

**EARLY YEARS:
Stories of the Corkill Girls**

**Revised Edition
by
Osa Ann Corkill Moore**



**The Yellow House
Our “Camelot”**

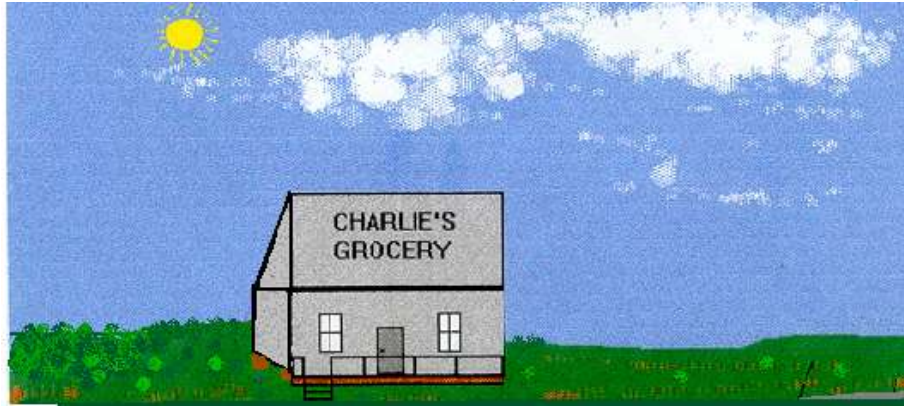
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FRONT COVER

Several years ago FH and I visited some spots of my childhood memory in Morrilton Arkansas. We went to see the Yellow House and I took some pictures of it while there. It is the house that much of my story centers around before our family was broken apart, it is a house that has always been very dear to my sisters and me, it was Our Camelot! Maybe the yellow paint had faded somewhat but other than that it looked the same as I remembered it. The dug well was still there and visible is the locked door of the room that housed the pump organ. I will add that the huge front yard where we played and enjoyed the attention from the train engineers had certainly shrunk. I am surely glad to have that picture to include in this revised edition of “Early Years”.

The Great Depression

I must have been three or four years old when the first crisis hit our family. I remember the tears, the whispers and the pain that Mama and Dad felt. I didn't know what it meant, I only knew that it was not good and it



frightened me. I learned later that Dad was going through the trauma of losing his neighborhood store, which had served him well for many years. The Great Depression days were close and his customers were feeling the oncoming financial disaster that most all people would soon know. At that time it was customary for customers of the neighborhood stores to buy by charge account. They bought all of their groceries during the month and then paid at the first of each month. I am sure as times got hard and money was scarce each family paid what they could each month as they struggled to get out of debt but soon the time came when they could no longer pay what they owed. Dad carried them as long as he financially could do so but then had to close his store and move from our home. The house we would lovingly refer to as the brown house.

I remember very little before this time but the memories I do have are good ones, a loving mama and dad, little babies and a little dog named Fido. I once told Leah about my little dog named Fido and she said "a lot of people have a dog named Fido". I think at that time the name was also much used influenced by the Funny Strip "Maggie & Jiggs" with their little dog Fido.

I remember going to Dad's store with him, sometimes we stopped at the soda pop factory and bought a



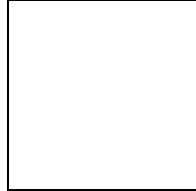
soda pop. I am sure there were other flavors but I especially remember the strawberry and the chocolate. What happened to the soda pop bottle that came down to my waist?



Then there was the window-shopping one Christmas when I got lost in Morrilton. We stopped to look at a display window full of Christmas toys, beautiful dolls, doll buggies, little dishes and many other sparkles of Christmas. I stood with my eyes glued to a doll and when I looked up Dad, Geneva and Louise were gone. I started running as fast as I could and screaming to the top of my lungs. When a big giant lady grabbed my arm I jerked away from her and ran as fast as my legs would move screaming, “I want my Daddy”. She caught me (I think she threw a net over me) and calmed me down by telling me that she would take me to get an ice cream cone. We walked hand in hand to the ice cream parlor and she set me up on the counter. There I sat surrounded by friendly faces eating an ice cream cone when Dad and my sisters walked in.



I remember walking with Mama past the Catholic Church and school, seeing the nuns dressed in their black habits and Mama threatening to throw me over the fence to them if I did not behave. The truth is that very often, when a child became a discipline problem at public schools, the parents sent the child to Catholic school knowing that the nuns could control the child. That was especially true in the upper grades (six, seven, eighth)



Typhoid Fever

I don't know when but Dad's sister-in-law (Aunt Betty Corkill) told us that Dad had contracted typhoid fever and he ran a prolonged high fever, after which he was never the same. She said that before the fever he was a brilliant successful man. Realizing the time period between his first wife's death and his marriage to Mom, I am thinking this probably happened before he and Mom married. His first wife died leaving him with a little son named Charles Merchia. She may have died with typhoid at the same time Dad was ill with it. I know at that time typhoid fever was a killer. I regret that I did not question Aunt Betty about things that I now would like to know but at that time I was sixteen years old and didn't want to hear about those past years. I am glad that she told us about the typhoid fever because when we were very young we did realize that Dad was not alert, he could be described as dull and I guess silly. It was hard for him to make difficult decisions and very often he called on his brother, Leonard, to help him or rather make the decision for him. I did ask him a few questions about the past but he would only laugh and not answer. I think he really did not know.

I am sure Dad was devastated when his first wife died leaving him with the little son (Charles Merchia). He let his wife's sister who lived in Pine Bluff take care of Merchia until he could get his life together again. Merchia was twelve years old when Dad married Mama, so Merchia remained with his aunt in Pine Bluff until he married. He came to see us many times but never lived with us.

