody else take off. If ya do you’ll pay for it when you come back. You can tell those boys when ya see them that they’ll have to suffer the consequences.”

Before I took my typhoid and diphtheria shots, I asked the nurse with the wart if she played with frogs when she was little. Her face turned beet red as she looked at me with blazing eyes. She whispered under her breath, “How dare you, ya little varmint!”

I didn’t mean to make her mad. I just wanted to tell her how to get rid of that wart. I lowered my eyes and watched as she loaded up the syringe. I was glad when she gave it to the big one to stick in my arm.

When it was all over I felt weak and half sick but proud since I was almost the smallest in school and had demonstrated great courage.
As 1942 came to a close, President Roosevelt warned the American people that although victories in the Solomons and North Africa might be hailed as a turning point in the war, there was plenty of work and fighting remaining before the war would be concluded.

Here at home, jurisdiction over all civilian salaries exceeding $5,000 annually was placed in the hands of the government and no one could have their salary increased without Washington's approval. Additional pleas were issued to American housewives to collect and turn in grease, oils, and tin cans to support the war effort. It was made illegal for a motorist to own more than five tires per vehicle. It was urged that pennies be removed from children's banks and returned to circulation. Coffee rationing was instituted as ships that would normally carry the commodity were being used for war purposes. Rationing of cheese, butter, and milk used for ice cream was rationed. Telegrams would no longer be authorized if their purpose were to wish someone a happy birthday or some other felicitation. Rationing was expanded in December to include 200 different kinds of food from applesauce to soup. Consumers would be able to purchase about half the amount of these foods as they did in 1941. Nearly half of the canned fruit and vegetables produced were being sent to the armed forces. Americans were told that even with all the rationing and restrictions Americans were living far better than our Allies in Europe. The draft age was lowered from 20 to 18 and criminals that had maintained a good record for six months were now eligible for the draft, including murders, rapists, and those convicted of treason.

By December, the Soviets had driven the Nazis back onto the blizzard-swept battlefields west of Moscow and were making steady progress on closing a trap on German troops.
The days were getting shorter and the nights longer. The ground was white most mornings because Jack Frost had stopped by and was spreading dazzling colors with his magic wand. The leaves had changed from green to yellow, scarlet, crimson, and golden brown. The rail fence along the woods in the pasture was lined by sumacs producing their heads of red berries with their flaming red leaves, and the hazelnut bushes were bending with their clusters of delicious nuts. Majestic oaks gave away their acorns and the squirrels carried them off to their nests.

Hickory nuts were in abundance, and walnut trees in the pasture were letting loose their green-shelled fruit which we would soon need to gather. The green outer shell stained our hands a dark brown when shelling them. The hard shell inside was dried and waited for winter for cracking. The persimmon trees were loaded, and every time I passed by I would eat my belly full. The squirrels ran amuck chattering and scampering everywhere in the trees and jumping from limb to limb storing away their winter food. The paw-paws were ready to eat, but I was not fond of them; they were too soft.

Leonard had left in October for the Army along with Floyd Farmer, Cy Hamp’s son. On the 19th of November he was sent to Ft. Riley, Kansas. Brother Coyd didn’t write very often, but we suspected he was involved in some secret operation.

The day before Thanksgiving, we were studying about the first Thanksgiving and why we should be thankful. We sang the song, “Over The River And Through The Woods To Grandmother’s House We Go.” Then our teacher, Miss Nell, asked, “Does anyone have a poem they’d like to read or recite bout bein thankful?”

I raised my hand and said I would like to sing a song about the war. With her permission I walked to the front of the room and began to sing:

There's a star spangle banner waving somewhere,
in that distant land so many miles away.
Only Uncle Sam's great heroes get to go there.
That is where I long to be when I die.

God gave me the right to be a free American,
and for this brave old land of liberty,
Let me show my Uncle Sam what I can do sir.
Let me help to bring those Nazi's down again.

“Thank you,” Miss Nell said as I took my seat. “Where did ya learn that one?”

“Hit’s bout a boy who was crippled and wanted ta joins the army and they wouldn’t take him. Leonard sings hit all the time,” I replied.

“I know your brothers and I know Leonard can play that guitar.”

That didn’t surprise me because everybody knew my brothers, and it was well known that she had a crush on Leonard.

This year’s pie supper had brought in enough money to buy necessary school supplies plus pretty Thanksgiving pictures to color. We also bought books, paper, and special kinds of purple gel for duplicating papers. We were not allowed to get near the gel because it was easy to destroy. Stencils placed on it would transfer onto another sheet.

That day our assignment was to write a soldier boy a note of thanks and encouragement. Most of us had brothers in service and we were more than happy to write a letter to them.
Thanksgiving was not anything special at home. We didn’t have company and we used this day off from school to finish digging potatoes and gathering any other vegetables that needed to be stored for the winter. It had begun to look as if the winter would be harsh; the weather had already turned cold and it was spitting snow.

“Lordy, Lordy,” Mommy said at breakfast, “Hits startin early snowin. The woolly worms are black this year. Some say that’s a sign of a bad winter.”

Poppy, who had come home from Dayton, Ohio, replied, “That’s not true. Worms can’t predict weather,” he said with a laugh that didn’t sit too well with my mother.

Meekly I inserted, “Did ya ask Geraldine what she thought bout how bad it would get this winter?” She was sitting across from Poppy and with a puzzled expression; he studied her rose red face.

“What’s this?” Poppy questioned as he continued to look at her.

“She knows black magic.” I announced, wallowing in the attention I had aroused.

Everyone’s eyes were on Geraldine as she lowered her head to hide her embarrassment.

“She’s crazy,” she retorted.

The conversation halted as she got up to check the next pan of biscuits in the oven.

“How’s your arm today?” Mommy asked Jessie.

Jessie, who worked at the Nabisco Biscuit Company in Dayton, Ohio, had torn the flesh from the top of her arm while sneaking a cracker over the top of the machine she was operating. Some people had tried to get her to sue the Company because it had taken all the flesh off her upper wrist, but Poppy said it wasn’t the company’s fault so it wouldn’t be the right thing to do. She quit her job and came home to recuperate. “Hit’s okay,” she answered. “Just sore.”

Sister Georgia, who was also working in Dayton, quit her job and came home with Jessie. She had spent most of her time following Jessie around trying to take care of her. Jessie did what she wanted to do, and Georgia just tagged along. No one understood Georgia, and the rest of the family had no patience with her borderline schizophrenia. Georgia talked to me when we were alone about her problems with society and the insecurities she faced every day. I had no idea why she was so withdrawn, but I knew she worried all the time about how to face the world.

When she complained to me about how people treated her, it made me feel sorry for her. Even at my young age, I thought she had serious problems. But I didn’t know what to do. I wished I could make her understand how pretty and good she was.

Recently Georgia told me about city life and how she hated working in factories with people. Then she changed the subject. “Jewell, when I was stayin at Maydell’s, she bought milk at the store in cardboard boxes.


“No, and,” Georgia continued, “They’ve got what they call television that you can buy. It’s a cabinet with moving pictures. It has different stations just like the radio cept instead of just sound ya get a picture.”

“You mean ya can have movies at home?” I ventured.

“Yep,” She answered. “Jesse Dykes says he’s gonna git one after the war. Ya can’t buy them now noway cause they’re not makin many till we win the war. I thought I’d buy me one just as soon as I could make some money.”

“Georgie, do ya have ta have lectricity?” I humbly asked.

“Yep, ya shore do.” She replied.

* * *

On Thanksgiving Day, we all worked to finish digging potatoes. It was fun for me because I pretended I was digging gold nuggets out of the ground. When Mommy came out to see
how we were doing, Jessie looked at her with her big blue eyes ready to tear and asked, “My arm hurts. Can I go in and rest it fer a while?”

To my surprise Mommy answered. “Yeah, go on in and help Georgie finish supper. Geraldine and Jewell can finish here fore dark if they hurry.”

Jessie jumped up and hollered, “Whoopee! Thank the Lord! Thank ya Lord,” as she ran toward the house.

That left Geraldine and me to finish the job while Poppy and Mommy went to the barn to feed the animals and to milk Ol’ Brindle.

After Mommy stepped out of hearing, Geraldine whispered, “Wouldn’t ya know it? Mommy always does that. Mommy, please, please, pretty please, let me go in the house cause my little arm hurts.” She was using a small child’s voice as she angrily threw potatoes at the bucket we were using to carry them back for storage. She continued bitterly, “Jessie’s her pet, and I don’t know why. She gets out of all kinds of work that the rest of us have to do.”

“We’d better hurry or we’ll be out here for the Boogerman to git,” I said as I picked up the pace.

“Hey Jewell, How’d ya like to keep that Boogerman away for all times?” Geraldine asked in a low voice, as she turned her head looking toward the barn.

“What da ya mean?” I questioned suspiciously.

“I know how ta cast a spell that’ll keep him away all the time if ya do what I tell ya to. It has to be a dark night when he’s hidin behind all the trees. Like tanight. Do ya want to try it?”

I truly was afraid of the dark and what might be there. Some people said there wasn’t a Boogerman, but I had seen many shadows that looked big and scary.

“When?” I asked. I thought to myself, I don’t believe all this, but, it was tempting.

“Tanight after supper I’ll bring my stuff and we’ll come back out. Ya don’t have ta be afraid cause I’ll be here.”

We carried all the vegetables to a big hole we had dug in the side of the hill in the back yard. It was lined with straw and grass sacks to keep the potatoes from freezing this winter. This was called a souse hole (a colloquial expression from the Middle English, sousen, meaning to pickle). Turnips and heads of cabbage were also placed in the hole for safekeeping.

Bright orange pumpkins with green stems had been stored in the barn. They would make delicious pies this winter. We stored them in the hayloft and covered them with old quilts. Brindle and Jericho loved them, too. Even our hogs liked them. We were fattening the pigs up to kill. It was getting near winter and would be cold enough to keep fresh meat. My stomach seemed to drop clear down into my back as I thought about the slaughter day. I knew how awful it was and what followed afterwards. I still had bad nightmares that stemmed from two years before on Thanksgiving when my folks had decided to kill hogs.

* * *

I remembered so vividly the morning I had heard the hogs squalling and grunting so loudly that it woke me up. I opened the door and saw Poppy, Mommy, and Dault Sears had hog-tied the two pigs we had been fattening up all summer, and were dragging them to an apple tree by the smokehouse. As I watched, Dault swung the ax and hit one over the head. Totally devastated I ran back to bed and covered my ears so I wouldn’t have to hear any more. After a while, I gradually pulled the pillow off my head and heard silence. As I opened the door again I saw the two hogs hanging by their back legs from a limb on the apple tree. The blood was flowing from their throats where they were slashed and Dault was cutting their belly open so their entrails would fall out. A big kettle of water boiled over a woodpile. It made me sick seeing my pets slaughtered.
As if that weren’t enough, that night when we went into the back bedroom to go to sleep, Mommy had put the hog heads on a white sheet on the floor of the bedroom to keep them cool until she could work them up in the morning into souse meat. Their eyes were open and their long tongues were hanging out on the side of their bloody mouth. I was so frightened I begged to sleep with Mommy and Poppy in the other room. Almost every night afterward for a long time I had awful nightmares. That was a lesson that was hard for a sensitive child to learn. As you might imagine, meat was not my favorite dish after that.

* * *

After every potato was brought to the hole, we covered it with grass sacks and then with dirt, marking the place where we would retrieve the potatoes as needed. And then we went in to eat supper.

Mommy had baked golden brown pumpkin pies that morning and had cooked an old tough rooster all day to get him tender enough to make chicken and dumplings. Georgia had also fried potatoes and cooked cabbage and made cornbread. We had milk to drink.

Poppy asked the blessing and said he was thankful for such a wonderful family and for such a bountiful crop this year. He prayed that Hitler and Tojo would be stopped before they took over the world. He prayed that God would look out for our boys in the service fighting for our country, and hoped they had enough to eat and would be home soon.

As we ate supper Poppy informed us that he had access to a radio while in Ohio where he could listen to the war news. He listened to it every chance he got. “Looks like we’re winnin the war, but we’re takin a great loss of lives in the Pacific. But the enemy are also losin a lot,” he continued as he chewed his dumpling, “The Japs lost 23 warships includin five cruisers

A common sign during WWII.
and several others in the battle for the Solomon Islands. We won that battle but with a lot of bloodshed. Hitler believes he can conquer Russia but he'll never do that. Russia is such a large country and the weather is so harsh that only the Russians know how to deal with it. Our troops and the British are doing well in North Africa and will soon have that area under control.”

Poppy looked over at me and said, “I heard the other day about a Schnauzer dog that belongs to a man in Burnside. He was in training to be a watchdog for the army. They have a canine corps called WAGS for dogs to perform special works for the army.” While Poppy was talking, I was thinking maybe I ought to give Jack over to them so he could help. When I voiced my opinion about this idea, everyone laughed. I didn’t care what they thought. Ol’ Jack could do a lot of stuff.

Poppy said “The whole country is sure working to help in the war effort. They’re raising all kinds of money selling war bonds.” Then he asked, “Have the Vansants heard from their son Ben yet?”

Mommy answered, “Yeah, they got a telegram from Washington telling them that he is being held prisoner by the Japs in the Philippines. God help him.”

The conversation continued. “Did ya know that they’d been working on getting an internment camp near Somerset?” Poppy asked as he buttered a piece of cornbread.

Mommy responded with a bewildered look, “I never heard about no internment camp. I don’t even know what it is.”

“That’s where they hold aliens suspected of having contact with the enemy. But they’re not going to get it. It’s going to western Kentucky. They wanted it cause it’d bring a lot of jobs to Somerset.”

Mommy shook her head. “Well, looks to me like we got enough troubles without worrying over a bunch of criminals. I’m fer one am glad they didn’t get it.”

Mommy didn’t eat much because she said she felt guilty eating food she wished she could give to some soldier boy who was hungry. It put a damper on the meal but hunger pains took away a lot. We had the best Thanksgiving meal I could ever remember.

![A Japanese internment camp during WWII.](http://amhistory.si.edu/perfectunion/collection/image.asp?ID=411)

*Accessed on November 20, 2013.*
After supper, Geraldine and I went to bed early so the rest of the family would think we were sleeping. She whispered to me, “I’ve got everything ready. We’ll just sneak out. Be sure to wear a coat and shoes.”

Stray clouds rushed across the sky and shut out the moon as we selected a spot near the woods to sit. Geraldine had brought a jar with coal oil and some twigs and dead leaves. She was wearing Mommy’s black coat that covered almost all of her. She gave me a big black scarf and told me to cover up with it. She brought out from under her coat a black pot with some water in it. This she put over the fire she had started after gathering a bundle of dead twigs.

Geraldine had brought a red bandana that she tore into three strips. Then she braided them into a rope that she tied around my neck leaving enough space to tie a tobacco bag to it. She said the tobacco smell would enhance the fumes from the rest of the bag’s contents. “Please don’t take hit off or we’ll really be in trouble,” she said quietly.

“What kind of trouble?” I whispered.

“The bag wards off evil spirits. You understand?”

The smell of coal oil permeated my senses and the contents of the bag added a pungent odor to the effect. I wanted to ask questions but she said I had to be quiet or I’d break the spell.

I was almost scared out of my wits and would have run home but I would have to go through the dark. She whispered, “Sit down and be very quiet.”

After settling her body, she hunched over the kettle and pulled a piece of paper out of her pocket. There was large printing that could be made out even as dark as it was.

She held her hands high in the air and slowly brought them down while muttering scary stuff.

Beneath the earth lies the kingdom of Boogerman evil.

The place of darkness where the silence is deafening,

and there he sits on his carved black throne.

Silent, unmoving, always and forever waiting for the innocent

to fulfill his scornful craving.

We call upon the forces of Good.

Remove him from his throne we beg.

Thy shalt not live to continue evil.

With that she threw the water from the kettle into the wind. In my mesmerized state, I could have sworn I saw something large and hulking come from the swirling water.

I jumped from up and began my streak to the house and to bed. It took forever for me to get to sleep because I felt like the Boogerman was peeking in the windows. I heard Geraldine come in and go to bed.

The next morning when I went to breakfast, Mommy asked me what that smell was. I said I was taking a cold and wanted to ward it off. That morning after school took up, Donald Wayne asked to be moved to the other side of the room from me because he said I stunk. By the end of the day I had become ostracized because most kids asked to be moved to the other side of the room. I figured if I wanted to play with anyone I better get rid of the pouch, which I did with regret, at evening recess.
The woods are lovely, dark, and deep
But, I have promises to keep
And miles to go before I sleep
And miles to go before I sleep.

– Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Morning
Robert Frost

XII   Trapping
January, 1944

The air was icy and twigs snapped in the cold. A gray light came from the east as the sun tried to find its way through the mist-filled air. Dark clouds gathered in the west looking like more snow was in the forecast.

It was Christmas, but Poppy, Jessie, and Georgia had gone back to Ohio to work and couldn’t get home. Dault came by with some game he had caught. He and Geraldine spent the morning sawing wood for the stoves. Last fall, Poppy and Jericho had dragged logs to the house that he had cut when he cleared the new ground, but we had to saw them up to fit in our stoves.

Hyle and Hazel came in the door around noon with a snow covered Boyce. We were glad to see them even though they were tired and about frozen. They had had to carry Boyce because he was just a toddler.

Dault had brought us some apples he had saved in a barrel of sawdust. They were winter apples and kept well into the spring. He brought us two rabbits he had caught in his traps. Mommy cleaned them and we had rabbit and dumplings and apple pie for Christmas dinner and, of course, our usual canned corn, potatoes, and shuck beans.

They were kidding me about hanging up my stocking Christmas Eve. Hyle was laughing while telling about someone that hung her stocking and got it filled with cornbread. I knew there wasn’t a Santa Claus, but I thought maybe if I hung my stocking, someone might put something in it, maybe a candy stick. So that night, even though it wasn’t Christmas Eve, I’d try. I didn’t have anything to lose.

The next morning I’d forgotten about hanging my stocking but Hyle looked at me with his eyes twinkling and asked, “Well, did Santa come last night?”

I ran to the mantle in the front room where I’d hung it, and sure enough, there was a big piece of cornbread in it. Well, I really didn’t expect anything. I just threw it out to the birds. That was their Christmas present.

*   *   *

In January the snow was already deep in banks where the wind had blown it against trees and bushes. The bare limbs of oaks and maples looked like long white icicles. Cedar and pine trees were bent from the snow that had fallen the day before. Midwinter set in and the war still roared in the Atlantic and the Pacific. Our country was becoming a major force in the war as Hitler kept sweeping through Europe and Japan continued to conquer the Pacific. The country was in the middle of making war materials and drafting all young men who were able to serve in the military.

Mommy had worried so about her friend Ogal Farmer because she had been very sick. Because of the weather, she hadn’t been able to visit Ogal or help with her family.

It was Saturday morning when Geraldine began putting her coat on saying, “Mom, we need ta check the traps ta see if there’s anythin in ‘em.” She and I had set the deadfalls and
steel traps that week. “Maybe there’ll be a mess of rabbit on the table fer supper tonight,” she continued.

“I want ta go!” I cried, “Please let me go!”

“If you’ll be quiet,” Geraldine said as she put on rubber boots.

I hurriedly put on my coat and boots.

A dead fall is a big flat rock set in the side of a hill with a trigger stick holding it up. If something got under the rock and touched the trigger the rock will fall on top of the animal and kill it.

The steel trap is cruel because it catches an animal by the leg with its jagged jaw. The trap is baited near the back end. The trigger in the front catches the animal when it pushes to get to the bait. The pushed trigger causes the spring to suddenly snap the two jaws together. An animal caught this way is a prisoner until someone unhooked it. Wild animals have been known to chew the remainder of their leg off to get out of the trap. Usually people used these traps for animals that were pests, and they would just shoot them when they found them in the trap.

We had set the steel trap at the corner of the barn where our chickens roosted. Something was catching them. We didn’t know if it was four-legged or two-legged, or perhaps both. I had found some feathers outside the barn and tried to follow the trail, but the newly fallen snow hid the evidence and we were not successful in finding the culprit’s den.

The morning was very cold and icicles had formed all around the eaves of the house. I put on rubber boots over my shoes. We had already sewn a sheepskin in the backs of our coats so they would be warm. My parents had had this sheepskin for years. They wouldn’t wear out. Every summer Mommy treated them with coal oil to keep the bugs from eating the wool. They smelled to high heaven but when we got outside, the smell would mix with the clear clean air and the coal-oil scent would dissipate.

Walking was slick and perilous as we stomped through the snow. The pine trees were most beautiful with the branches swayed down to the ground. I’d shake a snow-covered limb and watch the glistening flakes as they floated to the ground. We passed by a long line of jutted rocks hanging over the side of the hill where dripping water was frozen into solid rows of icicles resembling white sparkly drapes.

We had set our deadfall where clefts started forming by a big hollow tree that we thought something was using it for its home. We hoped to catch it in our trap.

When we got in sight of the dead fall Geraldine yelled “Hurry up! The trap’s sprung! We’ve caught something!” I could see she was right. We started to run and began slipping and sliding with every two steps forward we slid back one. When we reached the trap, it took us both lifting and pulling to raise the rock. Slowly the flat rock was lifted up enough to see what was there. Boy were we surprised. There were eight little quail lying under the rock stiff and dead. They had snuggled up under this big rock to try and stay warm and had pushed the trigger.

“Oh no!” I cried, “Oh no!” I picked up one of the little still bodies to make sure it was dead. I didn’t feel like I thought I would about making a catch. They were so pretty and I felt so sorry that we had killed them.

“Shut up,” Geraldine scolded, “Can’t ya see they’re dead. All that cryin ain’t gonna help. Ya jus don’t make sense. That’s why we set the trap. So we could get some meat. They’d probably froze ta death anyway.” There was strangeness in her voice that betrayed her feelings.

We checked the other trap and saw that there was nothing in it so we hurried back to the house to show our catch.
Mommy met us at the door and beamed, “Them are real good baked. I’ll get ta work pullin off the feathers and cleaning them so we can have them fer supper.”

* * *

By the time we got warmed up from our trip, Mommy had finished cleaning the birds and yelled from the kitchen, “It’s time to feed. Git fodder from the corn patch and feed the stock. Be sure ya pull the corn off the stalks to feed the hogs. When ya come back, git the slop from the kitchen and take it ta the hogs. Hurry up! Its gonna be dark fore ya get done cause we still have ta milk.”

We fed the stock grain, but because they needed bulk in their diet, every day they also got an armload of fodder. We cut the stalks in the fall and put them into fodder shocks in the corn patch. It took two people to drag enough to feed the animals twice a day.

When we gathered our field corn in the fall, we used the big ears for bran and cornmeal. We always left the second ear on the stalk. It was smaller and Old Jericho and Brindle loved to go through the fodder searching for the little nubbins. Brindle would put the whole nubbin in her mouth and crunch it. Jericho pulled the nubbin off with his teeth and he’d use his foot to pull the shuck off, and then nibble off the kernels. You could hear him crunching his corn clear to the house.

We gave the hogs a few ears to go along with the slop from the kitchen. The hogs just ate anything they were given. We put all the scraps from the table in the slop, and heated dishwater that was warm that helped to warm them up when it was cold and they didn’t have any water in their pen. Of course we saved the best scraps for Ol’ Jack and Ol’ Tom.

We still had to feed the chickens and gather the eggs.

* * *

The hen’s nests were in the corners of the hayloft. I always liked to gather the eggs because I could climb up to the hayloft easily. Our nest egg that we left to fool the hen was a dried egg gourd. It looked exactly like an egg. This kept us from gathering a nest egg that had been laid too long and was rotten. We could fool the chickens easily because they are not too bright. If there weren’t a nest egg in the nest when they needed to lay an egg, they would find another place, sometimes outside the barn where wild animals would eat them.

Chickens were very important because we used the eggs for meat in the summertime. We couldn’t keep meat without refrigeration, and eggs were laid fresh every day. I thought about last summer when I had become very curious as to how chickens laid eggs and where they came from. I knew that hens would sit on a nest for sometimes an hour before they would lay their egg. When I asked Mommy, she said, “Why don’t you just watch and then you’ll know what happens.”

This sounded like a good idea to me. So I decided to solve the mystery. Needless to say, watching a chicken sitting on a nest for an hour was not exciting. The first time I couldn’t wait. I lifted her up with her cawing and pecking my hands but no egg. Several times I tried this but my patience was not that of the old hen.

One day I saw an old hen fly up to her nest in the barn loft. I told that old hen, “I can set here as long as you can.” I had taken some rocks to play with while waiting for the answer. After about 45 minutes I saw her raise her hind end, and plop, out came a brown egg. She suddenly started cackling and squawking as if telling her flock that she had done her job. She flew off the nest and ran to join the rest of the chickens. Whatever makes chickens carry on so has not been researched as far as I know. Maybe she is relieved or just proud to have laid an egg; who knows? What a disappointment! All that time spent to see nothing other than that
egg come from that chicken's behind. I wondered if she had lots of eggs in her body. After all, I was only eight years old. I never could eat eggs after that.

* * *

“Shhhhh,” Geraldine brought me back to the present as we snuck around the corner of the barn. We wanted to check the steel trap under the loft without scaring the animal if we had caught one. We could see the chain to the trap but the rest of it was underneath the holding pole. “There’s somethin in the trap. Hit’s under the barn and the chain is still attached.” Geraldine exclaimed, “I see somethin under thar that’s black and white! I believe hits old Tom. He’s been gone a couple of days. I think we’ve caught him in the trap.”

My heart sank. My precious tomcat caught in the steel trap. I cried. “Oh Lord, have mercy, let’s get him out now. Come on Tom! We’ll get you help.” We coaxed and called, but we couldn’t get any response.

“I’ll bet he’s dead,” Geraldine said as we came closer to the hole under the barn. We both took hold of the chain and pulled with all our might as the back-end began to exit. Just a second too late, I cried, “Watch out!” Suddenly it raised its tail and sprayed Geraldine right in the face.

“Oh no! No! No!” She screamed as we got out of there almost suffocated with the skunk scent that had soaked her clothes and hair.

For days after the stinky skunk ordeal we could hardly stand ourselves. We washed our clothes in tomato juice and that helped. We tried rubbing Geraldine down with peppermint, washing off with Vicks salve, and using tomato juice to wash with. The tomato juice was the only thing that helped. I thought she was very brave to put it on her hair.

It took a long time for the scent to go away.
PART III

FEAR AND SORROW
The New Year seemed to bring with it a renewed sense of optimism and a confidence that the war would be won—and soon. In the beginning of the new year President Roosevelt delivered an optimistic outlook for the war to Congress. The President said that the “Allied cause is moving forward in Europe, Asia, and Africa backed by a miracle of production in the United States.” He announced that this year promised a very substantial advance along the roads leading to Berlin, Rome, and Tokyo and talked about how important the Russian struggle against the Nazi Regime on the Eastern Front had been to the war effort.

The government announced that 4 million women were working in war plants and soon one in four workers would be female. Washington banned pleasure driving in the East. Any motorist caught driving to purely social engagements faced the cancellation of their gasoline ration. Fuel oil was cut to about 45% of normal use. America’s traditional hot dogs and bologna were replaced with “victory” sausages that consisted mostly of soybeans. Families were limited to five cans of fruit and vegetables. The sale of canned fish and meat was stopped indefinitely. Lend-Lease accounted for more than 75% of all canned meats already and the government procured more than 50% of canned fish to meet current requirements. Shoe rationing was placed in effect limiting each person to three pairs per year. A recommendation was made to allow the War Department to seize 7 million private passenger autos and the fifth tire on all 27 million passenger vehicles. The vehicles would be scrapped for their metal. In March, it was reported that the Red Cross, up to December 15, 1942, had shipped over a million food parcels to Americans held prisoners of war.

The FBI announced that within 24 hours following Pearl Harbor they had picked up 3,000 dangerous enemy aliens on the West Coast and to date, 12,000 aliens had been incarcerated. They also reported that many Japanese aliens on the West Coast were armed and ready for an uprising when the FBI intervened and that many thousands of ammunition rounds, guns, radios, and cameras had been confiscated.

– Somerset Journal
Old Man Winter had spread his feeling of gloom and doom over our house as Monday morning came with a gray and dark sky. We had long been tired of the cold, what with having to cut wood and other hardships it brought. Tree limbs overlapped on the wagon road we traveled, and cold rain and snow were falling from the tree limbs. It was February and we wondered if the winter would ever pass. I was tired of trudging through the snow to school every day. We couldn’t play outside at recess. I had lost my gloves, and my rubber boots were torn. I didn’t want to stay at home because there was nothing to do there.

At school yesterday, Miss Nell read a report from the Pulaski County Health Department that had been published in the *Somerset Journal*:

The number of cases of influenza in the county has practically doubled during the past week, Dr. Joseph Lachman, director of the Pulaski County Health Department, said today. The warmer weather of the past few days served to increase the number of cases. He estimated that 500 persons are ill in this county with the disease. Dr. Lachman warned the public to go to bed at once if flu is suspected. He added that persons ill with influenza should drink plenty of water and should isolate themselves from the rest of the family. “Staying on the job and exposing other persons to the disease is no way to combat the epidemic," he said. “We must have the cooperation of every citizen or it will become worse.”
Several children had been absent from school because influenza had struck our community. Delphia, Beecher Hines’s mother, took him home from school because he was vomiting and running a high fever. His father, Vola, had been sick too. Beecher’s grandpa, Howard Hines,
had also been sick. The disease had spread to almost every family in the area. It could be life threatening because of the diarrhea and fever that came with it. Mommy said she should keep us at home but we couldn’t stay home forever.

Leona Hines came outside the store as we passed by on our way to school and called, “You’ll need to go back home cause there ain’t no school today. Cause Nell is sick.”

“Yippee,” we all yelled as we turned to go back home.

“Come in and warm up fore you go home,” she told us. We went in the store and I could hear a radio in the back.

Howard was sitting on a nail keg with his head angled toward the speaker, listening intently to the news. He looked pale and peaked from his sickness. The voice from the radio came loud and clear:

Rommell has been called back to Germany by Hitler after losing to the Americans at Bizerte and Tunis where the 250,000 Germans and Italians surrendered. After months of desperate fighting by Australian and American troops the Japanese in the Buna-Gona area have been practically wiped out. Their transports and supply ships have been sunk with the loss of thousands of men who were drowned. The situation appears to be this in the South Pacific. The Allies have been able in the past months to occupy positions in New Guinea and Guadalcanal in such strength that they have come to constitute a threat of disaster for the Japanese in that whole area. The Russians claim to have cut the Germans off from all supplies except those which can be delivered by air.

We gathered around the big stove in the middle of the room to warm our hands and feet before we started back home. “Back off a little or ya’ll burn yerself,” Leona said as we hovered close for the warmth of the stove. “There’s been several cases of little girls gettin their clothes caught on fire and were badly burned and quite a number killed.”

We warmed our frozen fingers and then left. After the last snowfall, we had packed the snow and made an icy slide coming down the hill to the store. It was so much fun to slide all the way down that long hill without stopping. The thawing ice caused red mud to ooze through the slide in spots, and when we hit them, big red splatters covered our clothes. Our shoes became muddy and wet. It didn’t take long to ruin a good pair of shoes.

Even though I didn’t want to miss this opportunity to play, I began to feel sick to my stomach and my head hurt. When I threw up my breakfast, we began the long trek home with Geraldine leading the way. Every step felt like my last one. My head roared and then it’d feel empty and hollow like a shell. My legs were weak and hurt clear to the bone and I shivered so hard my teeth rattled. I dabbed snow on my burning face to ease my throbbing head a little.

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Several days passed while my fever raged. I tried to focus my eyes on Mommy as she spooned potato soup between my clenched teeth, but she looked grotesque with a long snout and large ears. Unintelligible voices spiraled around and around in my head. I would awaken to my sweaty body wrapped like a mummy in bed sheets. When I tried to swallow, my throat felt like barbed wire.

Scary images kept hovering near. I remember yelling, “Get that hog off my bed!” Then again, I cried, “Jimmie, Jimmie, get Jimmie away from that big hole of water.” And yet, the worst was the image of a blob growing from the floor. It had small perky ears and a snout. As this thing grew, it began whirling and pulling up where I could see eyeballs staring at me, enlarging as I watched. They extended from their sockets and hung on each side of the
forming head. Long yellow tusks protruded from the sides of an opening as the thing kept sliding toward me in that red stuff.

Mommy held me in her arms as I tried to run and scream. What was I going to do?

“Mommy! Mommy!” I cried, as she rocked me back and forth.

Then one morning my head cleared as Mommy was urging me to drink some mullein tea. “Come on, Jewell, drink some of this. Please, just a little,” she pleaded.

She changed the wet quilts on my bed as I put my feet on the floor and dragged my body to the chair behind the stove. They kept hot water boiling on the heating stove and were constantly washing bed clothes and drying them in behind the stove because it was too cold and cloudy to dry outside.

Mommy and Geraldine had everything to do because Poppy had changed jobs and was working in Cincinnati. Jessie and Georgia had also moved to Cincinnati close to where my oldest sister Maydell lived. Jobs were plentiful and they had found work in a defense plant.

After several days of delirium and hallucinations, I began to feel better. Potato soup was the only thing that stayed on my stomach. There was no doctor near so we had to just wear out whatever was making us sick and hope it didn’t kill us.

On Monday, February 3, 1943, Mommy went to the Post Office. She learned that Ogal Farmer had passed away at the Wahie Hospital in Somerset. She was being buried at Poplarville the next day with Brother Rogers preaching the funeral. She was a dear friend and neighbor who left behind her husband Willie Z; her sons, Leo (in the army in the Hawaiian Islands, Seldon (in the army in Panama), Lowell and Archie B. (at home); and her three young daughters, Mylie, Juanita, and Arlee. She was only 45 and would be sorely missed by all. It was almost like one of our own family members had died.

Another week passed while I was recuperating, slowly getting my strength back, and then Mommy took sick. Fortunately, Geraldine and I were able to take care of things. Cutting wood was the biggest problem because we had to saw logs that Poppy had hauled to the yard with a crosscut saw. It took two people to pull this kind of saw, so I just had to give it all I had.

Mommy became desperately ill. She was running a high fever and hallucinating part of the time. All she worried about was getting enough wood to keep us warm. We kept enough ahead to last a week, but she wanted us to cut more.

Dault came by with some squirrels he had killed, but Mommy didn’t want him to come in the house with all the sickness. “You can cut us some wood, though,” she told him. After he and Geraldine sawed and cut up a big pile of wood, he showed me how to skin the squirrels and clean them to cook. We boiled them for about an hour and made some dumplings. Mommy said it smelled good and we fed her broth for the next few days. She began to slowly get better.

It took us a long time to feed the stock and milk every day. I was so weak I wasn’t much help but for some reason Geraldine never took sick. That was a blessing. Jimmie, as expected, became deathly ill. He kept having bouts of fever and diarrhea long after everyone else was well. He was lethargic and listless for several weeks, and we had to make sure he would drink liquids and eat.

We had been lucky because this epidemic had spread all over the county and whole families were sick, and there were people who died because they didn’t have anyone to take care of them. Mommy worried because in the past she had been able to help and nurse the neighbors in times of sickness. This time, however, her hands were full at home.

She remembered the Spanish influenza in 1918 after World War I. She used to tell of the terrible time when families lost so many of their family members to this disease. People didn’t know what had caused the pandemic. Some blamed it on gasses that the Germans used in battle. Some other people thought it was the result of trench warfare or smoke and fumes.
of the war. An estimated 165,000 Americans died of the flu during a two-year span. Some people died within hours of showing symptoms.

Mommy said she must visit our neighbors over in the woods from us to see if they were all right. We hadn’t heard from them since the flu had hit the community. Jim Matt Farmer and Leona (Wright) Farmer lived less than a mile from us over in the woods near Jackson Rock and up a branch toward Mt. Victory. Mt. Victory was located on the highest ridge east of us.

The older Wright generation had come from Wales and their English was almost unintelligible. Leona’s sister, Mary Rachael, stayed with her Welsh grandmother most of the time and had developed a speech pattern that was comical to others. Mommy and Leona Hines had lots of fun joking with her, watching her child-like reactions and expressions. She liked special attention and would clown around and tell things about herself to make people laugh.

Mary Rachael pulled pranks on her family, and I remember hearing her tell about being mad at her mother and killing her special geese. She said she was angry with her for making her work in the garden. So she went out early in the morning and killed two of her geese and put them in front of the door. When her mother opened the door she called to her, “Step high, Sarah Jane! Step high! Goose and gander! Goose and gander!” Of course, this phrase was repeated many times at our house because we thought it was very funny.

The Wrights all came by our place going to the post office and store. Leona had two daughters; Imogene was Jessie’s age and Arlene was Geraldine’s age. Leona’s father died when she was two years old and left her mother, Sarah Jane, with several kids to raise by herself in a house in the woods near us. Leona and Mommy were good friends and visited each other often.

Arlene visited us often and we were forever playing hopscotch wherever we could find a level place to draw our game board. We were all very good and competitive. Arlene usually

Rebecca and H. Monroe Wright and family.
won as she was wiry and agile, and it seemed she had hopped on one foot since she was born.

Tommy Wright, Leona’s brother, and his family also lived on the same branch between Sarah Jane and Leona’s. He had three daughters, Gertrude, Magola, and Melzene, and a son Leon.

* * *

Blissfully I watched as the birds returned; March daffodils bloomed and the feeling of despair and emptiness faded as my weak body started to heal.

By God’s grace and loving care, we all managed to pull through.

A birdie with a yellow bill
Hopped upon my window sill
He cocked his shining eyes and said:
“Ain’t you ‘shamed you sleepy head?”

– Robert Louis Stevenson
Time to Rise

It was March, and the trees were putting out new buds.