Infantile Paralysis

One of the babies that I remember was a beautiful little blond haired blue eyed boy which I am sure Mom and Dad were delighted to be blessed with after having three girls (Geneva, Osa and Louise) seventeen and eighteen months apart. His name was Emmett Leonard named for Dad's two brothers. We called him E.L. but tragedy struck when sometime during his first year he became ill with infantile paralysis causing him to be paralyzed on one side leaving him unable to walk or talk. He lived to be five and a half years old. I still have pangs of guilt remembering how he at times became strong enough to walk with someone holding him on each side. Geneva and I were often called on to help him, but sometimes I did not want my play interrupted to do this. He always enjoyed this so much and must have known when I didn't want to help him. We were delighted once when he walked by himself across the room and he was overjoyed by it. That was to be the only time he could stand by himself.

Mama's Family

By this time we had moved to the outskirts of Morrilton where Dad got a job at the cotton mill which was near our house. Life was good there; we girls were never lost for something to fill our days. Since Grandma Batson had babies as Mom had hers, when she came there were six of us. Jenny Lee was two and a half years older than Geneva, Jeff Davis was six months older than I and Lillian was two years younger than Louise. Then there was Golda and Jasper who were older than we were. They were all by her second husband whom she had married after divorcing her first husband. The thing that I remember most about her is that she often sang to me as she rocked me.

We never knew our grandfather Wyatt (Mama's dad) Grandma and he were divorced when Mama was a little girl. Mama remembered going to

the courthouse where the settlement was made, her dad picked her up kissed her good-bye and she never saw him again. She had a picture of him, which she proudly showed us. The picture was made by a professional photographer; Geneva and I remember him as tall good looking; dressed in a business suit and a felt hat. We have tried to locate the picture along with other pictures but have not found them.

There were three Wyatt children, Alta (Mama), Beatrice, and Edward. I have told you that Grandfather Wyatt was part Indian, either full or half I don't know. It is strange how one will let opportunity pass you by as I did in 1949 when we moved to Pine Bluff and Fred went to work at AP&L. Our neighbor behind us (Mrs. Throneberry) knew my grandfather or maybe knew of him. She said he was a farmer and a prominent citizen living not far from Pine Bluff at that time. Well again that life was behind me and I did not want to pursue any of the pasts so I made no effort to find him.

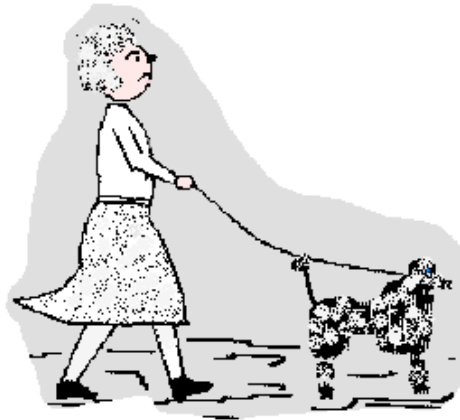
Dad's Family

I know almost nothing about my Corkill grandparents except that they are buried in Morrilton and that my grandmother's name was Ocieannah. There were three sons who lived in Morrilton, Uncle Leonard who owned a clothing store, Uncle Emmett who was a blacksmith and Dad had the neighborhood store. Emmett and Clara had one son named Raymond and, Leonard and Betty had one daughter named Elizabeth. We really did not know Raymond and Elizabeth very well, since we were Dad's second family, they were much older than we were.

Years ago Geneva, Louise and D'anne were looking through the Bureau of Records in Conway County and found this bit of information: In 1889 TR & Oceannah Corkill purchased 129 acres of land in Morrilton Township. Later eight acres was sold to the Railroad Co. to build the railroad track through Morrilton. A portion was either sold or donated to the cemetery. (Since the Corkill graves are at a choice spot in the original graveyard, we are assuming that, that is a portion mentioned in the records) Although there were no papers found on such transactions, we assume the remainder of the land was sold to individuals to build portions of what is now Morrilton.

In recent years we have learned that the Corkills came from the Isle of Man. Merchia's son Charles visited the Isle of Man and did some research on the Corkills then later Louise and Lynn visited the island. They came back with some interesting information including a videocassette of places of interest. It was interesting to find in the information that they brought back with them, Corkill family names - Charles, Bruce, Paul and Robert.

Our aristocratic Aunt Betty did not like Mama we were never told the reason but can make a good guess at it. She felt that Mama, since she was from a farming family, was from a lower social class of people. She was from a divorced family and she was twenty-one years younger than Dad (she was eighteen and Dad was thirty-nine when they married) I am sure that she felt that Dad should not marry again and probably blamed mama for the marriage. I can remember her coming to see us in her white starched dress with her curly white hair leading her little white poodle. We girls were told to stay outside while she visited with Mama inside. She always left in a huff with her nose in the air never looking our way as she left. We ended the episode with much laughter at Mama mimicking her as she marched around the room with her nose in the air. I am sure on those visits she scolded Mama for having so many babies. She called getting pregnant *letting yourself get in a fix*. She managed to let herself get in a fix only one time. Aunt Clara was not a snob. We lived close to her while in the brown house and she and Mama visited many times but after we moved I don't remember her visiting us.



Louise never liked Aunt Clara's visits so she always ran into the bedroom, crawled under the bed and stayed there until she left. One day she heard Aunt Clara coming and ran and crawled under the bed. That time I suppose Aunt Clara stayed a little longer than usual and I am sure Louise was tired of being under the bed. So when there was a lapse in the conversation Louise thinking that she had left said, "Mama has that old woman gone". I don't know how Mama excused that one but I know Geneva and I got a good laugh at Louise.