“Rise and Shine!” Mommy called to get us out of bed. How welcome to be able to hear that wakeup call again! I could hear the roosters crowing and the birds singing in the treetops. I looked out the window and saw the beautiful sun. It had been a long hard winter, and we sure were ready for spring. I could hear Mommy singing in the kitchen as they were preparing breakfast. She sang an old war ballad.
Just before the last charge of Custer’s men,
Two soldiers drew their rank.
With a thrust of their hands
And a last farewell
that they might meet again.

One had blue eyes and curly hair
Just nineteen years of age.
With a down on his face and on his chin,
He was only a boy, you know.

The other was tall, dark, handsome, and brave
Whose face in this world was grim.
The more he trusted in those he loved
Who was all the world to him.

Hyle Holt and Merrell Stuart.
We’ve fought together o’er many a ridge
we’ve fought through many a fight.
But before we join our comrade’s side
I ask this request of you.

I have a mother waiting at home
whose place in this world is dim.
Please tell her gently how I died and
Where is my resting place.

But if you should die and I return
I’ll do the same for you.
And then they parted to their ranks
And marched to their dying place.

After a good breakfast, I opened the door to the porch and saw Robin Redbreast jumping from one sprig of grass to another. Bluebirds chirped as they looked for straw to build their

Arnold, Gordon, Glendon, and Janice Dykes.
The grass was a soft green in the low wet spots, and Ole Bridle was hunting for tender, sweet blades of grass to eat. It looked as if we were going to have another early spring.

My oldest sister, Maydell, her husband Jesse, and their small children—Glendon, Arnold, Janice, and Gordon—were living on Buck Creek in the Dykes community. She was 22 years older than I, and was married and had a child before I was born. They had lived on Mt. Victory when their oldest child, Arlis, died with diphtheria when he was only two years old. They moved to a little cabin on Buck Creek and Jesse had worked in the coalmines but had to quit for health reasons. He finally was forced to leave for Cincinnati to find employment.

Maydell lost a baby right after Jesse started a new job in Ohio. Mommy would go over and help when she could. She said Maydell had lost her child possibly because she was carrying two big lard buckets full of water up the hill from the creek to do the laundry. The baby was full term and had died while in birth. It was the belief at this time that women shouldn’t stand on their feet for nine days after having a baby.

George and Lillian Dykes, Jesse’s parents, lived right up the road and were also helping in taking care of the children and feeding the family until Jesse could take them back to Ohio with him. Maydell was weak and there was much work to do taking care of four small children. Mommy would go early in the morning and do the laundry and cooking. It was a long walk from Poplarville to Dykes, so we were limited on how much we could help. When she got well enough to walk, she and her children came and stayed with us until her health improved.

We had heard from the War Department that Coyd had been deployed overseas, but we had had no word from him personally. Leonard had joined the 9th tank battalion and was on maneuvers in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Hyle finally gave in to his patriotic zeal and volunteered for the Marines. His wife Hazel and his son Boyce were living at their place they had bought on top of Colo Hill. He was waiting for his call.

Sometimes I felt guilty when I was playing and having fun because I knew about the hardships our soldier boys were facing. It weighed heavily on my conscience as it did most everyone’s.
A Victory Garden poster from WWII.
During the World War II, you could neither just walk into a shop and buy as much sugar or butter or meat as you wanted, nor could you fill up your car with gasoline whenever you liked. All these things were rationed, which meant you were only allowed to buy a small amount (even if you could afford more). The government introduced rationing because certain things were in short supply during the war, and rationing was the only way to make sure all customers got their fair share.

The government rationed items such as lard, sugar, flour, tires, and all manner of household goods. Each family was given ration stamps according to the size of their family; however, stores couldn’t keep supplies. Sugar and lard were the two things that Mommy thought she had to have to cook with. The news would spread through the country that a certain store in the area had received a shipment of scarce items, and people would walk for miles to buy them.

One time Mommy walked all the way to the Hail community on Bent Road because she heard they had gotten a shipment of lard. When she got there, they were sold out and she bought some oleomargarine. Our cow was dry at the time so we didn’t have any butter and this was a butter substitute. It was strange looking white, solid stuff that had a little packet of yellow food coloring so when mixed in the oleomargarine looked like butter. It sure didn’t taste like butter! Mommy said it wasn’t fit to eat, and she didn’t use it.

The Government wanted everyone to grow his or her own food. People were being encouraged to grow vegetables in backyard victory gardens.

Doddley Tom Hail and his first family.
A January 28, 1943 article in the *Somerset Journal* read:

Everyone with the smallest plot of ground and who can spare the time from other labors must plant a garden this year. Unless this is done there will be a serious food shortage. This is a case of either plant or do without. A large portion of this year’s food production is going to members of our armed forces and to our allies. There will not be enough at home unless everyone who can plants a victory garden.

We are at war with the most heartless and ruthless foe ever faced by civilized people. Says the 4-H Leader, “Our boys on the fighting fronts are in the muck, blood, and corruption, with no choice but to fight it out to the bitter end. Could those of us on the home fronts spend but 30 seconds where our boys are dying, we would never, never complain when we are called upon to grow food and grow more food. Every patriotic citizen, especially those on the farms, will back up our fighting boys by growing more food this year than ever was produced by this nation or any nation.

They asked everyone to give up their metal rain barrels to be used for making bullets. A few people refused, and they paid a price because it was said that they had shirked their duty to their country. Those of us who had given all we could let the others know how we resented their actions.

March had come in like a lamb and would probably go out like a lion. The days were so warm we easily thought it was spring. Mommy said it was a fooler, that the dear Lord was testing us and that we would have some more bad weather. We had planted our early garden and it was already coming up. The seeds were sprouting tiny little plants: turnips, greens, beets, onions, and lettuce. Today we’d plant our potatoes.
Kentucky announced that its draft quota had been lowered by 14% but it still wouldn’t be able to meet its objectives. Nearly all items that go into the American market basket were now regulated under the rationing system and the American housewife was required to use intricate planning and be adept when planning meals. In early April, Prime Minister Churchill warned that it might take two more years of war to crush Hitler, “and his evil powers into death, dust, and ashes.” That was Churchill’s effort to discourage talk of the war already being won. In late April, Churchill lifted the ban on the ringing of church bells that had been in place since the invasion peril threatened the island in 1940. London also reported that a powerful ghost voice interrupted Berlin radio’s birthday tribute to “our beloved Fuehrer” by shouting “The entire German nation curses today the hour that man was born.” The voice continued, “This henchman has been in power much too long. German people awake! The time has come to finish with the Nazi gang. Down with Hitler and his gang. On the day of Hitler’s downfall the war will be over.” The ghost was on the same wavelength as the Berlin radio transmitter and the Nazi’s were unable to stop the ghost voice.

At the beginning of April, Adolf Hitler was finally heard in Berlin. He had been rumored to be dead, ill, or insane, so his emergence from months of seclusion was noteworthy. Hitler admitted that German soil had become a war zone but boasted the eastern front crisis had been overcome and urged his citizens toward “final victory.”

The RAF launched its heaviest raid of the war on Berlin with great destruction reported. The raids by American and British bombers continued around the clock on western Germany and France, weather permitting. Death and destruction rained down all over Europe.
The weather had turned warm and severe thundershowers were an everyday occurrence, signaling that summer was on its way. I was in the yard playing with Jack, climbing the apple trees and watching Jimmie while he sat near the house humming and gathering sticks about him. Every now and then he would make his little crying sounds and vent his frustration by biting the back of his hands where he had developed large calluses. We never knew why he cried. We just tried to console him. No one knew what was going on in his mind. There were times when he intentionally hurt himself when he was crying.

Suddenly Jack started barking and running toward the wagon road with his hair standing straight up on his back, letting me know someone was coming. I stood very still waiting for the appearance of our visitor, when I saw an old felt hat topping the small incline which led to our yard. It seemed that the owner was constantly swaying from one side of the road to the other. As he got closer I saw the pack on his back, and I recognized him as a drummer who went through the area selling his wares. I waited until he got closer before running to get Mommy. I was excited because I always liked going through his pack to see what he had for sale.

I heard Mommy say to Geraldine, “Put on some more potatoes for supper because Uncle Doddley Tom Hail will be hungry.”

As we walked off the porch to greet him, I whispered, “Mommy, I think he must have got sprayed by a skunk.”

“Nah,” Mommy laughed, “he jus needs a bath.”

Doddley Tom removed his pack and laid it on the ground so we could see what it contained. It was a special pack somewhat like a suitcase on the outside, but it folded out into a three-piece case with compartments for everything imaginable. Tools, dress patterns, bows, hair ribbons, and lace trimmings were just a few of the things in the pack.

We didn’t have money, but his garden seed packets were only a penny. We always had some Sunday School money (mostly pennies) put away. I just had to have a ribbon that was only five cents. The Lord would have to wait.

Mommy bought some flower seed packets. We rounded up 25 cents. He had sat down to rest while we shopped and said, “I’ve come a long way from Jugornut. Reckon you’d have some leftover supper and maybe I could sleep in your barn till mornin?”

Mommy answered, “Uncle Tom, you can eat supper with us and I think there’s some dry hay in the barn you can make a bed. I’ve got some old quilts you can use.”

The next morning after breakfast, he put his pack on his back and started down the road. He staggered from one side of the road to the other, and you would think he was drunk if you didn’t know better. I asked Mommy why he walked that way. She said, “Some say it was cause there was a curse put on his father for his dranking cause he was drunk when Doddley Tom was conceived. Others say he just drinks a lot. Some say it runs in the family. I don’t know but it keeps him from working like normal people.”

“Doddley Tom had two families,” Mommy continued. “His first wife died, leaving him with five children which some neighbors and relatives took in. The children by his second wife had a hard time, but their mother did a good job raisin them. Some of Thomas’s relation down in Jugornot fixed up a corncrib for him to stay in. That’s where he lives most of the time.”

* * *

It was Monday afternoon and I had stopped to play with Violet on the way home from school. Jimmy and Bobby Helton said they’d be down to play as soon as they put up their
dinner buckets. Jimmy was in my grade at school; Bobby was younger, but he did a good job keeping up with his big brother. Even though Mommy had told me to come straight home from school, I just had to stop long enough to see that Jimmy lived up to his brag that he could jump farther than me, out of Violet’s barn loft. I could hardly wait. I had jumped the last time we had played together, and it was Jimmy’s turn to show me he wasn’t a coward.

Violet went in the house and told her mother she was home so the younger kids could come out to play. She was a year younger than me but she had a lot of responsibility watching her brothers and sisters.

Violet and her twin siblings, Earl and Merle, came out of the house and we went straight to the barn. We heard movement in one of the stalls and suddenly someone screamed, “Help, help! There’s a snake in here and it’s bout ten feet long and it’s a rattlin somethin.”

We all took off running to the house yelling, “Snake! Snake,” to tell Violet’s mother, Lerlene and her grandmother, Martha Ellen Sears. Mrs. Sears grabbed a hoe and Lerlene got an ax from the porch and off we took, with Lerlene telling the younger ones to stay in the house. We ran to the barn across the road with Lerlene leading the way and Mrs. Sears with her long dress swishing the ground right behind her. Violet and I stayed in back because we were scared to death of snakes.

Martha Ellen Sears.
I expected to see Jimmy and Bobby lying dead in the stall, but instead they were sitting on the wagon tongue laughing hysterically, swinging their legs and slapping each other on the back. Lerlene and Mrs. Sears were so mad that Lerlene yelled, “That’s not funny. Snakes are dangerous, and don’t make jokes and scare people to death.”

“Yeah,” Mrs. Sears chimed in. “Stay away from this here barn if’n ya’re gonna act like that. We’ve got nough troubles.” With that command they left for the house to continue fixing supper. Well, that did it. Jimmy and Bobby had fixed us good. I was so mad at them because their prank had ruined my plan. And I wanted revenge.

“You can jus’ go home and don’t ya come back no more!” I screamed. “Trouble makers!”

Violet gave me a shove, “Who died and left you boss? You don’t live here. They can come back when they want to, and it hain’t none of yer business. Now there,” she continued, “and you can go home yerself and never come back.”

I was so mad that I reached over and smacked her cheek. She grabbed my hair and got me down in the middle of the barnyard trying to choke me. I was about half afraid of her because she was tough. I begged her to let me up, while Jimmy and Bobby were standing over us and Jimmy was hollering,” Whup her, Violet! Smack her agin. She needs a whuppin fer tellin on us fer nothin.”

I finally managed to get out from under Violet and she turned loose of me. I was scratched up and my head hurt from my hair being pulled. I was screaming at the top of my lungs, “I’m gonna tell on you! I’m gonna tell that you jumped on me and pulled my hair and choked me.”

As I ran down the road Violet yelled after me, “You don’t know how to play so just stay away!” There was one bright hope in my mind. I had stopped at Violet’s to play even though I knew I’d get a whipping, but I had not stayed long. Maybe I could sneak in and Mommy wouldn’t see me.

I didn’t want to talk to Geraldine about my fight because I knew she would give me another lecture, so I stayed outside playing with Jack till I saw Mommy coming from the garden. I was in luck. It was milking time and she had come to get the milk bucket. I tried to hide my face with my hand but she jerked it away. Suspiciously she asked, “Jewell, what’s wrong with your face and neck? You been fightin with Violet agin?”

Seeking sympathy I broke down, sobbing and crying. “Violet jumped on me fer nothin’ and tried ta choke me ta death!”

“Whad’cha do? Stop on the way home from school after you was told not to?” Mommy questioned. I could see she wasn’t going to give me any sympathy so I just better shut up and leave it be.

Then she said, “Ya’ll never learn to mind. Ya know you’re supposed to come straight home from school and ya don’t. Ya got what ya deserved cause I’ve told you and told you but ya keep doin it. Now ya’ll not ever play with Violet agin.”

“I don’t want to ever play with her agin!” Then through a fresh burst of tears I cried, “I don’t have nobody else to play with!” Deep down inside I felt lonely that I had lost a friend.

* * *

The next day was warm enough for me to play in the branch, which was running sparkling and clear. In little pools of water, in the low lying places in the pasture, I could see the jelly-like masses with specks of black frog eggs around the edges of the pools, and then there were some that had already hatched out into tadpoles or polliwogs.

They were little greenish-black elongated larvae that push their short bodies around by swimming with their tails. Some were darting around still inside the mass of clear slimy substance that held the eggs together and yet some were already sprouting legs. I put some of
the biggest ones in a fruit jar because I wanted to see them change into squawkers after they
lost their tails and sprouted legs.

I gathered the leaves of the spearmint plant to take in the house to make good tea. The
sweet mint flavor was good for digestion and for kids with a sweet tooth. Today the branch
was running full. The grass was green along the water, and Ole Brindle was picking with great
urgency to savor the sweet green sprouts after a winter of dry fodder and bran.

I saw bees coming and going away from the branch in a line, up the hill toward Dault’s.
“Bees! Bees!” I cried as I ran to tell the news. “I saw them around the water. I know there’s a
bee tree close by!” No one else seemed excited about my find. Dault had taught me how to
find a bee tree. We always kept a few hives of bees for honey, but Mommy said one hive had
died out during the cold, hard winter that had just passed.

Every year, many young bees hatched out in the spring. The hive would become
overcrowded. When a new queen hatched, the bees would divide up and swarm; that is, many
would fly away with the new queen to find a new home.

I went to bed that night thinking of how I could get Geraldine to help me track down
where those bees were coming from.

* * *

“Jewell! Wake up! Wake up! The Buggerman is in the room!” Geraldine’s muffled voice
came from underneath the pillows where she was hiding. Quickly I rolled over to the side of
the bed and onto the floor. I crawled under the bed out of reach of the grunting hulk trying
to grab me. I wrapped my body into a ball with my arms and legs, to make myself as small as
possible all the while trying to scream, “Mommy! Mommy!” There was no sound coming
from my mouth as desperately I tried to yell.

Suddenly, I could hear raised voices through my foggy mind as I was awakening from that
awful nightmare. It had seemed so real that my heart was still beating fast and my body shook
as I crawled out from under the bed. Mommy and Poppy were in a heated discussion about
money and a new invention Poppy was working on. He had quit his job in Ohio because he
had not gotten along with his co-worker. He had asked the man not to use God’s name in vain
around him. It made the man mad, so he made it a point to curse big and loud every time he
was near Poppy. Poppy had let him have it with his shoe, and the company had let Poppy go.
This meant that there wouldn’t be any money coming in. Mommy said he would just have to
go back to Ohio and get another job.

“I’ve paid all the debts off and saved five hundred dollars ta help buy the Bolton place
over on Silver’s Branch. It’s got a decent house and a tobacker base. The tobacker will bring in
nough money ta live on after we buy everythan else we need. They’re askin a thousand,” she
said as she swept the floor.

“I’ve saved money from Coyd’s allotment, and if I havta I might spend some of Leonard’s
money he’s sendin home. But you ain’t gettin it fer no inventions.”

She continued in one breath, “Have you hyard bout the war this week?”

Poppy answered as he walked back and forth, “Hyle’ll go to Indiana next month to start
his trainin in the Marines. We’re bombin Hamburg by air and are takin a lot of losses. I know
they’ll have ta hit Hitler hard or he’ll come up with some other strategy to try on us. He’s run
out of tanks and has slowed down til they come off the assembly line. He tried ta take the city
of Kursk, but our boys and Britain landed on Sicily and he pulled his troops ta fight in Italy.
Our boys took the beachheads and Mussolini is whipped. A big victory for us.” Poppy was
almost jumping up and down he was so excited. “Our troops took back Attu in the Aleutian
Islands and our air and sea ships are holdin the Japs.” Poppy stopped long enough to get his
War Bond poster from WWII.
breath and then said, “They’re bringing lots of money in by sellin war bonds to support the war. Course most people are making money so thank God they’re spendin it fer freedom.”

I went back to sleep thinking I didn’t know what war bonds were, but if Poppy was happy I was happy.

“Get up! Get out of bed!” I heard my mother calling as she built a fire in the cook stove to cook breakfast. She sang:

\[\begin{align*}
I'd \\ rather \\ marry \\ a \\ young \\ man, \\
with \\ his \\ pockets \\ lined \\ with \\ silk \\
Than \\ to \\ marry \\ an \\ old \\ man \\
with \\ a \\ hundred \\ cows \\ to \\ milk \\
'Cause \\ an \\ old \\ man, \\ he \\ is \\ old \\
and \\ a \\ young \\ man \\ he \\ is \\ gay \\
and \\ a \\ young \\ man's \\ heart \\ is \\ full \\ of \\ love \\
get \\ away \\ old \\ man \\ get \\ away!
\end{align*}\]

Geraldine was helping with breakfast. When I came in the kitchen, I said, “Geraldine, let’s go and find where them bees are coming from. I know there’s a bee tree close by. She reluctantly agreed to help. When we got to the branch, the bees were frantically working around the water, flying back and forth almost in a straight line as they flew into the tree line in the pasture. As we walked along the top of the bluffs, we saw a big hollow tree, and we could see bees flying around a big hole about ten feet off the ground. The hole was black with a mass of bees that were frisking and fluttering their wings getting ready to swarm.

Swarming bees will not sting unless you happen to mash one or get one up your dress. My mother told us that when she was a little girl, her grandmother was trying to bring down a swarm of bees and they landed right on her head. Because of this story, we usually had our head covered just in case.

Today the bees were balling up to fly. Bees will follow a loud noise, so we banged pans together and ran toward the empty hive we had ready. The bees flew above our head in a ball, flying around the queen. Finally they landed on the limb of a small bush by the edge of the woods bending it to the ground. From the yard Mommy yelled, “They’ll stay there tanight cause hit’s a gettin late and they wont go no further right now. Ya’ll have to move um fore the sun's up in tha mornin.”

Dault came over the next morning and with a handsaw and carefully cut the limb off where the bees had settled, and placed it over the hive. When we checked later on that day, they had found their way into the hive and we had saved a swarm of bees.

Later that summer we would prepare to rob the bees by tying down any loose clothing we had on. We wore long sleeves and long pants and tied something around our heads. We then made a smoke torch that gave off a strong suffocating smoke that calmed the bees (or choked them). Usually we got a few stings but that paid for the golden sweet honey we took.
“Geraldine! Wait for me!” I yelled as I ran to catch up with her on the way to the store. I had stopped to make Jack go back to the house because he was trying to follow us. Poppy was working in Ohio again, and Mommy had to take care of everything at home. Today she was replanting the garden and had told Geraldine and me to go to the post office to pick up the mail.

Geraldine had stayed up far into the night reading, and she was tired. She didn’t want to fool with me. Although we all liked to read, we could only do it at night and that wasn’t easy. Our coal-oil lamps didn’t give much light and were dangerous if we went to sleep with one burning. Many houses caught on fire from knocking over a burning coal-oil lamp sitting by the bed. Besides, we kept our bed buddy awake if we kept a light burning all night. Last night she wouldn’t let me see what she was reading.

“If you don’t wait for me I’ll tell Mommy you were reading them ol’ *True Romance* magazines again,” I threatened as I hurried after her. We were not allowed to read those magazines. The girls at school would get one and pass it around because they didn’t want their parents to catch them with it. If Mommy or Poppy caught us reading them we would be in big trouble. She just turned and stuck her tongue out at me.

At the edge of the woods, purple, dewy violets were in blossom. Here and there the ground was covered with “pretty beds.” Their small delicate flowers were light lavender with yellow centers. Sheep sorrel grew in bunches of yellow flowers that we nibbled as we walked along the road. Sweet Williams grew all along the banks, and we could smell their fragrance for some distance.

As we climbed the grade on the other side of the branch, Geraldine stopped short. “Shhh,” she whispered, “You see it? You see it?”

I thought she was trying to scare me so I pushed her as she stepped aside so I could see. “Shhh,” she said again while my eyes were glued to a dog coming down the hill, swinging, and staggering as he walked. With my heart pounding, I whispered, “Let’s run!”

“Oh no!” she said frantically, “We’ve got to be quiet and sneak up in the woods till he goes by.”

We were always told to beware of strange dogs because they could have rabies. The local paper had reported several people being bitten by mad dogs, and they had to take the shots every day for seventeen consecutive days or they’d die. I could visualize that big needle they used to insert the serum into my belly because that was where they gave the shots.

“Don’t make a sound ‘cause I don’t think it sees us,” Geraldine whispered as we sneaked up the bank to hide behind a tree. I was so intent looking at the dog coming toward us that I didn’t see a tree root and hung my toe causing me to fall. From my prone position on the ground I could see Geraldine was already behind the tree and motioning for me to hurry.

The dog stopped and slung his head from side to side. I could see his bloody eyes and the slobber rolling from the sides of his mouth, and I could hear him grunting with every breath. I cautiously crawled over to the tree without ever taking my eyes off the dog. He snapped at something flying around his head and after an eternity began staggering down the road to the branch. He sniffed the water, and the most awful soul-wrenching howl issued from his throat. He took off running back up the road and across the field below Violet’s house. We quickly ran from behind the trees and practically flew home. “Mommy! There’s a mad dog loose. He’s gone in the field below Violet’s!” we yelled in unison.

She rushed from the garden to hear our story. I began trying to talk but mumbling was all
that came out. Geraldine filled in the story with more reasonable explanations.

While rushing to the house Mommy began giving orders. “Let me put on a clean dress and comb my hair and we’ll go get the news out fore that dog bites somebody. Jewell, you come with me. Geraldine, stay here and keep Jimmie and we’ll be back soon.”

Cautiously we ran back toward the branch with Mommy leading the way. I was scared to death, but I wanted to see what would happen. Our first stop was at Violet’s house. We told Lerlene, Violet’s mother about the dog and where it was.

She asked, “Did ya know whose dog hit was?”

Mommy answered, “Geraldine and Jewell saw hit and they said they didn’t know.”

Lerlene grabbed a shotgun and started running toward the field where her husband Orville was plowing out his corn, yelling as she went, “Orville! Orville! Come get this gun and go kill a mad dog. Hit’s down at the bottom of the field.” I ran along with her to see what was going to happen.

I heard him holler from behind the plow, “Whoa! Whoa!” as he stopped his mules and ran to meet us yelling as he came. “Where? Where?”

She answered with urgency, “Down in the field above Winnie’s.”

He took the gun and started toward our house on the run. He wasn’t out of sight before we heard a shot and saw him coming back.

“I killed hit by the branch,” he said. “Mad dogs always smell water and go crazy but can’t drink. Better tell folk’s bout the dog cause he shore was mad.” He continued, “I don’t know whose dog he wus, or what he might have bit. I’ll go cut his head off so’s we can take him ta town ta have him checked fer rabies.”

“Come on in and rest a minute,” Lerlene invited. “Have you hyard from Coyd lately? I guess ya hyard that Varner Waddle, Jack’s son, is back in action after being wounded in Africa.”

“Yeah, we ain’t hyard from Coyd lately.” Mommy replied. “They say Caleb Edwards from Mt. Victory was killed in the Hawaiian Islands. George Nolan’s boys, Delbert and Robert, are both missing in action and were on the Corregidor when the Japs took it.” Mommy began to walk slowly up the hill. “Guess I’d better gets on to the store.”

“Maudie Sears Richardson, my cousin from Mt. Victory, has joined the WAAC. I hyard her husband Guy has already left fer the service,” Lerlene said as she stepped up on the porch.

Mommy answered over her shoulder, “The paper said Ol’ Mussolini has gone stark crazy. A ravin maniac. That’s a shame Ha! Ha!” I knew Mussolini was one of those evil leaders that were killing Americans so I didn’t know why Mommy said it was a shame.

Lerlene Mounce.
As we went on to the store to report the mad dog, I thought about Geraldine and how smart she was to know what to do.

I fastened Jack in a barn stall. During the day I tied him to the clothesline so he could run and play with me when I was out. He was very unhappy with having to be contained but I didn’t want him to die.

* * *

I’d been playing up on top of the hill in the new ground, catching June bugs and jar flies, tying a string around one leg to watch them try to fly. They made a loud buzzing sound when beating their small wings so hard trying to carry the heavy string. Their large green bodies were already a heavy weight in relation to their wing size, so they didn’t fly very far.

I’d pretend I was flying one of those airplanes that flew in formation over our house. Poppy said they were fighter planes on maneuvers going to Air Force bases in Kansas, Texas, and Georgia. I would have given anything if I had been the fourteen-year-old farm hand from Illinois who joined the Army and gave his age to authorities as 18 years. The Somerset Journal stated that because he liked to hunt rabbits, squirrels, and foxes, he decided to become an aerial gunner. He was assigned as a turret gunner on an Air Force bomber and by the time he turned sixteen, he had participated in 21 missions over North Africa. The Army gave him an honorable discharge when his real age was discovered. In the meantime, the young man was hired to work in a plane factory making the bombers that he rode in combat missions over North Africa.

I knew all the nature sounds in the fields and forest like the call of crickets, frogs, birds, but as I was in the new ground turning over rocks to find lizards, little green snakes, and anything else interesting, I heard strange noises coming from the trees that bordered the field. I began to look for what was making the sound. I couldn’t believe my eyes! The trunks of the trees were covered with unfamiliar enormous bugs. Carefully I pulled one from its perch on a bush, and found it didn’t bite. I ran home to show Mommy and asked what it was. Boy did I start a commotion!

She exclaimed, “Lord have mercy! I forgot hit’s a locust year. With all the dry weather we’ve had, we still have to have this plague to deal with. They’ll eat anything and everything!”

Every 13 to 17 years this large insect about an inch and a half long emerged from under trees where the adult laid the egg and the larvae lived until they came to the surface. They shed their shell and become adults, laid their eggs, and the life cycle became complete.

Locusts have membranes on the sides of their bodies for making their mating calls. It sounded like one group of them would call, “Far-r-r-ah Far rah, Far rah,” while the other group would answer in short lower tones, “Egypt, Egypt, Egypt.” If I listened real close and used my imagination, I could hear those words in their calls. I remembered reading about them in the Bible where the Lord sent them as a plague on Egypt and Pharaoh during Old Testament times. I was intrigued with this new insect.

By the middle of the day the air would be filled with their mating calls. Everywhere we went there were locusts: on the ground, on the porch, in the trees. I’d gather a quart jar full in a few minutes and feed them to the chickens. They would gather around me and wait for their treat as I handed the live bugs out one by one. It was very entertaining to watch the chickens as they grabbed the locusts with their open beak and run a few steps with their victim fighting to get loose. They would swallow the whole bug, stretching their neck one way and then the other with beaks opening and closing, until the fighting bug disappeared. I could still see the prints of the struggling bug as it slid down their gullets. I thought of Jonah in the Bible and how he escaped from the belly of the whale. How did these bugs finally die after they were
swallowed whole? They furnished me entertainment for a while because there wasn’t much else to do.

* * *

Since we hadn’t seen our neighbor Dault Sears for some time, I asked Mommy if we could visit to see if he was okay. I wanted to ask him if he had seen the locusts and tell him about the mad dog. Mommy said he must be pouting or he could be sick. Sometimes he wouldn’t come around because he took offense at something we said or did unbeknown to us.

Dault was anti-social, but he came to see us now and then. He had lived alone in that old log cabin that belonged to the Sears heirs. It was never clear to me whether he had ever married. His brother Edward Sears lived at Goodwater and came to see him now and then.

That morning we hoed out some of the weed sprouts in the garden, and then Mommy, Jimmie, and I took off over the heavily matted sage grass ridge to Dault’s house. I recalled another time not so long ago when the sage grass was as matted, and vividly I remembered the flames of fire that almost consumed our neighbors and us.

The sun was warm on our backs and the air was fresh and smelled of new grass and leaves. As we went along the little path Mommy started singing a ballad about a little girl named Mary Phagan who had lived in South Georgia (Marietta) in 1913, and was murdered. She told the story many times because it was the most publicized murder trials ever and was talked about all over the country. Leo Frank, a northern Jew, was convicted of the murder. Later, it was discovered that the lynching mob that pulled Frank out of prison and hanged him had killed an innocent man.

*Little Mary Phagan*

Was a trusting soul they say
She went to the pencil factory
To get her little pay.

Leo Frank met her
With a brutal heart we know
He smiled and said ‘Little Mary,
Now you’ll go home no more.

The tears rushed down her rose cheeks
The blood gushed down her back her back
She remembered telling her mother
What time she would be back.

But Leo Frank met her
In cold blood he did kill
And for an evil pleasure
Her lifeblood he did spill.

All the old ballads were so sad that I always cried when we sang them but I loved them almost as much as Mommy. Then we sang another ballad that she loved, about a little boy’s last wish that was dying from a long sickness.
Come and bathe my forehead mother
For I'm growing very weak.
Let one drop of water, mother.
Fall upon my burning cheek.

You will do this won't you mother
Please remember what I say
Give them all my toys but mother
Put my little shoes away.

Santa Claus, he gave them to me
With so many other things
And I think he brought an angel
With a pair of golden wings.

Soon the baby will grow larger
And they'll fit his little feet
Wont he be so nice and cunning
As he walks along the street.

You will do that won't you mother,
Please remember what I say
When I'm gone, That's all I ask you
Put my little shoes away.

Mommy never could finish that ballad without crying. I knew she was thinking of her own little baby that had died and I cried along with her, even though I never knew him.

“We never thought he was so bad. He'd be all right fer a while but he was always contrary. I shoulda not let him crawl round on the floor an in the yard. I jus never thought he wouldn't be all right.” By this time the tears were flowing and Mommy was sobbing into her apron. “We went and got Dr. Browning from Mt. Victory several times but he jus give us some syrup for him ta drink and tol us it was the bloody flux. That he'd be all right if we give him solid foods. But at the end he wouldn't eat nothin. He jus quit eatin. He's one of God's little angels. I know he's up there waitin for me. He's not sufferin no more.”

I tried comforting her but I was so sad I didn't help much. “Mommy, you done the best you could. Please don't cry.”

“I shouldn't break down about the baby cause he died so long ago. I have ta save my nerve fer whatever might happen with this war and my boys lookin at gettin killed.” She picked up her apron tail again and blew her nose and gained her composure to face the troubled world.

By this time we had come into the yard. “I don't see him nowhere, da you?” Mommy asked. I had been looking all the way down the hill and I hadn't seen him either. I answered her in the negative, so we knocked on the door.

A man's strained voice said, “Yeah?”

When we opened the door we saw Dault lying on the bed. He was in a fetal position with a long growth of beard on his swarthy face and his blue eyes were listless, staring out of deep hollows.

Mommy's face belied her intense concern as she immediately walked to the bed and asked, “What's wrong? Why'er you in bed?”
He just turned his back to us and muttered, “Well, I shore wouldn’t be hyar if’n I weren’t sick.”

Mommy said, “I thought ya might be sick since we hadn’t been seein ya much. What hurts?”

He answered, “Everthang.”

He rolled back over toward us. His pale face and sweaty forehead gave evidence of his condition. “How long ya been sick?” Mommy questioned.

He answered just above a whisper, “Bout a week, though I’m shore worser taday. I thank I’m dyin. If I do, jus put me in that ole holler log at the bottom of the hill, stop both ends up and bury me behind the house at the edge of the trees. I’ll be dead a long time fore anybody’ll know. Ain’t got nobody to care noway.”

With a chastening glance Mommy began cleaning up some of his mess, “Don’t talk foolish. What happened?”

He answered in his low drawl, “I was out back of the house cleanin off some rocks that fell from the chimley and I didn’t feel anythan hardly but a little prick, not nough to worry bout cause I went on working till I got hungry an come in to get somethin to eat. I didn’t go back after I ate.” His voice kept getting weaker as he talked. “Ever since then I’ve been sick.”

As Mommy straightened his bed she asked, “Where’re you sick?”

“I sweated a lot and felt sick ta my stomach. Jus thought I was a comin down with the flu. And then the next day I had stiffness and pain in my shoulders and back. I got up to git me some water and noticed this on my hand.” He answered.

There was a small clear blister on the top of his hand. It didn’t look dangerous but by the look on Mommy’s face, I knew it was serious. “Some damn spider bit me. I wished I’d a kilt hit. Hit shore has laid me up.”

Mommy answered, “Yeah, I hear, but you ain’t gonna die. You just feel like it.” She took off out the door with a chamber pot and said, “I’ll go home and make some potato soup and send it over with some bamagillia salve ta put on that blister. I know yer not eatin nothen.”

With his labored breath he whispered, “Winnie, I ain’t got the strength ta argee with ya but leave me alone and quit cleanin up my mess. If I live, I’ll clean hit up. If I don’t, then hit won’t matter no how.”

After telling me to stay with Dault till she came back, Mommy and Jimmie started at a fast pace across the field. I wanted to wash the dishes in the kitchen but Dault told me to leave them alone. He didn’t want anyone waiting on him.

Before long Geraldine brought over a bowl of hot potato soup. It smelled so good that I could see him perking up a little. I found a clean bowl and spoon in the kitchen and filled them full of delicious soup. He sat up on the edge of the bed and ate a few bites. Then he groaned and lay back down with sweat pouring off his pale face.

On her way to the kitchen with the bowl Geraldine ordered, “Go on home and tell Mom he ate a little and that we’ll stay till in the morning. If he gets worse we’ll come and get her.”

I didn’t argue, because it was time for supper and I was hungry.

After supper I went back with some more soup and cornbread. Mommy said she would come in the morning when she finished the chores.

That night when I lay down on the floor to take a nap, I suddenly remembered that there were spiders around which changed my mind. Instead I sat down in an old rocker by the fireplace with exhaustion attacking my mind and body. My eyes were very heavy and I closed them for a moment. When I opened them I saw my dress I had worn was now thrown in the fireplace. When I looked down at myself, sure enough my dress was gone. I wadded my body up into a ball and began to creep to the fireplace to retrieve it. On close scrutiny, I


could see small hairy legs pushing out from the skirt. My eyes became glued to this grotesque transformation as two antennas started pushing through the neck supporting bulging eyes, and its mouth was working up and down making high-pitched sounds. Then the sounds became more intelligible. “Spider, spider is the best, I will get you when you dress.”

The spider's wispy ebony legs were crawling toward me. His eight eyes held me mesmerized. I began trying to run but nothing happened. I was simply paralyzed to the spot. As I watched in horror, the spider began growing and changing before my very eyes. A snout began to grow with monstrous long tushes, and perky ears began sprouting. I frantically planned my escape, sailing through the sage grass fields trying to find my way home to safety.

I felt something tugging and pulling my arm. I thought the hog had caught me when I heard, ”Jewell, Jewell, wake up! You're trembling and making funny noises.” I was thankful that it was morning and I was sitting in the rocker where I had gone to sleep last night. Another nightmare had plagued my dreams.

The birds were chirping and the sun was peeping up over the hill. Geraldine looked tired this morning. She had spent the night keeping a cool, wet cloth on Dault's forehead and gave him small sips of water to wet his dry mouth.

I went to the door to see if Mommy and Jimmie were coming with breakfast, but they weren't in sight. When I turned around, Dault was sitting on his bed, trying to roll a cigarette with shaking hands. He bought Bull Durham, which came in a bag and was ground into small particles. The bag was small enough to fit into a shirt pocket. On the side of the tobacco pouch were white paper wrappers about one and one-half inches wide and two inches long to roll the tobacco in to make the cigarette. I always was amazed how he could roll a cigarette with just one hand. Of course, he had a lot of practice. When he finished, the cigarette was perfectly round and he licked the side of the paper to stick it together. I knew he was better because when he had been so sick he didn't want to smoke.

I built a fire in the cookstove and put the coffee pot on because I knew he liked to drink coffee in the morning. When it started boiling, he said that was the best aroma he had smelled for a while.

I hunted around in the kitchen for something to cook and found flour and fatback. I fixed him some flapjacks on top of the stove and fried the fat back. He said he wasn't ready for bacon but he ate a flapjack with his coffee.

That awful nightmare made me want to look for the spider that had bitten him. I asked, “Dault, where are them rocks you was stackin when you got bit?”