Hard Times

I am sure Dad's wages at the cotton mill were meager compared to the income that he had realized from his store but Mama helped out by raising chickens for sale. She also sold eggs (ten cents per dozen). She made all of our clothes, raised a big garden and canned the vegetables and during the season she picked strawberries at a strawberry farm in walking distance of our house. She often took one of us girls with her to spend the day picking berries. I was always glad when it was my turn to go with her.

We rented a house from Mr. and Mrs. Sisson. I am sure hard times had hit them also and in order to survive they rented their house and moved into the back of their neighborhood store close by. They stored part of their furniture in one room of the house that we lived in, among those things was a pump organ which I eyed with envy through the window of the room with the locked door. Their barn and cow lot was near our house where they came twice daily to milk and feed the cows.

Cucumber and the Old Devil

Mrs. Sisson and Mama shared the garden plot at the back of our house with a path leading down to the outdoor john separating the two sections. It was that path that almost caused us girls to come face to face with the devil. We were forbidden to go on Mrs. Sisson's side of the path and that was not hard to abide by since Mama and Mrs. Sisson's gardens looked very much alike. But then one day we looked on Mrs. Sisson's side and there was a huge cucumber, as big as a small watermelon, so we thought that since it looked like a watermelon it must taste like one. We pulled it and cut it open and to our disappointment it not only did not taste like a watermelon but it did not taste like a cucumber. It was Mrs. Sisson's seed cucumber! We were in big trouble!



Well, needless to say it didn't take Mrs. Sisson long to miss it and it didn't take Mama long to find some suspects in the crime. "No", I said we did not take it and did not know who did (at that time I didn't know about the helicopter man (see Foot notes pg V). Mama said, "If, you did not take it then fine, but if you did take it and you don't tell me the truth then the old devil will get you tonight."

Good Grief! There we were caught between the devil and who knows what, we had all felt the sting of the peach tree switch. We huddled in the back yard and tried to think of a plan but there seemed to be no way out but to confess and Mrs. Sisson was still on the front porch visiting with Mama. How we did wish she would go home so we would not have the embarrassment of having to confess in front of her.

Nighttime was coming soon so confess we must but who would do it? Geneva did not want to be the one and I surely did not want to be the one. So I said, "Louise do you want the Old Devil to get you tonight?" "No", she said. "Well then you had better go and tell Mama that we did get that cucumber". So without hesitation she went and told Mama. I don't remember the punishment maybe there was none but anything was better than the fate that we were facing when night came.

Hot Pepper

One of the things that Mama grew in the garden had a lasting affect on me; I might say "it was burned in my memory". As Mama set the bowl of hot peppers on the table she told us that they were hot, "don't eat them, they will burn your mouth", she said. She made sure I heard her say that because she knew that I was guilty of raiding the sugar bowl that stayed on the table and would most likely be the one to spot the peppers. I climbed on the table and looked at those pretty red peppers and then touched one of them and it didn't feel hot, so I decided to try one. I put one in my mouth, bit down on it and started to chew-----I soon found out what hot meant. I couldn't go crying to Mama so had to suffer the consequence alone. Burned in my memory!



Raising Chickens

Raising chickens brings back pleasant memories. In the spring the hens started showing signs of wanting to “Set” by sitting on the nest after having laid their eggs also by clucking as if they were calling little baby chicks. Mama would, then, take the eggs, mark them with a pencil and then put them back in the nest until she had as many as the hen could cover with her wings. She then checked each day and took out the unmarked eggs as I watched and cringed as the old hen pecked her hand. As Mama gently raised the hen talking to her as she removed the eggs the hen seemed to realize that she could trust her and she calmly let her remove the eggs. I think it took three weeks for the eggs to hatch and then the hen and the beautiful little baby chicks, some yellow, some white and some black were taken off the nest and let loose in the yard.



There were also some bad memories of those little chickens. Because they shared the same yard with us three girls running and playing, we often stepped on one of them. I can still remember the feeling of the little one being smashed under my foot. Another good memory is that of gathering the old hen and her chicks when a storm was brewing. We girls helped to round them up for the shelter in the hen house until the storm was over. It was such a comfort to see the hen settle down and call the little ones as she spread her wings to cover all of them.

One other chore we did to help with the chickens was to smash the eggshells (after they had been toasted) and leave them for the chickens to eat. This was to give them the roughage that they needed to digest their food. Mama toasted the shells by placing them on the stove as she cooked. The toasting was to prevent the chickens from eating the shell from the raw egg.

Primer School

September 1927 and time for Geneva to start to school. We all walked the two miles to the little white two-room schoolhouse called

Haniford School, which held grades primer through sixth grades. Mama pushed little one year old E.L. in the buggy and Geneva, Louise and I walking beside her. Geneva was the proud little girl going to school until we got there and then her mood changed. She cried and could not be consoled. As a last resort the teacher suggested that her little sister, Osa, stay with her the first day. How could I say “no” when the teacher looked at me as if she was sure that I would have no problem staying and would be the comfort that Geneva needed. Well, I suppose I was the comfort that Geneva needed because she stopped crying and was happy all day long but me! I cried until I discovered that I could stick my head inside the desk, I stuck it in there sucked my thumb and probably did not come out until the day was over.