He answered, “Out by the chimley. They'd fell off las winter and I was tryin to put em back.” I took off out the door and around the side of the house where the chimney stood.

There was a pile of flat rock lying on the ground and it looked like Dault had started stacking them. I tiptoed over to the rocks because I didn't want to disturb anything by making noise. Carefully, noiselessly, I examined the pile looking for a web. In a wedge shaped space, I discovered a small irregular shaped spider web in between two rocks. The dew was still heavy and the sun was shining on the intricate woven web marking the lacy design in detail. This made it more visible. Looking closer I saw next to one of the rocks a small black spider. It was only about a quarter inch long, legs, head and all, and I couldn't see the bottom of its body the way it was sitting. As I examined the web more closely, there was a white small ball hanging on the web. I had always heard that the black widow spider devoured the male after mating. I had never really been afraid of spiders, but I knew they could be dangerous, as was evident with Dault's bite. My sister sure was scared to death of them.

All of this was running through my brain while I ran to the house to tell Dault about my find. I saw Mommy coming from home and I started yelling, “I found it! I found it! I found
the spider.” Mommy’s face was drawn down in a frown.
She scolded, “You crazy chile. What’che doin playin with spiders. Ain’t che got anough
sense to know you can get very sick after a spider bite? Just look at Dault!”
“I just wanted to find out what kind it was and kill it fore it bit somebody else. Come here,
Mommy and look, I think it’s a black widow.” I cried.
With a stick she turned it up side down and looked at its belly. Sure enough, there was a
red mark on the abdomen.
“When you mess round with rock piles, you’re likely ta git bit by spiders or snakes or
stinging lizards, specially if there’s some wood close by,” Mommy said as she hunted for
something to kill the black widow. “Lot’s of people git bit and don’t even know what’s wrong.
Jus think they’ve got the flu or somthin, till they find a place on em that looks funny. You
usually don’t find the spider.”
We killed it and smashed the egg case. I took what was left of it and showed it to Dault. It
was very small and sure didn’t look deadly. Of course, after I smashed it we could hardly make
out what it was. He muttered, “I shore am glad you found it. It could’ve got me agin.”
July – September, 1943

In July, President Roosevelt said “In the Pacific we are pushing the Japs around from the Aleutians to New Guinea. It becomes clearer and clearer that the attrition, the whittling down process against the Japanese, is working. The Japs have lost more planes and more ships than they have been able to replace.” Reporting steady growth in our Pacific naval, land, and air strength, he said, “If the Japanese are basing their future plans for the Pacific on a long period in which they will be permitted to consolidate their conquered resources, they had better start revising their plans now.” However, we are still far from our main objectives in the war against Japan.

The research director of the Radio Corporation of America declared that television would be made available to every American household immediately following the war. Production of television sets, ranging in screen size from 6 to 24 inches, would begin as soon as industry could transition from war to peace production.

At this time all building material was placed under government control to eliminate all construction deemed non-essential. Coffee rationing ended and sugar allotments increased and this was attributed to more success in fighting the U-Boat menace and increased availability of shipping. Civilians were authorized 388 eggs per person, an increase of eight more over their ration for 1942. A dramatic shortage of beer was profound throughout the country due to a shortage of corn and other grains. Demand for beer was running nearly 50% above production and those areas further from the breweries were the driest. The government announced the production of 100 million shotgun shells to facilitate fall hunting. Envelopes with lining, traditionally used for wedding invitations, were banned. Americans were allocated 75% of the nation’s food production for the current year, the remainder provided to the armed forces and shipped to the other allies.
The sweltering hot and dry month of August had arrived with long days and short nights. We had spent the early summer growing and canning the vegetables from our garden, and had picked and canned several gallons of wild strawberries and blackberries. It was Saturday morning and Mommy was going to town to meet her sister, Aunt Mandy, who was coming for a visit. She lived in Cincinnati, Ohio, where she worked at Crosley’s Manufacturing Plant.

Years ago, at age seventeen, Aunty Mandy had married Andrew Phelps, and three children were born of that union within a few years. Uncle Andrew was a deputy sheriff and also ran a moonshine still when they lived in Pulaski County. He wore his gun on his hip and strutted his authority as the power of the office protected his wild and abusive nature toward his family. He drank heavily and associated with unlawful people (He personally told me this, but he had changed).

He eventually moved his family to Oklahoma, where he had been offered a job on a big ranch where his kinfolk were working. After several years of living there, Aunt Mandy left him and moved to Cincinnati where she found employment. She brought her youngest kids to live with her after she got established. She then married Earl Tolliver.

Before the war, local people desperately needed employment, and the promise of a better life was a motivation. They moved large families from the hills of Kentucky to the urban areas of the cities with the hope of making enough money to feed and clothe their family. The pay was minimal; they had to find cheap housing. Many moved into cold-water flats with saloons nearby on every corner. Toilet facilities were atrocious; all the families in the building used one toilet outside a four-story building. Huge rats and alley cats frequented the garbage dumps alongside the toilets, and the poor sanitation resulted in disease. But people were destitute, and they saw this as better than trying to raise a big family on a hillside farm. Those who were established in the cold-water flats sometimes housed country cousins until they found a job. Aunt Mandy's doors were always open to her family. Whenever any of the family went to Cincinnati to seek employment or for any other reason they always stayed with Aunt Mandy until they could afford housing.

After the spring semester at Sue Bennett College in 1943, Leonard went to Cincinnati to find a job for the summer. He was to stay with Aunt Mandy until school started again.

Aunt Mandy had moved to Cincinnati at a time when factories were begging for help. The American manufacturing age had begun with the invention of new electronic appliances and the mass production of automobiles. Defense plants were beginning to appear as the country prepared for war.

Aunt Mandy’s daughter, Lena, was separated from her abusive husband and was getting help from her mother until she could find work. One day Leonard was helping her with her three children as they walked home from Aunt Mandy’s when they met Lena's estranged husband. Drunk and jealous, he attacked Leonard with a knife, stabbing him in several places. He was rushed to the hospital where they sewed him up before he bled to death. I remember seeing the scars on his side and shoulders. He had to come home to heal until school started.

* * *

Aunt Mandy always spent her summer vacation with us. She rode the train from Cincinnati to Somerset and Mommy would meet her there. She'd hire Coy Lee Sears, who lived on Poplarville Road, to bring her to our house from Somerset in his truck.

Aunt Mandy’s hair was really curly and dark brown, and her dark eyes twinkled and
sparkled behind her glasses, revealing her good nature. She was a beautiful woman throughout. Her clothes were the best. Mommy said they were all store-bought because she didn’t have the time to make them. When she visited in the winter, she wore suits and fox skins around her shoulders. The fox’s head had glass eyes, a nose and a mouth and the rest was fur with legs and a tail. She wore fashionable silk stockings and high-heeled shoes. Mommy seemed to forget some of her troubles when Aunt Mandy was there. It was pleasant being around the two of them. They made plans to go to Whetstone the next day to visit Aunt Nora, their sister; Uncle Jim and Uncle Shelly, their brothers; and Grandpa Vanhook and his new family.

My Grandmother Vanhook had died a few years before and Grandpa had married Maggie, a beautiful young woman, only 16, who had been previously married. Her husband had been Aunt Mandy and Uncle Earl Tolliver.
killed on the job, so she had received an insurance settlement for her and her daughter Edith. They bought a car, one of the few cars in the county, and constantly needed help from the neighbors, who resented using their mules to pull them out of the ruts and ditches. They thought the car was a luxury Grandpa didn’t need.

After giving orders for us to have the house cleaned and supper cooked, Mommy left to catch her ride to Somerset to meet Aunt Mandy. I was supposed to help Geraldine do the work, but Jack and I kept running back and forth to the edge of the woods in anticipation of their arrival. They would have to walk from Howard Hines’s store carrying a suitcase because that was as far as they could get with the truck. The day became unbearably long.

“I’m gonna tell Mommy right in front of Aunt Mandy that you didn’t do nothin all day. You’re supposed ta take care of Jimmie,” Geraldine said as she was changing the beds.

“I don’t care!” I exclaimed. Deep down I knew Geraldine wouldn’t tell on me. She was excited, too, because Aunt Mandy was her favorite aunt. I was taking in an armload of wood for the cook stove when I suddenly heard voices in the yard. Running to the door, I saw Aunt Mandy and Mommy looking at Mommy’s prized flowers that she watered every day even if she had to carry the water from under the hill. They came in the house and Aunt Mandy gave me a hug. She smelled so good! She pulled out candy bars from her purse and gave one each to Jimmie and me. We tore open the wrappers and began devouring the sweet, delicious chocolate.

“Geraldine, I’ve got somethin fer you but it’ll have to wait for a while. I’ve got to change my clothes,” Aunt Mandy said as she picked up her suitcase from the floor. Mommy told her she could use the back room so I helped carry her bags back there.

Later, Aunt Mandy gave Geraldine a box of face powder and a tube of lipstick. I would have liked to have the lipstick, but Mommy wouldn’t let me wear it. And I doubted she would let Geraldine wear it. After a good supper of fresh vegetables, milk, and cornbread, Aunt Mandy and Mommy sat on the porch talking as the red trails from the setting sun signified the closing of a busy day. She and Mommy talked well into the night about family news and they planned their trip to Whetstone the next day.

“Well, tell me bout everybody and all the news. I get hungry ta hear bout what everyone’s doin,” Aunt Mandy said as she sat in the rocker while Geraldine and I did the dishes.

“Well, let’s see,” Mommy said as she settled in her chair. “Maydell and her family lives over on the creek by Dykes Bridge. Jessie and Georgia are with Dodson, workin in Dayton, Ohio. And then, most young men are gone, or, are goin ta the service. I jus hyard that Onva Lee Farmer, Synthia Farmer’s son, and Denton Phelps, Andrew’s nephew, have been called up. The Vansant’s hyard from their son who’s in a Jap prison camp in the Philippines. I’m sure they were tickled to hear he’s alive. They got four sons in the service right now. I guess all our boys will be called fore hit’s all over.”

“I was glad to hear they’re puttin up a memorial at the courthouse fer all the Pulaski County boys that’s been killed in the service. The Girl Scouts is doin that,” Mommy continued. “We shore need to be memberin them ferever fer givin their life fer us.” Mommy’s voice trailed off into an anguished whisper.

“I know,” Aunt Mandy said with a long sigh, “both of my sons have been called even though they’ve got a family.”

“Are they livin in Oklahoma?” Mommy asked trying to control her emotions.

“Yeah, they’re livin near their dad,” she answered. “They were working on Wolf Creek Dam before they moved back. Hit’s supposed to change a lot of the creeks and supposed to make a big lake out of Cumberland River. The Government has been buyin up a lot of bottom lands cause they say once this dam is finished hit’ll flood em. I don’t know why they’re doin
that, cause bottomlands are the best for raisin stuff. If ya ask me I thank they oughta leave thangs alone. Anyway, they’re gonna stop till the war is over.” I wanted to stay up and listen to them talk, but my eyes were heavy and I had to go to bed. It had been a long and exciting day.

When morning came, Mommy and Aunt Mandy began getting ready to meet Coy Lee at the store at ten o’clock for him to take them to Whetstone. “Mommy, can I go?” I meekly asked, never dreaming I’d be allowed such a privilege. To my great surprise Aunt Mandy hugged me and said, “Winnie, why don’t cha let her come? She’ll git ta see brother Jim’s kids and then Pa’s girls. She’ll be good, won’t cha?”

I emphatically nodded my head, while jumping up and down looking at Mommy for a positive sign, but expecting rejection. I knew not to beg because Mommy hated that. She cautiously answered, “Well, I guess you can this time, but you better not aggravate or embarrass me or ya’ll never go nowhere else with me.” I would have agreed to anything, ANYTHING, to get to go, so that was the way it happened.

Mommy told Geraldine to get me a change of clothes and help me wash my hair, which she resentfully did. She said under her breath, “It just ain’t fair. I don’t get to go nowhere. Just stay home and take care of Jimmie and the stock.”
Boy, I was excited! To think that I was going to see Grandpa whom I could not remember ever seeing! As I looked at Geraldine’s fallen face, my conscience began to surface. She had to stay by herself and do all the work. Well, I’ll help more when I got back, I thought.

Mommy warned Geraldine to watch Jimmie so he wouldn’t wander off and watch the stock because the fences were not good, and they sometimes broke through. The garden was fenced in, but they could find a low place where they could jump the fence, and destroy our vegetables.”

“If somethin goes wrong, git Dault ta help ya cause he’s usually home.” Mommy was giving orders as we walked out the door. “We’ll be back late tomorrow so you know what ta do while we’re gone.”

When Mommy’s back was turned Geraldine muttered under her breath, “I don’t know how a snotty nosed kid like you gets to go. It ain’t fair. I’ll getche when ya get back. You’re in for it. I’ve already got my stuff together.” Her threats didn’t alter my excitement, but that last statement stuck with me because I knew Geraldine had magical powers. What could she do to me? I’d tell Mommy, but I better wait till we got back. With a small bag of clothes, we left to catch our ride to Whetstone.

Coy Lee was waiting for us at the store. Mommy and Aunt Mandy rode up front and I rode in the back huddled up with my back next to the cab. What a ride! The wind blew

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**Somerset Journal, January 14, 1943. Work at Wolf Creek Dam To Continue At Least Until May.**

The War Production Board (WPB) at Washington, in announcing last week a list of 65 flood control and river and harbor projects of the Army’s civilian works program for which it had revoked preference rating orders issued to the corps of engineers, stated that one of the exceptions to the revocation order was the Wolf Creek reservoir and flood control project. The WPB explained that the continuation of the Wolf Creek project is necessary in order to bring the dam construction to a point where the work already done will not be destroyed by erosion. The WPB said it is understood that the work will be brought to such a point during May of this year. At that time it is expected that the WPB will revoke all the present priorities under which the War Department is operating at Wolf Creek and that the project will be closed down until after the war. The Office of War Information said the revocation of priorities is in line with the policy to curtail work of non-war nature in order to conserve materials and equipment essential to the war effort. In explaining the necessity for continued construction of Wolf Creek dam across the Cumberland River in Russell County, the WPB listed the operations necessary to be completed before work is shut down as: completion of excavation of the cut off trench, drilling and grouting in the unfinished portions of the trench, placing approximately 288,000 cubic yards of impervious fill to complete the trench, bring the embankment to suitable grade to provide adequate protective drainage for the impervious fill, and treat and backfill the solution channels encountered in the foundation. Whether or not the project’s priorities will be revoked when the work outlined is completed is expected to depend on war conditions at that time. If work on the project were halted completely at the present time, much that has already been done would be destroyed by the erosion of rains and high water from the river. The WPB withdrew priorities on the Dale Hollow and Center Hill Dams on Cumberland tributaries in Tennessee. The Dale Hollow Dam is located on the Obey River near Celina, Tennessee, and is nearing completion. These projects are also under the U.S. Army Engineers. Senator McKellar (D, Tenn), Senator Stewart (D, Tenn) and Representative Gore (D, Tenn) conferred with a committee from the WPB in an effort to secure cancellation of the stoppage action. No further announcement has been made by WPB.
through my hair and the bumps in the road threw me all over the truck bed. I held on to the sides with my tailbone taking a beating, but it was worth it. We traveled north on Poplarville Road past the homes of the Farmers and the Sears's, Low Gap School, and Theodore Meece’s. Then we turned east at Mt. Victory Road following it up the hill to where the roads forked. If we had turned right we would have gone through Mt. Victory and on to London. But we turned left on Acorn Road, and traveled to Goodwater, which was around 4 miles.

Mt. Victory was settled around 1890 by a family from Ohio by the name of Nunnlley who moved into the area and began to develop it. They were a part of the Pentecostal Church. Mr. Nunnlley built some houses and encouraged friends from Cincinnati, Ohio, to move here. The Massamore, Hart, Linville, and Dare families all came to Mt. Victory to live. Mr. Nunnlley built a school and Mrs. Dare headed it up, therefore it was called the Dare School. Mrs. Hart also taught there. The area became known as Nunnlley Springs, named after the Nunnlley family, and the sulphur springs that flowed below the school. These springs were well known for their health properties, causing the immediate area to be developed into a popular health resort. The Nunnlley’s built a two-story hotel building, and people came from all over the country to bathe in the waters. They would hire a stagecoach from Somerset and stop at John Logan Dykes’ halfway house in the Dykes community to change horses and rest. Unfortunately, the hotel burned and the school closed. Most families moved away.

Coal trucks brought coal out of the “Wildcat” mines near Rockcastle River; therefore, the Mt. Victory–Acorn Road was kept in good shape. If we had turned right on Stepping Rock Road, we would have gone to Rockcastle River.

Coy Lee let us out at Barney Snell’s farm on the left side of the road because we couldn’t travel by automobile on the rough road going to Aunt Nora’s where we would spend the night. We had to walk about a mile. Uncle Jim and Uncle Shelly lived within sight of Aunt Nora’s house.

They all lived on the land where my great grandfather, John Vanhook, settled after he came home from the Civil War. He was a union soldier. A portrait of him in his Union uniform hung on our wall as long as I could remember. Grandpa gave it to Mommy to keep after he remarried. I now own the picture.

My great great Grandfather was Aaron Vanhook who raised nine children: George, John, William, Benjamin, David, Mary Ellen, Martha, Polly and Betsey. Ellen married Will Hen

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*Lexington Morning Hearld, September 8, 1903.*

Somerset, Kentucky Three men were killed and several wounded in a battle in which Winchesters and revolvers were used at a campmeeting at Mount Victory, Pulaski County. Services were in progress when William Bolton, a constable, attempted to arrest two men named Richmonds. A fight followed, in which Bolton, though wounded, killed both the Richmonds and was himself killed by Columbus Garrison. Several persons were wounded by stray shots. Officers are searching for Garrison. The two men in the back of this photo are the 2 young men who were shot and killed by Constable Bolton. They are Charlie on the left and Ben “Tweed” on the right. Sitting in front is their brother James Richmond. Ben was married to Surelda Garrison and James to Rachel Garrison, both were sisters to Christopher Columbus Garrison. This photo is believed to have been taken in the early 1900’s just before their untimely deaths at Ben and Surelda’s wedding.
Dykes. Martha married Henry Tomlinson, Polly married Henry Silvers, and Betsey married Ruben Langford. Aaron Vanhook couldn’t read or write but he was a hard worker. He made chairs, wooden buckets, churns, and shoes. He became a pilot for coal boats from Cumberland Coal down the Cumberland River to Nashville, Tennessee.

Mt. Victory School
The school was located in the building at left. The building on the right provided housing for eighth grade graduates in preparation for teaching positions in one- and two-room schools.

Mt. Victory Community
The community of Mt. Victory was started in the late 1890s. The first dwelling to be built in the center of Mt. Victory was the Nunnelly home. (Nunnelly also operated the Nunnelly Springs Health Resort.) It was the Darr House which was a two-story building with living quarters and a library on the first floor. The second floor was used for classrooms. The Darr House was built in 1893 and was sponsored by Marion Nunnelly, owner of the hotel.

The Darr School began classes in 1895. Ms. Maude (Darr) Roark taught the school until about 1890. A public school was started around the turn of the century.

The Presbyterian Church built and operated an academy in 1905. The school consisted of a modern school building and the day (two stories) and a dormitory. Because of the good schools at Mt. Victory people started moving into the area.

The academy was changed to a high school about 1922. The high school was operated by the church and it remained in existence until about 1927 at which time it was closed for one year. It was re-opened after one year and remained in the church building 1943 at which time the county built a new building and the high school was housed with the elementary school in one building.

Mt. Victory, in its short history, has had about six school buildings. Earlier schools located at about a three mile radius of Mt. Victory include Homestead School to the east, Bearwallow School to the south, Providence School to the west, and Goodwater School to the north.

Verne J. Wright
Great Grandpa John served in the Union army for six years, and was given land by the government for reenlisting. He was a great soldier and in the Union Volunteers in the 12th Regiment Kentucky Infantry. He fought bravely in many battles and skirmishes all over Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, and North Carolina. The famous battles of our region included the battles of Perryville, Zollicoffer, Wildcat Mountain, and Mill Springs, and his company joined General Burnside on his campaign in Tennessee.

* * *

There were conflicting reports on great grandpa’s genealogy but the following information written by my great grandfather, and grandson of John Vanhook, J.C. Vanhook, is as accurate as I know and is registered with the National Historical Society.

John C. Vanhook
My Grandfather John VanHook

It was a long time ago that my great grandfather Aaron VanHook raised a family of children. It has been so long ago that merely to mention them will be sufficient for a COMMON BOY’S background. There were nine of these children made known to me. They were George, JOHN, William, Benjamin, David, Mary Ellen, Martha, Polly, and Betsy. JOHN OF THIS GROUP WAS MY GRANDFATHER. Mary Ellen married Will Hen Dykes; Martha married Henry Tomlinson, Polly married Henry Silvers, and Betsy married Ruben Langford.

John Will Langford, Betsy’s son, said that my great, great, grandfather, Aaron VanHook was half Cherokee Indian. This may have some truth in it, since it was common in those days for whites and Indians to intermarry. There are Indian traits in some of our people; for instance, Uncle Dave, father’s brother, was very dark, and looked very much like an Indian. Nearly all of the VanHooks love the open country, its freedom and simplicity. They are courageous and will fight for what they think is right.

The Nunley Springs Resort that once existed in Mt. Victory.
Great Grandfather, John VanHook, was born about 1833, in Coles County, Illinois. He was married to Susan Jane Boyd in 1855. She was only 17 when William, her first child, was born June 23, 1856. Uncle Aaron was next and then came on the Civil War in 1861. Great Grandfather enlisted in the Union Army. He had to leave his young wife and his two little boys to get along as best they could until his return. William told of the hardships the family suffered while grandfather was away, such as a meal made of cornbread and water, and wood gathered from the forest by his hauling through the snow barefoot in a long shirrtail. Grandmother heard of the battles at Mill Springs and Suttons Hill. She could only walk the floor, wring her hands and pray that her husband would live through it. Such as this built up a hatred for the Southern Confederacy some never could forget.

It may be well to include great Grandfather’s discharges in this connection since they convey much historical information.

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Know ye, That John VanHook a Private of Captain O’Han’s Company, (A) Twelfth Regiment of Kentucky Infantry Volunteers who was enrolled of the Twenty Sixth day of September one thousand eight hundred and sixty one to serve Three years or during the war, is hereby discharged from the service of the United States, this Thirty first day of December, 1863, at Straw Berry Plains, East Tennessee by reason of re-enlistment as a veteran volunteer. (No objection to his being re-enlisted is known to exist.)

Said John VanHook was born in Coles County in the state of Illinois. Thirty years of age,6 feet, no inches high, dark complexion, hazel eyes, black hair, and by occupation, when enrolled a farmer.

Given at Louisville, KY. This Twenty-third day of Feb. 1864.

T.J. Bush, Capt. 24th Ky. Infy, A.C.M.

The war had not ended at the expiration of his three-year enlistment so he reenlisted and was discharged a second time.

The old tabernacle at Mt. Victory.
TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Know ye, That John VanHook a Private of Capt. William F. Hinderson’s Company (A) 12th Regiment of KY. Vet. Infantry Volunteers, who was enrolled on the first day of January 1864 to serve three years or during the war, is hereby Discharged from the service of the United States this 11th day of July, 1865, at Greensboro, NC by reason of S.O. No., 113 Dept. NC July 1, 1865. (No objection to his being re-enlisted is known to exist.)

Said John VanHook was born in Coles County, in the State of Illinois, Thirty years of age, 6 ft., no inches high, dark complexion, hazel eyes, black hair, and by occupation when enrolled, a farmer.

Given at Greensboro, NC this 11th day of July 1865.
William F. Henason, Capt. Co.
A.B. Smith Capt. A.C.M. 23d A.C. Must. Officer.

There was given to him along with these papers one of commendation and praise. It mentioned five battles besides the skirmishes in which he fought, and praised him for his marksmanship. He always shot from his left shoulder, and although he was drilled to shoot from the right, he was instructed to shoot from the left when in battle. This valuable paper became lost when it was used in Pulaski County Court to substantiate the testimony given by Grandfather in some murder litigation.

After the war he lived the remainder of his days on the old home place. When he died it fell into the possession of us children. John VanHook bought the heirs parts and they divided the proceeds.

The Kentucky schools in great grandfather’s day did not afford attractive educational

Barney Snell helping a family move up Stepping Rock.
advantages to mountain boys. The fact that he could not read nor write did not signify that he was lacking in intellect. He was a good workman. He made chairs, wooden buckets, churns, and shoes. He became a pilot for coal boats from Cumberland Coal banks down the Cumberland River to Nashville, Tennessee. His service for this work was eagerly sought after.

The coal boats were huge open-top barges that were built at the mines, loaded with thousands of bushels of coal and taken to the Nashville markets. These barges would crash and sink should they strike a stone in the rough shoals between the mines and Burnside. It required experienced river men to pilot them, which was done by long oars at each end. These barges were never returned as others could be built cheaper than the used ones could be towed back up the stream.

Grandfather must have loved the hills and woodlands where he had settled before the war, or else he was a poor judge of values. For at the close of the war there was public land to be taken up by settlers in southern Indiana. Since he was a soldier he was given preference to a section of it for only a very little cost. But he would not go. That land now is worth many dollars per acre whereas his old home place sold in 1928 for the paltry sum of $4.00 per acre.

The children that were born to this union of John and Susan VanHook were William, Aaron, Franklin, Ellen, Dave, and John. The youngest son was named for his Dad. Perhaps he could think of no other common or distinguished name; or it may be that grandmother became sentimental and wanted a boy that she could call “Little Johnny.”

Sometime before Grandfather died he selected a spot in the corner of an old field where he wished to be buried. He asked Grandmother to have him put there. He loved his home. No other grave was there. He could have been put in the National Cemetery at Nancy beside many other honored heroes of the Civil War but he chose to stay at home. The home-loving trait is outstanding with the VanHooks.

One afternoon Grandfather stayed out later than usual. Grandmother became uneasy. She sent her sons Dave and little Johnny, who were then entering manhood, to search for him. They had not gone far before they found him lying crosswise of the road, on his side as if to sleep. He had succumbed to a heart attack and was dead. The boys rushed back home and to the neighbors spreading the alarm. A sled was brought to the place and the dead soldier was taken home on it. He was laid away exactly where he had requested. A stone that was furnished by the United States Government marks his resting place.

That lonely grave remained there in the corner of the field for many, many long years, waiting, ever silently waiting for his true love to come again and lie by his side. As time went on the field was neglected; pine trees grew to be almost 100 feet tall and 14 inches in diameter about the resting place; until at last on a cold September 13th, 1929, his sweetheart was laid by him as she had requested many a time for her last long sleep. May they rest in peace.

So ends the profile of John C. VanHook. As to the first sentence of this profile, “Who is this man John VanHook?” I think I can truthfully say that he was a man who loved and lived life to its fullest. He fought in a war for what he believed in.

He was a family man, loving his wife and children till his death.

* * *

When we arrived back to Aunt Nora’s, we were hot and thirsty. We filled up on the good, cold well water while she began preparing dinner.

Aunt Nora and Uncle Bob had married when they were working in Cincinnati, Ohio, and raised their children there. They bought a few acres of the old Vanhook home place from Uncle Jim Vanhook, and built the little house when they moved back to Whetstone to retire. Aunt Nora was a worker. She raised chickens and sold eggs at Earl Snell’s store on Whetstone
Branch to buy her groceries. She was only 5 feet tall but she was stout. She had been burned when she was a baby and her face was badly scarred. When Aunt Nora was six months old, Aunt Heddy, Mommy’s oldest sister, was rocking her in front of the open fireplace when she dropped Aunt Nora and she fell headfirst into the flames. Through special care she lived, but she carried the scars where the fire had burned her face and neck.

Her little house was neat with only three rooms. She had built a well house, a smokehouse, a toilet, and a chicken house just above the porch in the back yard. Her outside toilet had three different sized holes, one for Uncle Bob, one for herself and a small hole in the center for his little dog, Nabob. They said that he used it occasionally. I thought Nabob was an ugly dog with short hair, yellow-spotted white fur, and pug nose. He was very smart though. He howled, singing right along with Uncle Bob. He walked on his back legs obeying commands such as fetching cigarettes, matches, and anything else Uncle Bob commanded. I thought of my dog, Ol’ Jack, and I figured I had a lot of work to do to train him to do tricks like that.

After our meal, we walked over to see Uncle Jim and his family. Their house was in sight of Aunt Nora. They had four small children. The oldest, Dorothy, was about my age. We didn’t stay long because it would push us to see everybody before we had to leave. We were to meet Coy Lee at two o’clock the next day at Acorn Road.

Uncle Jim was a good-looking, six-foot-tall man. He had been a rounder in his early days
until he met Aunt Vena and he’d become a family man. Uncle Jim was left without a home when Grandma Vanhook died and Grandpa remarried. He stayed with my parents and rode an old mule named Jenny everywhere he went. She was just plain mean to anyone except Uncle Jim. She was notorious for pawing the dirt and biting a piece out of anyone who got near. But she loved Uncle Jim. He rode her all over the country, either drunk or sober.

One year Uncle Jim spent the summer raising an acre of tobacco (This was before the government gave tobacco allotments to farmers). He took it to Lexington to sell, and it brought $72. He got drunk and spent it all before he returned home on Monday morning. Uncle Jim had spent most of his life working in logging. He once told me that he had logged with a team of mules on Duck Creek Road in Cincinnati to help clean out that area to build the road.

The grown-ups visited while I played with my cousins. While we were gone Uncle Bob had walked around to Uncle Shelly’s, who lived in a shanty in the woods behind Aunt Nora, and asked him to come for supper.

Uncle Shelly was a small man about 5 feet 2; he had never married and lived alone. Next to Uncle Jim in age he had also been out of a home when Grandpa re-married. He had served in World War I and had worked in Cincinnati after leaving the service. When he became sick he caught the train to Somerset. Someone found him walking around town completely out of his head and put him in Vola Hines’s truck to come to Poplarville. He had collapsed at Howard’s store. My brothers and Poppy had to carry him between them in a homemade gurney to our house. He was burning up with fever and out of his head. Dr. Browning from Mt. Victory was called in. He diagnosed him as having smallpox and scarlet fever. He recovered, but he never seemed the same. I was six months old when he came to our house sick and everyone including me took the smallpox. It was deemed a miracle that we all lived because smallpox was deadly. Jessie almost died. She carried scars on her neck, chest, and back from sores caused by the disease.

When Uncle Shelly would visit, he would sit and watch everyone, as he leaned back against the wall in a straight-legged chair, a big wad of tobacco in his mouth and a can to spit out his ambeer. He didn’t talk much but seemed to enjoy himself, cackling at small incidents that happened.

* * *

While everyone was catching up on the news and reminiscing about the old days, Aunt Nora told me I could help her get supper. First, we went to the well to draw some fresh water. Aunt Nora said that was the best water in the country. I believed it. The water came up clean, clear, and cool.

I helped her peel potatoes. She’d already broken up her green beans. She had some fat back she fried for the men, but we were used to eating vegetables. She made a fresh red raspberry pie, and let me have two pieces at supper.

I ate so much that I was sick. Mommy wasn’t happy with me because she had taught her children that we were not to stuff ourselves when we were at someone else’s house. After supper, I just curled up in a corner and went to sleep. The next thing I knew a rooster crowing and people talking were awakening me. I could smell chicken sizzling in the pan and I knew Aunt Nora was cooking us a big breakfast.

I went out to use her toilet. It was painted white inside and out. There was a Sears and Roebuck catalog and some newspapers on the floor and a pan for washing your hands. A zinc water bucket sat in the corner with a gourd for dipping out water. She had hung a towel on a nail so you could dry your hands. What a luxurious outhouse! Ours was a few planks nailed
together to hide behind and a “fits-all” hole. We didn’t waste any time sitting on the toilet in our outhouse, because there was no back and in the winter the cold wind blew right under our naked bottoms. In the summer dirt daubers and wasps thought it was made for them and decorated the wall with their art and fiercely defended it. Chickens thought it was their feeding trough and snakes used it as their bedroom. Besides all this, we needed to clasp a clothespin on our noses as the aroma was suffocating.

When I came back in the kitchen, everyone was sitting around eating and talking. I never knew people could talk so much. I hurried up and ate so I could put on the new dress I had brought. I didn’t have shoes, but I didn’t care. Most everyone I knew didn’t wear shoes.

We started out on our trip to see Grandpa and his family. At the head of Whetstone where four roads forked, we took the road that followed Whetstone Branch down the hill. The trickling of running water filled the still air as the small stream jumped and bounced over the rocks and pebbles. The trees along the branch made a canopy of shimmering leaves, revealing the white bark of the sycamore as a slight breeze played along their trunks. We passed by the Snell’s store and Post Office and on down past the Stogsdills’. The Hargis lived off the road before Whetstone Baptist Church. Grandpa and his family lived in a house just beyond the church.

They were not expecting us, so Grandpa was hitching up his mules to plow out his corn. He was a burly, heavy-built man with wide shoulders. His eyes twinkled in his large red face and I could see that Uncle Shelly and Aunt Nora looked like him.

Mommy sat in a chair wiping the sweat from her face and said, “Go ahead and get your plowing done. We just came by cause Mandy was down and we wanted to see everybody. We have to meet Coy Lee at two o’clock up on Acorn Road.”

Grandpa answered, “Jus stay and we’ll have some dinner after while. I got all day ta do the plowin.”

“No, we can’t stay,” Aunt Mandy said.

He sat down on the porch and called to Maggie. She came out and all the girls were behind her. I never saw such pretty people. Maggie had black curly hair and deep blue eyes and a fair

Grandmother Isabelle Vanhook with children: Mary, Nora, Jim, Shelly, and Harlan
complexion. She was healthy enough but not fat. Frieda, the oldest, looked a lot like her. June, Geraldine, Anna, and Stella were the girls’ names and each one was prettier than the other. All of them had dark curly hair and blue eyes and a fair complexion like their mother. Geraldine was my age. Grandpa had eight kids by his first wife and now six by his second young wife.

“Ya know Heddy’s sick?” Grandpa asked as he sat on the edge of the porch with a piece of straw between his teeth.

“No!” Mommy exclaimed, “What’s wrong with her?” They were talking about my oldest aunt who lived in Harlan County.
“Yeah,” he answered, “She’s bad with cancer.”

This news brought a silence until Mommy sighed and with tears in her eyes she said, “I’m gonna see her somehow. It’s so far away clear over past Corbin, and that Frank Helton is a bootlegger and all she’s had is trouble. Ain’t no wonder she’s sick, with all the trouble she’s lived through. Bert, her son, has been at our house a lot when my boys were home. Three of her boys are in the service.”

This brought on another conversation about the war. Grandpa asked, “When have ya hyard from Coyd?”

Mommy answered, “I got a letter las week. He didn’t say much. He landed in Sicily. I couldn’t figure out much where he is. He said not to worry that he was all right and he didn’t know when he’d get ta write agin. Our boys are gettin hurt and killed ever day. Logan Farmer’s boy, Elmont, is seriously injured and is in a hospital in South America. He was hurt on a motor cycle.”

“I know. George Nolan from Mt. Victory hyard from his boys, Robert and Delbert, who were captured and are in a prison camp in the Philippines. I cut it out of the newspaper,” Grandpa said as he pulled a newspaper clipping out of his pocket. “Said they were alright. They were overheard on a short wave broadcast radio from a radio station in Tokyo. It was recorded on a phonograph record at the prison camp. A copy of the message sent to Nolan’s parents said:

“Hello, Mom and Dad. I know you are surprised to hear from me. I am in Tokyo, Japan. I am well and feeling fine. I have received letters from you. I would sure love to see you all again. I am hoping and praying it won’t be long. Write me as soon as you can. It sure makes me feel better to get letters from home. I expect my girlfriends are all married now. Please say hello for me. How is everyone at Mt. Victory?” – Somerset Journal
“In closing he listed all the Americans who were with him and said they were all in good health.”

“ Ain’t that a sight,” Mommy said as she wiped away the tears.

Grandpa said, “Italy surrendered. That was good news. I know we’re winning this war, but I wish it’d hurry up and be over. I read where they said hit’s costing us $300 million a day. Some people are killin and renderin groundhawg fat ta send ta Uncle Sam ta make bombs.” That brought a chuckle from everyone as he continued, “We shore don’t need them groundhawgs eatin our corn.”

“Well,” Mommy said shaking her head, “tha country’s doin what we can. They’re asking fer old clothes ta go ta the people in Germany who’s had everythang destroyed. I shore ain’t got none of them ta give.”

Aunt Nora nodded her head in agreement, “I hyar they had a prayer meetin at Vester Wright’s Sunday. Said they was a crowd there. Charles came home on furlough. My boy Wallace has done been in service for a while.”

Mommy said, “The Bolton boys, Cecil and Earl, Jim and Bertha’s sons are in the service. Coy and Oral Bolton, Neal’s sons are overseas. And Oliver Baker is gone and Frank Vansant has joined the Marines.”

Maggie sat quietly on the porch while Grandpa’s girls and I played hopscotch on the sandy yard.

After a silence with all thinking their own thoughts, Aunt Nora spoke up, “We’d better go so’s I can fix dinner fore ya leave.”

Grandpa got up from sitting on the edge of the porch and said, “We’ll be moving to Mt. Victory soon. We’re selling this place and buying the one out the ridge next to Bill Arthur Farmer’s place.” They all looked surprised.

“Then you’ll be closer to my place. Just up on the hill from us,” Mommy said. “That’s right,” grandpa answered, “Maggie’ll be glad to move from here.”
We left after goodbyes to all.
When we got back to Aunt Nora’s, we were hot and thirsty and sat down to have a cold drink of water.
“I try to keep Grandpa and Grandma’s graves cleaned off. They were all growed up.” Aunt Nora said to Mommy. Aunt Mandy got up from her chair and began walking toward the door. “Let’s go over and look at the graves. I ain’t seen them since I wus a girl.”
The burial site was about 500 yards from Aunt Nora’s house at the edge of the woods above where Joe Lim Mounce lived. Aunt Nora had cleaned all the sprouts out and filled up the graves where they had sunken with time.
There was a military headstone from the Union Army with the inscription “John C. Vanhook, KY 12th Infantry Born; around 1833. Died, 1884.”
Then there was a rock marking another grave of his wife, Susan Boyd Vanhook, and an infant’s grave next to it.
Aunt Nora and Aunt Mandy began reminiscing about how they remembered their grandparents. Mommy said, “What I membered most bout Grandma is we thought she was mean when we stayed with her as young girls.”
Aunt Nora spoke sharply to that statement, “I stayed with her a lot and I didn’t find her mean. She was almost blind and had a hard time. You know she was a full-blooded Cherokee Indian, or that’s what I hyard.” she said as she pulled weeds and broke off sprouts that were growing on the graves. “I member hearin bout Grandpa. They give him two tracts of land after he served two three-year terms in the Union army. That includes my place where the old house stood and many acres surroundin it.”
“We better git goin cause we got ta fix dinner yet,” Aunt Mandy said as she started toward the house.
After we walked back to the house I began helping Aunt Nora with peeling potatoes while she put on the rest of the dinner to cook. She was still a little perturbed over the difference of opinion between her and Mommy. She began to tell me the sad story about great grandmother given to her by one of grandmother’s children.
“Susan Baker Boyd (Grandma Vanhook) was born in 1835, and she was 92 when she died. She lived a long life and the last few years she was blind. Her and Grandpa raised six children many times havin very little ta eat while Grandpa was in the Union Army. Her granddaughters stayed with her fore she went ta live with her daughter. When I stayed she
was good to me. This is the story I received through contacts.

“Susan Jane Boyd Vanhook, was a very beautiful girl in her youth. She was about 5 feet 3 inches tall and straight as an Indian's arrow.

“She was slim and neatly built. Her hair was black as a raven’s wing and her skin was very fair. Even after she became a widow. Even she thought so herself; she had several pictures of herself made and enlarged for her children. After she had borne her children and had entered into the latter part of her life she became stout and chunky, but she never lost her vigor until she became blind the last seven years of her life. She could walk long distances and work from daylight until far into the night. She seemed never to tire of working.

“Susan was born out of wedlock. Her mother was a Miss Boyd, and her father was a man named Harman. After Grandma was born, Miss Boyd married a gentleman named Baker. Several children came of this marriage among whom were William Baker and Henry Baker, half-brothers to my grandmother. There is no record of her age, or of her marriage to grandfather. She was perhaps born in 1839. Grandmother was married in Pulaski County. There is no record of it because the courthouse and all the records were destroyed by fire in 1870.

“After Grandfather died in 1890, Grandmother tried living with her children—first one, then another. She must have been very lonely for she never seemed to be satisfied. Sometimes she would quarrel with whomever she lived with, and then pick up her possessions and go to another one of the children and stay until a quarrel moved her again. However, most of the time she made her home with the only daughter she had—Sarah Ellen Nelson. Once she tried to live with Uncle Dave, my grandfather’s brother, who was then single. They set up housekeeping in a small house across the ravine from J.C. Owen's home. This arrangement didn't last long.

“Grandmother would knit stockings. She used four long needles and could knit in the dark so exact was she. Then she would piece quilts and quilt them. So, the winters passed for her and she toiled on for no pay at all—just a place to stay.

“Besides all her other work, Grandmother practiced midwifery. Many a time she has gone to take care of childbirth when a doctor could not be found. She was sometimes spoken of as a Granny woman. This practice was kept up for several years until one night Lee Nelson, a brother to Uncle Tom Nelson, came for her to deliver a baby for his wife, Martha Hughes Nelson. Martha bled to death before a doctor could be rushed to the place, which was right over the split end of No. 4 tunnel overlooking Burnside. So far as I know Grandmother would never undertake that job again without a doctor.

“Grandmother never had a beau after she was widowed.

“It was September, 1929, and it had rained daily for months, causing the roads to wash out. The weather had turned cold and the rain had turned into snow. Grandmother had passed from this life while staying with her daughter in Burnside after a long illness. Her last wish was to be buried by her sweetheart husband and infant child in a field on the old home place in Whetstone. They had held her up for several days because of the weather but it became more necessary each day that passed to put her in her final resting place.

“Finally they hired a hearse from a funeral home to bring the pine box to rest beside her husband. The trip became more perilous as the journey continued. Four men rode in the hearse with tools, axes, saws, and shovels, using them often to get the hearse over the mud and ruts in the road. Pushing and pulling they got the car out of many large ruts and on some occasions had to get help from teams of horses from the neighbor. I am told that it took almost a week to finally get the body buried and travel back to town.

“May she rest in peace.”

By the time she finished telling the story we had a good dinner prepared. Afterwards it was time to start out to meet our ride home.
The dry, scorching summer continued with the war gaining in fury. Every boy upon reaching the age of 18 was immediately called to service. The country seemed to be one big machine fueled by the need to stop the devastating destruction formulated by power-hungry, mad men. The Allies had made great advances during the war but that hadn’t seemed to bring the evil leaders any closer to negotiating a peace. Women were working in defense plants and some were even joining the military.

It was Saturday and I had the day off from school. Each morning by sun up, our cow Brindle had to be milked, and afterwards, she and Jericho, our old mule, would graze all day on grasses and weeds that grew in the pasture. Every evening, Jack and I would drive Brindle to the barn to be milked.

The first rays of sun struck the clouds making them pink and cottony and the grass a greenish gray. Then as the sun rose in the sky, all the puffy clouds glittered, the stars started to fade and the whole sky opened up into a blazing color that shone on the green dewy leaves like diamonds. I could see a huge round pool of yellow fire rising over the treetops. Suddenly the whole sky turned blue and the clouds looked white again.

After my chores were done I began making my playhouse under the big umbrella tree that grew in the shade of the woods at the edge of the yard. Its leaves were about two feet long and a foot wide. They made a good shade and could shield me from the rain. Sometimes we’d make an umbrella by tying the leaves together.

Mommy called to me as she was coming from the barn with a bucket of milk covered with white foam. “Jewell, you can play, but ya hafta watch Jimmie. Find somethin fer him to sit on.”

That was my usual task, so I hurried to the house to get Jimmie. Mommy was straining the milk through a white cloth when I opened the door. “Be sure ya keep an eye on Jimmie all the time cause you know how he runs off ta play in water. Lord knows he’d go a long way today fore he’d find water in the branch, bein as hit’s so dry.”

I carried a chair from the house for Jimmie to sit on while tearing big leaves into precision pieces. He’d stack them over and over in a pile, as he hummed “Amazing Grace,” or some other song that was on his mind. He seemed consoled as he rocked back and forth, constantly singing or humming songs that he’d heard. The whole family sang as we worked, played, or rested, so he knew a lot of songs. Jimmie couldn’t talk but he sure could carry a tune.

Jack was a good companion, but he couldn’t talk either, or understand how to keep house. I talked for him, pretending he was my husband.

“Now Jack,” I’d say, “You know I havta do the warshin today, so I won’t be able ta plant them rosen-ears. I jes can’t seem ta git all the work done with all the kids I have ta cook fer.” He looked at me and whined.

I’d answer for him. “Jewell, I have ta teach school today and won’t be home till late. We’ll have ta plant the corn another day.”

This monologue continued for so long that Jack got tired of it all and just lay down to take a snooze. Then I’d complain about him sleeping and leaving all the work for me. “Jus go ahead an sleep jus like ya ain’t got a thang ta do!” When Jimmie began to whimper, I took him back to the house.

The day soon passed and it was time for Jack and me to drive Brindle in from the pasture to be milked. On the way I passed by overhanging clefts jutting out about halfway up the hill. In between the clefts were small trees where the earth had crumbled and the bare rock was so steep that trees had a hard time finding any place to sink their roots. They desperately sent out
a visible network of naked roots, seeking nourishment from the tiniest bit of soil left in the crevices of the rock. A ridge of soil and underbrush made a break between the clefts where the grass grew and was a part of the green pasture. At the top of the hill was the forest line. In the valley along the branch was where the grass grew lush and thick. It was cooler there in the summer and where I usually found the stock in the evening, lying down in the shade.

Ol’ Brindle would be chewing her cud and flapping at flies with her tail. Jericho would be lying under a shade whisking his brushy tail and waiting for the sun to go down so he could wallow in the sand. The cow and mule seemed to enjoy each other’s company.

Along the cowpath the pink larkspur were in blossom. Birds hopped and flittered on the yellow goldenrod, and butterflies were lighting on cow pies in the shadows of the trees. Squirrels jumped on the tree branches and Ol’ Jack ran in circles trying to catch them as they skittered up a tall tree and chattered on the branches overhead. White field daises were scattered along in big clumps and the purple ironweeds added to the collection that I gathered to take home for a bouquet. A white-tailed rabbit jumped up and Jack gave a weak effort of chasing it. He was exhausted from running after everything that moved.

I was always barefoot, and walking through the tall grasses was sometimes adventurous. Every now and then I could see the weeds and grass parting and waving as a creature crawled along, but I wasn’t brave enough to follow. One day I almost stepped on a snake lying so still that only his flickering tongue and glittering eyes showed that he was alive. His blue-black color told me he was a blue racer and harmless.

Occasionally I would find a killdeer’s nest that she had built on the ground in a patch of weeds. The mother would give a great performance, squawking and scolding, and then spreading and lowering one wing, hopping around as if it were broken, to distract me from her little ones. If I made the grass move slightly, there would be four wide-gaping beaks, hungrily waiting to be filled.

Then I would see our guineas running through the grass gathering insects. They were so wild that they very seldom came to the house in the summertime, roosting at night in tall trees in the pasture. They’d hide their nest in the weeds, and sometimes I would find a nest with 20 or so small brown eggs. It wasn’t unusual to see an old mother guinea with a string of little chicks following her. Their life was short because some animal would catch them to eat for their supper.

One day I saw a brown, velvety ground squirrel run into a hole under a tree that grew along the branch. He had bright round eyes and a soft crinkling nose and little paws that hung by his side when he sat to watch me. He flitted and jumped, with perky eyes constantly alert to danger. His bushy tail was longer than his body. I tried to catch him, but when I’d get close he’d suddenly disappear.

I just had to have one for a pet so I made a plan. I slunk around the big tree and quickly put my foot over the hole and called Jack to catch it. Jack sniffed the ground with his tail waving in the air, and the squirrel, sensing danger, jumped from his hiding place and practically flew to his hole. He landed on my foot, nosing and scratching my bare toes trying to get inside his home. I brought my hand down and circled its back with my fingers. That was a mistake I never made again. Who would have thought that such a cute, soft piece of fur had such teeth! He turned his head around and sunk his protruding teeth into my forefinger. I threw that little monster from me but too late.

As the blood flowed, I ran home yelling and screaming “Mommy! Mommy!” Mommy ran to meet me and through sobs and tears I told her the story. I could see the relief on her face as she held my finger tightly to stop the blood.

“I shore thought ya was snake bit!” She exclaimed as we hurried home. “We’ll pull it
tagether with a clean rag and stop the bleedin.” She washed the cut and smudged it with bamagilla salve. She bound it tight in a strip from an old sheet which she always saved for such purposes and finally the bleeding stopped. We could see the bone and the torn flesh “It’ll grow back together,” Mommy said as she finished the last wrap. “It coulda been worse. Maybe next time you’ll thank fore you pick up a wild animal.”

To this day I carry the scar from that cute little critter.

* * *

Poppy was working again at a chemical plant in Cincinnati. He bought a battery radio and brought it home to us. We were overjoyed because it was a link to the outside world. Every evening the whole family waited anxiously to hear the war news, and about where our boys were fighting. We listened to the six o’clock news with Lowell Thomas. I could hear the radio as I lay on my bed. As the news continued, my eyes closed and I thought of what Geraldine had said about the Kentucky Theater in Somerset showing a movie on the war called *Hitler’s Children*. I knew I wouldn’t get to see it although I really didn’t want to because I hated Hitler so. How could you not hate him? He had caused my brothers to have to leave home to fight with guns and possibly get killed.

The Kentucky Theater made me think of all the movie stars in Hollywood that were so popular and that Geraldine admired. The papers told of how our soldier boys put pinups of their favorite movie stars in their barracks. Betty Grable was the number one favorite and a poster of her hung on many walls. She was called Miss Legs.

The drought continued, causing the animals to constantly graze on whatever they could find to eat. There were still small pools of water in the shade of the trees along the branch where they could drink, but the powerful rays of the sun were making these quickly disappear.

Every morning the sun rose with blinding brightness and the earth had not cooled from the day before. The morning dew seemed to evaporate on the vegetation before sunrise, leaving a suffocating feeling. Life-giving rain had seemed to have forsaken us as each day brought dry, hot weather. It had been several weeks since we had had a good soaking rain. We were carrying all our water from the spring under the hill below the house. The rainwater we had caught earlier in the year from under the house roof was used up.

There were wildflowers all along the wet spots in the branch. I waded in a few spots of mud...
with my bare feet to feel the cool smoothness between my toes. Many insects traveled along the edge to gather moisture. Wide-winged butterflies, yellow with black trim, flew around the damp spots, occasionally landing to suck moisture. Some had orange spotted wings. Some had light brown wings scalloped with blue and gold spots, and there were many small ones that were solid pale blue. And then there were orange and black monarch butterflies that migrated south in the winter. I watched the velvety wings opening and closing as they drank the little moisture they could find. Their tiny feet left no marks. Their feelers quivered, around their small, round, lidless eyes. I left them alone after I found that the wings were covered with tiny feathers that peeled off in my hands. These minuscule feathers protected the butterfly from the elements and without them they would die.

Brindle was almost dry because she was saving the milk for the new calf coming soon. A thin white cloth served as a strainer for the fresh milk before we took it to the spring to keep it cool until used. The ever-running spring water came out of a large hole in the side of the hill by the branch about half a mile from the house. We made an enclosed shelf under the overhang to keep the animals away. Twice a day we brought water from the spring to drink, cook, and wash dishes. Our baths were limited. I was not big enough to carry a water bucket full of water up the hill, but I could carry the milk and butter.

I had asked Violet to come and play on the sawdust pile in the woods above our house. I wasn't allowed to play at her house. She said she'd have to sneak off because she watched her younger brothers and sister all the time. Jumping off the sawdust pile was just the best fun in the world but it was forbidden because there were stinging lizards (scorpions) and snakes under the wood slabs. I just wouldn’t tell Mommy where we were going.

This was my lucky day, I said to myself as I saw Violet coming up the wagon road. It was mid-afternoon and she had sneaked off after dinner. “I’m sick and tard of takin care of them kids. I want ta have fun!” She exclaimed as we made our way up the hill to the sawmill. We had to hurry because it wouldn’t be long before her mother would come to find her.

Last year, the large timber had all been cut and the sawmill workers had moved on to another location. All that was left of the sawmill were piles of slabs and sawdust. The pine rosin odor emitting from the sawdust saturated our senses as we looked around for any scorpions or snakes, or other dangerous critters. The weeds grew high around the slab piles so we decided to stay away from them. The warm sawdust was piled in a stack about 20 feet high. We had to climb fast because it would quickly slide you back to the bottom. We climbed to the top where we could see, over the treetops, my house in the valley and Violet's house on top of the ridge.

“Betcha I can jump farther than you can!” Violet cried as she soared through the air to land in the soft fluffy pile.

“Betcha can’t!” I yelled, as I climbed to the top of the pile and let loose with a wild jump. That began the contest. Our skirts billowed up our back and our bloomers were full of scratchy sawdust. We’d shake them out and climb again.

Then I saw that Violet was beating me and I got mad. I couldn’t let her beat me! So I gave her a shove and she fell to the other side of the pile hitting her head on a tree limb. “That’s fer cheatin!” I yelled, hoping I hadn’t hurt her much.

Rubbing her head she looked up at me with murder in her eyes. “I’ll make ya take that back when I get ta yer throat!” she said as she scrambled up the pile.

I was itching and burning when I looked with alarm at my bright red arms and legs. Then I saw that Violet’s were the same color. Knowing that Violet could whip me, I began to cry.

I was itching and burning when I looked with alarm at my bright red arms and legs. Then I saw that Violet’s were the same color. Knowing that Violet could whip me, I began to cry.
Violet had sneaked off and left her with all the kids to mind while she was making apple jelly. “Violet, you need a whuppin for runnin off and scarin me like this,” she said as she looked at our red skin and tumbled clothes. “You know that place is dangerous with all them snakes and stingin lizards!”

Violet ran ahead of her mother toward home scratching and swishing her clothes with Lerlene close behind threatening to whip her. Mommy’s brows were lowered and I knew I was in trouble. “Go on to the house and wash up. I’ll be there directly.” I knew she would stop at the peach tree and get her weapon. The discomfort I felt now would be nothing compared to what it would be in a few minutes. Maybe I could get some sympathy from Georgia, I thought, as I made my way to the house.

“Jewell,” Georgia asked, “why do you do thangs you know ya’ll get a whuppin for?” as she hugged me tight.

“I jus want ta play SO BAD!” I cried.

That night we listened to the Renfro Valley Barn Dance. I especially liked Lil Eller, a comedian who could wrap her legs around her neck and sing.

We also listened to the Nashville Barn Dance and Jamboree from radio station WSM in Nashville, Tennessee. It came on every Saturday night. It was a real treat as we all gathered around to hear the music. I danced a type of “Kentucky stomp,” as the fiddles and banjos played “Turkey in the Straw,” and other instrumentals. Mommy’s favorite was the Carter Family with Mother Maybell. Little Jimmie Dickens, Roy Acuff and the Smokey Mountain Boys, Ernest Tubb, and many others performed.

* * *

During the night a gentle rain had fallen, but a powerfully hot sun soon sucked up the moisture. It was August and the drought was still with us. Poppy had come home for the weekend from his job in Ohio, and I heard him talking to Mommy: “Winnie, it’ll be awhile fore we get much rain. Look how light blue the sky is. Las night the stars showed bright, and you could see the moon’s cloudy surface, meanin there’s not much moisture in the air. I checked the pinecones and they’re wide open. If there’s much moisture in the air, nature moves in and they close up to protect their seeds.” Poppy was well known for his accurate weather predictions. Neighbors would come by often to ask him when it would rain, because he was usually right.

I saw a newspaper, Somerset Journal, lying on a chair on my way out to play. The front page read,

THEIR CRUELTY MUST BE PUNISHED

Back from his world tour of U.S. battlefronts, Senator Chandler of Kentucky has told of many atrocities to our men in the South Pacific. One such instance was the case of a captured American soldier who was operated on without anesthetics so Jap soldiers could watch his internal organs function. Senator Chandler said that the account had not been officially verified. We hear of such dastardly barbarity to our men in uniform, it makes our blood boil and we are determined more than ever that their heinous crimes will be punished. Senator Chandler said that General MacArthur, Allied Commander in the Southwest Pacific, is compiling a “Doom’s Day Book” containing the names, ranks, and units of Jap officers who order or sanction such savagery. This list will be used in bringing the perpetrators to justice.

There were pictures of the leaders of the war-torn countries on the front page. I sneaked it out and cut out Hitler’s picture, nailed it on a tree in the front yard, and threw rocks at it
until it was torn to pieces. Pretending I was a soldier, I’d use a stick for a gun. I’d march back and forth in front of Hitler’s picture and say, “You’d better start prayin, cause yer a dead dog.” I’d take my stick and make noises with my mouth like a gun. “Bang! Bang!” as I continued marching, “Then I’m goin to Italy and kill Mussolini, and to Japan and kill Tojo. Then the war will be over and my brothers can come home.”

That evening as we sat on the porch I threw wood chips at brown bats that were zooming back and forth chasing bugs. It was comical watching them dart after the chip thinking it was something they could eat.

The velvety soft darkness settled over the valley and was accentuated by the croaking of a bullfrog. The dazzling bright stars began to pop out one by one and a slight breeze cooled the air. “Whip-poor-will, whip-poor-will” came sharp and clear in the quiet still night. “E-e-e-ee-ech, e-e-e-e-e-ech” came from the trees below the house as a screech owl signaled its position.

As the night closed in and the woods were enveloped in dark shadows, the frogs went to sleep and I snuck closer to Mommy. Then we heard from the deep woods, “Who-Who-Who” in very low tones.

I answered, “Jewell Holt is my name, who-who-who are you?” There was silence for a while and then from another side of the woods came again. “Who-Who-Who” in yet lower tones. I knew a hoot owl had added its call to the mix.

The moon began to rise from beyond the trees. The creamy light spread along the horizon and close by the stars melted in the brightness of moonlight. My mother spoke in a soft tired voice, holding back tears, “Every night I ask God ta keep my boys safe and make sure they’re not hungry.” In the twilight I could see tears falling down her hollow cheeks. “Jus can’t stand when I think they’re hungry or if they’re dyin and I can’t help them.” She struggled to her feet, wiping her eyes on her apron, “Every night I ask the Lord why we have to have war. Why do my sons have ta sacrifice their lives ta have freedom? All we want is ta raise our children ta be honest, hard workin people, and love one nother and trust in you dear Lord.” As she closed the door I heard her say, “But You know best. It is not mine ta question why. Maybe hit’s worth the struggle to preserve the peace of a country so full of Your love and glory.”

Suddenly I heard a shrill scream down in the hollow. My heart began to race and I could hardly breathe. Then another scream came from the other side of the house. I ran inside and jumped in the soft fluffy featherbed.

“What is that?” I asked frantically as I covered up my head.

“Hush chile,” Mommy said, “Hit’s jus some wild animal carryin on.” The next morning all of the family was talking about the wildcats that had been screaming in the woods below the house last night. I had never seen a wildcat, but I didn’t want to see one either.
For weeks now the ground was hard and cracked in the low-lying areas. One morning I woke up to the pitter-patter of rain on the tin roof. The sky was grey, and the sweet fragrance of wet grass was drifting through the windows. I could barely wait to go outside and play in the nice warm rain. Maybe this rain would finally break the drought, and help our late garden vegetables we had planted.

Mommy, Georgia, and Jessie were in the kitchen frying potatoes and making gravy and biscuits. My sisters had come home for the weekend on the bus from Cincinnati where they were working. Mommy was singing one of the old ballads:

\[
\text{It was in the month of May} \\
\text{when all the flowers were blooming} \\
\text{Sweet William came from the western states} \\
\text{and courted Barbara Allen.}
\]

After she sang several verses of Barbara Allen, she started on another old ballad:

\[
\text{My mother was a lady} \\
\text{Of yours I would allow} \\
\text{And you may have a sister} \\
\text{Who needs protection now.} \\
\text{I came to this great city} \\
\text{To find my brother dear} \\
\text{You wouldn’t dare, insult me sir} \\
\text{If Brother Jack were here.}
\]

\[
\text{The two sat there in silence} \\
\text{their heads hung down in shame.} \\
\text{Forgive us miss, we meant no harm} \\
\text{Please tell us what’s your name.}
\]

\[
\text{She told them and they cried aloud} \\
\text{we know your brother too} \\
\text{we’ve been friends for many a year} \\
\text{and he often speaks of you.} \\
\text{Come go with me when go back} \\
\text{and if you’ll only wed} \\
\text{I’ll take him to you as my bride} \\
\text{cause I love you, since you said ...}
\]

Her sweet voice carried through the house as she began the chorus again. Mommy sounded happy now and I knew it was because of the rain.

The sun was shining through thin clouds. Water was glistening on the green grass and everything smelled fresh and earthy. The leaves on the apple trees were a dark green and the small apples were visible. “I wish hit’d rain all day long, but hit’s better than nothing. It’ll dampen thangs down a little,” Mommy said as she and I walked to the barn carrying a milk
bucket. “Maybe hit'll rain more tanight.”

Later that day I could hear the chicken hawks calling to the little chickens “chickie-dee, chickie-dee,” with their mimicking cry while circling over the clearing. The old hen clucked and cawed as she tucked her little “diddles” under her wings. Mother hen was not lazy with her tireless forage for food for her chicks. It was my job to make sure that chicken hawks didn’t catch them.

Suddenly, I heard a squabble as a hawk dived to the ground to catch a stray chick and encountered an enraged enemy. Momma Hen had blown her feathers out, making the appearance of twice her size and she was tangling with the hawk. Boy, was that hawk surprised! He thought he could just swoop down and pick up his prey, but he met with a hostile mother hen who protected her brood with her life. There were feathers flying and squawking and screeching coming from the combatants. The old hen’s head was bleeding, but she hung on to that hawk with her sharp toes and piercing beak. The rest of the chickens came running to see what was going on. Our feisty Banty rooster began flapping his wings, strutting in circles around the two fighters, waiting for a chance to join in. The hawk looked around at all the big chickens and the Banty that were ready to attack, and gave up. He flapped his wings and was out of there in a flash. He didn’t fly too high so I assumed that he wasn’t in top notch shape. Old Momma gathered her brood under her wings and sat until the danger was over. After a few minutes she stood up, clucking her little ones to follow her as if nothing had happened, and again started her ritual of hunting for bugs. But she was always on the alert, moving her head back and forth, up and down, watching for danger.

* * *

The apples were ripening but they were so small I could eat half a dozen. Mommy was making apple butter from those falling on the ground. The garden was mostly dried up, but our potatoes were growing. We planted them early enough that they got the spring rains.

Ol’ Brindle was dry and about ready to calf. One morning, when Geraldine and I went to the barn to take care of the animals, she was just lying there in the barn lot when she normally would have been out picking grass. We knew there was something wrong so I ran to the house to tell Mommy. I thought she might be ready to calf. We coaxed her with some bran to get her up. She slowly lifted herself off the ground, sniffed the bran, dropped her head and showed no interest. She drank a little of the water we carried to her. Then she lay back down in the shade of the barn. Her big gentle eyes looked so sad. We kept trying to get her to eat, hoping the sickness would pass.

Mommy and I kept trying to give her nourishment all day. She wasn’t interested. Losing a milk cow was tragic because milk was the main source for a healthy diet, and substituted for meat. And we couldn’t afford to buy another cow. A good milk cow would cost at least 100 dollars.

Ol’ Brindle was so gentle she would let anyone milk her. And every year she birthed a calf that we sold for veal. The chickens always pecked around her feet for the loose bran. The cat was usually winding itself around her legs begging for milk. I loved sitting next to her warm body on cold mornings.

The following morning she was still lying where we had left her but she was on her side, which is not a natural position for a cow. All day she didn’t touch a bite of food or water. The third morning she had stretched out, lying on her side, grunting every breath. We began pouring liquids down her such as Coca-Cola, coal-oil mixed with water, and anything else we had heard of. Nothing helped. She kept getting worse. One of the neighbors came and split her tail that was supposed to cure hollow tail, but it didn’t help.
Jimmie needed milk to drink because he was frail, so Leona Hines gave us milk for him. The neighbor came back and dehorned her. He said sometimes the horns would set up infection that caused problems. This didn’t help either. Poor Ol’ Bridle would look at me with those gentle eyes and almost beg for help. She continued to get worse. We sat up with her for a week, day and night, pouring stuff down her but she finally died.

Mommy and I were so grief stricken we couldn’t stop crying. I loved that old cow. Dault brought his mule and pulled her body up to the new ground where Poppy had cleared. We piled brush on her to burn her body. We were afraid she might have had something contagious and we didn’t want other animals to get it. I helped to pile the treetops on her but I couldn’t stand to watch her burn. I headed to the house so I could hide my head in a pillow to keep from smelling the stench from her burning hair. I knew that that was the best way to get rid of her, but it was still hard to accept.

That evening the radio was giving local news, and I covered my head under a pillow to keep from hearing more bad news, but I could still hear what was being said.

“The Japanese should be brought to trial and punishment after the war,” Chandler said.

“The Japs are an uncivilized people but they should not be allowed to perpetrate such savage cruelty without being severely punished. The soldiers are saying the Japs slit some prisoners open just to see what made them tick. We Americans became as outraged as the Japanese when they stabbed us in the back with the attack in Pearl Harbor but we didn’t use cruel punishment.”

The words trailed together as my eyes closed.

Our neighbors Elmer and Bessie Farmer who lived on the next ridge gave us clabbered milk to drink and use. They were milking two jersey cows and selling sour cream because they didn’t have refrigeration to keep it cold and sweet. They’d skim off the cream from the top that left curds and whey. Curds were used for making cottage cheese or just for drinking when we stirred it up together with the whey. We sometimes churned the clabbered milk and it would make good buttermilk. They were giving it to their hogs so they let us have what we needed. It wasn’t as good as fresh milk, but it was nutritious.

Every day Geraldine and I walked through the woods up to their house to get the milk. We crossed the branch and climbed the hill and then went on out the ridge to their house.

Elmer and Bessie’s daughter, Betty Ray, was Geraldine’s age and was her friend.

Before we’d start Geraldine would yodel to let Betty Ray know that we were coming. “Yoo-dal-ladee-e-e-e-e, Yoo-dal-ladee-e-e-e-e-e.” She cupped her hands and yodel again until she heard an answer.

After a few minutes there would come the answer, “Yoo-dal-ladee-e-e-e-e, Yoo-dal-ladee-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-.” as Betty Ray called to us from their house. This was the signal and she’d come to meet us. Geraldine and Betty Ray would whisper and giggle because they had secrets they didn’t want me to know. Both claimed a boy at school.

As we walked along the path going to get the milk, we’d sing:

There’s a Star Spangled Banner waving somewhere
   In a distant land so many miles away.
Only Uncle Sam’s great heroes get to go there
   That is where I want to be when I die.
God gave me a right to be a free American
   And for this great ole land of liberty.
Let me show my Uncle Sam what I can do sir
   Let me help to bring those Nazis down again.

"Yoo-dal-ladee-e-e-e-e, Yoo-dal-ladee-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-.” as Betty Ray called to us from their house. This was the signal and she’d come to meet us. Geraldine and Betty Ray would whisper and giggle because they had secrets they didn’t want me to know. Both claimed a boy at school.

As we walked along the path going to get the milk, we’d sing:
Geraldine said she was tired of just staying at home and never getting to do anything. She wanted to do something for the soldiers to help win the war. Then we sang another song to the top of our lungs,

\[
O, \text{ beautiful, for spacious skies} \\
\text{For amber waves of grain} \\
\text{For purple mountains majesties,} \\
\text{Above the fruited plains.} \\
\]

\[
\text{America, America,} \\
\text{God shed His grace on thee} \\
\text{And crown thy good} \\
\text{With brotherhood,} \\
\text{From sea to shining sea.} \\
\]

There was a small path through the woods that kept us out of the thickets that grew alongside the branch. This year, there were no waterholes in the branch and the rocks were white and dried. I wondered where the little minnows and crawdads went when the branch dried up.

There were caves here and there in the surrounding hillside that made it cooler. In the morning we could see lifting fog dotting the landscape coming out of the caves. People who didn't know what it was might swear that it was smoke coming from fires.

This morning Betty Ray was very excited. She had come halfway down the hill to meet us and was dancing around the trees singing to herself. She couldn't wait to tell us her news. When we got into hearing distance she hollered, “I'm movin!”

Her announcement was a shock to Geraldine and she paused for a moment. When we came closer she asked, “Where you movin?” I could hear the disappointment in her voice. Betty Ray grabbed her hand and said, “I hate ta leave my friends but we're movin ta the city where my Daddy can make some money and we can have more. We're movin ta Indianapolis, Indiana.” She went on to say that her Uncle Ed Farmer who lived on down the hollow from us was moving, too. That meant that Betty Joe, their daughter who was Geraldine’s age, would be moving.

By this time we were coming into their yard. Geraldine said, “We’re movin too. We’re movin to Silver’s Branch when Mommy gets some more money saved. Hopefully by next year. If we do I’m gonna go ta high school at Mt. Victory.”

Betty Ray was too excited to hear a word Geraldine said. In a conciliatory moment she said, “Maybe you can come and visit sometime. I'll be goin to a new school and I'll have better clothes ta wear and I just can't wait!”

We had arrived at their house and Bessie had our milk poured into gallon jars. After a cordial greetings and conversation, my sister and I started on our way home. It was obvious that Geraldine was devastated. She bitterly said, “I'll leave here as soon as I’m old enough which won't be long, maybe two years. I graduate from grade school this year and probably won't get ta go to high school.” My heart sank because I knew I had a long time before I could leave home to make money.

* * *

The sky looked far away with a few white cottony clouds floating around but no sign of rain. Geraldine and I were going to the store because Mommy needed sugar to make apple
butter. Sugar was rationed, but we had enough stamps to get 2 pounds if Howard had any in stock. It was hard to stock rationed items because he only got limited amounts at a time. We would also pick up the mail at the post office.

It was around ten o’clock, and we were just stepping out the door when we saw three men coming in the yard from the wagon road. I stopped dead in my tracks and just stood there staring, while Ol’ Jack barked. His hair was raised on his back as he snarled and ran back and forth from the woods to the front porch. Geraldine grabbed my hand and pulled me back in the house, “Don’t stare! You act like ya ain’t never seen nobody before. You embarrass me. I swear I saw you and Violet a followin pore ol’ Marg Poynter down the road talkin ta her and her tryin ta git away.”

I just kicked at her and missed her leg by a hair. She was always telling me what to do. I went back to the door, and by this time, the men had come on into the yard and were standing there talking to Jack. Mommy had come from the kitchen and was standing in the door to see who it was. The three men were all dressed up in suits and hats and they looked like they were going to church. One of them was fat and wore a tie and was sweating profusely. He spoke in a loud voice, “Howdy Ma’am! Is the mister home?”

Mommy answered, “No. He’s not here right now.”

Then the fat one said, “We’re jus goin round bout visitin people,” and held out a card. “I’m Judge Tarter, Mrs Holt. This here’s my driver and my secretary who come with me. I jus wanted ta tell ya that I’m workin’ fer you ta try ta getchee a better road ta yer house so’s ya can

Somerset Journal. Prisoner Three Years, Home.

After spending more than three long years in Japanese prison camps, where he was subjected to much cruel treatment, Corp. Carl Begley, 23, son of Mrs. Stella Begley, returned to his home at Stab Monday on a 30-day furlough. “I just can’t believe it is true,” was his greeting to relatives and old friends who have been greatly concerned about his safety for many months. Cpl. Begley is one of the heroes of Corregidor who miraculously came through many severe ordeals. It was on May 7, 1942, when he was taken prisoner, and it was on September 16, this year, he was freed from a prison camp in Japan. While held a prisoner the Pulaskian suffered greatly from malnutrition and lost 35 pounds. Since his liberation Begley said he had been fed like a king and was back to normal weight. He wishes he could forget the last three years with all its heartaches. Corp. Begley volunteered in the army February 7, 1941, entering the Coast Artillery and Anti-Aircraft Corps. He took his basic training at Ft. McDowell, Angel Island, California, and went to the Philippines April 22, 1941. He served with H Battery of the 60th Coast Artillery A.A. On Corregidor and American forces held out as long as they possibly could but the ammunition supply ran low and the equipment they had was so obsolete. The Japs succeeded in cutting off their supplies and surrender was the only course. Sixteen thousand prisoners taken by the Japs on Corregidor were moved by boat to Manila and from there to Prison Camp 3 in the Philippines. For five months Begley was held in this camp, then being moved to Ft. Erie. Here for 21 months he worked as a stevedore, loading and unloading all kinds of cargo under the direction of Nip guards. Eleven hundred of the Americans, including Begley, were herded into the cargo hold of a small Jap ship and taken on a 12-day cruise to Japan where they were placed in the Honawa Prison Camp September 9, 1944. The boat trip was a nightmare that Begley will never forget. There was very little ventilation in the hold as the hatches were halfway closed. Many of the men were sick and when they fainted would be carried up to the deck, left until they came to, and sent back to the hold, said Begley. “If we were lucky we would get 600 grains of rice (a cereal bowl) and a canteen of water a day. They would hand buckets of rice down into the hold and we would scoop out some and put it in our mess kits. They would then send down a bucket of water to wash the kits. (continued)
We were very careful not to waste any and would drink the water after we had cleaned our kits. One of the men died on that trip to Japan and we were constantly in fear submarines would get us, said Corp. Begley. In the Honowa Camp there were 500 American prisoners and they worked in the copper mines six days a week from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. with 30 minutes off for lunch. On Sundays they would take us to the prison farm and work us all day. In the Honowa Camp, 400 miles north of Tokyo, they fed us rice three times a day, and a little radish water soup. During the entire time we were held prisoners we received bread only six times, small pieces of meat less than a dozen times and no milk, “said Begley. “The Jap guards beat us with their hands and clubs for any excuse they could think of. If they got up feeling bad they would take it out on us and got much pleasure out of cracking our heads together. The guards were always armed and many of them could speak English. After the first few months we never got to see a newspaper. We had no radio communications but in our conversation with the English speaking guards we learned from time to time that the war wasn’t going any too well for the Nips. During the entire time I was a prisoner, I received only five letters from home, although many, many more were written. All the time I had the utmost faith that some day I would get home but at times the prospects seemed pretty dark,” said Begley. Corporal Begley said the prisoners first knew the war was over August 20 when the camp commander called the men together and made the announcement, reading the official surrender bulletin to them. Immediately the men were relieved of their labor duties and rations were greatly increased. We were formally liberated September 16, taken by train to Cendi, and from there to Yokahoma by Navy transport. Here they were processed and returned home, arriving at Seattle, Washington, September 27. He spent a few days at the rest camp at White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, before getting an active duty furlough, and will return to White Sulphur after his visit here. Several of the members of the Harrodsburg, Kentucky, Tank Company were in the prison camps with him, he said. The only other native Pulaski service man who was a Jap prisoner of war was 1st Lt. Ben Vansant, son of Mr. and Mrs. V.C. Vansant who lost his life when a ship transporting American prisoners from the Philippines to Japan was blown up. Corporal Begley’s decorations include the Silver Star with two oak leaf clusters.