I suppose that that shocked me into reality to the point that I don't remember my first day of school. At that time schools did not have Kindergarten but had what they called Primer. A child started to school in the primer at age six years, if capable after six weeks they were passed to first grade. Oh, what pressure that was to make that big step and how embarrassing I felt it would be to fail to make it. There was much anxiety when the day of reckoning came and we were told who passed and who did not pass. We students waited with fear and anticipation for the teacher from the first grade to appear at the door, which lead from the primer class to the first grade. I remember her as a Giant as she stood in the doorway and called out the names of those who were to follow her to the next room. All three of us girls were saved the embarrassment of failing; we passed to the first grade.

Public Health Nurse

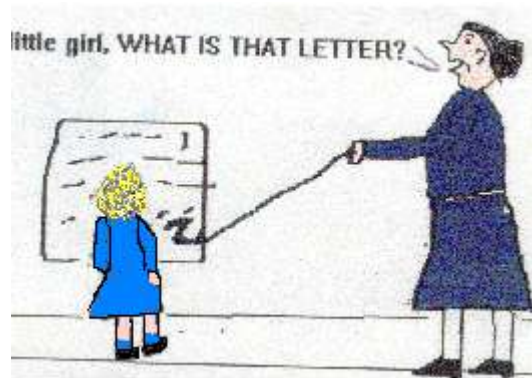
Although I don't remember my first day of school, I do remember the dreaded visits from the Public Health nurse. I was scared to death of that woman not knowing what she was going to do to us next, or which end she was going to want to look at next. Her visits were more like an invasion than visits I think the teachers were also frightened of her. On one visit she said, in her



loud voice, “Children, line up in two lines, those who have a scaw line up on this side and those who don’t have a scaw line up on this side. Well, since I had no idea what a scaw was I just sorta lingered in the middle. “Little girl get in one of the lines”, she said. I quickly got in the “no scaw” line hoping to goodness that I didn’t have one of those things. Slowly I inched my way up the line dreading my turn, wishing I were anywhere but in that line. But I knew I was there when she grabbed my arm took a look at it and said, “You have a scaw” as she gave me a good hard shove. She was looking for a smallpox vaccination scar!

Eye Test

Next she lined us up to check eyes, “put your hand over your left eye and read this chart”, she said. Well, I did all right with that until we got to the letter “Z” I did not know what a letter “Z” was. She kept moving me closer and closer getting more and more agitated until she finally had me with my nose against the chart with both eyes open and I still did not know what it was. The teacher finally spoke up in my defense and said, “The children have not yet learned the letter “Z”. Well, I learned that day what the letter “Z” is and I have never forgotten it.



Stripped of Our Bloomers

And still another visit she lined us up, the boys in one line and the girls in another, thankfully I knew which line to get in this time. The nurse took the girl line and the doctor took the boy line. While the teacher held a sheet around the table we girls were stripped of our bloomers and put on the table and examined under our hood. I never knew what they were looking for I only knew that they severely damaged my



dignity. It was not unusual in times past for the Health Department to choose a Pilot Group to do a study for some health problem. And since neither Geneva nor Louise remembers such an incident, I am sure it was my class, which was chosen for the test.

Head Lice and Scabies



Routinely the nurse checked everyone for head lice and scabies (called seven-year itch). Children who were found with either were sent home to get the prescribed treatment. For itch it was a covering of the body with stinking sulfur and grease. I can't remember the treatment for head lice but I do remember Mama combing our hair with a fine-tooth comb

which, I am sure was to remove the nits. Even though I was never found with either, I was always nervous dreading the embarrassment of being sent home. On one occasion when we were being checked, I noticed a small scratch on my hand and thinking that the nurse would mistake it for itch I said, "I scratched that" and then immediately thought, "oh, no! An itchy spot is just what she is looking for." Well, I was glad she was smart enough to know that it was not itch, but what the heck is that itchy spot that I have chased all of my life- the one that Robert took a video of when he got his first camera. I suppose that's the seventy-one year itch.



Bring Your Little Sister

It was "Bring your little sister to school with you Day" and Louise and I were excited. Louise would be starting to school the next year and was anxious to see what school was all about and I wanted to show off my little sister. As we walked to School Geneva and I gave Louise instructions on the dos and don'ts of school.

Get in line when the bells rings, no talking, stay in your chair no talking. When the bell rings line up to go outside for recess, no talking.

Listen to the teacher, and absolutely no talking. Louise and I sat together in the little desk, we played at recess and we ate lunch with Geneva. All went well until it was time for our reading class which meant going to the corner and sitting in the little wooden folding chairs near the stove. As the teacher listened to each student read from the “Baby Ray” Reader, and I sat waiting my turn and enjoying the moment, Louise put her hand on the back of my chair and said in a loud voice, “Osa your chair sure is hot”. Well it was hot

and I am sure the teacher needed to check it before it started blazing ; maybe she did inspect it----I don’t remember because I was too shocked and embarrassed ☹ Louise had done the unthinkable; she had talked out loud during class.

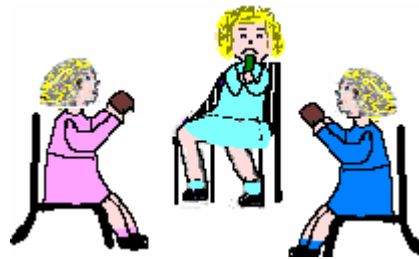


Hives and Sour Pickles



It was sometime during the early school years (first or second grade) that I started having the pesky hives that have troubled me all of my life. I would wake up in the morning with the ugly itchy welts all over my body and swollen eyes and lips. I went to a Chiropractor doctor and he took away my sweets.

It was hard because we girls had enjoyed candy bars in our school lunch pails. To help supplement his income, Dad had worked part time in a small grocery store in Morrilton and he always brought home candy bars. I suppose mama thought that if a candy bar could do me harm maybe a sour pickle would do me much good, so while Geneva and Louise sat and ate their candy bar I ate my sour pickle ☹.