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serve on the jury. That if they did you’d make shore they was picked.”

He kept glancing at the two with him and backing toward the road as he answered, “They jus misunderstood. I’m not privy ta that type of thang. I couldn’t do that if I wanted to. Besides, why’d I want to?”

“People ain’t as stupid as you think. You have ta get votes ta get re-elected don’t ya?” Mommy asked. “Even ta diggin them up out of the graveyard.”

That statement set my mind in motion. What did she mean by “dug them up out of the graveyard”? I imagined them going at midnight digging up a corpse and getting him to sign a ticket. No! No! Surely not!

By this time the Judge had regained his composure. He said, “Well, we got a lot of walkin ta do so we’d better go. Tell the mister I wus here, and maybe he don’t feel that way.”

As he turned to go I heard him mutter under his breath, “They shoulda never give women the right to vote cause it causes all kinds of trouble.”

We all went in the house, and I asked Mommy why she said he was a liar. She said, “All politicians are liars. They tell lies ta git in office promising everythin to everybody and knowin all the time that they ain’t gonna do it. They want to be big shots and want ta git rich and politics is where all the money is. Well I think it’s time we made someone else rich. Ain’t no difference in em. All the same. Now go on and get to the store. I’d a never talked ta a honest man that-a-way.”

We waited a little while before going to the store so they would go on and we wouldn’t have to follow too close behind. Then we started out and still caught up to where we could see them around the bend. They went up to the door at Violet’s and we hurried to pass the house before they finished their visit.
October – December, 1943

December marked the two-year anniversary of the United States entry into a global war against the tripartite Axis powers. One Axis power (Italy) had been knocked out of the conflict and that country was now a bloody, chaotic, and confused battlefield.

Washington announced that over 50,000 fathers had been drafted in October and November and 20 times that number would be required to meet the next year’s requirements. The armed forces were seeking to have 11 million men and women in uniform the following year.

In October, the Secretary of the Navy warned that despite recent success, the German U-Boat menace remained a real and serious threat to Allied shipping and would remain so until the end of the war.

In October, American General Clark’s 5th Army occupied Naples while the British 8th Army advanced as far as 30 miles north of the city.
Mommy and I were preparing to go to the post office to get our mail and hear news of the war. My brothers were in the service and Jessie and Georgia were with Poppy in Ohio. Since Poppy was gone I sure missed my trips at night with him to Robcat’s. But we were putting away the money he brought home to buy the Bolton place. I could hardly wait.

The brilliant colored leaves were falling early because it was so dry. The yard was almost covered where the wind blew them from the nearby woods. While waiting for Mommy, I raked them into big piles and covered my whole body. I called and called Jack to come but when he didn’t I figured he was off chasing a rabbit. The rattling of the dry leaves reminded me of someone shaking a shuck bed.

It was around ten o’clock and the mail came near ten-thirty. We wanted to be there for mail call because all the neighbors had boys in the service and the whole community was concerned for their welfare. All families were united in their desire for victory in this devastating war.

In the midst of my thoughts a man’s voice about scared me to death. I didn’t know there was anyone around and was not expecting anyone. He asked, “Is your mother here?”

A stranger stood looking at me with brown eyes staring under his dark brown eyebrows. He was about 6 feet tall and very thin, with a haggard face and a receding hairline. He wore a flannel shirt and overalls and a khaki jacket. The sorrowful expression on his face belied his composure.

Quickly I answered him, “Yes, I’ll get her,” and ran to the house with my heart beating wildly. I didn’t know who this strange man was and I didn’t want to be alone with him.

Mommy came to the door, “Howdy, Lloyd, come in, come in. How’er yer folks?”

He moved with cat-like agility as he approached the porch, stepping lightly in the leaves that had been swept against the house.

With an unusually soft voice, he answered, “Mom and Pop are okay. They’re concerned bout the war jus like all of us.

He sat down in a straight-backed chair and leaned it against the wall. Then he reached in his shirt pocket and pulled out a bag of tobacco. Mommy sat on the end of the bed next to the door. She motioned for me to sit down, and I realized I was staring at our visitor.

He waved his hand holding the tobacco and said, “I picked up this here habit while I wus up at the asylum in Danville. Ya know, I jus got out.”

“Yeah,” Mommy said, “I know you were ther fer a while.”

“Ya know, Winnie.” He kept on talking with exhaled smoke playing around his mouth and nose. “I was sent up fer hurtin tha girl, but I didn’t do it.”

Looking out the window Mommy answered him, “Lloyd, I didn’t thank ya did.”

For a while, he and my mother carried on the usual conversation about Jesse Dykes (his brother, and sister Maydell’s husband) and other people they knew.

After a long silence Lloyd said, “I hyar all yer boys are gone to the service. I don’t thank we’ll be much longer winnin this war, if’n we can git Stalin ta keep his hands off Poland. I hyard on tha radio this mornin that he murdered 11,000 men they found in mass graves fore Germany invaded. Russia wants ta own most of Poland.

I shore wish they’d take me, but they won’t. The army wouldn’t take me. I’ve got somethin wrong, ya know.” Then his voice became louder, “There’s times when my head hurts so bad I can’t thank or see. This thang gets swelled and pushes so hard ginst my scull that hit seems like hit’s alive. I jus can’t stand hit any longer!” His face was changing right before us. His black
eyes were blazing, and his flushed face betrayed his controlled manner. He got up from the chair and began walking back and forth across the room as he rolled another cigarette. “They say I’m not right in my head. I’ve been sufferin with this pain fer so long, ever since I wus a boy. It seems ta start in the front of my skull and goes all round and meets in the back. I know there’s somethin in there that hain’t right. Hit needs to come out and I know you have helped other people with this problem. I know ya have tools ta cut in my head and take this thang out. Ya see,” he put his finger above his ear and trace an imaginary line around his head. “Ya see, you start right bove the year and go all round the hair line. It’ll come right off then and you can pull it out. That’s why I’m here. I’ve come ta git ya ta do this.”

I was wondering what he was talking about because I didn’t know Mommy had tools like that. She got up from her chair staring at Lloyd in a strange way. She said, “Lloyd, I don’t understand what ya thank I can do fer you. I’d help you any way I can but I can’t cut in yore head. I don’t have that kinda tools.”

He sat down in the chair and rolled another cigarette with shaking hands, sticking it in his mouth after licking the side together and then he quietly said, “Winnie, I know hits askin a lot fer ya ta do this but I can’t thank straight till I git my head back together. I don’t know why hit picked me but I know hit’s alive. I think the devil picked me ta be his angel. Hit blocks out the good thoughts and I thank bad thangs that I wouldn’t do ifen I was in my right mind.”

Mommy excused herself, saying she had to look about the beans she was cooking for dinner, and motioned for me to follow. I followed her in the kitchen and she whispered to me, “Run and tell Dault to get on his mule and go get George Dykes, Lloyd’s father, and tell him his son is here and talking crazy.” The urgency in her voice made me realize we might be in a dangerous position. I took off as fast as I could go.

I found Dault and relayed the message. Dault stood there for a minute looking kind of stunned. Then he rushed to get his bridle to put on Ol’ Jake, his mule. When he asked, “What’s he doin out of the insane asylum? Did he run off?”

Central Kentucky Asylum for the Insane. The facility cared for patients with psychiatric disorders, mental retardation, and brain damage and was located next to where Louisville’s E.P. Tom Sawyer Park stands today. The original building shown in the postcard above was buldozed in 1996.
I answered, “I don’t know. He’s talkin ta Mommy bout cuttin in his head and takin somethin out.”

Dault looked at me with his steady blue eyes and I could see thoughts running around in his head. He started running to the barn where Ol’ Jake was lying and grabbed an ear of corn to coax Jake into action. Jake eagerly took the corn and then Dault slipped the reins over his head and the bit into his mouth. He jumped on Jake’s bare back and dug his heels in his side. They took off and then went over the sage grass field with Jake bucking and jumping trying to get rid of the unwanted burden on his back. Dault hung on, his long legs almost touching the ground.

I almost forgot that I needed to hurry home as I stood watching the funny spectacle the pair made, with Dault’s and Jake’s legs hidden in the tall sage grass looking like a two-headed boat sailing in a turbulent sea of grass. Reality returned and I ran in the direction of home.

When I got there Lloyd was gone. Mommy said after I left he started to yell and get nasty because he realized she had sent for his father and he left on the run. Later, Dault told us that he had met Lloyd’s father coming to get him. He said that Lloyd was not well enough to be out in society and that he would have to send him back to the institution.

* * *

**Somerset Journal. A drift 44 days in the Indian Ocean.**

In interviews at San Francisco, California, last week, Lonnie Whitis of Eubank, Route 1, and Edgar Allen Weihe of Louisville, each a seaman first class, told reporters of their experiences adrift on a raft for 44 days in the Indian Ocean. The two were members of a Navy gun crew on a cargo ship which was sunk by a submarine in July. “Whitis was in his bunk and I was on watch when the first torpedo hit,” Weihe recounted. “I gave the general alarm and manned a machine gun and got a shot in at a light, but couldn’t see any sub. A half hour later the abandon ship signal sounded.” Weihe and Whitis were going to climb into one of the two lifeboats, but the first mate ordered them to jump as it was too crowded. They were to get into the open boat later. They jumped, were thrown a small “doughnut” raft and drifted around to port side when the second torpedo blasted the stricken ship, blowing a big raft into the water near the two. It was still dark and the sea was rough. They managed to crawl aboard the other raft, fully provisioned for 20 men, and a moment later a submarine appeared and an officer called out: “Good luck – hope you make it.” They made it, all right, after 44 days that were fun at first, but harrowing toward the end. At dawn they watched their ship sink, and then there was nothing on the horizon. (The lifeboats had sailed on, made land within a day.) “We thought we’d rationed food carefully,” Weihe said, “but we had enough for 20, so I guess we were pretty generous with it. We ran out of food in 27 days. On the 30th day, we ran out of water.” At first they tried to set sail with blankets, but they were wet and the spray made them wetter. They tried to row, but the raft was too big. So they just settled back and let her drift. They were covered with oil from their brief floundering in the water, but that was a happy circumstance. It kept them from getting sun and wind-burned. But it played havoc with their skivvies, shirts, and dungarees. After the first few happy days, they started taking turns keeping track of the days, so that each would have some sort of responsibility. It helped the time to pass. On the eighth day, a plane flew overhead. They signaled with mirrors. The plane went away, came back at dusk, circled, and went away again, never returned. On the 10th day a flying boat came over at dusk. They signaled with flashlights. The flying boat flickered its lights in reply. But it went away and never came back. About this time a flock of albatrosses showed up. They hovered over the raft. Some of them even lighted. Weihe caught one. “Want him?” Weihe asked. “Naw, let him go,” Whitis replied. There was still plenty of food on board. So Weihe let the big bird go. But (continued)
One cool morning I sat on a log at the edge of the woods deep in thought about what I could do to help the soldier boys, and about when we would be moving.

The sun cast a pinkish hue in the eastern sky and began to rise over the horizon. Everything got deeper pink and as the color went higher in the sky the dew glittered and the sun cast shadows of the trees on the hill. Then the whole sky lit up and there was a big, beautiful, bright ball of fire.

I remembered Mommy talking about our neighbors. Ogal and Willie Farmer's younger son, Seldon, had just been called to the service. He was in the pre-cadet aviation department of the Army training to be a flyer. I thought of how I would like to fly one of those big planes, although the ones that passed over the house didn't look very big. They were usually in a V formation and very, very high on their way to the air bases along the southeast coast.

My thoughts turned to the gossip about an Army plane having to make a forced landing about 2 miles from Ula Post Office Saturday. That was about 5 miles from us as the crow flies. R. L. Hail who runs the Post Office said the pilot thought he was out of gas. After he landed he found he had enough gas to get to Danville. I sure would like for one to land in our yard. Not that I would want anyone to get hurt, but I sure would like to see an airplane close up.

If the war lasted I was going to do like Maxine Wright from Mt. Victory and join the

(continued) it wouldn't go. We pushed it overboard. It climbed back on. Four times Weihe pushed the albatross off the raft and he finally went away. A nice pot roast, too, both later thought with regrets. On the 26th day, when life on the broad ocean was getting to pall, a ship steamed by about 3 miles off. They signaled, they shouted, they waved their arms. But the ship steamed on by. On the 28th day, a school of six whales came up and played around the raft. Big fellows. They blew spray over the raft and soaked the two voyagers. “We were sure scared stiff,” Weihe admitted, “until a couple of porpoises came along and drove the whales off. And then their food gave out. Next, the water tanks went dry. They had some malted milk tablets left, but they couldn't get them over without water. They wouldn't melt. With fishing tackle, part of raft equipment, they caught a fish. And out of the sky came an albatross, maybe the same one that was so reluctant to leave before. They killed this bird. But they didn't relish eating the bird or the fish raw. So what did they do? They roasted them. “We tore a slate off the bottom of the raft,” Weihe said. “We broke up this slate and built a fire in a tin hat and had roast fish and albatross. Tasted swell.” Several times it rained and they caught fresh water in the tin hat. In between rains they would lie in the food well and let their bodies soak up moisture. So they were getting along fairly well. And then on the 35th day they began showing signs of getting a big slaphappy or sea-happy. “Hear that?” Weihe whispered, “A choir – a church choir?” “Don't hear no church choir,” Whitis answered. “But I do hear a motor,” “I hear motors too,” Weihe said. “And a choir.” They took stock therewith of themselves and their chances of survival. They decided their yellow distress flag was bad luck, so they hauled it down. They decided they wouldn't signal nor shout nor wave their arms next time a plane or ship showed up, just for change of luck. And so, at daybreak of the 44th day, Weihe swept his space-wearied eyes across the horizon, poked Whitis vigorously, pointed, and cried: “Look an isle! An isle with a tree on it.” Whitis looked sharp. “Heck,” he said, “that's no isle; that's a ship with a mast on it.” So, for luck's sake, they didn't signal nor shout nor wave their arms. They took stock therewith of themselves and their chances of survival. They decided their yellow distress flag was bad luck, so they hauled it down. They decided they wouldn't signal nor shout nor wave their arms next time a plane or ship showed up, just for change of luck. And so, at daybreak of the 44th day, Weihe swept his space-wearied eyes across the horizon, poked Whitis vigorously, pointed, and cried: “Look an isle! An isle with a tree on it.” Whitis looked sharp. “Heck,” he said, “that's no isle; that's a ship with a mast on it.” So, for luck's sake, they didn't signal nor shout nor wave their arms. Just sat there with arms folded, watching curiously. And the ship, a British merchantman, almost ran them down! They were picked up, given tea and crumpets and clothes. Weihe had lost 12 pounds, Whitis 15. The vessel took the boys to a base where they eventually were placed aboard another ship bound for the United States. They learned that they had drifted approximately 280 miles in the 44 days, most of that distance away from land. Whitis is expected to arrive home this week on a well deserved leave. He is the son of Mr. George Whitis who lives near Texas school.
Marines. She had become famous as a big poster girl for the Marines after graduating from Sue Bennett College. But first I had to attend school and grow up.

Then I thought about moving to our own place on Silvers Branch. I was very anxious to know if there were any kids I could play with nearby. Just hanging around with Jack and having to pretend he was a person had lost its amusement, even though I loved my pets.

Ol’ Tom was sitting by a mouse hole in the kitchen baseboard that morning. I stood very
still and I could hear gnawing inside the wall as the mice were sharpening their teeth on the wood. A few minutes later I heard a skirmish and the squeal of Tom’s prey as he held its neck, cutting off its air. Tom would sit all night to catch his breakfast. He was a good mouser.

Jack wasn’t on the porch waiting for me as always. Where could he be? Did he find something to eat or a bone to gnaw on? I called and called but Jack didn’t come. I had noticed he had laid around a lot and didn’t do much with me lately. I had just figured he was getting old and didn’t want to play any more.

After looking all around for him, I went in the house and asked Geraldine if she had seen Jack. She just hung her head and didn’t answer. Then I demanded, “What’s wrong with Jack? Where is he? You know something! Did somebody hurt him? Is he sick?”

All these questions came pouring out of me as Geraldine raised her head from where she was peeling potatoes for dinner, “No, he’s not sick; he’s dead!”

I heard Jimmie making his little crying noise behind the heating stove tearing paper from a catalogue. I should have known something was wrong because Jimmie always seemed to sense trouble, causing him to be nervous and cry constantly.

But I thought she was joking, “Ah, Geraldine, quit makin up stuff. Where is he?”

“I’m not makin it up. He died last night, but he was sick the last two days and ya didn’t even notice,” she said as she finished peeling the potatoes and started washing the breakfast dishes. “Come on and dry these dishes and I’ll help ya bury him after we get the house straightened.”

I still thought she was joking, “Where is he? I want to see him!” I demanded, as I began to cry.

With a tight voice she answered, “I found him under the porch late las night and drug him over ta the other side of the house. He wus already dead when I found him.”

I ran outside and found him lying there just like he was resting after a hard play. He couldn’t be dead! Tears started to roll as I tried to wake him up. Touching his body, I found it stiff, climaxing the sorrow I felt. What had I done? I didn’t know he was sick. How thoughtless of me. There must be something I can do, I thought. What would I do without Jack, my constant companion since I could remember? Mommy! Where was Mommy? I went to the barn where she was feeding the chickens and Jericho.

By this time I was bawling out loud as sobs racked my body. Mommy was in the barn gathering the eggs when she heard me crying. She came with her apron full of eggs, and sympathy marking her face. “Jewell,” she said, “Jack is gone and I know hit hurts but he lived a happy life. He wouldn’t have liked a new home, so don’t cry no more cause we’ll get another dog.”

“I don’t want another dog,” I cried. I couldn’t remember when there wasn’t Jack to play with. I just couldn’t imagine him not being around. I ran back and laid my head on his back and sobbed and sobbed until I was sick. As the shock began to wear off, I realized that Jack had to be buried.

Geraldine was making the beds when I went in the house, and she said, “He was old and everythan dies after a time. You need ta stop cryin and get ta thinkin bout somethin else.”

We took a grubbing hoe and a shovel, walked next to the garden fence near the branch and dug a big hole. I asked her to pull him over and put him in the hole while I retrieved his old quilt he always slept on to cover his body. It would make me feel like he was just asleep in his home.

We mounded up the dirt over his body and put a rock at the head for a tombstone. I asked her if we could have a funeral for him. She looked at me kind of funny and said we could.

I gathered some wildflowers that grew along the branch and put them on his grave. I stood at the foot and Geraldine stood at the head. I began to speak in a tearful voice from my
heart. “Jack, ya wus always my friend when I didn’t have any. I know yer in heaven now but I will shore miss ya.” I couldn’t say anymore I was so choked up. Then I asked Geraldine, “Can we sing ‘Ol’ Shep’?”

She nodded her head as she was near tears even though she hadn’t cared much for my dog. We began to sing:

When I was a lad and ol’ Shep was a pup
Through the hills and valleys we’d stray
Just a boy and his dog, we were both full of fun
And we grew up together that way
I remember the time at the old swimming hole
When I would have died beyond doubt
But ol’ Shep was right there, to my rescue he came
He jumped in and helped pull me out.

Ol’ Shep was my pal but he was getting old
His eyesight was fast growing dim
Then one day the doctor looked at him and said,
“I can do no more for him, Jim.”
With trembling hands I picked up my gun
And aimed it at Shep’s grateful head.
I just couldn’t do it, I started to run
I wished they would shoot me instead.

Now Ol’ Shep is gone where the good doggies go,
No more on this earth will he roam.
If dogs have a heaven, there’s one thing I know
Ol’ Shep has a wonderful home.

Exhaustion filled my body from all the pain and sorrow caused by my loss. Trying to console myself my thoughts turned to my new home and life without Jack.
PART IV

THE END OF THE WAR
January – March, 1944

The new year of 1944 was bathed in much more optimism than the previous few years as the global outlook for the Allied Nations appeared much brighter. However, devastation, doom, and threatening skies brought in 1944 to the remaining Axis Powers.

On the domestic front, the government announced that it would use prisoners of war to relieve labor shortages in the northern timberlands of Michigan; German POWs were paid 80 cents a day. Soldiers were buying war bonds at the rate of $30 million per month.

Although Ireland had declared its neutrality in this Great War there were more Irish troops fighting for the Allies than many other countries within the alliance. But the ancient hatred that existed between the Irish and English and Irish stubbornness was blamed for not clearing Nazi spies from their country. So, Great Britain isolated Ireland from the rest of the world with a naval blockade as it prepared for an invasion of Western Europe.
Robcat had come with his team of feisty mules and a jolt wagon to help us move. How exciting! Moving day! Winter had finally passed and Mommy and Poppy had signed the deed for the place on Silvers Branch, so we owned our own home. It was March and the wind was bitter cold as we loaded up the things we were taking. I threw on my old winter coat and a scarf for my head so I would be warm riding in the wagon.

“Whoa!” Robcat called to his mules. The reddish brown team stopped at his command. “Gee,” he directed, pulling the reins to right and then to the left “Haw! Haw! Come on now and git in there!” he coaxed while backing the wagon to the front door.

“Robcat,” Mommy said as we were carrying out the kitchen stove. “We’ll only have two loads cause we’re not takin a lot of stuff that’s no good.” The stove was so heavy it took all of us to handle it. We had torn down the pipe and had taken off the warming closet that was attached to the back of it. The stovepipe needed replacing so we would buy that new. Our Hoosiers and Baker’s kitchen cabinets would go on the second load. We were not taking the old eating table. Lindsey Wilson College was remodeling and had given Leonard a big solid oak library table that we would use with the new chairs Dault had made for us.

Robcat nodded his agreement as he jumped to the ground, hitched up his overalls and adjusted his old felt hat. Spitting out a stream of amber from a wad of tobacco that bulged his cheek, he said, “That’ll be bout all we can do anyway cause the days are so short.”

There were three old bedsteads, feather ticks and feather pillows in the back of the wagon and also a layoff plow, axes, and saws. Trunks held our clothes and linens. We took the sewing machine because we couldn’t buy everything new.

Mommy and Geraldine walked with Jimmie. It was a long walk for him but they rested a few times. We didn’t know how he would react to his new home because he didn’t deal well with new situations.

All the animals had died except Tom the cat, and some chickens. Last winter Tom had gotten caught in a steel trap somewhere and had come home with his front paw hanging by the skin. The paw finally rotted off and healed over but that didn’t stop him from getting his mice. We were leaving him until we could walk back and get him in a couple of days.

Before we left I found him in the barn sitting on the stall door, washing his paw and shining his black and white gleaming coat. I remembered the many times he hung around the barn at milking time waiting for a bowl of milk. Sometimes he’d rub around Ol’ Brindle’s legs and I’d squirt him in the face. He’d jump testily away and begin trying to lick his face, and rub his nose and eyes that were dripping with milk. Nor would I ever forget when he waylaid me on the way to school and scratched my face. But I deserved it because I had been mean to him that morning. “Promise me, Tom, to be right hyar when we come back ta git you,” I said as I turned to go. When I looked back, his impish green eyes were following me in his independent way.

We tied the chicken’s legs together, and put them in grass sacks to take on the wagon. They squawked and cackled at first, but settled down eventually. It was my job to keep them on the wagon as we went over the sharp jolts that would almost send everything over the side.

I hated leaving the place of my birth, but I knew we weren’t moving far away, and I’d come back and play with Violet sometimes. We pulled out, and I jumped on the feather mattress by the back wheel. Obstacles were magnified many times over when the wagon wheels bounced and slid over them. We moved at a slow pace, because each small dip or rock caused the load to jump around even though we had tied it down with ropes. I felt like getting off the wagon.
and running to get there faster, but I had to mind the chickens.

I rode both trips back and forth, helping with loading and unloading each time. When the last piece was in our new house, Robcat spoke softly to his mules as they pulled the wagon out of the yard and started home. With their ears perked, and their necks straight, they began walking rapidly; darkness was creeping in, and they knew they were going home for supper. We were all tired, but we still had to set up our beds so we could sleep.

Jimmie slept fretfully that night, making little whimpering noises. We caught him in the middle of the night trying to get outside, so I slept with him the rest of the night.

The next day when we went back to pick up some small stuff, I went to the barn where I left Tom. I called and called, but Tom was nowhere around. I searched everywhere, in his favorite hiding places, and all under the house, but I never found Tom. Mommy yelled that it was time to go. I left with her but kept frantically calling until I was out of sight of the house.

I decided then and there that I would be back soon to find him. I knew he wouldn’t have gone off from home for long.

* * *

Going back home we traveled over what is now Sears Road and past the Sears’ places. There were two houses within sight of each other. Ruth Sears and her son, Nathan Jay, lived in one of them. We stopped to say hello and Ruth told us she was moving from there to Mt. Victory before long. Unfortunately, Nathan Jay was killed soon after that in an automobile accident.

Mazzie Klein, one of the Sears descendants, lived in the other house. She had moved back from Cincinnati because she had developed a tumor in her abdomen, and refused to have surgery. She was of the Holiness faith, and believed that God would heal her. She kept her granddaughter, Joyce, who was younger than me.

Earlier before we moved, Mommy and I had walked to Silvers Branch to look at our new home, and we stopped to talk with Mazzie. Her stomach was very large; but otherwise she was a small, beautiful, classic featured woman. She wore her hair in a bun on the back of her neck, and her large, soft, blue eyes with her oval shaped face, and full mouth, made an angelic picture. When we left I asked Mommy, “When is she going to have a baby?”

Mommy replied, “Mazzie's got a tumor growin in her stomach, which is gonna kill her cause hit jus keeps growin.” I thought that was a shame because she was so nice.

After we passed Mazzie’s, we descended down a steep hill that led us to Silvers Branch, just below Charlie Bolton’s house, directly across the branch from our house. Silvers Branch began at the top of Mt. Victory hill, and passed the Silvers place at the bottom of the hill; thus the name, “Silvers Branch.” This house was where a brother and sister of the Silvers family lived and their parents before them. There were two houses, and two barns, each on opposite sides of the branch, with a few acres of cleared land nestled in the valley.

The branch ran past Bodie Farmer’s place, and on down past Charlie Bolton’s and ours. A sinkhole in the branch, right in front of Charlie’s house, took some of the water underground. It was the conduit for the many small streams that rushed from the surrounding hills into the lower valley, and in wet weather it created a swift current, cutting the gullies deeper and wider. The many sinkholes that had formed from the large cave system helped reduce the flooding by acting as another outlet for the water until it reached Buck Creek. That is, until the water overflowed the sinkholes, or they were stopped up with large trees or trash, and then the branch flooded the entire nearby bottoms.

The branch was used for many years as the road for wagons, and for the few automobiles that drove by on their way to Mt. Victory. It was plenty wide with a lot of creek rocks for a road, but there were some places that would wash out with a long rainy spell in the spring.
People carried shovels and axes in case they had to clear debris out that had washed into it after a heavy rain. The branch flowed about 100 yards in front of our house, with only a small bottom separating it from our yard.

Another smaller branch flowed on the right side of the house and emptied into Silvers Branch about 100 yards from our house. It carried the waters running off the hills from the south. Silvers Branch became a roaring monster, especially after the small branch emptied its muddy rushing water into it, sometimes overflowing and creating a lake covering the bottom where we grew our tobacco.

A small store building that the Bolton’s had used for a grocery store, sat in the corner where both branches met. Our woodshed sat almost on top of the branch but the banks were so high that it never flooded. Our house was sitting only about 20 feet from the woodshed and our barn was about 50 yards up the side of the branch.

Robcat needed to bring his mules and wagon by our place, so he had cut a road in the side of the hill above the branch. On both sides of the branch were steep cliffs and woods.

Many times in the ensuing years we watched the branch as it rose over the banks with our house only a few feet from the mad rushing waters. If it were rising late in the evening, Mommy would stay up and keep watch so we would have time to go up the hill directly in back of our house if it became necessary. It is a wonder how people knew just how far to set a house from a branch.

Our house was once a three-room log building, but the recent owner had built on two bedrooms and a front and back porch, and had covered the whole house with clapboard siding. We found that when it snowed, it blew through the cracks in the bedrooms. We’d wake to a light covering of snow on the covers, especially in the room where we children slept. It was the farthest room away from the heating stove, and it had been added on with very little thought for warmth. The floor would be covered in a light powdery snow, enough to see our footprints when we got up in the morning. Cracks around the windows let in the cold air, but with plenty of covers and featherbeds, we could keep warm enough, even if we had been sleeping outside in zero weather.

Remnants of the old barn.
About halfway up the hill in the back of the house, there was an ever-running spring that came out from under a large rock, through a small opening. Trees surrounded it, and cool air came from under the rock. It supplied water for us. A small dug out pool below the spring provided water for the cows in the dry summer time.

To carry the water down the steep hill from the spring to the house a galvanized water pipe had been laid. It was buried six inches under the ground. This was a problem in the winter, because the pipes froze, and constant leaks at each joint in the summertime created a playground for crawdads to work mud into the pipe, stopping the water flow.

In bad weather the mailman rode horseback to deliver mail from one post office to another. Wagons didn't have too much trouble, unless the branch was really up. Then, of course, there was a danger of the wagon being washed away, and horses and driver being drowned.

* * *

I was out playing with my new white rabbits that Mommy had brought me from Mazzie’s. I named them Flopsey and Peter, and I was engrossed in watching them munch grass with their little soft noses and whiskers moving. Their whiskers were moving up and down rapidly as they nibbled out of my hand. Hearing a car motor brought me to my feet.

There weren’t many automobiles, so I wanted to see who it was. From the yard, I could see the top of a cattle truck, coming around the bend in the branch, with a couple of cows in the back.

“Mommy! Mommy! Come quick! Looky! Looky!” I yelled as I ran to the house.

Mommy came to the door wiping her hands on her apron and asked, “For goodness sake!
What in tarnation is wrong? I coulda hyard ya a mile away.”

I was running around, jumping up and down, as the truck stopped by the storehouse, and started backing up to the side of the bank. Mommy’s face lit up as she rushed back in the room to change her apron and brush her hair. Quickly she was back on the porch, watching as the truck stopped. A man got out and yelled. “Winnie, I brought you them two good milk cows you wanted. They’re good milkers, and they’re already bred to a Hereford bull.”

I ran ahead of Mommy as we hurried to the truck. A man in overalls and brogans was inside the truck bed, and a younger man was pulling a cow with a large udder out of the truck with a rope. The man said, “Thought maybe we could unload them hyar with no trouble.”

One cow had crooked horns that circled in toward her head. The other one was light blond with brown masking on her face. She was already tied to the outside of the truck, waiting for someone to lead her away. After both cows were unloaded, the men took them to the barn and helped us put them in a stall. The older man said, “I’d leave ‘em there till tomorrie. They might run off till they git usted ta hit hyar.” Mommy agreed and she paid him $200, plus $3 each for bringing them to us.

I could sense Mommy’s excitement as she looked at the beautiful blond Jerseys with brownish markings around their big placid eyes. Jerseys were a gentle breed. I named them Ernestine and Josephine. “We’ll git our money back in a year’s time. We’ll have milk all the time, and we can sell cream twice a week, cause they give rich milk, jus bout half cream. There’s a truck that picks the cream up twice a week ta take ta town,” she said as we went to the house to get a bucket to milk in. Their udders were full of milk, and we would milk them that evening.

* * *

I’d been passed to fourth grade before I left Poplarville, so I wouldn’t have to start to Providence until next year, even though school wasn’t officially out for this year yet.

I’d have to walk straight up a hill about one mile to get to my new school. Providence was an old schoolhouse but larger than Poplarville School. It set in a clearing in the woods, above Neil Bolton’s and below Dale Edwards’ place. Kids from out the ridge, as far as Joe Lem Mounce’s, place attended Providence school, and the Ping children who lived down in the

The old Providence Schoolhouse.
hollow, as well as Joyce Farmer, Bill Arthur Farmer's daughter. Eva Lee and Bonnie Bolton, my good friends and neighbors also attended the school. There were about 20 children, and a woman teacher, Ina Mae Bolton, who lived in a big house right across the branch from me.

Providence Baptist Church was also the name of the church where some of the children attended. My mother's brothers and her mother were buried in the graveyard there.

Lucy Whitis lived within sight of the church all her life and her family still lives there. They have taken care of the church and cemetery for many years. Lucy would get happy when the spirit hit her, and the old church house would go to rocking when she shouted.

Our new neighbors were Charlie and Ina Mae Bolton, and two children, Eugene and Edith May. Eugene had graduated from Mt. Victory High School and was in college, and Edith Mae was Geraldine's age. Geraldine had graduated from eighth grade at Poplarville and was planning on starting to Mt. Victory High School this year.

Jim and Bertha Bolton lived around the road about a mile toward Somerset. Their two sons were in the service and one child (Eva Lee) was at home. She was physically handicapped. Matt Bolton, the man who owned the place we bought, was the father of Charlie, Neil, Ed, and Jim. He had sold his place because Ed, his son who lived with him, had just been elected jailer and needed to move to town.

Neil and Evert Bolton lived up on the hill from us toward Mt. Victory. Several years before, my parents had owned and lived at the same place; however, Neil had built a new house by an ever running spring which came out of the hill and supplied all the water they needed. There were three daughters: Betty, who was Geraldine's age; Fern, who was three years older than me; and Bonnie, who was a year younger. Two sons, about the age of my brothers, were in the armed services.

George Massamore stayed with them at this time for his room and board. He was a small thin man who didn't have a home. He helped them on the farm with hoeing and cleaning their crops and other chores. He could have stayed with Ellen Dykes, his sister, but he liked staying at Neil's where there was a big family.

George had been homeless for most of his life and had become a good fisherman. But George ignored the fishing laws and it sometimes got him into trouble. He learned that running a trotline and building a dam across the creek, would produce much more fresh fish than the conventional way.

Periodically a Fish and Wildlife Officer would find his fishing apparatuses and tear them down. This would make George furious, as he was child-like, and had a bad temper. Since George didn't have a steady home, they didn't catch him but they knew who the guilty man was. They knew that George was harmless and depended on selling his fish to give him a little money, so they went easy on him.

I remember Mommy buying a few messes of fresh fish. I really hated cleaning them. We scraped off their scales and cut off their heads. When their entrails came out you could see the heart still beating. These fish had needle-like bones embedded in the flesh that could be dangerous if you got one stuck in your throat. So we had to be careful to pull them out before eating.

Ina and Charlie Bolton lived across the road from us and kept their milk and butter in a cave (Boltons Cave) that is now called Wells Cave, directly in back of their house. I thought how nice that would be to have a big cave to explore in your back yard. Sometimes Eugene, their teen-age son, would invite high school students to a tour in the cave. One Sunday afternoon, Geraldine was invited to go with them, but not me. I would have given anything to go but they said I was too young. Geraldine came back right away with two boys assisting her as she hobbled on one foot. She had fallen and hurt her leg when they were crawling
down to the basement of the cave. They had to almost carry her out. Mommy was upset and emphatically told me I was to never go in that cave, especially by myself.

After the boys left, I was full of questions about what the cave looked like and how big it was, but she just said she would never go in it again because she was claustrophobic. I made my decision that as soon as I could sneak off I’d visit that cave. I just wanted to see what it looked like. I’d be careful and Mommy wouldn’t find out because I wouldn’t tell anyone.

My opportunity came the next day when Mommy asked me to go to Neil Bolton’s to buy a bag of sugar. Neil used one room in his house to sell grocery items. Preparing for my adventure, I had sneaked a lantern out and hid it under an overhanging rock in the dry branch.

After reinforcing myself with a handful of matches just in case my lantern went out, I took off. Geraldine had told me that there were two entrances; one directly behind Bolton’s house and the other was a short distance from the first one. This was the one I would try to enter because I didn’t want the owners to see me and it was further from their house.

As I sneaked through the bushes I came upon a pile of huge, white limestone rocks which had fallen, almost blocking the entrance to the cave. At the top were massive rocks hanging precariously over the entrance, looking as if they would fall at any time. I had to pick my steps, testing each rock to keep from starting a rockslide, which could cause sudden death. Even though I was careful, I accidentally slid down a wet, flat, moss-covered rock, standing on its edge completely blocking any return.

I stood looking at the impregnable rock wall in front of me realizing I would have to find another way out. That dreaded heavy feeling in my chest felt like someone was sitting on it. I almost cried out, but I knew I’d be in trouble with Mommy when she found I had ignored her orders. At least I still held onto my lantern.

After carefully examining the rock fall, I saw a small opening where the rocks separated. I headed toward it, climbing over rocks with my bare feet, until I reached the hole. I could see on the other side that the rocks had fallen at an angle so I proceeded to climb through the hole and over the rock pile to the ground floor of the cave. At this point I lit my lantern.

Needless to say, I was scared to death. No one knew where I was, and I knew I was in trouble. I had to find the other entrance. What if I couldn’t find it? No one could hear me no matter how loud I yelled.

I began my journey with shaking hands. Every nerve was on edge as I put one foot in front
of the other with the lantern throwing eerie images on the walls. I saw insects that looked like crickets crawling on the walls and ceiling.

Suddenly I heard whining sounds and a rush of fluttering. I looked up and saw something like birds flying near the ceiling. I hid behind a boulder until the noise settled. Holding up my lantern I saw black blobs hanging from the ceiling. They were on the far side of the tunnel so I had to try and sneak by without disturbing them. I wondered why birds would be in a cave. That didn’t make sense, but at least they weren’t bears. Lordy! Lordy! Why did I think about that! I had heard people talk about bears hibernating in caves. But it wasn’t wintertime. That consoled me until I remembered Hyle saying bats lived in caves and attics. They came out and flew around at twilight chasing bugs for their dinner. Sometimes they would get in the house and we chased them all over with a broom to get them out. Mommy thought that bats caused bad luck.

The floor of the cave was sandy and I could walk upright. I held the lantern high in front of me as I followed the curving tunnel where the sides came closer together causing a suffocating, squeezing, sensation. I became panic stricken when I thought it might get smaller. There was a jutting rock about half way up from the floor of the tunnel almost barring passage. Above the rock a high ceiling widened out with small openings on the walls that looked very black. I thought of all those crickets hanging onto the rock.

“Dear Lord in heaven,” I shut my eyes and began to pray. “Please help me. I know I deserve to die for not minding my mother but if you will just let me get out of here, I will never disobey her again. Amen.” Holding the lantern up I saw that the tunnel began to widen and walking was much better. My prayers were answered!

With hurried steps, I was looking for some sign of light, but in my haste, I fell over a boulder in the middle of cave floor. I dropped my lantern and heard glass break while the flame died. Instantly, I reached in my pocket and felt for my matches. Thank heaven they

George Messamore.
were there. In the dim light of a match, I found my lantern and saw the wick was flooded with coal oil. I lit it and the flames jumped high for a few moments and then settled down to a dim flickering flame.

I had stumbled into a much larger room with a tunnel taking off to the right. I trudged on and began to see marks where someone had used carbide light to write the street names of the tunnels. The tunnel I was in was Main Street. There was some writing on the wall that I couldn’t make out with my poor lighting. The tunnel to the right was Vine Street. As I inched along, the room became very large and I heard dripping water. These sounds were familiar and helped to calm my nerves.

My lantern kept going out and I only had two matches left. Carefully I made my way toward the water drip. The water was coming off the ceiling and there was a handmade trough to catch it with a bucket of milk sitting in it. I was so happy I jumped up and down and again put my light out.

Desperately feeling for my matches, I discovered that they were gone and had another heart attack moment. I began to focus on a curving wall where light seemed to be reflecting. I inched a few more feet toward the light. When I looked straight ahead I could see light coming from a large opening several feet away. Merciful goodness! I had found the other opening. Slipping and sliding over the slick muddy floor and rocks, I hurried toward the second entrance. As I looked back I realized I hadn’t seen much, like the basement and other tunnels, but I was done for the day, maybe another time when I was braver.

*   *   *

I could hear our radio blaring in the front room. The evening news with Edward R. Murrow came loud and clear over the airwaves as we anxiously tuned in to hear how the war was going.

Our troops and the British established beachheads in Normandy on the French Channel coast. This was not an easy task as the Germans fought hard to hold the beach but Hitler was sure that this was not the main objective. “The U.S. First Army under Gen. Omar Bradley executed the first object of the allied troops and Hitler refused to send the needed troops to support the movement. With the help of allied air superiority in Northern France Eisenhower moved in 850,000 troops and 150,000 vehicles.

There was a break as the commentator said, “We’ll be right back after this message.” Then there was music as voices sang this jingle:

Shine your shoes and you’ll wear a smile
Shine your shoes and you’ll be in style
Sun shines east, sun shines west
Griffin polish shines the best,

Some folks are not so particular
How they look around the feet,
But if they wore shoes upon their heads
They’d make sure they looked neat

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So ... Keep your shoe shined with Griffin all the time
A Griffin shine is the only shine
When you hear this particular rhyme. Ding-dong, ding dong,
Everybody get there it’s time to shine ... 

The music trailed off, and the commentator began the news again as he droned on and on, telling about where we were fighting, but I didn’t understand most of the terms, and the names of the countries were strange to me. I just knew that we would win because our soldiers were the best.

*  *  *

Poppy came home the next weekend to our new place. He’d gotten a ride to Poplarville Road and walked from there through Theodore Meece’s bottoms, and on past the old Tully Sears place just below our house on Silvers Branch. He had bought a *Somerset Journal* to catch up on the local news.

“Winnie, how are the cows?” Poppy asked. Mommy was peeling potatoes as she answered, “They’re givin so much milk that I’m sellin 5 gallons of cream twice a week. I had to buy a little hay to feed um, but the pasture is gettin green, so they’ll be nough grass ta feed um now on ta summer.”

The conversation turned to the war as it usually did; Mommy put her potatoes on to

*Vermont Garrison in an F-86 during the Korean War.*
cook, while Geraldine and I carried in stove wood for the cook stove. Poppy said, “I see in the paper where Vermont Garrison from Mt. Victory, Mahugh’s son, has been missing after he flew his plane over France. That’s Robcat’s nephew, you know.”

Mr. and Mrs. Mahugh Garrison were notified Saturday by the War Department that their son, First Lieut. Vermont Garrison has been missing since March 3 when he made a flight over France. Lieut. Garrison, 28, a former Pulaski County schoolteacher, is a Thunderbolt pilot. A news release from an Eighth AAF fighter station in England, dated February 19, and received this week by The Somerset Journal, stated that he recently destroyed his fifth German aircraft a Messerschmitt 109, and became one of the AAF’s newest “aces.” The victory was scored when a Thunderbolt flight he was leading met a squadron of “bandits” head-on while flying at 25,000 feet over Germany on a Fortress escort mission. “As soon as I spotted the Jerries,” said Garrison, “I broke and rolled to the starboard side. The Hun I was after must have been trying to out dive me as he made a plunge for the deck. The maneuver was useless however as I kept closing on him. I held my fire until I was about 200 yards from the Hun, then I let go. I immediately saw the white flashes of my incendiaries work their way across his port wing and then cover the fuselage and cockpit. When his plane started burning the pilot went overboard, so I broke off the engagement and headed for home.” Garrison, who attended Eastern State College for two years, served one year with the Royal Air Force prior to transferring to the AAF in July, 1943.

– Somerset Journal

“We have local men who are heroes because of their intelligence and bravery,” he said after he finished reading the article aloud.

* * *

Early Monday morning Mommy woke us up walking the floor, worried because she had had a bad dream. She said someone had spoke to her as plain as could be in a man’s voice, “‘Coyd’s dead!’ I knowed it! I knowed it! After the man’s voice, I hyard a bell rangin and you know that’s a sign somebody died. After that I couldn’t go back to sleep. I havta pull myself together till the mail runs. We’ll go to Poplarville Post Office to see if they sent a telegram there.” It had been some time since we had heard from him.

She walked the floor until time to go to Poplarville. It was a good distance but we didn’t tarry and were there in 45 minutes. The mail had just come and we received a letter from Coyd saying he was in England and was all right. He had been deathly ill and in the hospital, but he was better. He didn’t know how long he would be stationed there because he was expected to be deployed anytime to the war zone.

Mommy’s face glowed and we could see the relief from the stress she had been through.
On June 15th, Washington announced that B-29 bombers flying from newly constructed airstrips in China had bombed Japan. This was the first raid on Japan since General Doolittle led his famed volunteers off the USS Hornet in April, 1942. The war was finally to be brought to the Japanese homeland. Japanese radio also reported that U.S. forces had landed in the Marianas Islands. The U.S. Navy reported shelling the Marianas and Kuril Islands, several miles apart in the Northern Pacific. On the 22nd, President Roosevelt announced that “we can force the Japanese to unconditional surrender or national suicide much more rapidly than has been thought possible.”

Then, on the 6th of June, 1944, “Operation Overlord” kicked off and the opening of the much-anticipated Western Front was beginning. Overlord consisted of major amphibious landings at five beaches on Normandy, France, and thousands of paratroopers who landed behind German lines to create confusion and accomplish certain military objectives to assist the main invasion force to the west. The invasion force was carried to their disembarkation point by over 4,000 ships and perhaps as many as 250,000 troops hit the beaches in the first hours of combat. Thus began one of the largest, most complicated and difficult warfare operations ever conducted in the history of man.
The weather had turned nice, and spring was in the air. We had planted our garden, and had finished setting out our first tobacco crop across the bottom in front of the house. Neil Bolton had plowed the ground; Uncle Shelly came from Whetstone with his mule and used a drag to smooth out the clods, and then laid it off in rows to be planted. Mommy dropped the tobacco plants, and Geraldine and I had followed along behind and stuck them in the ground. We were very proud of how good they were already looking.

*  *  *

Our new garden had come through the ground and pretty soon we would be eating green beans and potatoes. We already had cabbage, lettuce, and carrots. Beets would soon be ready to pickle because we usually pickled them while they were small.

We had been to Poplarville to get the mail, and when we returned we were surprised but pleased to see Poppy at home. He hadn’t been home for a while because he had been sick. He had written that he had an awful chest cold and was going to see a doctor.

But I was glad to see him and noticed his face was haggard from his sickness. “Little Hog, I’d like to hug ya but I have a contagious disease, and I don’t want you to catch it.” Poppy said.

I thought he probably had the flu, and I knew it was contagious. I retorted, “I’m not afraid of the flu. I’ve already had it.”

“No,” he said in an emotional voice. “It’s not the flu. It’s something much worse than that.” He sat down on the front porch in the rocker Dault had made for us for our new home, and started whittling on a stick lying close by. I could see he was deep in thought, and with my heart in my mouth I waited impatiently.

He finally began, “I’m real glad my family has got a home of their own now, and I know your Mother will be much happier. Course you’ll have to help a lot, and you’ll have to become a big girl quickly.” I never talked a lot when I was around Poppy because I wanted to listen to him as he explained situations. But I really wanted him to hurry up and tell me what was wrong.

Looking up from his whittling Poppy said, “When I saw the doctor, he ran some test and they found I had TB. Do you know what that is?” I began nodding my head while big tears were welling in my eyes, as I tried to control my shaking body. I knew people died from TB. I knew it was prevalent in Poppy’s family, and that my grandfather and my great-grandfather Holt had died with it.

Looking at me closely he said, “There is a chance I might be cured if it’s not too bad yet.” I sighed a breath of relief. “Thank God,” I thought.

“Don’t you worry, cause everything will be all right anyway,” he continued. “You’re big enough ta help your mother, and life will be good ta you cause you’re spunky and smart.”

I didn’t like to hear talk that sounded like he wouldn’t be around, so I got up without saying anything and took the mail in to Mommy who was cooking supper. I could see by her face that she had been crying. Without looking at me she said, “Go see bout Jimmie. He went out the back door jus now, and he’ll be gone the first thang ya know.” Suddenly Geraldine was at the door with Jimmie in tow, holding some new potatoes she had graveled out from under the potato plants.

I didn’t know what to do or say because everyone was busy with their own thoughts as we ate our supper in our new dining room. No one mentioned Poppy’s sickness at the table. I noticed Mommy sat his plate aside after he finished eating. I wondered why until after dinner.
she took his plate and scalded it with hot water.

Mommy said later that Poppy had been wading in water half the time where he worked and had taken a cold or that was what he thought it was. The last six months he had kept coughing and feeling tired all the time, but he had thought he would wear it off. However, it just didn’t go away. When he went to the doctor, they did an X-ray and found an advanced case of tuberculosis. Since his father had died with it at an early age, he was very susceptible to the disease. He had quit working and came home to try to get in the TB Sanatorium in eastern Kentucky.

“I don’t know what else to do,” Mommy said, “but to use some of the money the boys send home. Hit’ll cost over 100 dollars a month, but we have to do somethin. Be shore and don’t eat after him and try and keep your distance.” She continued, “They’re trying to get a TB sanatorium here in Somerset but it won’t be here in time for Dodson.”

The paper carried the results of the study by a committee that was working to try to get a sanatorium in Somerset.

In this county in 1941, 1942, 1943, and so far in 1944, we have 307 diagnosed cases. This would indicate there is a minimum of 600 cases in the county with over 1,200 persons living in contact with active tuberculosis. In the past ten months we have had 110 active cases diagnosed and reported by x-ray. From figures received from the State Health Department we find the closet county in the area had 127 diagnosed cases over a period of four years. “Poor economics and tuberculosis go hand in hand. In 1937, the last year figures were available, the average income of each Pulaskian was $135, and out of 7,000 families, 1,500 were on relief,” Lachman added. Dr. Lachman stated that 10 percent of the county’s population has moved to industrial war towns but will return here after the war. Because many of them have been working in war plants under severe strain, a high percentage can be expected to develop tuberculosis. Dr Lachman pointed out. “Our water supply is safe and sure, and there will never be a shortage as long as there is a Cumberland River,” he told the group. The city’s modern sewage system should also be considered as a factor in its application, he declared.

– Somerset Journal

Poppy was 60 years old and had a strong will to live, but TB was a killer.

It suddenly seemed as if my world was crumbling. I couldn’t imagine living without seeing my Poppy, even though he had been gone a lot. I looked forward to when he was at home on weekends and holidays. It seemed like everything I loved was dying. I just couldn’t stand thinking about it so I began to sob and ran out of the house to the back of the yard where my rabbits were caged.

The tears kept flowing as I rubbed Floppy’s soft fur. Then I discovered that she had grown very large in the stomach. I ran to the house to tell Mommy and with a smile she said, “Yes, I know. She’s going to have babies.”

What a nice surprise! I was simply delighted that I would soon have more rabbits to care for. It raised my spirits and I forgot about Poppy for a while.

About a week later Poppy entered the TB sanatorium over in Corbin for treatment. After three months, they told him that the disease was too advanced for them to help him so they sent him home. We made ready the back bedroom where he could stay away from the rest of the family.

We cut out a door connecting the bedroom to the front porch so he could have company without exposing them to the disease. It raised his spirits when someone visited and he could talk about the war or some other topic. The neighbors were afraid of TB because most people had someone in their family who had died with it. We knew we were susceptible to contracting...
the germs so we were as careful as possible. Mommy boiled all his sheets and pillowcase when she washed them. She let me take his meals in to him. Then she would scald the dishes. We didn’t know that the disease spores were airborne and that we didn’t have to make physical contact. We could get it from breathing the same air in a room where there was an infected person.

* * *

Poppy kept the radio going, listening to the news. The neighbors would come and sit on the front porch and talk through the screen door. After a visitor, when I would take his supper to him, his cheeks would be flushed and there was a sparkle in his eyes. The hospital had given us some sputum boxes that we could put together; he could spit into them without handling tissues, and every day we buried the boxes.

* * *

As the war continued, the papers were full of the war and its terrible inhumane horrors to which Germany and Japan subjected their prisoners. It just made my blood boil:

Refugee Board Report Cites Bestial Cruelty, Murders By Germans. Washington, November 27 – The War Refugee Board, three members of President Roosevelt’s cabinet, sponsored today a 25,000 word detailed report of bestial cruelty and murder by the millions in German extermination camps. The board, which comprised Secretary of State Hull, Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau, and Secretary of War Stimson, said “The board has every reason to believe that the reports present a true picture of the frightful happenings in those camps. It is making the reports public in the firm conviction that they should be read and understood by all Americans.” The report consisted of two eyewitness accounts of life in the Nazi camps at Auschwitz and Birkenau in southwestern Poland, prepared independently but almost precisely parallel. Each included an estimate that more than a million and a half Jews from various European countries were gassed and their bodies cremated at Birkenau alone between April, 1942 and April, 1944. One, by two young Slovakian Jews, who for two years had clerical posts in the camp through which they could keep fairly close track of events, set the figure at 1,705,900. The recent account was by a non-Jewish Polish major. All three escaped. For their protection their names were withheld by the Board, which said in an accompanying statement: “It is a fact beyond denial that the Germans have deliberately and systematically murdered millions of innocent civilians, Jews and Christians alike, all over Europe. This campaign of terror and brutality, which is unprecedented in all history and which even now continues unabated, is part of the German plan to subjugate the free peoples of the world.” The board, of which John W. P (?) is executive director, is responsible for carrying out the policy of the federal government for rescue of the victims of enemy oppression. – Somerset Journal

For parents who had boys in prison camps, it was almost more than they could bear.

* * *

Summer of 1944

The spring and summer months passed in a hurry. I had a lot of new territory to explore, and a new venture of growing tobacco besides the usual growing and canning, preparing for
the winter, and, of course taking care of Poppy. Now it was time for me to start my new school at Providence. Miss Ina, our teacher, and Mommy decided that I would walk with Miss Ina to school, through the pasture in back of their house, instead of going by Neil Bolton’s place.

Providence schoolhouse was old, and the same one that my brothers and sisters attended when they lived where my father taught school for several years.

The first day of school I was meek and quiet because I didn’t know anyone. I found out who was in my grade and was given some of the books that we would be using. Ed Ping and Sid Baker, the biggest boys, were in my class. Then there was Eva Lee and I. Bonnie Bolton, Joyce Farmer, and Bertie Baker; all about my age were in the grade behind me. Other students were Joyce Meece, Ray and Jack Ping, Eddie Edwards, Carrie Lee, Betty Mounce, Pearl Lee and Orva Dean Mounce, Mary Ann Dykes, Larry Meece, and some I don’t remember.

Providence School had at one time been full with children of the large families who lived close by. However, times had changed. The war had taken all the people who could work in defense plants, and the young men were away fighting in foreign countries; therefore, the Board of Education was hard-pressed to find enough kids to keep all schools open. An example was Low Gap School on Poplarville Road. They tore that schoolhouse down and moved it to Acorn because that was where more children lived. To help increase enrollment, they adopted a policy to let children began in the primer at four years old.

It was customary for boys to start smoking just as soon as they could roll a cigarette. The bigger boys carried a bag of tobacco in their shirt pockets and at recess they would light up just as soon as they got outside and let the smaller kids take puffs from their cigarette.

We carried our lunch in a dinner bucket—usually a 5-pound lard bucket. In the wintertime, it consisted of two or three jelly biscuits for me, but in the summer we all took fresh vegetables from the garden, cucumbers, tomatoes, corn-on-the-cob, and a piece of cornbread. Some children would eat their lunch on the way to school and would have to do without the rest of the day.

The humdrum days of school in the hot summertime got really boring, and we were always looking for some excitement. One day it was very quiet right after lunch, and suddenly we heard a loud bawl. We all quickly turned around in our seats and saw Dell Edward’s massive Hereford bull standing with his huge red and white head through the door. We ran screaming and pushing to the back of the room and jumped up on the stage. Some of the bigger boys ran to the door and let out a big yell. Half a dozen cows and the bull went running up the road toward Whippoorwill Station, with the boys right behind them, whaling sticks over the animal’s rumps as they ran. That woke us up for a while.

Another time Miss Ina made the announcement that she wanted to take us to the revival at Friendship Church the next day. Everyone had to agree to go because she couldn’t leave anyone behind. Usually the preacher and some of the church members would come to school and have church service there, but not this time. Friendship Church was down the hill from Whippoorwill Station, past Virgil Edward’s house, and on past the Bradleys’, a total of about a mile. So after lunch we took off to church, with a warning from Miss Ina that if we acted up, or if the biggest boys tried to stay outside, she’d tell our parents.

It was customary for young boys and men to stay outside in the churchyard during services and not come in the church house at all. The girls fought over who was going to sit next to a window so they could see if a certain boy was there. Many marriages resulted from a young man waiting outside the church to walk a girl home.

We arrived just as church was starting. The four biggest boys sat on the very back seat and the girls sat in front with Miss Ina. When I looked back, the boys had sneaked out and I could see them standing in the yard smoking cigarettes. On the way home Joyce Meece told Miss Ina, “Did you see them boys went outside and was smokin and talkin out loud?”

Miss Ina nodded and was silent for a while as she picked up the pace leading us back to school. Her face betrayed her annoyance and she sent a note home by them telling their parents of their misbehavior, but there was never anything said after that.

Joyce Farmer, Bonnie Bolton, and I were buddies. Joyce Meece was three years younger and wanted to play with us, but we thought she was too young. We were unmerciful to her and kept running away and hiding behind trees, although she was tenacious and kept up with us most of the time.

One day we were all swinging from the lower limbs of a tree that grew close to the school building. We decided to scare Joyce. I said, “Do you know the end of the world is comin tanight?” We could see Joyce’s face turning red and see the fear I had aroused as she thought about that.

Then Bonnie said, “Yeah, the preacher told it las Sunday. There won’t be no more sunshine, and no more fun playing. We’re all gonna die.” That did it! Joyce started crying wildly while hugging the trunk of the tree. Through tears she cried, “But I’m not saved, I’ll go down yonder!” Bonnie and I were snickering and laughing at her misery, but Joyce Farmer sympathetically said, “Don’t kid her like that! She’s scared ta death.” Joyce Meece took off running to tell Miss Ina on us and we went running toward the ball diamond where some of
the children were playing baseball.

That night when I lay down to sleep I thought of my own lost soul and prayed the prediction didn’t come true.

* * *

Poppy had felt better through the summer months, but his coughing spells exhausted him. The atmosphere around the house was depressing, but when I felt sad, I would think how sick Poppy was, and I’d try to cheer him up.

It was August and our tobacco was about ready to cut. The leaves had grown as big as the umbrella tree leaves with the stalks five feet tall. This was the first year we had raised tobacco, and it had been fun but a lot of work. Big green tobacco worms were attacking and we had to pull them off the leaves because they would completely eat them up. Some were bigger than your forefinger. They had many legs, and would raise the front half of their body, and look at us with their antennae working up and down sensing our presence. It seemed as if they were daring us to touch them.

As we went down the rows, the big leaves overlapped the balk and our arms would rub against the worm-infested tobacco. They became sticky and black with the tar-like substance that rubbed off the tobacco leaves. We hated wearing long sleeves because they made us so hot without any air stirring in the suffocating tobacco patch. All day we worked, pulling worms...
and throwing them into buckets we carried with us. At each end of the row we dumped them into a larger container. I tried not to look at all the big green, striped things, wriggling over and under each other trying to escape. Then we killed them by pouring scalding water in the bucket. By dark our hands were brown and sticky and I felt as if I had taken a bath in worm splatters.

“There’s one! There’s another! Jus look at um!” I cried.

“Shut up and knock um in your bucket,” Geraldine said as we continued down the rows looking for the green worms. I threw one at her and it landed on her arm.

“Eeeeeee,” she screamed. “Stop it.” That fixed her! Just let her get smart again!

As I looked ahead of me I could see big roly-polys looking around the large green leaves and it seemed like they were gritting their teeth. I’d take hold of the middle of the soft larva and it would hump its back and hang on for dear life. Sometimes when I was pulling it from the leaf, it would spit amber right in my eye with complete accuracy.

That night I dreamed I was in the middle of the patch and I saw a foot-long brilliant green and yellow striped worm laughing at me while tobacco juice ran down its body.

“Help! Help!” I cried, as I threw the bucket at it and started running back down the row. When I looked back, there were more long green worms coming behind me, with shining eyes and gritting teeth. I stumbled over my feet, and fell headlong screaming hysterically, “Geraldine, Get these thangs away!” What was I to do! Movement caused me to open my eyes; Mommy was shaking my shoulder, “Wake up Jewell, Wake up!”

What a relief! I was in my bed and there were no worms on me. I gratefully jumped up and made my way to breakfast. It was just another nightmare.

*   *   *

Twice a week we had a 5-gallon can of sour cream sitting by the road for the milk man to pick up. Ole Ernestine and Josephine were giving gallons of milk, so much that we bought a pig to fatten up to kill this winter.

We would prepare 12 half-gallons of green beans to fill a zinc washtub. After filling the tub with water and building a fire under it, we boiled the beans for four hours to make sure they sealed. We put up six cannings. The corn was done the same way; only we used pints for the corn. We made cans of sauerkraut from the big cabbage heads and had picked many big luscious blackberries that grew around the pasture. There were grapes growing on the back fence of the garden, from which we made grape juice to can.

There was a small area of woods on the far side of the branch where I had found a large grapevine that climbed to the top of the trees. Grapevines were just the best for making swings but they were dangerous. Sometimes the vine would break away from the tree and I would fall into whatever was under the swing like stumps, sharp snags, and rocks. I didn’t tell Mommy and hoped she didn’t find it because she would cut it down.

One Sunday, Bonnie visited and we swung one whole afternoon. I took a long run and swung far in the air when I felt the grapevine began to break loose from the treetops. I fell and landed on a stump of a sapling I had cut earlier to clear the path for the swing. It skinned up my legs and hurt my back. The next day when I went to play, Mommy had cut it down. That is the maddest I ever did get at my mother. But I dared not sass her because she still kept her switches laid over the door facings ready for use.

By September our tobacco had finally matured. We cut and speared the big stalks to hang on a stick. Uncle Shelly came with his mule and sled and helped take it to the barn. It was then hung on poles in tiers to dry. Because I was small and could balance myself on the poles, I was elected to work in the top of the barn. By October, it had cured to a golden brown, and
we stripped the leaves from the stalk and tied them in “hands” to be shipped and sold at the tobacco warehouse.

By this time, flocks of wild geese were flying south in a “V” formation. I could hear the leader calling to the others “Honk! Honk!” All down the line the geese answered one after another. “Honk! Honk! Honk!” Their calls became fainter as they flew with their strong wings toward the south to travel many miles before they stopped at some body of water to rest.

The sunrays got weaker as the days got shorter and the fall season came around. We had been heating the house with the cook stove but it was time to fire up the “Warm Morning Heater” in the front room. After breakfast, Mommy gathered kindling and put it in the stove to start the fire. We hadn’t had a fire in there since last spring, so according to the old superstition, when we started a winter fire we mustn’t let it go out because it was bad luck. This rule Mommy followed to a “T.”

When Geraldine and I came in from milking we could hear crackling in the stove, and smell the burning wood; it seemed to saturate the whole house. Jimmie was sitting behind the stove in a straight-backed chair, humming, and every once in a while making his little noises.

Poppy was sitting in his chair in the bedroom eating his breakfast with the radio on, listening to the news. I could hear through the closed door, the commentator and then the sponsor:

*Coca-cola hits the spot*
*Twelve full ounces, that’s a lot.*
*Twice as much for a nickel too,*
*Coca-cola is the drink for you!*

The voices sang the cute little jingle advertising their product. Then the news commentator came on again, telling about what was happening with the war.

We were all standing with our cold hands extended toward the stove after pulling off our coats we had worn to the barn. Mommy was sweeping out the front room as she talked, ”We’ll soon have ta start bringin fodder down from the upper cornfield fer the cattle, cause I know they’re not gettin any grass from the pasture. They have to have roughage ta fill their empty stomach.” I hated the thought of dragging loads of fodder down that branch, but I knew we had to keep the cows fed to continue getting that good nutritious milk. We would be having some new babies this spring.

As I stood with my back to the fire, I heard crackling going on in the stovepipe leading to the flue. The heating stove stood about 6 feet out in the front room, with a black stovepipe connecting it to the chimney.

Light through the pinholes in the wall showed unnaturally bright, and the pipe felt scalding hot. The room was getting smoky, and I said to Mommy, “Is the wall supposed to get that hot?” She felt it and fear jumped into her eyes as she looked closely.

We could hear a roaring coming from the stovepipe. She whirled around and quickly ran to the outside door and I was right after her. We could see flames erupting from the chimney.

Mommy yelled for Geraldine and we all jumped into action following her instructions. Geraldine and I grabbed two water buckets from the back porch and filled them with water from the tubs we had under the drip of the house. We carried them back and forth to Mommy as she threw them on the roof and chimney. Then Geraldine took her place, as she was stronger than me. There was a small incline on the side of the yard where the old chimney stood; the ground level went on up the hill, and on to our outside toilet. It was a plus that the house sat
on a lower level and we could stand and throw water from the knoll to the housetop. My heart was in my mouth as we fought the fire with buckets of water. The flames in the chimney began to lessen as we continued with our tiring work.

Suddenly Mommy yelled, “Jimmie, Where’s Jimmie? Your Poppy, get um out!” She took off to the front porch at a swift pace with me on her heels. She yelled to us. “Keep carryin water and throwin hit on the chimley.”

We opened the front door, and saw Jimmie was walking around the room crying wildly, as the suffocating smoke filled the room. I pulled him out on the porch while Mommy went to Poppy’s bedroom. I heard her say, “Dodson, you’ll have ta get some clothes on and get out of here, cause there’s a fire in the chimley, but I think we’ve got hit under control.” She opened the door from his bedroom to the porch, but thank God, the smoke hadn’t gone into his room through the closed door. It could have hurt his diseased lungs really bad. I heard her opening drawers, hunting for his clothes.

I ran back around the house to help Geraldine again and saw that the flames had subsided, but she was still madly bringing buckets of water and throwing them on the chimney.

The whole side of the roof was wet, and all around the chimney was soaked. Mommy voice was filled with emotion as she ordered, “Go on and take care of your Poppy. He’s on the porch, and stay with him and Jimmie until you hear from me.” Jimmie was sitting in the rocking chair, making small nervous sounds and sporadically flinging his hands in the air. Poppy was sitting up with many quilts from his bed wrapped around him and I could only see his nose and eyes. Suddenly his whole body was wracked with deep rotten coughing.

Mommy opened the door, and the stinking smoke from smelly water soaked timbers hit us in the face. We threw open the windows so it could escape. The stove and all around it were splattered with black water, but the pipe was still holding together. After we were sure the fire was out, we brought Poppy and Jimmie back in and began clean up the mess.

Mommy’s eyes were red and swollen as she checked around the wall for any smoldering embers. “I should have checked the chimley fore I built the winter fire. There was no doubt somethin in there that caught on fire.

We couldn’t have fire in the stove again until repairs were made. Dault came and repaired the roof, replacing the old timbers that had partially burned, and then cleaned out the chimney. He found evidence of a bird’s nest, which had caught on fire from the sparks from the burning wood. Fortunately the logs that were under the siding had not caught on fire, which kept it from burning the whole house down.

I overheard Mommy say to Dault as he worked replacing the chimney, “Next winter we hafta make different arrangements. Dodson will hafta stay where there’s heat. We need ta build a small house in the back fer Jewell and Jimmie to stay ta git them away from the sickness."

That sounded like fun to have my own little house, something like a playhouse. Never did I dream how isolated and frightened I would become, living by ourselves at night with my Poppy expecting to draw his last breath any time. After all, I was only nine years old.
July – September, 1944

By July, 1944, America had become aware of the monstrous atrocities committed against the Jewish peoples trapped under Nazi dominion in Europe. Those of Christian faith were encouraged to demand Washington to take action to save those Jewish peoples still alive in Europe. Somewhere between 4 and 5 million European Jews had been killed in Hitler's holocaust since August, 1942, when the Nazi extermination campaign began. President Roosevelt was encouraged to offer sanctuary to those European Jews who could be saved from annihilation.
October – December, 1944

American forces invaded the Philippines in October, and by the 26th, the Japanese Navy had been practically destroyed in and around the island nation enabling reinforcements to be landed at invasion points. However, an American amphibious force managed to land on the western side of Leyte and captured the strategic Fort Ormoc, the principal port on that side of the island. It was now very difficult if not impossible for the Japanese to land reinforcements or supplies.

By November, American Super Fortresses were bombing Tokyo and some parts of the capitol were thrown into a panic.

The Allies attacked the great naval base at Singapore for the first time since it surrendered to the Japanese in February, 1942.

A balloon with Japanese inscriptions had been found in Montana. The balloon had been attached to an incendiary device apparently designed to start fires. The device failed to explode and the balloon was found intact. On the 28th, amid rumblings of disapproval, the Army announced that loyal persons of Japanese ancestry would be permitted to return to the West Coast after the first of the year due to the apparent impossibility of the Japanese landing an invasion force.

German War Crimes

Washington released a report on November 27th that detailed the bestial cruelty and murder of millions in German extermination camps. Washington announced they had every reason to believe the reports emanating from Germany were true and presented a horrifying picture of what was happening in the so-called extermination camps. The report indicated that between April, 1942, and April, 1944, more than 1.5 millions Jews had been gassed and their bodies cremated at the Birkenau camp alone. On October 4th, the Allies landed in Greece and ten days later Athens had been liberated. On November 4th, all Axis forces in Greece surrendered.
Stay all night, stay a little longer
Dance all night, dance a little longer
Pull off your coat, throw it in the corner
Don’t see why, You don’t stay a little longer
Can’t go home if you’re going by the mill
‘cause the bridge is washed out at the foot of the hill
little creeks up, big creeks level
Plow my corner with a double shovel
Stay all night
Stay a little longer. Dance all night,
Dance a little longer.
Pull off your coat and through it in the corner,
I don’t know why, you don’t stay a little longer.

XXII  The Dance
September, 1944

The summer had passed and I was back in school. We had cut and stripped our tobacco and they had already taken it off to sell. Poppy’s condition was worse with bouts of spitting up blood.

There was a lot of talk about a local girl who won the title of Miss America; Geraldine loved to read about her and how she competed in this national event. Her name was Venus Ramsey, from Eubank. She appeared at many rallies selling war bonds for the war effort, and was scheduled to appear at Somerset School auditorium. She had raised thousands of dollars with her stage performances, selling $2,000,000 worth of war bonds in two weeks in Chicago and Washington.

* * *

Jessie wrote home and said she was really sick and had quit her job. She didn’t have any money to go to the doctor nor to buy bus fare to come home. Georgia had quit her job and also came home with Jessie. Mommy sent bus fare and met them in town. She took Jessie to the doctor in Somerset and he gave her some medicine that cured her after about a month. She was very unhappy at home but Mommy didn’t want her to leave because she said Jessie couldn’t take care of herself.

On a Saturday night, we had gone to bed early as usual. I slept in the same room with my sisters and I could usually hear everything that went on. I was not quite asleep when I heard a noise at the window. I sat up to see what was going on. In the gathering darkness I saw Jessie waiting outside the window as Geraldine’s rear-end filled the opening. That brought me up from my bed and I was at the window in a flash as Geraldine was lifting her right leg over the sill and Jessie was helping her. There was barely room for them to squeeze through. When Geraldine finally made it to the ground they were both looking at me with their fingers on their lips motioning me to be quiet. Georgia was sleeping in a small cot in the room and I knew she was awake. I also knew she would never take a part in such a thing.

I whispered,” Where’re ya goin?”
Jessie whispered, “Go back ta bed. We’ll be home after while.”

Well, that wasn’t going to work with me. With a little louder tone I retorted, “I’m goin with you or I’ll tell Mommy.” That brought on a bunch of whispering and then Jessie said, “Hit’s no place fer little girls.”
I thought on that for a few minutes and then exclaimed, “If I shouldn’t go, then you shouldn’t go. So, take me or I'll tell!”

“Shhh you’re not ready,” Geraldine whispered again, “and we have to go.”

By this time I already had my new dress on and I grabbed a comb and raked it through my hair. My shoes were under the bed but I had no socks. Well, I’d just have to go without socks. I pushed my feet into the shoes and was out the window in a flash.

I heard Georgia say in a low frantic voice, pleadingly, “Jewell! Please don’t go!”

And miss all the fun. NO WAY! There was nothing I liked better than music and dancing. I had to run to catch up because Jessie and Geraldine were already past the barn going up to the top of the hill toward Dault’s.

It was already dark and I was sorely afraid of the Boogerman who traveled after dark. But I was beginning to believe that maybe the Boogerman was not real and it was just a ploy to get me to behave. I ran as fast as I could in the dark, stepping in holes and sliding on big rocks trying to catch up with my sisters who were already above the barn. I knew they were also running, trying to discourage me. But I was determined. My mind was whirling around this new situation. Mostly guilt and shame haunted my thoughts because I knew someday Mommy would find out, as she always did. But I might as well have fun in the meantime.

Breathlessly, I stumbled within hearing distance of my sisters. Then I asked, “Where’re we goin?”

*Miss America, Venus Ramsey from Eubank.*
Jessie answered in an impatient voice, “We’re goin ta a dance. You’re not to tell nobody cause we’ll not get ta go agin if Mommy finds out.” Most people in the community thought it was wrong to dance, but I didn’t. I couldn’t see anything wrong in square dancing.

We went up the branch past Robcat’s and Dault’s and then over the hill to a house in the woods. I had never been to a dance, but when the Nashville Barn Dance came on the radio, I sure danced all over the house.

We came to a log cabin where there were several horses tethered, and people standing around outside. The family had moved back what little furniture they had, and a big fire roared in the fireplace. What excitement! There were several people milling around that I didn’t know. Some girls were jumping around just waiting for the music to begin. I could hardly wait!

Because dances were prohibited by the beliefs of most of the people I knew, I was suspicious of those I didn’t know. I watched them talking and laughing; I saw their shifty eyes observing the crowd, especially my sisters. I was so excited that I didn’t care right now. I’d keep my eyes open and watch for anything wrong.

I noticed a small chunky man tuning up a banjo. He wore a felt hat, and his face and nose were red. He looked like his mustache might be hiding a harelip.

People were yelling, “Lets get it goin, Carl.” Then, “We’re ready, Carl.”

Ol’ Carl finished tuning up his banjo and said, “Gentlemen, take your partners.”

The scuffling began with everyone hunting for someone to dance with. Geraldine was a little shy so she said, “Come on, Jewell,” and boy, was I ready!

Carl started plucking the strings of the banjo to the tune of “Turkey in the Straw.”

I had never heard a banjo played like that. Jumping and singing, he made every string talk. The music he made was the most exhilarating and fascinating performance I had ever witnessed. He played for about five minutes while people were rounding up a partner. Then he jumped straight up in the air and began calling the set.

Grab a partner and everybody dance!
Swing her once and a half and back again
Swing the one on the left
Then the one on your right
Swing your partner
Swing her once and a half
then turn her loose
Like the ole grey hen’s
done gone to roost
Chicken in the bread pan,
picking out the dough
Granny will your dog bite? No, chile, no
Do-see-do And everybody swing.

Couples lined up in a circle and were following the instructions of the caller, and keeping time with the music with their feet. A tall blond boy grabbed Geraldine by the hand, and I lost my partner. That was all right because I danced with other girls about my age almost every set.

When we had danced for an hour, Carl said he needed a rest. He slipped out the door where others were drinking something out of a bottle. Then he came back and the banjo was hot again. This went on till around midnight when Geraldine said to Jessie, “We’d better go
home. It’s gettin’ late.” I was dead tired, but we still had to walk about 3 miles through the woods home. When we left, two boys with whom Geraldine and Jessie had danced walked us home.