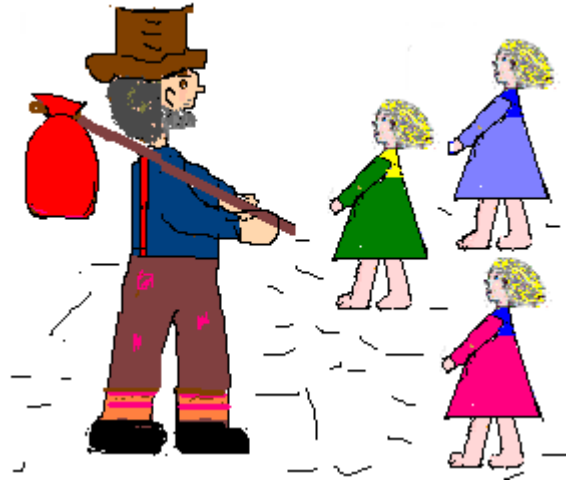


So often I would wake up in the morning with my body and Mama took me to his treatment from me. This

Hobos

Living close to the railroad and highway we had many hobos stop at our house asking for food and sometimes for a place to sleep. I suppose since many hoboos traveled by hitching a ride in a train boxcar, our house was easy pickings. Adding to the convenience of it was a sidetrack that went to the cotton mill slowing the train down to an occasional stop,

making it easy to hop off of the train. The story was that if you helped one they somehow marked the place so others would know that they could get help at your house. Mama always fed them and let them sleep in the barn. We never felt threatened by them and we girls often sat on the front porch steps and talked with them as they ate the food that Mama gave them.



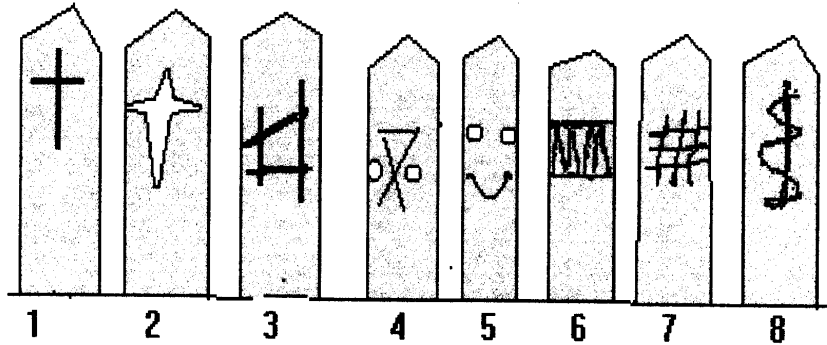
Invited to Spend the Night

Late one afternoon an older couple carrying a young baby stopped and asked for food and a place to spend the night. For several reasons Mama wondered if the baby belonged to them. The baby was dressed in a beautiful embroidered white dress that had become filthy dirty. They had no other clothes for the baby and no milk for it. As we sat around the dinner table that night and talked the couple could not seem to get together on the baby's age or its name and they seemed nervous. Mama invited them to spend the night in the house instead of the barn. The baby cried much that night and Mama helped with it by feeding it, bathing it and finding some clean clothes to put on it. I am sure Mama would like to have checked with the police before they left the next morning but since we had no car, no telephone and the police was distance away she had to let them go. They seemed very anxious to leave the next morning so after giving them breakfast Mama gave them milk for the baby and said good-bye. Mama watched the newspaper for several days for news of a kidnapped baby but there was no such report.

Pop Bottle Charlie

The day that I was getting ready to print this page, this month Guidepost came and in it is an article written by Joe Friedman—talking about hobos during the depression years. I thought it fitting to tell you about that article. Joe's dad (a Jew) having come to this country to escape persecution had felt misplaced for a time and so was very much in

sympathy with the hobos. He owned a grocery store during the depression and so handed out food to many hungry hobos passing by. He told of one rumpled old man with callused hands who sauntered up to the meat case, wiping his brow with a ragged handkerchief. So many men with lean, lanky frames and patched overalls had flooded the store that day that his dad



asked the old man if he knew why there were so many. “Come outside” said the old man. “I want to show you something”. Mr. Friedman and his son Joe followed him outside where they walked around the building to where the stone foundation met the street. There scratched with a piece of coal was the sign of the cross. When Mr. Friedman asked what it meant he was told it meant that a good Christian man lived there and that he would never turn them away. Joe said his dad left that sign there throughout those rough depression years. In this same article was a list of hobo signs collected by Rev. C. Ross McClellion who remembered a mark he had found at home as a boy, he once asked an old hobo what it might have meant. The hobo, Pop Bottle Charlie, gave him a list of different signs with their meanings:

- 1 Religious people
- 2 Dishonest man (a backstabber; don't ask for work.
- 3 Police officer lives here
- 4 Good jungle, make yourself at home---
- 5 You can sleep in this farmer's barn
- 6 Poor water.
- 7 Stay out of the yard-
- 8 These people will help you when you're sick.

After seeing this I am sure that the Sisson's barn being close to our house would be a drawing card for the hobos.

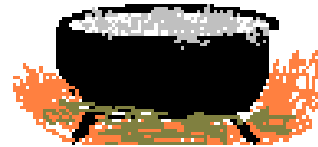
Gypsies

We sometimes had Gypsies set up camp on the highway close to our house. Stories were told of how they would steal food from people living close by their camp and yes, how they would sometimes steal children to be used as slaves, so we were always afraid of them. I don't think they ever took anything from us unless it was our chickens roosting in the trees in our backyard. I do remember that a lot of them were stolen but that was mostly by the people who lived not far from us. One night we awoke with the chickens squawking and flapping their wings obviously disturbed by something. We went to a window and looked out into the yard and saw a man pulling the chickens out of the tree. Mama ran to the cotton mill to get Dad as we girls watched the man fill his hands with chickens and leave. The man and chickens were gone when Mom and Dad got back.

On one occasion after the Gypsies had pulled up camp and left, a body was found which caused quite a stir among those who lived close by. I really don't remember the outcome of that incident. The authorities probably buried the body and let the Gypsies go on their way.

Wash Day

If it was not raining, Monday was wash day. This was done in the backyard where Mama drew the water from the well, heated it in the big black wash-pot, rubbed the clothes on the rub-board and hung them on the line to dry.



We girls helped to take care of the babies during that time. E.L. loved wash day because that meant that he could be outside most of the day surrounded by Mama and us three girls. He spent his time sitting on the ground playing with his little ten cup and watching the action around him. Later there would be Maxine and then Nida for us to help with. For Maxine caring for her meant keeping her spoon filled with peanut butter.

The dug well provided us with more than the water that we needed. It also served as a cooler for our milk. Mama put our milk in a gallon bucket with a



good tight top on it. She then tied a rope to it and lowered it to the bottom of the well. It was always nice and cold.

Pets

Living on the outskirts of Morrilton we had many little kittens which had been dropped off near our house. We girls picked them up and fed them milk with an eyedropper and some survived but we had many funerals as we buried them back of the garden. What happened to fido? Well he developed a bad habit of chasing Mama's chickens so one day while we were at school he ran away. I was grown before I realized that when a dog runs away it is usually while the children are away at school.



The one pet I remember most was a little red Bantam Hen. I loved that little hen and I suppose she loved me. Often when I went outside she would come running to me to be picked up and held. I wonder now how she survived my running and playing with her tucked under my arm but I suppose she enjoyed it because she always came back for more.

Christmas Joy

Christmas was a joy! With bright tinsels, fruits, nuts and candies. I remember the delight of seeing Dad walking down the railroad carrying a large Christmas tree. He mounted it in a stand and when he stood it up it touched the ceiling. We all watched as Mama decorated it with garland, beautiful glass ornaments, icicles and little clip on candles. Christmas Eve night Mama lit all of those little candles filling the room with their flickering light adding the sparkle of tinsel and garland. We hung our stockings by the fireplace to wait for the filling of them by Santa Claus. Christmas morning we found them filled with oranges, apples, nuts and candy. I still associate the scent of oranges and apples with Christmas because that was the only time that we had either of them. It was not until years later that both were shipped from other states to our groceries the year around.

Mama did a lot of baking to get ready for Christmas. I remember a chocolate cake she baked and set it in the window for the icing to cool and told us not to touch it. I meant to take only one bite but then there was Louise who also meant to take only one bite-----Well, I was not gonna stop until she stopped and she was not gonna stop until I stopped---and then to add to the eating frenzy, I heard Geneva coming in the door causing me to dig in with both hands. So by the time the cake cooled there was no icing on it. We were in trouble again! Well of course, the Devil made us do it; he surely seemed to get his “jollies” out of using us.

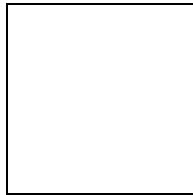


Santa Claus Comes To Town

Santa Claus was coming to town and Mom was taking us to see him. We hurriedly dressed and walked the distance to Morrilton. I kept going over the list of things I wanted and hoped I would not become tongue tied when he asked me what I wanted. Although Mom had told me that Santa Claus could not bring me a tricycle, it was first on my list. I thought it would not hurt to ask. As we gathered around Santa Claus, I got to the back of the line trying to muster the courage to face him. As he started to pick up Louise and set her on his lap, she reached up and pulled the beard off of his face. I was shocked as I saw the beard come loose and I thought, “Well there goes my tricycle or anything else that I might want because Louise has destroyed Santa Claus’s face. I knew he would be mad at all of us. To my surprise, as Mom and Santa laughed, Santa put his beard back on his face and listened to our list of wants.



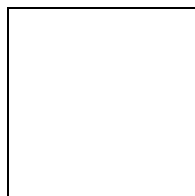
One Christmas disaster struck. It was cold that night and we girls wanted to be sure our new doll along with our old ones stayed warm through the night. We wrapped them in little blankets and placed them in chairs close to the fire- place and then went to bed. Sometime during the night I woke up with smoke in my eyes so I pulled the cover up over my head. When I heard Louise stirring I said, "Pull the cover up over your head Louise", and she did. Thankfully About that time Geneva woke up and sounded the alarm which saved the house but not Louise's dolls. A hot coal of fire had popped onto her bed of dolls and burned them beyond repair. I don't know the end of that story. I only remember that I was ready to protect my dolls from having to share with Louise. I still remembered the little doll dress that I had to give to Jenny Lee when she lost all of her doll clothes in the flood of 1927.



The Railroad

We loved living by the railroad; it was a part of our lives in several ways. We liked the attention that the Engineer gave us by blowing the whistle as they approached our house, giving us time to run into the yard and wave at him and the caboose-man. We didn't realize until later that actually they were blowing the whistle for the railroad crossing and not for

us.