Every Saturday night for three weeks we climbed out the window and took off without Mommy catching us. On the fourth Saturday night, I was just about out of the window when I heard an agitated voice ask, “Jis where ya’ll thank yer’re goin’?”

All activity stopped because we all heard the piper. Our goose was cooked.

Mommy had caught us. Coming out on the back porch, Mommy seethed, “I know all bout where yer’re goin. I know where you’ve been the las three Saturday nights. Get in here and fer God’s sake be quiet cause yer Poppy would kill you if he knew bout this. I’d be ashamed, with him in the next room dyin with TB and you don’t care bout what you might put him through.”

We quietly filed through the back door glancing at the door facing (our hangman’s noose) because that was where Mommy’s stash of switches was hidden. She punished us and we went on to bed with stinging legs and a disappointment that our fun had been stopped forever.
The American forces invaded the Philippines in October. By the 11th of January, the Japanese on Leyte had been defeated and additional Allied landings had been carried out on Mindoro. Heavy aircraft carrier raids had been made on Luzon's airfields. On the 18th, General MacArthur landed more American troops about 120 miles north of Manila and the Bataan Peninsula. Little resistance was encountered. The Americans quickly established a 40-mile beachhead and had advanced 40 miles inland. General MacArthur’s force was upwards of 100,000 men and that was less than the enemy had on Luzon. However, Americans controlled the sea and air and therefore could reinforce and re-supply their invasion force and the Japanese could not. To further the point, the U.S. Navy located several Japanese convoys off the Indo-China coast and sank 25 or more of their ships. On the 25th, MacArthur captured Tarlac, a city some 60 airline miles north of Manila and he was driving to control the main roads leading to the capitol. On the 1st of February, came the report of a daring rescue mission carried out by the Army Rangers that freed hundreds of POW’s that had been imprisoned since the fall of Bataan and Corregidor in 1942. Intelligence indicated that the Japanese were killing the POWs to prevent them from rejoining the fight. Then, on the 4th, Manila surrendered to General MacArthur.

By November American Super Fortresses bombed Tokyo. Japan supposedly held thousands of Americans as POWs and those men were thought to be in grave danger.
The winter had been cold and it was a job to cut enough wood for the kitchen stove and to heat the house. There were no able-bodied menfolk at home so Geraldine, Jessie, and I cut small trees and snaked them in by pulling them with a rope. Mommy had hired Uncle Shelly to cut and pull in some of the bigger logs. Every day we used a cross cut saw to cut enough wood to burn for the day.

Charlie Bolton, our neighbor across the branch, told us that we needed to have a load of inexpensive coal hauled to burn in our Warm Morning stove. Mommy told him to ask around and see if someone would haul us a small load out of the Wildcat, the coal mine on Mt. Victory near Rockcastle River. They would have to bring it before wet weather because Silver’s Branch Road would become swift and impassable.

We had bottomland 200 yards up Silvers Branch where we raised corn for the cows. After the corn was mature and had turned brown, we cut off the whole stalk and put it into fodder shocks like wigwams. The inside of these shocks would be preserved and give off a tantalizing aroma that smelled so good the cows loved it. They’d eat all of the golden leaves and even the stalk. Every day we’d drag armloads down the branch to the barn to feed Ernestine and Josephine. It took two loads per day to provide the roughage the cows needed. Sometimes I’d have to help, but I couldn’t carry as much as Mommy. If it had rained or snowed the night before we’d have to drag it through snow and cold water, and the swift current would help us pull it along. Sometimes we’d get our feet wet because the icy water would be so high it would come over our rubber boots. Usually it would take us a couple of hours to feed and milk and break the ice in the branch so the cattle could drink water.

Jessie was still at home, but she was very unhappy. Almost every day she’d say, “I can’t stand it no longer. I’m goin crazy! I ain’t got no money, no friends, and nothin to do but work.” She mostly stayed in the house and took care of Poppy and Jimmy. She’d read books and only did what Mommy made her do. She had told me she was going to leave just as soon as she could figure out a way of getting out, whether Mommy wanted her to or not. After all, she was 20 years old and restless.

The war continued with the Allies gaining ground, and it looked as if we would soon be on German soil. Poppy kept the radio on most of the time listening to war news. He heard that German officers had tried to assassinate Hitler because they figured he had to be stopped for the sake of the Motherland. However, he was not hurt in the plot and became stronger, ordering the Gestapo to hunt out and kill any traitors that had been involved in the plot. Rommell, his top general, committed suicide before he could be arrested.

Coyd and Leonard were in Europe and in the thick of the battle. We received word from the war department that Coyd had been slightly wounded on March 24 in Germany. We were relieved to know it was only a light wound. This was the third time he had been wounded since D-Day. He had been overseas for 20 months; Leonard had been overseas for eight months. We felt helpless as we listened to the news and heard all about the battles. The Somerset Journal carried many stories about the bravery of our local soldiers and their heroic fighting, like the Barber boys from the Hail community:

Two-hundred miles from the nearest ocean, the “small boatmen,” unsung heroes of every landing from North Africa to Normandy are here again to help carry Allied Armies across
the last great water barrier to the heart of Hitler’s Germany. Among them is Orville Barber, 19, Seaman First Class, USNR, son of Mr. and Mrs. J.T. Barber, Poplarville, Kentucky. Barber and his fellow amphibians are making naval history, for never before has the Army called on the Navy to help it cross an inland river. Their mission is to supply a last “build up” of men, weapons, and ammunition to support the first assault troops and they are performing that mission—gloriously. Their presence wrapped in the closest secrecy, Barber and the other Navy men have been training for months with Army combat engineers in smaller rivers of France and Belgium. These bluejackets and doughboys are enthusiastic partners in a new and unique combined operation. Barber joined the Navy in October, 1943, and took part in the invasion of France. Previously he attended Hail school. Three of his brothers are serving in the U.S. Army. They are Private Clyde Barber, Germany; PFC Verl Barber, New Guinea; and Private Roy Barber, Illinois.

– Somerset Journal, April 19, 1945

The neighbors were good to Poppy and us. They knew how he liked to read and keep up with the world and especially the war, so they would bring him all the newspapers they got. The Somerset Journal reported all the local servicemen who were wounded or killed. They carried many stories and editorials about how the entire county was helping to win this terrible war.

The Journal carried news about First Lieut. John S. Cooper candidate for the Republican nomination for Circuit Judge:

At the age of 42, John Cooper volunteered and entered the Army as a private in September, 1942. He has served 14 months overseas with Gen. Patton’s Third Army. He has served his country well. He represented Pulaski County in the legislature one term, and made an excellent record as Pulaski County Judge two terms. An able attorney, he successfully practiced in the county, district, state, and federal courts before entering the Army. We invite the citizens of the 28th Judicial District to join us in nominating and electing John S. Cooper Circuit Judge. Friends of John S. Cooper were working to get him elected to Judge of the 28th Judicial Court even though he was overseas in the army.

– Somerset Journal

* * *

The sun was shining, but March winds were blowing cold. We would welcome April with the rain showers and spring days.

On a Saturday morning Mommy and Geraldine were outside milking and taking care of the stock. Jessie began washing and cleaning herself up. She put on her best dress and was fixing her hair when I asked her where she was going. She answered, “Jewell, I jus can’t stand hit no more! I want to work and have some money and some fun. I’ve got ta git outta here.” As she was combing her blond curly hair she continued, “I’ll be all right and write ya when I git settled. Someday you’ll understand.”

My stomach began aching and churning as I tried to discourage her. “But Jessie,” I cried, “where’ll ya stay? Ya can’t stay at Maydell’s cause she’ll tell Mommy and ya’ll hafta come back home.”

“No,” she answered as she was going out the door, “I know where to go cause I’ve been round nough.” She had packed a suitcase and was rushing out the door so she could be on her way before Mommy got back to the house. She paused just long enough in the doorway to say, “Jewell, please don’t tell Mommy till I’m gone long nough to get a ride to town.”
I asked tearfully, “Jessie, who’ll you ride with?”

“Oh, it’s Saturday and someone’ll be along from Mt. Victory and I’ll hitch a ride,” she said as she closed the door behind her.

Poppy was in bed in the back room and Jimmie was sitting behind the stove tearing up a catalogue. But I couldn’t tell Poppy. He was sick and he couldn’t do anything anyway. I walked the floor looking out the window hoping to see Mommy coming down the branch, but they had only been gone a few minutes. Merciful heaven! What was I to do? I didn’t know what kind of sickness Jessie had, but whatever it was caused a lot of anger and anxiety with Mommy. She would hardly let her out of her sight.

My stomach was churning and my heart was racing while I watched though the window until her blond head disappeared down the road. I thought of all the things that might happen to Jessie, and I would be partly to blame because I didn’t stop her. After all, she had come home deathly sick last summer, hadn’t she? No telling what would happen this time. In my highly imaginative mind I could see her laid out in a casket, dead, with her pretty blond hair fluffed on her shoulders and her new dress Mommy had made. My anguish was too much to bear alone so I decided to run up to the corn patch and tell. I was not supposed to leave Jimmie alone but I would not be gone long enough for him to get into trouble.

I threw on a coat and my old shoes and took off out the door as hard as I could go. I had to wade the branch in some places. I tried to jump from one rock to another, but I was so distraught, I didn’t even notice the cold water.

There they are! I said to myself. I saw them coming down the branch with a load of fodder trying to miss the stream flowing alongside them.

I yelled before I met them, “Jessie left. She’s gone and won’t come back.”

Mommy stopped dead in her tracks and looked as if she had been struck by lightening. Then she asked, ”How long ago?”

“Not long.” By this time I was bawling so I could hardly talk. “She told me not to tell but I had to!”

“Lord have mercy!” Mommy moaned as she flung down her load of fodder, and threw her arms upward. “Take this on to the cows and I’ll hurry up and see if I can catch her.” She took off at a fast pace as I struggled with the heavy load of fodder she was pulling down the branch.

After Mommy hurried on ahead, Geraldine said, “I wish I coulda went with her. I’m sick of all this. But,” she said as she shifted her load of fodder to her other arm, “I wouldn’t leave with Poppy sick.”

Mommy and our neighbor, Eugene Bolton, who owned a pickup truck, took off toward Somerset to try to overtake her on the way to town. But they couldn’t find her. She was already gone. I felt so bad because I knew I should have told right away and maybe she would have been found. The image of my sister’s last plea, standing in the doorway begging me not to tell, and the desperation that showed in her big blue eyes stayed with me for many years as Mommy frantically searched for any word from her, just wanting to hear that she was alright.

There began a long absence of three long years in which we didn’t hear or know what happened to her. Mommy tried the sheriff’s office, but they said she was old enough to do what she wanted to do. The world seemed so big to me as I studied at school about large cities and their different life style, always wondering if Jessie had a place to sleep or how she was doing all alone in such a big world. “Don’t tell Mommy till I’m gone long enough to catch a ride.” These words haunted my dreams. I felt such guilt thinking I should have told right away. Things would have been different.

We were not to talk about her to the neighbors. Poppy never knew why Jessie left home.
nor about her sickness. Mommy worried over her as much as she did her soldier boys because
she was sure she would never return alive. Her prayers were always, “Dear God, please be
merciful to my wayward child. You know all things and I’m begging you, if it be your will,
keep her safe.”

* * *

The spring rains started early this year. Winter had been very wet and the rainfall all
seemed to run off the hillsides because of the saturated ground. The branches had been up
most of the time, so we were having a problem getting to the barn to milk and feed the cows.
Geraldine and I could wade water easier than Mommy so we were taking care of that job. We
had stored some dry fodder in a stall in the barn just for such an emergency as this, but we
still gave the cow’s bran and milked twice a day. In wet weather we walked up the hill in back
of the house to a gate that opened into the pasture. Then we went down to the barn to wade
across where the branch was wider and not so swift.

This time it had rained all night and the branch was a roaring river. That morning when
we went to milk we tried the usual route. We thought we could wade across, but the tumbling
swift water was twice as big as it had ever been. Realizing we couldn’t cross there today, we
went on up from the barn until we came across a tree that had been washed down and had
lodged crosswise, making a perfect foot bridge across to the other side. The rushing water was
muddy and foaming into white bubbles as the swirling force hit the log. Geraldine climbed
on top of the log to test it and it didn’t move. She crossed over to the other side without any
problems, holding on to the bucket of bran, and told me to follow.

There were small limbs on the log that I held onto as I edged across trying not to look
at the mad water underneath. A sudden jolt caused me to lose my footing as a small stump
floated against the foot log. My feet flew off the log into the swift current. Panic-stricken, I
turned my body toward the log and held onto the small limbs with all my might. The water
roared and tugged at my body and my legs as I tried to stand in the swift current. At that point
I realized what a perilous position I would be in if the log began to roll and I went under it.

I felt as if someone were pulling my legs from underneath me. I could hear nothing but
the roar of the water. With an extreme effort, kicking with my feet and pulling with my arms
around the log, I managed to get out of the center current. Holding on to the log, I waded the
branch until I made it to the other side. By this time the stump had passed as the swift current
washed it on down.

Geraldine yelled and screamed but was totally helpless. When I got close enough she
grabbed me and helped pull me from the water. Then the cold hit me. My teeth were chattering
and my body was shivering. I was too cold to cry.

The next problem was getting back on the other side so I could go to the house to change
my wet clothes and warm up. The log was still holding because a big limb had dug into the
side of the bank making it steady. With Geraldine’s help, I crossed the log this time and ran
as fast as I could back to the house and warmth. I learned an undying respect for swift waters
and angry branches when the water is high.

That night when I lay down to sleep I could hear the roaring of both branches as the rain
continued, and I was afraid for the first time that we would be washed away. My sleep was fitful
and I could see the rushing waters behind my closed eyes. Finally a deep sleep blocked out my
thoughts. “Mommy! Mommy!” I screamed, “Where’s Jimmie?” I was running alongside the
foaming water, screaming as I went. It was rising up into the yard and tumbling into a lake
from the overflow of Silvers Branch.

Again I yelled, “Mommy, Where’s Jimmie?” I could see her standing on the porch with
her hands on her hips looking at the muddy water as it roared by the house, backing up in the
front yard.

I yelled again because I couldn’t understand why she just stood there. When next I looked
toward Silvers Branch I could see Jimmie’s head bobbing as the water kept taking him down
stream toward the sinkhole. I began wading to my knees through the cold liquid, and my dress
became wet at the bottom, increasing the resistance against the turbulent stream. The farther
I went, the deeper it got and my heart beat more wildly. Soon, I was in water up to my waist
still calling, calling for Jimmie. The water was pulling me on like a seductive temptress luring
her lover to a water-filled grave. The sound from the roaring waters filled my whole being
as suddenly my trembling legs succumbed to the strong force and my head went under. The
words I was screaming gave way to a bubbling silence.

I awoke with a start finding myself in my bed, ever thankful to see my little brother lying
in his own bed at the end of the room.

* * *

Georgia said that all the women she worked with made fun of her and that was why she
quit her job. Her suspicious nature made it hard for her to cope. And she never stayed with
one job very long. She was also easily embarrassed, a trait most people couldn’t understand. I
was always happy when she was at home. She took care of the house and Jimmie and did a lot
of the cooking. She only stayed for a month before deciding to go back to Maydell’s to help
her with her new baby. Then it was my job to watch Jimmie and take care of Poppy.

* * *

The winter had passed and it was time to sow our tobacco beds. We carried dead limbs
out of the woods and burnt them where we were making the bed. The heat would kill weed
seed and the ashes made a soft bed to sow the tiny tobacco seeds in. We spaded up the soil and
put slabs around the sides of the bed. Then we sowed it and covered the bed with canvas to
protect the plants from frost. Aunt Nora from Whetstone had visited and Mommy sent word
to Uncle Shelly to come and drag and lay off the tobacco patch, and plow our garden for us.

During the month of May, most churches held their appointed time for Memorial Day
activities. The local churches had gotten together many years before and decided to stagger
the dates for Decoration Day for local churches so people could decorate graves of loved
ones in all different cemeteries, and partake in the planned services. Most everyone in the
community had relatives buried in several of the surrounding cemeteries. It was a time of
reunion, for many had moved away, and they wanted to catch up on all the news. These were
big events and we always tried to have new clothes to show off.

Providence Church had set their “Decoration Day” for the Sunday after the third Saturday
in May. (This is still the date the church celebrates.) Mommy ordered material and patterns
from Sears and Roebuck catalogue to make our new clothes. I whispered to her, “Can I get a
pair of pretty lace step-ins like Geraldine wears?”

She laughed, “Yeah, I’ll order ya a pair if ya promise you’ll not show nobody what yer’re
wearing.” I nodded my head, but I knew I’d have to show my girlfriends just a little peek.

We also ordered crepe paper to make flowers to decorate the graves. We’d work for a week
making the crepe paper flowers and then, most of the time it rained. The rain would cause
the flowers to fall apart and fade within a few minutes. Sometimes Mommy would take some
peonies and early roses out of the yard.

Decoration Day was a festive but sad occasion; people we hadn’t seen since last year’s
decoration would be there. The day before the decoration, some of the family would gather
and clean off the cemetery, so clean that it made the graves look newly dug. Mommy wept when she lovingly placed flowers on her little son’s and her mother’s graves.

Most everyone brought some kind of flowers, mostly crepe paper ones, to adorn the graves. Some brought flowers out of their yard.

Geraldine had to stay home with Jimmie and Poppy, so Mommy and I walked up the hill by ourselves with our flowers in hand. There was already a crowd in the graveyard, talking mostly about the war, and about who was injured or killed. After they rang the church bell for church to begin, some people went inside, while others just visited outside with each other.

After prayer and singing, the pastor, Ol’ Tomlinson, began to preach. “Thank the Lord the war in Europe is won. Now when the Japs give up the war will be over.” Everyone enthusiastically said “Amen.”

As he proceeded with his message he began jumping around to emphasize his words. He talked about God’s grace, and what we had to do to save us from a burning hell when we died. Raising his voice he paced back and forth from the alter to the pulpit quoting the Bible where it said we were all sinners and had come short of the glory of God. When I thought of the sins I had committed, I could almost smell the black smoke suffocating me and feel the heat from the flames of hell. “Vengeance is mine saith the Lord,” echoed from the ceiling and pierced the souls of sinners in the congregation. It was confusing to me because in one breath it was, “God is love” and then “the wrath of God.” He gave a call for anyone who had a testimony. Sister Lucy Whitis in an emotional voice began to tell how God had saved her soul, and the
more she talked the happier she got. Her feet began to lift off the floor and she shouted down the aisle to the altar. She was no small woman and we could feel her spirit as the church rafters vibrated and the floor bounced. Most everyone was happy and many were shedding tears of joy and celebration.

I saw that Mommy was not joining in and I understood. Poppy dying at home was not a cause for celebration for us. Usually we had a crowd who went home with us for dinner, but not this year. When we got home, Poppy inquired if there were many people there he knew. Mommy answered yes and that they had asked about him. Tears began to form in his eyes and I knew his thoughts were on the future and the possibility we would be decorating his grave next year.

*  *  *

I had been to school and was coming in sight of Charlie Bolton's big white house when I saw a strip of fresh dirt turned up just above his barn. It went right through the middle of his pasture on the hill above Silvers Branch, across the branch from our house. There was a big yellow machine sitting there in Charlie's barnyard. That was the biggest machine I had ever seen! It had a huge wide plow in front and steel studded large wheels on each side.

I ran home as fast as I could to ask Mommy what was going on. She said that the county was making a new road from Dykes to Mt. Victory. Charlie Bolton and Neil Bolton, who owned the bottom land up the branch and Bodie Farmer, who owned land past Neil's, gave the county the right-of-way for a new road. They needed a road to bring the coal out of Mt. Victory. The new road would be assessable to all automobiles in any kind of weather and drivers wouldn't have to worry about the branch getting impassable. That big machine moved more dirt in one sweep than a team of mules could do in one day. They bulldozed the road level and put truckloads of white gravel on it. What an improvement! It made it easier to get a ride to Somerset because people from Mt. Victory would travel this road. Mommy was overjoyed.

Poppy's logical explanation was expressed as he said, “Ya know, Charlie is magistrate and I'm shore that's one reason why we're gettin the road. There's been a bunch of people on Mt. Victory workin ta git better roads too. They've been meetin at Mt. Victory School. It was in the paper last week bout the meetin.”

Good Road Group Meet at Mt. Victory, The meeting was held at Mt. Victory Thursday night and precinct chairman were appointed for the purpose of forming an organization to secure better roads in that section. Howard Smith acted as temporary chairman and appointed the following precinct chairman. Dykes, Allen Sears; Jugornot, Johnnie Edwards; Farmer, Howard Hines; Poplarville. J.N. Mayfield; Colo, W.A. Hail; Goodwater, Lee Bolton; Bent, Robert Hail; Ano, Harvey Whitaker; Bear Wallow, Ben Baker; and Mt. Victory, David Jones. Mr. Jones appointed the following nine men to act with him in the Mt. Victory precinct. Leonard Hyden, Phillip Barnett, Harry Sears, John Linville, Vester Wright, Holbart Black, Chester Bullock, Charles Barnes, and V.M. Vansant. The other precincts will appoint nine men to work in their precinct.

– Somerset Journal

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As the days got warmer we opened Poppy's door to the front porch so he could have company. It helped him get through the long days. Jim Bolton, our neighbor who lived on past Charlie's, had been to see Poppy this day and had brought him a Somerset paper. There was an article telling about the new road.
March 15, 1945

**Part of Sublimity Road to be Relocated.** The following order was entered upon in the minutes of Pulaski County Court. It appears to the County Court that a portion of old Sublimity Road, paralleling Silvers Branch or having its road bed therein, is dangerous and impassable in flood tide, an emergency is declared to exist, and it is ordered by the court that said road bed be removed from the creek or from such proximity thereto as will render it safe for travel. It is further appearing to the court that the land owners through whose lands the necessary change will traverse are Bodie Farmer, Neal Bolton, and Charles Bolton, and they were accepted by Pulaski County and the route agreed upon between the land owners and Justice John Edwards and the County Judge, is hereby established as a county road. It further appearing to the court that great confidence is reposed in the intelligence, integrity, and good judgment of Col. Harden Farmer, it is ordered by the court that he is appointed commissioner of this court to make the change in the county road aforesaid with full powers to consummate same in any manner he deems best to improve the road and facilitate the public travel. The public spirit and patriot attitude of Bodie Farmer, Neal Bolton, and Charlie Bolton is demonstrated by their liberal contribution to the welfare of their neighbors and the public, is hereby made a lasting record and is worth of emulation of good citizens generally. The court’s commissioner, Col. Farmer, will report his actions under this order to the court.

– *Somerset Journal*, March 15, 1945

“Good,” Poppy said after reading the article. “We shore need a better road so people can
travel in all kinds of weather. A lot of people are gettin automobiles and they need a road where they don't drag the bottom out of their car over the big rocks.”

* * *

My Father’s Mother

My Grandmother Holt was in her eighties at this time and I had not been around her much. She lived in Somerset and I didn’t ever go to Somerset. It was hard to visit us because a lot of the traveling was by foot.

In June of 1945, Grandma Holt came to stay with us for a while to help take care of Poppy. She had been living in Somerset in a small house next to Uncle Jim Holt. She was 80 years old and walked as straight as an arrow. What a remarkable woman, who raised a family of six boys after being widowed early in life.

On December, 1859, my grandmother, Catherine Poynter, was born at Bald Rock, Kentucky. Her parents were Jesse Poynter, born August 18, 1829, and Mary Jane Goff, born in 1833. Catherine’s paternal grandparents, James Poynter born around 1802, and Catherine Meece, born around 1810, possibly migrated from England.

Her paternal grandparents came from Virginia and settled in what is now Dutton Hill just north of Somerset. An event that was handed down through the years occurred during the Civil War. When the Meece’s, my Grandmother’s parents, heard that the soldiers were coming through the area, they hid their horses on a nearby hillside to keep them safe. This hillside became a historical battlefield that today is known as Dutton Hill. Indians in Pennsylvania massacred Catherine’s great-grandfather, Johann Heinrich Miese.

Catherine’s maternal grandparents were Elijah and Sally Bullock Goff, whose line dates back to Virginia.

Catherine Pointer and John Holt were married in the home of Jesse Poynter, her father, in Laurel County, Kentucky. The marriage was presided over by A.R. Russell, Justice of the Peace. Their marriage was performed in the presence of James M. Brewer, John’s stepfather, and William Holt, John’s older brother.

Soon after the death of Rev. John, Catherine loaded up her six sons and a few belongings and headed out to Arizona because Jesse Dodson was ill with weak lungs, and she thought the air would be healthier for him there. They made it as far as Oklahoma and settled in an area on the border of Oklahoma and Texas. Apparently the air there was better for Jesse because he did improve.

I remember hearing my mother refer to Poppy’s poor health as a boy, and that it had carried over to his adult life; however, some say it was Roscoe who was ill and the trip was made because of him. Others say it was because of family and friends who were already in Oklahoma that Catherine loaded up her family and made that trip. More than likely, they traveled by train. The Brewers are my grandfather John Holt’s half brothers who later moved to Oklahoma.

This letter was received from Oscar Brewer, grandfather’s half-brother of Mangum, Oklahoma.

February 28, 1977
Dear Joan, Ed, and girls

I just got your letter a few minutes ago, will say we are getting along all right. I am feeling remarkable well for a man of my age. As you know, I am the oldest in my family and guess I am in about the best health of any of my family unless it is your Uncle Everett.
The name BREWER, as we are, is an English name. The Brewers were being persecuted with a group of others for religious reasons and went into Holland. From there they came to the American Colonies. Some of the Brewers drifted around for a time and finally wound up in the Carolinas. The first name that I can remember was Ambrose Brewer and I believe his nick name was Bugs Brewer. As I understand it, he was my Grandfather’s Grandfather. I remember the name George Brewer as being a Grandfather born in 1822. My Grandfather’s name was James Madison Brewer. I never saw my grandmother.

Now I come to Elizabeth Brewer, she was my grandfather’s first wife (she was not my Grandmother). There was an old letter written in April, 1848, to Elizabeth, my Grandfather’s first wife when he was a “solger” in the Mexican War. It was written from “Veracrous,” Old Mexico.

He told her to hire a “hand” and plant a corn crop; he believed that he would be coming home in time to farm the next year. This will amuse you, Joan; The State of Texas gave him seven sections of land when the war was over. He promptly traded it for a team of mules to farm with. My Grandfather’s first wife had passed away and he remarried. He married a woman by the name of Manerva Holt. My Grandmother was a widow and she had a large family by Holt and they were half brothers to my father. My father only had one full brother, James M. Brewer. My Dad was about 2 years older that Uncle “Jim Matt” we called him. He died young. My father’s name was Landon C. Brewer and died young when he was not quite 39 years old. My Mother’s name was Martha Brewer and her Mother’s name was Sylvania Coldiron who married Justice Brewer. My mother and father were third cousins. So after about three generations that’s all I know about.

My mother’s side of the house, the Coldirons, came from some of those Teutonic Tribes of Central Europe, they were early-day settlers in Virginia, and then moved to Kentucky.

I was just a 12-year-old boy when I left Kentucky in 1904. We came to the Indian Territory from Kentucky by train. We lived near a town called Antlers. It would take too long to describe the trip across Indian Territory. We left a Summer Resort with 311 rooms.
We were loaded down with all kinds of supplies. In Indian Territory we like to have died with chills and fever like Malaria gives you. It was terrible! We drove in covered wagons, just drifting from little town to little town and there were no graded roads and no bridges. It was a slow process. I guess it was not so bad, we would kill quail, rabbits, and small game then cook and eat them. At least we had fresh meat. I have crossed Oklahoma three times in my life in a covered wagon. In 1910, Willie, Frank, and I drove through in covered wagons to a little town called Sasakwa. Papa and Mama and the little children rode the train. We were all very unhappy in eastern Oklahoma. Papa got worse and died while we were there and he was buried at Bilbry, about 6 miles from Sasakwa.

Therefore, we fixed two covered wagons and an old buggy and we drove back through across Oklahoma again. We never made it back to Texas. Instead, we stopped in Oklahoma. (South of Eldorado)

I have worked and preached since 1913. I was ordained in 1915 and have worked and in this area all except four years in Mississippi when I worked with Charlsie's Dad, Charles B. Gurley, an Evangelist and preacher in Mississippi and Tennessee. Bessie and Haston were both born in Mississippi.

Now, how I met your Mother. The Gurley family moved to Eldorado and lived on a farm northwest of town and I courted and married her. I am justly proud of all four daughters and my one son. I do not know that much about Charlsie's family except the immediate family and they are all dying off mighty fast.

You ask if we have any folks in western Arkansas. We have a great number of distant relatives in western Arkansas. I heard my Father refer to a man by the name of Uncle Pless. He was reared in a large family in Meana, Dequeen up to Ft. Smith area. Another town he mentioned was Hatfield where one family we knew quite well. He was Willie Brewer and was a double cousin to my father. They were much closer than any of his half brothers. Most of them I have never seen and will never see in this world. It is like too many families, some good, and some bad.

I met an old Baptist preacher about 50 years ago and he knew and could quote more scripture than any man I ever saw in my life. He said, “I can’t tell you whether any of the kin of your gang were good, (very religious) or if they could drink red eye whisky like spooning it in a rat hole.”

“Most were one or the other.”

I am getting tired, I will write more the next time.

With love to all,
Dad & Papaw

PS: Eldorado, Oklahoma, is right on the Texas border.

My grandmother Catherine returned to Kentucky about 1910, leaving her son Roscoe behind. He became a Baptist minister following in the footsteps of his father. Catherine and her sons moved out near Dykes or Poplarville, Pulaski County, Kentucky. James Madison, her son, is quoted as having said, “Mom could scratch out a living on a rock.” They existed because Catherine’s sons worked for neighboring farmers. Another quote from James Madison is his mother saying, “Boys, take little bites of bread and big drinks of milk tonight.” One summer James Madison worked all summer long and his pay was one milk cow, which James took home and gave to his mother. This was after his father, Reverend John, had died.

Catherine professed her faith in Christ at an early age, and joined the Baptist Church, continuing in that faith until her death. Her life was one of service to God and her community.
She was known as a faithful and loyal worker in her church.

Catherine was a tall, thin woman and made all her clothes and washed them by hand every day. She wore an ankle length dress, two petticoats, long stockings, and high buttoned shoes. Her hair was in a bun at the nape of her neck. Every evening she sat on the porch and smoked her pipe while she rocked in the rocking chair, and talked through the door to Poppy.

A stinking pouch Grandmother wore around her neck fascinated me. It was filled with weird smells and the overwhelming stench of garlic. She had natural remedies for all sicknesses that attacked the human body. I didn’t have a lot of conversation with Grandmother, but I really wanted to know what was in the pouch and why she wore it. She seemed glad to talk about her use of herbs and bragged that she had never been to a doctor. Her folks had used herbs and plants and had handed down all the remedies for disorders and diseases to their children. Cockleburs were boiled and turpentine was added in just the right amount to make a good cough syrup. Tansy was used for upset stomach; boneset and catnip were for fussy babies and nerves; sassafras tea helped build up the blood; Signet helped kidney disorders; ragweed rubbed on poison ivy relieved the itch; mud or baking soda rubbed on stings and bites helped to ease the itch and pain; kerosene rubbed on cuts and bruises had a curing ingredient.

Mommy thought she was eccentric and didn’t get along with her very well. She didn’t believe in taking a lot of preventive herbs. She bragged that she never filled her newborn with catnip tea right after they were born as a lot of people did. She thought this was what caused a lot of babies to die in the first day or two after birth. Infant mortality was very high at this time.

Grandma stayed with us a couple of months before going back to town. She said she felt as if she was in the way.

*  *  *

In the summer of 1945 Mommy hired Dault to build a little one-room house just about 30 feet from the back door so Jimmie and I could stay there when Poppy got worse. She was preparing for what we knew was inevitable.

Poppy tried all the remedies people told him about to cure TB. He drank thirteen raw eggs a day for a while. He hated alcohol but someone said two shots a day with some mullein tea and sugar would help so he did that, to no avail. As his disease progressed, we tried to go on with our lives.

I had missed a lot of school because I often had a cold or the flu or some other sickness. Absence from school caused me to become far behind the rest of the class. No one really cared about my illnesses or education at the time. We were just trying to get along from day to day and I lost interest in school. Miss Ina told Mommy that she thought it would be better if I repeated fourth grade next year. We all agreed to that.
April – June, 1945

In the spring of 1945, it appeared that the war was winding down with Germany, but it was recognized that the war with Japan in the Pacific would take longer to complete, perhaps as long as another year. Then on April 12th, President Roosevelt died, with less than a month to go before Germany capitulated and Adolf Hitler committed suicide. Vice President Harry Truman took the oath of office two hours and 34 minutes following the death of President Roosevelt and immediately pledged to wage the war “until no vestige of resistance remains.”

On April 1st, began what could arguably be deemed one of the most vicious battles in World War II, the Battle for Okinawa. The Marines and Army troops landed on Okinawa without much more than token opposition.

Adolf Hitler, the instigator of the most destructive war known to man, committed suicide in lieu of facing certain justice at an international tribunal.

On May 8th, V-E Day was declared and the end of bloodiest warfare ever witnessed.
Roosevelt Dies
April 12, 1945

Poppy was staying in his room most of time, listening to the news on the radio. I took care of him and Jimmie while Mommy and Geraldine worked outside. While sweeping out the front room, I heard the news commentator saying:

President Roosevelt has died from a cerebral hemorrhage this afternoon at 1:30 P.M. at his home in Warm Springs, Georgia.

I thought, “Did I hear that right? What did they say?” I dropped my broom and opened the door to Poppy’s bedroom. He was sitting up in bed with a surprised and happy look on his face. He clapped his hands and said, “Our country will be better off. Roosevelt would never have put a stop to these giveaway programs he started. It’s already out of hand. He won a fourth term and nothing would have changed as long as he was in office.”

I didn’t know what he was talking about, but I was sure my family was not the ones who were getting free stuff. We were always working to put food on the table. Mommy would never let us accept any type of charity.

The news commentator continued talking about Roosevelt and the many things he had done to bring our country out of the recession. My stomach was churning from thinking about what might happen now with our president dead. Oh Lord have mercy!

What would happen now? Would Hitler kill us all?

This was far above my head, so I meekly asked, “Poppy, is there anything you need?”

He answered that he was going to take a nap. “I figure Jim Bolton will bring me a paper from town today. I sure hope so.”

“Well,” I answered, “I’m goin outside with Jimmie and we’ll be in the yard. You can ring the copper bell if you need me.”

I remembered that we had gotten a letter from Leonard telling us that he had spent 24 hours with Coyd in someone’s basement in Germany. Coyd was still healing from a battle wound received in combat. Leonard had found out that Coyd’s division was in Germany fighting in the “Battle of the Bulge,” the same battle that Leonard’s 9th armored division was fighting.

Somerset Journal carried this notice in the paper.

Sgt. Coyd I. Holt, 27, and PFC Leonard B. Holt, 24, sons of Mr. and Mrs. J.D. Holt of Dykes, have recently spent 24 hours together in Germany. It is the first time they had been together in three years. Sgt. Holt has been in service 5 years and overseas 2 years. PFC Holt has been in service two years and overseas ten months. Both are graduates of Mt. Victory High School.

– Somerset Journal, April 12, 1945

The grateful Germans furnished them with plenty of wine and food. One can only imagine the precious moments they spent reminiscing about their lives, sharing stories of their childhood and speculating about the future, but never forgetting they would have to return to battle with a ferocious enemy. By the grace of God they both lived to tell about it.

Jimmie sat under the pine tree on a long high-backed bench and I gave him a catalogue to look at and tear into strips. I put shoes and a sweater on him because the weather was still cool.
My stomach fluttering began to subside as I stood under the lush green canopy of the white pine and smelled the clean aroma from the needles. The limbs grew in a complete circle around the trunk at about 3-foot intervals making it a perfect tree to climb. There was always a cool breeze blowing through the lush needles. My bare feet lifted me up to the first circle of limbs and my hands held onto the next circle just above.

Quickly I reached the top and could see the roof of the house, the barn up the branch and where both branches met down by the storehouse. What a great place to sit! An idea hit me while I looked out over the treetop. It would be a perfect place for a tree house. I had never seen a tree house but I had read stories about them. I scurried down and ran to the woodshed where I had seen some planks. Sure enough there were several six-foot-long planks leaning against the wall inside. They would have to be cut, so I found a handsaw and started sawing.

Boy, this was hard work because the saw was dull and the planks were hard. It took a while but I managed to saw half dozen in two and carried them one by one up to the tree, fitting them right on the top of a circle of limbs. I realized I wouldn’t be able to build up any sides and make a real house but the planks made a special place to sit where the breeze blew and I was hidden from all observers. Jimmie watched as he sang and tore up papers I would have to pick up. But that was all right. He was happy and I was happy for the time being. This had

My brother Jimmie.
taken my mind off the immediate problems.

Later that afternoon, Jim did bring Poppy a paper from Somerset with all the news. He sat down on the front porch and I opened the door leading from Poppy’s bedroom so they could talk.

Poppy said, “The paper says that Oral Bolton, Neil’s son, has received seven gunshot wounds and is expected to come home to the states as soon as they can move him.”

“I know,” Jim said. “His other son, Coy, is a mechanic in the transportation divisions of 8th Air Force Service in France. They were just commended by Lt. General James Doolittle for their outstanding work.”