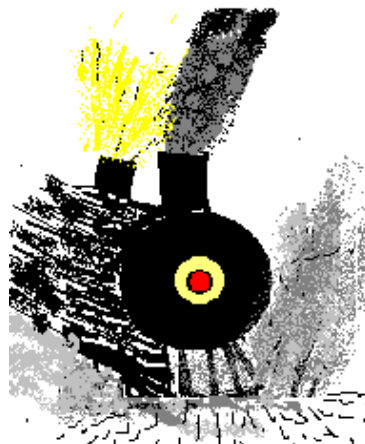


We walked the railroad part of the way to school which cut off some of the distance that we walked each day. The railroad was a part of our playground as we used the rails for our balance beam. We competed to see who could walk the furthest without stepping off of the rail.

Mama told us many times not to put a rock on one of the rails because it would cause the train to derail. I found it hard to resist that temptation as we walked the rails and there were many rocks close by. I thought it might be exciting to see a train derail right in front of our house. It would be good to have that nice Engineer and Caboose-man in our yard while they put the train back on the tracks. -----until one day! We almost saw a train wreck at the crossing in front of our house.

Mama and we girls were in the front yard watching as a heavy piece of machinery was being moved across the railroad. The railroad was built higher than the road, which meant that they had to go up a steep incline to the top of the railroad and then down on the other side. The machinery had a long snout that stuck out in front of it posing a problem of getting it across the railroad without getting tangled in the wires overhead. The three men who were moving it consulted with each other and decided they would try to move it across before the next train was due. The driver slowly drove it up the incline while the other men helped guide him. Just as they got almost to the top, the snout became tangled in the wires and as the driver got out of the drivers seat I began to get anxious because I knew a train was due soon.

As the three men stood talking, the train rounded a curve with its whistle blowing. I think I must have heard the whistle first and I started screaming, probably so loud that the men could not hear the train whistles. I was absolutely hysterical as I watched the oncoming disaster. I felt somehow responsible for what was about to happen. Mama slapped

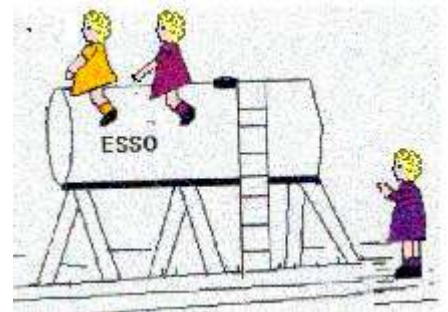


her hand over my mouth and tried to shake some sense into me while I watched in horror. Finally the men heard the train and the driver started running to the machine, throwing me into accelerated hysteria as I watched him crawl into the driver's seat of the machine. By now the train was so close that it looked like a big black smoke bellowing monster with its ear piercing whistle and a heavy fog of steam spouting from it as the engineer applied the brakes in an effort to stop. The driver put the machine in reverse and backed off the railroad not worrying about the wires or where he was backing as he cleared the tracks just as the train rolled by.

After that incident I had no problem resisting the temptation of putting a rock on the rail. We saw one other near accident when two trains were headed toward a head-on collision. But since I did not feel responsible for that one it did not drive me to the brink of insanity. For some reason one train was stalled as another one was due coming from the opposite direction. When they heard the on coming train whistle, the flagman ran down the tracks waving the flag and the train was able to stop in time to avoid the collision.

Our Play Grounds

Another one of our playgrounds was the ESSO (now called EXXON) gasoline storage tanks across the railroad from our house. We loved to climb the ladder to the top of the tanks and sit straddle of them and we sometimes walked around on the top. We enjoyed this fun several times before an ESSO official caught us and told us to stay off of the tanks. That kept us off for awhile until we realized that he came so seldom that by keeping a lookout for him we could get by with climbing



them. So we went back and climbed making sure to watch for an ESSO truck. We had no more than gotten on top of the tank before Mr. Sisson came out and scolded us severely and making believers out of us. Obviously ESSO had asked Mr. Sisson to keep a watch out for us and since his store was in easy seeing distance of the tanks, we knew we had lost that playground.

Still another interesting place was a lumberyard across the railroad. Actually it was a storage place for staves, which had been sawed somewhere else and brought there for storage. I suppose they were stored there to be hauled away by rail to their destination. They made great climbing towers for us to climb to the top and down inside them. I am sure had the owner of the staves seen us he would have put a stop to our playing on them. But then maybe he did see us and hoped that we would get hung up in those columns and spend the remainder of our life there, thus getting us out of the hair of those who were trying to keep watch over us.

Actually, we spent the most of our playtime in our yard playing marbles or swinging on our swing which hung from the big Oak tree beside our house. One would think that that was the safest place for us to play but it turns out that it might not have been so.. It was when we were swinging that day that Louise cut her foot to the bone all the way across the bottom



and up toward her toes. It required many stitches to put it back together and she still has a huge scar to show from that day.

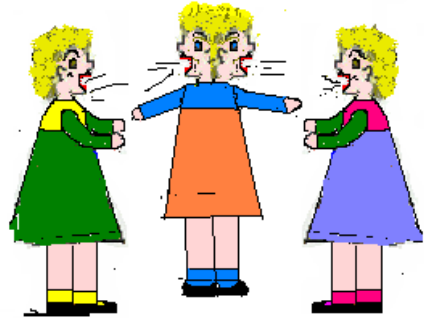
It happened like this: We were taking turns swinging each other but when it became Louise's turn to swing Geneva or me she did not want to swing us and so she stood against the porch stomping on a glass jar as she argued with us. "I can't swing you" she said, as she stomped on the jar, "yes you can" said Geneva, "but I can't swing you high", as she stomped harder on the jar, "well, then swing us as high as you can" said Geneva, "but I can't swing you as high as I can", as she gave the jar another hard stomp. "If you don't come and swing us" I said, "I'm gonna tell mama". With another hard stomp came a loud scream as the jar broke and we looked over to see blood coming from her foot. Geneva and I screamed for Mama and she in shock at the size of the cut didn't hesitate to get a doctor.