Poppy recalled, “The only visit President Roosevelt ever made to Somerset was for the most part a disappointment because only a few got to see him. He had been to Harrodsburg for the dedication of Pioneer Memorial Park and his special train was to pass through Somerset. The date was November 16, 1934. The train was expected to stop here for the crews to be changed, but it merely slowed down while the new crew swung aboard and the old crew stepped to the platform. President Roosevelt didn’t know that more than 4,000 persons had gathered to see him as he passed by.”

I heard Jim say, “Well, Dodson, guess we’ve got nother president. And the good news: looks like the war is almost over.”

Oral Bolton.
Poppy interjected, “Guess you heard bout my boys, Coyd and Leonard, meetin in Germany.”

“Yeah, that was somethin!” Jim said with a grin, “them bein in a foreign country and meetin durin a war. Cecil and Earl are in Germany too. “

“Pulaski County soldiers know how to fight. Ya take Floyd Farmer, Cy Hamp’s boy. Jus read in the paper where he was a part of the stand on the western front in Belgium and Luxembourg. His division’s action prevented a complete takeover by the Nazi’s. He wrote home, “St. Vith was hell.” He was with the 9th armored division that stopped the enemy attack at St. Vith, and captured a bunch of Belgian cities.

Poppy read the front page of the *Somerset Journal* aloud after Jim left:

Pulaskians joined with other Americans in mourning the death of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt who died suddenly of a cerebral hemorrhage at 3:35 Thursday afternoon in his Pine Mountain cottage at Warm Springs, Georgia, where he had gone for a rest. Saturday was proclaimed as a day of prayer in Kentucky by Governor Willis, and Somerset’s Mayor W.C. Norfleet requested business houses to close from 2:00 until 4:00 p.m. The banks and post office here were closed throughout the day and other business houses were closed for

*Coy Bolton.*
two hours or longer. The churches remained open during the day for prayer and meditation. At 3:00 P.M. Saturday, the hour of the Roosevelt funeral in Washington, there was a ten-minute pause in the programs at the local theaters. The Rev. L.D. Fisher offered a prayer at the Virginia Theater and the Rev. Floyd D. Rose prayed at the Kentucky Theater. The city and county offices were closed during the funeral service. Many flags were displayed, most of them at half mast.

Like me, Mommy didn’t know much about the economics of the time, only that she wanted the war to end. She asked, “What’ll happen now with Roosevelt gone?” Poppy continued reading from the paper:

President Harry S. Truman, who Thursday at 6:09 P.M. became President of the United States, following the death a few hours earlier of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, gave his pledge to the nation, to its allies, and to its enemies Monday that the men the late chief executive selected to wage this war will continue to direct the fighting “until no vestige of resistance remains.”
XXV End of War in Europe
April 30, 1945

President Truman spoke to the American public on the radio:

Our victory is but half won. But this is a solemn but glorious hour! The whole world must be cleansed from the evil from which the world has been freed. We must give our joyful thanks to God. When the last Japanese division has surrendered unconditionally then our fighting will be done. Within a year most soldiers will get furloughs home while en route to the Pacific war. Furloughs for men going to the Pacific via the U.S. will be for 30 days or more. Other troops will go directly to the Pacific and some are already on the way.

Adolf Hitler and Eva Braun, his bride of one day, killed themselves in the Berlin Reich Chancellery shortly after 2:30 p.m. on April 30, and their bodies were burned immediately. Hitler shot himself, through the mouth, and Eva Braun took poison. The radio report gave a detailed account of Hitler’s last ten despairing days as the Russians steamrolled toward his Berlin hideout. Hitler married Eva Braun just before the end and spent one night with his bride while his capital flamed about him.

Citizens of Pulaski County received the news that the war in Europe was over quietly. There was no loud or unusual celebrating on that Monday. The average citizen was of the opinion the war was only half won because the war in the Pacific continued, and any celebrating should be saved until the Japanese had also been defeated. Word that the European War had ended spread rapidly early Monday morning. The courthouse bell was rung once each hour all day Monday and Tuesday at the direction of Judge R.C. Tarter, and flags were displayed outside practically every business. At 11:00 a.m. Monday, whistles at the Ferguson Shops were sounded and the men joined in singing and shouting for 10 minutes, and then returned to their work. President Truman requested that all places of business remain open as usual. Nearly every church in the county was open all day Tuesday for people desiring a place to pray.

At home we were overjoyed to know that Coyd and Leonard were out of the war zone; but we felt guilty about our relief since others were fighting and losing their lives in the fiercely fought battles as Japan was using every resource to give a last ditch win.

We tried to go on with our daily life but all we wanted to do was go somewhere and talk with our neighbors about our victory. Mommy made trips to the neighbors and to Poplarville Post Office to rejoice with friends. Poppy’s ear was glued to the radio so he didn’t miss anything. Of course, our crops and gardens had to be taken care of but those chores didn’t seem important at the time. Some soldiers were being given furloughs if they had been in active duty overseas without time off. But mostly everyone was looking at the Pacific to see what was happening.

“The Vansants finally got word from the government that their son Ben died last October when a Jap prison ship was sunk off China coast,” Poppy said as he put the newspaper down.

“That’s just awful,” Mommy said. “Looks like they could’ve notified them sooner.”

Poppy continued, “I agree. All their sons were in the service. Vermont Garrison went back to his squadron in England after 13 months as a Nazi prisoner. I know Mayhugh and Fahelta are happy.”

Poppy continued, “There’ll be many effects of the war we’ll havta deal with. The sick and wounded and our allies will need help as well as our enemies in the war-torn countries. I saw in the paper where Roy Holt, Brother Jim’s son, is now in Germany.”

“I don’t see whar we need ta feed our enemies,” Mommy said with exasperation.
“But there’s innocent children who’ll starve if we don’t help em,” Poppy offered as a bad spell of coughing hit him, tearing his throat to pieces.

“One good thing is, the prisoners are bein released from German prison camps. Eugene Rogers, Green’s son, is comin home,” Mommy said as she started outside to begin worming the tobacco.

“Also, they said that Claude Baker, William Baker’s son, from Poplarville was in a hospital in England recoverin from a skull fracture he received in Germany.”

Mommy and I walked to the Post Office where everyone was rejoicing this morning, even though the war still raged in the Pacific.

Already the public had started planning for the future, something that they hadn’t done since the war began. There were some people who speculated about what they thought would

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Mr. and Mrs. V.V. Vansant of Mt. Victory have been notified by the War Department that their son, First Lt. Ben F. Vansant, who was taken prisoner by the Japanese on Bataan, lost his life last October, when the Jap prison ship on which he and 1,775 other American prisoners were being taken from the Philippines, possibly to Japan, was sunk. A letter to Mr. and Mrs. Vansant from Major General J.A. Uilo, adjutant general of the army, follows: “The International Red Cross has transmitted to this Government an official list obtained from the Japanese Government, after long delay, of American prisoners of war who were lost while being transported northward from the Philippine Islands on a Japanese ship which was sunk on October 24, 1944. It is with deep regret that I inform you that your son, First Lieutenant Ben F. Vansant was among those lost when the sinking occurred and, in the absence of any probability of survival must be considered to have lost his life. He will be carried on the records of the War Department as killed in action October 24, 1944. The evidence of his death was received on 16 June, 1945, the date upon which his pay will terminate and his accounts will be closed. The information available to the War Department is that the vessel sailed from Manila, Philippine Islands on October 14, 1944, with 1,775 prisoners of war aboard. On October 24, 1944, the vessel was sunk by submarine action in the South China Sea over 200 miles from the Chinese coast which was the nearest land. Five of the prisoners escaped in a small boat and reached the coast. Four others have been reported as picked up by the Japanese, by whom all others have been reported lost. Absence of detailed information as to what happened to other individual prisoners and the known circumstances of the incident lead to a conclusion that all other prisoners listed by the Japanese as aboard the vessel perished. “It is with deep regret that I must notify you of this unhappy culmination of the long period of anxiety and suffering you have experience. You have my heartfelt sympathy,” Ben was born at Morehead, Ky., Dec 31, 1918. He attended Sandy Hook High School, Sandy Hook, Kentucky, and Clarion High School in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and graduated from Mt Victory High School in 1936. He worked his way through the University of Kentucky and graduated with a B.S. degree in chemistry in 1940. He was awarded a fellowship in his department the following fall and was working part time on his Master’s degree as well as serving as an instructor when he was called to active duty. He went to the west coast in July, 1941, and from there to the Philippines without ever having a furlough home. He was taken prisoner when Bataan fell and was on the March of Death. He had been moved from Davao Prisoner Camp to Cabanatuan on Luzon from which point he was being transferred to Japan. Captain William A. Gentry of Harrodsburg, who returned home a short time ago, was with him in prison. Captain Gentry stated that Ben helped to make medicine to doctor the other prisoners and comforted them in their distress. Ben was a noble Christian boy and frequently led in Christian services held among his fellow prisoners.
do the farmers well after the war. Some said they were going to buy land because they believed they could raise cattle on some poor land that had lain fallow for several years. Some neighbors said they had attended a meeting of farmers and civic leaders where they were discussing how to develop the rural area. The paper carried a report from the meeting:

**Committee Formed To Report On Post-War Development Program For Rural Pulaski.** A post-war program of development for rural Pulaski County was discussed at a meeting of farm and civic leaders Friday night in the county courtroom at the courthouse. Among the things most needed by the county are better educational facilities, extension of soil improvement, rural telephone service, and extension of electric lines. Those at the meeting agreed as all other Kentuckians should make some plans now to curb the “land buying spree” as well as make plans for the post war era. It was stated that there are too many persons putting their money in farmlands and paying high prices for this property when it is worth only about half of what they pay. “It is better for the man to improve the land he has and make it more productive than to purchase more land in order to increase his income,” Mr. Mahan added. The speaker pointed out that half or more of Kentucky’s farms need to be changed from “poor land” to “good land” farms. He also emphasized that the average production from livestock and poultry should be much greater than at the start.

* Somerset Journal, April 5, 1945

“The Japs are sending bombs inside balloons trying to burn whatever they can with them,” Poppy said while putting the paper down.

Mommy spoke up, “You mean the Japs are trying to burn us out with fire bombs?”

“Yes, they’re smart. They’re very loyal to their native land and will do anything to win this war,” Poppy said between fits of coughing.

* * *

The next morning, Mommy told me to go to Whetstone after school and tell Uncle Shelly we needed him to come and plow out our crops. She said he moved so slow that it’d probably take a week. I was to stay with Aunt Nora all night and come back the next day.

Ben Vansant.
I could walk with Mary Ann Dykes, Carrie Lee and Betty Mounce, and Perrell Lee Mounce and his sister Orva Dean, who lived out near Aunt Nora.

That evening when I arrived at Aunt Nora's, I found that her daughter Alma was visiting from Ohio. My bare feet and dirty dress miserably embarrassed me. Instead of spending the night I told Aunt Nora I was supposed to come straight back home.

It was almost dark by the time I started home and I figured it would take me an hour if I ran the three or four miles. This was the road where the old woman lived who used to throw babies in her fireplace and people passing by could sometimes hear them crying. In order to get home, I had to pass by this scary place. The road was through deep woods with only three houses on the entire road. I sprinted about a mile, but I slowed down to see if I heard any babies crying as I passed by this infamous place. All I could hear was my heart pounding and hard breathing.

The thought of passing by Providence Church and graveyard at dark caused my adrenaline to increase and my imaginative mind to work overtime. I wanted to be brave and not be afraid of ghosts, but Hyle had told me so many ghost stories that it was hard to do. As I came into the clearing in the woods where the little church house and graveyard sat, the white church loomed out of the twilight, and I could see the shadowy tombstones directly to the eastern front of the church. I sat down on a log to catch my breath, steady my thumping heart, and muster my courage. I wished I'd just stayed at Aunt Nora's, but it was too late to go back.

After catching my breath, I came up with a plan. I would bypass the graveyard by going around the opposite side of the church at the edge of the clearing. I fought to get through the thick underbrush, and woods all around the back of the church. But my nerves were

Roy Holt.
on edge and I couldn’t watch where I was going because of keeping my eyes glued for any movement in the graveyard.

Suddenly I felt something tugging at my shoulder. “My Lord in heaven, something’s got me!” I thought. Without looking back I took off running through a briar patch. Immediately my bare feet were full of thorns and I had to stop. I sneaked a look over my shoulder and saw in the twilight a large briar still moving in my path that had no doubt hung onto my dress as I passed. I could feel the blood flooding my face from embarrassment even though there was no one to see my cowardly sprint to safety.

Mustering up courage, I sat down to pull the thorns out of my feet. I knew I still had to pass by that cemetery down in the woods above Neils’ place. It was almost dark, and in the woods there were enough leaves to cause the shadows to move as a light breeze flittered through. I sneaked as quietly as possible down the path we walked to go to church from home.

Hyle had told me about his adventures while passing by this place in the night. There were six graves in this small graveyard. Several people in the country that traveled by this graveyard told of haunts and ghosts they had encountered. They believed that the people buried there were possibly murdered or wrongfully accused and there was no consolation for their unrest. Some say that they were related to the Whitises. Some say they were related to the Farmers who lived down in the hollow.

Hyle claimed he knew the history of one of the men that was buried there. He was allegedly murdered, and much mystery surrounded his death. Hyle said that after he had walked some girl home from church, he would come back by this little graveyard in the woods at night. One time a haint (ghost) just appeared out of the ground. He was a bag of bones covered with rags and had a skeleton head. Hyle had described it so vividly that I envisioned the scary scene. His tattered clothes revealed an army uniform, and he was

![Eugene Rogers.](image-url)
carrying a gun with a bayonet on the end. He marched back and forth across the graves as if on patrol duty. Hyle tried to sneak by, but the ghost blocked his way, chattering his teeth and aiming his gun. In his flight to escape, he ran right through the ghost.

I remembered this entire tale as I sneaked by the graves. I could see a couple tombstones dimly lit by the small amount of light that glimmered through the trees. At any moment I expected to see some banshee flying or walking around, angry with me for disturbing its peace. The graves were covered with leaves and sticks, but everything else looked peaceful enough. After I got past without incident, my feet took wings and I sailed over any rocks or tree branches that were in the path. When I arrived home, I was so tired I fell in bed. I never told anyone what a coward I had been.
XXVI   End of the War
August, 1945

Thousands of workers at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, many of them Pulaski Countians, had been making the most powerful instrument of destruction ever conceived by man: the atomic bomb. Monday, August 6, 1945, the U.S. by Executive Order ordered one nuclear weapon, “Little Boy,” to be dropped and had wiped out the Japanese city of Hiroshima, and then another Japanese city, Nagasaki, had been bombed by the “FatBoy” on August 9, 1945, causing mass destruction.

The Japanese unconditionally surrendered and signed the “Potsdam Declaration” as was announced by President Truman, Tuesday night shortly after 6:00. An impromptu parade which lasted for hours, shooting, bell ringing, horn and siren blowing, marked the end of the war Tuesday night in Somerset. By 6:30, the celebration was in full swing. The fire siren, courthouse and church bells, and horns of countless automobiles created a scene such has seldom been heard here. Several soldiers and sailors were in the Somerset parade. While many participated in the noisy celebration, many others went to the various churches to offer prayers of thanksgiving.

– Somerset Journal

* * *

Decorated U.S. Army Veteran of the European Theater in World War II.

Coyd Holt belonged to the 38th Infantry Regiment, was wounded 24 March, 1945, awarded the Purple Heart with Oak Cluster for his service in France, 1945. Additionally, Coyd was awarded the European African Middle East Medal with three Bronze Stars, the American Defense Medal, and Good Conduct Ribbon. He achieved the rank of Sergeant. Coyd enlisted July 24, 1940, at Ft. Knox, Kentucky, and was honorably discharged June 23, 1945. He was a rifleman with Co. “F,” 38th Infantry. Per his discharge, Coyd spent 1 year, 8 months and 10 days overseas. Coyd had blue eyes, brown hair, was 5 feet 5 inches tall, and weighed 130 pounds.

* * *

Coyd was discharged from the Army. It was a time of jubilation for all of us. He rode the train from Cincinnati where he had made a stop before coming on home. Our first glimpse of Coyd was shocking! He was so thin and haggard. I could hardly contain my excitement when I saw him coming up the branch. When he came into the yard, Mommy and I were standing there waiting. He hugged Mommy and in one motion threw me on his back. I hung onto his neck screaming and laughing completely overjoyed with the moment. He let me down and with mischievousness asked, “Are you married yet?” I began to laugh and couldn’t stop until my eyes were filled with tears of gladness.

He still had that sweet smile and deep blue eyes, but his nerves were shot. He seemed like a caged wild animal looking for an opening where his troubled heart could escape the memories of the terrible battlefield. After sleepless nights, he would arise and within a short time he’d be out on the road to catch a ride to Somerset to find friends and whiskey.

The transition from the battlefield to the tranquil solitude of home in rural Kentucky was almost impossible. His blue eyes were constantly shifting as if looking for the enemy. The first morning he was home, Mommy went to his bed and laid her hand on his shoulder to awaken him. He reacted by jumping from the bed and knocking her across the room. Then he was mortified he had hurt his mother, but Mommy understood and didn’t do that again.
As local boys were discharged from the service, many had “post war stress syndrome,” which was then called “shell shock” or “battle fatigue.” Soldiers had been conditioned for war, but not for their return to civilian life. An article in the *Somerset Journal* described the phenomenon that possessed our returning heroes:

A visit to our jails will show that we have a problem. — the veteran. The war ended. Then he was a hero. Now it seemed there is little else for him to do. And he became our number one problem child. He is so well prepared for getting into trouble. An opinion from a famous lawyer recently returned from services speaks out; there was, in the years before and during the war, a popular fallacy that the service “will make a man out of a boy.” It was claimed that a year or two of service was just what was needed to “straighten out” a youth. Nothing could be further from the truth. If a man can stay in the Army or Navy for four years and not come out a bum, he has a stout character. The service does not stress moral living or communal cooperation, but military efficiency, which is their business. He also stated that the boy who failed to indulge in the usual vices, or who was too obedient, too orderly, was usually frowned on by his fellowmen. Nor does it end here. The veteran learns to obey military law and develops a scorn for civil law enforcement. When he returns he brings this scorn, this resentment, with him. This is a dangerous mixture to put down idle, in the midst of a civil community where obedience to the law is more a matter of will than force. But worst of all, the idle veteran, the veteran without a home, the veteran without recreation, resents the community, resents those who didn’t fight, resents attempts to control him. It is a dangerous mixture, and one with which we must deal.

Mommy had given Coyd the bankbook where she had kept his money he had sent home. He and Bert Helton, his cousin, went through it all in a few weeks. We understood that they were trying to block out the past few years and heal their emotional wounds with strong

![Coyd and Christina Holt.](image)
One morning, I heard them talking in the bedroom. Mommy’s low voice came through the door, “Son, I fully understand why ya’re drinkin so much and it helps ta numb yer feelins fer a while, but son, I pray that ya’ll soon be able ta settle down. Your money’ll be gone and ya’ll have to find work. Ya won’t have no money ta git ya outa jail. We don’t have any money so ya’ll have to stay there and sweat it out. I shore don’t want that.” I could hear a short response and she continued, “I know what ya’ve been through but I hope ya can start ta live a normal life fore long.”

“I’m going to Cincinnati tomorrow to find work. I’ll try ta stop my drinkin and straighten up. I know I have ta!” Coyd responded.

So Coyd left the next day to stay with Maydell until he got a job. He later married a woman by the name of Christine, and he quit drinking and joined a Holiness Church. They began their family with children, Jackie and Brenda, soon thereafter.

This did not end the turbulent strife that consumed his life until he passed on.

* * *

Poppy had read in the paper about the big celebration of the end of the war on Monday afternoon on Fountain Square. He wanted Geraldine and me to attend the festivities. Neighbors who owned trucks were taking some people from the country to Somerset to be a part of the V-J celebration. Geraldine and I rode in the back of a neighbor’s truck.

A large crowd was there. Several hundred people were in the parade from the high school building to the Square where the Rev. L.D. Fisher and Col. J.J. Bethurum Williams spoke from the courthouse balcony. I was excited because I had never seen a parade. We stood on Fountain Square watching all the participants as they marched by.

Heading the parade were city policemen and state highway patrolmen, followed by the school band. Next was the color guard, then veterans of the Spanish-American War, World War I, and uniformed soldiers and sailors of World War II. Following in cars were “Gold Star” mothers, Red Cross workers, and members of civic clubs. On foot were Boy and Girl Scouts. On another truck were employees of the Ferguson Shops of the Southern Railroad. Saddle horses were bringing up the rear. The band played and then Miss Margaret Gilpin sang, “God Bless America” to a receptive and excited crowd who joined in singing the chorus. Rev. L.D. Fisher addressed the crowd:

“For those who gave it all we are unable to find words that have the power to express our appreciation and affection to the Gold Star Mothers. After all, they have paid the greatest price for freedom but they must have some satisfaction in knowing that the glorious outcome of the war was made possible by their effort. Every time they see the Flag flying in the breeze they must feel a sense of pride in the knowledge that their sons kept it there, and so gloriously helped preserve the principles for which it stands.”

Mr. Fisher spoke of Him who gave His son on the cross to redeem the world. He said America had a chance to go forward because of the supreme sacrifices of her gallant soldiers who died for our freedom and prayed that those sacrifices were not made in vain. The band then played the National Anthem and Mr. Jones presented Colonel Williams:

We celebrated today an event perhaps the most epochal – certainly the most meaningful to this generation – in all military history. For, through the grace of Almighty God, we have won with stunning decisiveness and completeness on all fronts this Second World War. But the souls of our dead heroes will not stay at rest if we, the living, lose their victory. Our departed comrades fervently hope that, in the words of the Psalmist, we left here on earth will

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make wars to cease, will break the bow, cut the spear in sunder, and burn the chariots of war
in the fire of everlasting peace.

The exercises closed with the sounding of Taps by the bugler. Afterwards, hundreds of us
shouted and sang songs of victory. I hung on to Geraldine because I was afraid of getting lost
in the crowd. We saw several people we knew who had come to town to celebrate.

It was soon time to meet our truck and go home. We left with joyful heart, many happy
memories, and pride in our county being strong and invincible.
Post War

**Atomic Age:** The 400 scientists who worked on the atomic bomb declared that the bomb was “a deadly challenge to civilization itself,” and the use of atomic energy “must be controlled by a world authority.” Many challenges faced the world as the leaders of the countries met in conference. The post-war global political situation was full of challenges and so President Truman and Prime Minister Attlee met for a conference in Washington, D.C., in November. Number One on their list of discussions was the atomic age future facing the world. Prime Minister Attlee was of the opinion that the atomic secrets should be managed and controlled by the big five countries, U.S., Britain, France, Russia, and China. Other topics, including the Jewish resettlement in Palestine and other regional conflicts around the world, were discussed at this time.

In Germany, the British confirmed in November that Adolf Hitler and his bride, Eva Braun, committed suicide on April 30th and their bodies were immediately cremated. This report was meant to tamp down rumors that Hitler remained alive and was in hiding. Food and fuel shortages faced Germany in the winter of 1945.

In November, Russia was handed a defeat through the polls when elections in Hungary rejected the communist candidates in favor of liberal democrats. This was not a defeat that Russia would accept and eventually Hungary would fall under the repressive communist boot. Russia was strongly demanding that the U.S. release its atomic secrets to their country. General Yamashita, the Japanese leader in occupied Philippines, attacked his trial for war crimes on technical grounds. In an effort to stir up anti-American sentiment amongst the citizenry, Chinese Communists charged U.S. Marines opened fire in an effort to oust them from northern strongholds. The U.S. denied the charges but the communists were stirring up trouble in the north and a showdown was pending between Chiang Kai-shek and pro-democracy elements within the country.

Discussions were underway in Washington about imposing price ceilings on new and used homes to prevent wholesale inflation as the nation suffered from an acute housing shortage. In October, Washington allocated over 3.5 million tons of foodstuffs for export to Europe in the last three months of 1945. That brought the 1945 total to about 8.3 million tons. It was believed that post-war nations would be unable to support themselves.

According to a researcher with the American University in Washington, World War II cost approximately $1.1 trillion for armament and war materials and about $230 billion in property damage. These figures do not include the costs of war in China. The U.S. expended $317 billion for war materials, Russia $192 billion, and, the U.K. $120 billion. The Axis powers spent approximately $469 billion. Germany spent $273 billion, Italy, $94 billion, and Japan, $56 billion.
Leonard had stayed in Germany to help with the restoration of the destroyed country. During his time there he met a schoolteacher and fell in love. He sent her picture home and wrote to Mommy that he was thinking of marrying her. She was pretty, smart, and could speak English very well. He wanted to know if Mommy would approve. Mommy answered his letter, saying she was afraid he would have a problem with the people in America right now in accepting a German as a citizen. Even though she was innocent, most people had built up a hate for our bitterest enemy, Germany.

Poppy was too sick to even discuss such matters. He was suffering a lot with his breathing, and staying in bed all the time. I made a big production out of taking his meals to him and making his food look attractive. He would get emotional and I would see big tears in his eyes. I didn't know what to do because I couldn't hug him, so I would go out of the room and cry. Later when I’d come back for his tray, he would ask how I was doing in school and if I was minding Mommy. Of course, I told him I was doing all right and, yes, I was minding Mommy.

Hyle had been medically discharged from the Marines in 1944 and had gone to Ohio to seek employment. Hazel soon followed and began working in a factory. Their son Boyce was only four years old when he came to stay with us for a visit. He was well behaved, and he would play for hours in the yard with a couple of toy cars he brought with him. He was so smart! He could count to one hundred, read, and recite many Bible verses. And he knew his ABC’s. I wanted to stay home and play with him but I had to go to school.

Boyce stayed on the porch on pretty days and talked with Poppy through the open door, or he’d go to the barn and stay with us while we stripped tobacco. We sang while we worked and he could sing right along with us. Poppy was much taken with him. He said he was the best-behaved child he had ever seen.

As the days were getting shorter and cooler, TB was consuming Poppy’s lungs. He ate very few solid foods and drank mostly liquids. Deep, wracking spells of painful coughing brought blood from his decaying lungs. He knew his time was near, so he wrote to Uncle Roscoe in Oklahoma and asked him to come and see him one last time. Uncle Roscoe came and spent a week, which raised Poppy’s spirits. He kept writing to his brother Delbert in Ohio begging him to come but he never did. It left him heartbroken.

My family was overjoyed that we had won the war and that the killing would finally stop; however, at home, my Poppy was fighting a losing battle for his life.

Coyd had been in Ohio working since last fall, but Leonard was still stationed in Germany. The wintry days were cold and wet. It seemed as if the cold soaked right into our skin and settled in our bones. Neighbors began coming in and sitting up with Poppy at night to help us out because he had to have someone with him at all times. His coughing was worse and his breathing was labored. Any day he could go.

Jimmie and I were staying in the little house Dault had built the summer before. I hated
staying by ourselves, away from everyone. They had furnished it with two beds and a heating stove. I brought our food from the house. After Jimmie fell asleep at night, I would go out of the house and around to the windows trying to see if Poppy was still alive. I could see him lying in bed struggling for breath. If I could only do something. I lived in the shadow of despair. A constant feeling of sadness and depression.

If I just had someone to talk to! My family was so tired and torn up with taking care of Poppy that they didn’t think about me.

When they would catch me peeking in the windows, they would make me go back to the little house and tell me I needed to stop worrying Mommy. Then I would be ashamed and go back and try to sleep while the ever-present fear of Poppy’s looming death kept me awake. The cold personified my troubled soul, and I’d throw wood in the stove to try and warm my thoughts. The nights were long.

Georgia had come home to help because Geraldine and I were doing all the work while Mommy sat constantly by Poppy’s bedside. On a cold day in February, early in the morning, Mommy came to the door and told me to get dressed because Poppy wanted to see me. I was so afraid when I saw how pale and hollow his cheeks were. I went to his bedside and sat down. Between episodes of breathlessness and pain, he said, “Little Hog, I will soon be gone. You have been a treasure to me and have given me much enjoyment in my last years. You must mind your mother. I won’t be here to help raise you so you need to be a good girl. I want you to do all the things the Bible tells you, and then I’ll meet you in heaven. Promise me this.”

By this time I was crying so hard that all I could do was nod my head. I left the room and within a few hours he was gone. On February 26, 1946, the death angel came and bore Poppy’s spirit away. A merciful God took him in his arms and carried him to paradise, ending all his suffering and sorrow and taking him into a place of peace and rest.

I tried to think of our heavenly meeting and how Poppy would be waiting in heaven to welcome me when I died. Try as I might, I couldn’t rise above my grief.

The neighbors came in and washed and dressed him for the funeral. Neil and Evert

![Roscoe Holt](image)
Bolton made the casket and pine box for his burial. It was a cold day when we buried him in Providence graveyard.

Sister Jessie could not be found, and Leonard was still in Germany and couldn’t get home in time for the funeral.

Jesse Dykes, Coyd, and Hyle, and some neighbors lifted his casket onto a truck to be carried to Providence graveyard, his final resting place. Mommy and I rode in the cab to the place where the ruts in the road made it impassable. We walked the rest of the way to the church house. The rest of the family walked up the hill through the woods to the church, except Georgia who stayed home with Jimmie.

Green Rogers preached his funeral as Poppy had requested. People came to the funeral even though the roads were bad. A group of men carried the coffin past Whippoorwill Station, and on to the church house.

My father was one of the bright spots in my life and I sure would miss him. He had walked the talk with his life in the zest and convictions of his beliefs. He had been a prominent leader in his small world and had lived far beyond his time with his educational and scientific knowledge.

May God rest his soul.

The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away
Blessed be the name of the Lord.
The Pacific War lasted 1,364 days, 5 hours and 14 minutes.
The Europeran War lasted 2,192 days.
In World War II, a total of 56 nations participated.

EPILOGUE

The physical and psychological scars of armed conflict can and often do lasting harm to those that survive the experience. However, all wars demand that many brave souls face the ultimate test of faith, courage, and sacrifice. WWII was a bloody conflict on a global scale involving millions of people. The suffering and inhumanity inflicted by tyrants was great throughout the war and Pulaski County, Kentucky, met the challenge and contributed warriors to all corners of the world—many of whom gave their absolute all for our country, people, and way of life. We owe them a debt that can never be repaid.

The total number of Pulaski County warriors who died in World War II exceeds 224. May God rest their souls.

Jewell Holt Florea
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Died Where</th>
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<td>B-I-C 9/4/45</td>
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<td>Rolin Feese</td>
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<td>Ray Floyd</td>
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<td>Millard L. Fox</td>
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<td>Died Philippines</td>
<td>1945</td>
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<td>KIA France</td>
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<td>Alfred Hammonds</td>
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<td>Winfred Hampton</td>
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<td>Donald E. Hancock</td>
<td>KIA Luxembourg</td>
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<td>Cecil B. Hardy</td>
<td>KIA France</td>
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<td>J Vaughn Harmon</td>
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<td>Geo V. Harris</td>
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<td>Hart KIA Solomon Islands</td>
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<td>William Kenneth</td>
<td>Haste KIA France</td>
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Floyd D. Helton KIA Pearl Harbor 12/7/41
George Helton KIA France 8/19/42
Fred Bruce Hill KIA North Africa 11/8/42
Alfred L. Hoff KIA France 12/3/44
John R. Hood KIA France 8/10/44
William Denney Hood KIA Philippines 5/6/45
Charles Hudson KIA Philippines 3/22/45
Clarence Hughes KIA France 8/29/44
Richard Hughes Died Texas 9/29/42
William Humble Died France 10/2/44
Paul Isaacs KIA Italy 10/14/44
Hoy R. Jasper KIA Germany 17-Nov-44
William N. Jesse Died Kentucky 7/2/45
Julian S. Johnston KIA New Guinea - Air 9/15/44
Rufus Jones Died Colorado
Charles Allen Jones Died Pacific 9/16/45
Chester D. Kemper KIA Philippines 3/19/45
Ernest George Kuzee KIA Pearl Harbor 12/7/41
John Lane KIA France 7/7/44
Robert G. Latham KIA Luxembourg 1/27/45
Farris Leigh KIA Germany 10/6/44
Albert Loveless Died Texas 1/10/44
Hubert Mayfield Died Mississippi 9/23/42
John Frank Maynard KIA Philippines 4/9/45
Fayette McDonald KIA France 11/26/44
Edwin McIntyre KIA France 6/17/44
Curtis Meece KIA Italy 6/5/44
Robert Earl Meece KIA Atlantic 4/24/45
Leonard Mercer KIA France 11/12/44
Robert S. Merrill KIA France 11/9/44
John A Miller Died Burma 6/6/44
Jay G. Miller KIA France 11/19/44
Joe Frank Miller Died California 6/30/45
David C. Miller KIA France June
Samuel J. Minton KIA France 1/12/45
Lowell Molen KIA Europe 11/44
Carroll Moore KIA South Pacific 1944
Granville Morgan KIA Okinawa 3/19/45
William L. Morris KIA France - Air 12/5/43
Charles W. Mounce KIA Holland 2/16/45
Irvin Lafort Mounce KIA Okinawa 6/21/45
A.J. Mullenix Died Florida 9/14/43
Robert K. Mullins Italy
Otto New KIA
William Stanley New KIA Europe - Air 11/12/44
Hubert Nicholas KIA Germany - Air 7/15/44
Lewis N. Norton KIA Italy 9/26/44
William Howard Parker Died Texas 8/15/43
Sam F. Parker Died Tennessee 2/6/45
William Glen Parkey Died Wyoming - Air 8/14/43
Howard Parkinson KIA Austria 6/7/45
Johnnie Parmley KIA Pacific
Earl M. Payne KIA New Georgia 7/14/45
Carl L. Pence KIA Germany 3/13/45
William Marshall Petrey KIA
Cecil Phelps KIA Italy 10/31/43
Howard Phelps KIA North Africa 11/42
William R. Phelps KIA Germany 12/23/44
Russell K. Phillips KIA Philippines 2/27/45
Cecil R. Piercy KIA Belgium 1/5/45
Columbus Pittman KIA Italy 11/28/44
Robt Wyman Prather KIA South Pacific 12/44
James Price KIA Philippines 7/27/45
Luther F. Prows KIA Philippines 1/9/45
Clarence Pruitt KIA France 9/17/44
Murrell Randall KIA Germany 3/3/45
Earl Reynolds Died Shelbyville 5/13/42
Paul Reynolds KIA France 11/16/44
James Ed “Geo” Rhoten KIA Philippines 7/6/42
Albert R. Richardson KIA Belgium 1/4/45
J.E. Ross KIA France 7/11/44
Hubert Roy KIA 8/44
Eugene Roysden KIA France 7/27/44
Roy Glenn Ruckel KIA Atlantic 1/43
James E. Rutherford Died Texas 10/22/42
Robt C. Rutherford KIA Germany 3/1/45
Hiram Sears Died Hawaii 6/12/43
Edgar James Sears KIA Okinawa 5/25
Louie H. Sears KIA France, St Lo 8/5
Chester Sexton KIA Mediterranean 4/20/44
Albert D. Shadoan Died Somerset 11/11/45
Wilbur Shadoan KIA Italy 4/2/44
Fred P. Shadoan KIA Germany 2/25/45
Woodrow Glenn Sheehan KIA Italy 11/19/43
Clyde E. Shepherd KIA Germany 12/15/44
Jewell Simpson KIA Philippines 4/25/45
Edwin Smith KIA Philippines 7/24/45
Zora Smith KIA Belgium 9/7/44
Tommy South KIA Canada 9/7/43
Howard Sowers KIA France 3/3/45
Bernice L. Spears KIA France 7/29/44
Ova Spears KIA France 10/18/44
Norman S. Stucker
Paul Quentin Stevens KIA South Pacific 12/18/44
William Ray Stigall Died
Henry E. Stigall Died Philippines 9/9/45
Theodore Sturgill KIA Italy 7/44
Francis Merrill Stone KIA South Pacific 10/42
Harold Roger Stone KIA South Pacific 10/25/44
William Haskell Sullivan KIA Italy
Nick G. Sullivan KIA Belgium 12/17/44
James W. Tackitt Pacific
Wyatt (Wite) Tarter Died St. Louis 7/16/42
Edwin Forrest Tarter KIA France 11/18/44
David S Thompson KIA
Garland Thompson KIA France 7/15/44
Hubert E Thompson KIA North Africa 2/4/43
John Thompson KIA Philippines Btwn 6/3/43
David C Trimble KIA
Marshall Tucker Died NY Hospital 6/26/45
Marce Turpin KIA France 8/4/44
Geo A Van Arsdale KIA Pacific 12/44
Carl Richard Vanhook KIA Holland 3/1/45
Ben Vansant KIA Pacific 10/24/44
Clayton (Chas.) Vaught Died Germany 5/17/45
Kenneth Alan Waddle KIA Philippines 12/5/44
Robert L. Watkins KIA France 8/10/44
Estes Weddle KIA France 7/25/44
Frank A. Weddle KIA Luxembourg 1/19/45
Ellis Elden Whitis KIA Pacific 5/13-19/45
John Raymond Whyte KIA France 7/29/44
Glenn Williams Died Mississippi 12/43
Howard T. Williams KIA 12/25/44
Lindsay Williams KIA Germany 3/1/45
Kirts Williams KIA France 10/23/44
Charles F. Williamson KIA Belgium 1/15/45
John D Wilson KIA New Guinea 2/15/44
William C. Wilson KIA Philippines 1/45
Lewis Boyd Wilson KIA Italy 4/22/45
Elmer Yancey KIA B-I-C, India 3/45
About the Author

Jewell Edwaline Holt Florea was born in eastern Pulaski County, Kentucky, in 1935. When she was 18, she moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, and then to Chicago, Illinois, in 1972. In 1981, she moved back to Kentucky and now resides in Goodwater, a community east of Somerset in Pulaski County, Kentucky. She has four children and five grandchildren. At present she raises garden vegetables for sale at the Somerset Farmers’ Market and is active in community improvement organizations.