At that time moms and dads took care of most health problems calling a doctor only when absolutely necessary. This was one of the few necessary ones. Obviously Louise won that round because she could not be

expected to push a swing for a long time. In fact almost as soon as that cut healed, she cut the same foot again, so Geneva and I are still waiting for our turn to be pushed in the swing by Louise.

Spats

Just as all siblings do at times, we had our little spats. I will have to say I was involved in every one of them. If I was not one of the two doing the quarreling, I was standing in the middle of it egging it on by saying to one and to the other one, "I know something good you can say". So the quarrel would go on and on.



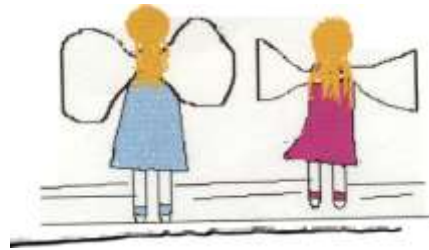
Unionalls

The one and half mile walk to school in the wintertime was a cold and miserable one. We children had to stand around the pot-bellied stove and warm our bodies before we could start classes. We dressed as warmly as we knew how with long underwear, which we called unionalls, with long stockings over them, bloomers, a dress, high top shoes, coats, caps and mittens. One morning I got up sleepy, as always, and wishing I did not have to go to school, with Mama prodding me to hurry and get dressed. I got all of those clothes on and went to school but all day long I fought with my unionall sleeves so long that they kept falling down over my hands and the legs so short that they kept pulling up toward my knees. When I undressed that night to go to bed everyone got a good laugh at me, I had put my unionalls on upside down. Well I never told them that I knew that morning as soon as I got them on that I had them on upside down, I was just too tired and sleepy to change them. After all there was a hole at each end so I could not see that it mattered which way you wore them. After that day I knew there was a difference and it did matter.



Angel Wings

Even though it was a long walk for most of us we did have a few programs at school at night one being a Christmas program in which along with other children, I played the part of an angel. I don't know if Mama did not get the instructions on how to make the wings or if she had her own idea of how they should look but I was embarrassed to tears when our wings were put on us to get ready for the performance and my wings were triangular shaped and were heavy and floppy. The other children had round shaped wings that were light enough to stay in place. And to add to the embarrassment all of the other angels had blue dresses and I had on a red one. I feel sure that I got most of the attention and the whispers from the audience as all eyes were surely on that strange looking angel.



No Broken Bones

There were few cars on the road at that time but I managed to get hit by one while walking to school late one afternoon on our way to a school function. The impact knocked me over into the ditch and tore my dress. As I started to get up the driver stood close by scolding me for getting in his way. He told me that the sun was in his eyes so he couldn't see me and told me again to stay off of the road, leaving me feeling guilty. Actually I was walking at the edge of the pavement and leading Maxine who was walking on the shoulder so maybe I was considered to be in the road. I was bruised from head to toe but no bones were broken. Mama didn't seem to be too concerned but she did give me much consideration when there was some chore to be done and I would plead



“pain in my side”. I am sure Geneva and Louise who had to do some of those chores could see through my “pain in the side”.

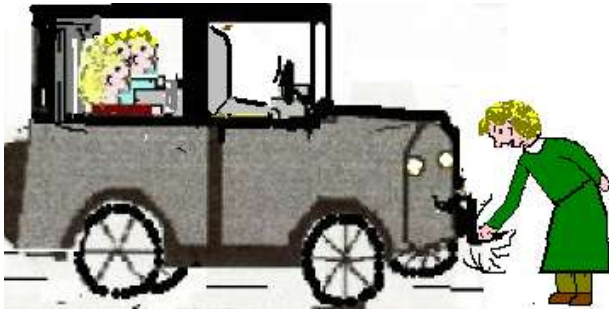
Don’t Ride with Strangers

We children were warned many times at school and at home to never get in a car with a stranger. Maybe since we seldom saw a car and the chance that one of those cars would stop and offer us a ride, the warning fell on deaf ears but one morning while on our way to school one of those cars did stop and offer us a ride. The man said, Get in girls and I will take you to school and of course Geneva, Louise and I crawled into the car. I was the last one to get in and then I remembered the warning that we had been given so I left the door open. The man told me to close the door and I said, “No I want to leave it open.” I felt like I might need an escape route. He laughed and at his insistence I closed the door and he took us to school.

Mom’s Model T

Mama bought one of those cars, called a T Model for \$20.00 and with much effort it would actually sometimes start. Mama got it started one day and we went to Menifee, which was about twenty miles up the road. I had heard about this far away place called Tennessee and I was excited as I told my friends that we went to Tennessee. I was embarrassed when my teacher corrected me.

Although it was exciting to ride in a car, the process of starting it was frightening. First Mama had to put the controls on the steering column in place and then go to the front of the car and start cranking it. It took many



revolutions of the crank before it would fire and then often it would sputter and die.

Sometimes it would back-fire causing the crank handle to fly backwards and almost knock Mama off of her feet. Many times it would become flooded

and wouldn’t start so we would have to give up on it until another time. Of course there was no heat in the car and there were no windows to open and close so needless to say it was a cold ride.

Grandpa Batson

Very early in our childhood Grandpa Batson died. I remember very little about him only that he was an old “grouch”. When we went to see Grandma we had to stay clear of him because he did not want us around. We were told that when he and Grandma married he insisted that the children leave home when they became eighteen years old. Mama being the oldest was the first to leave and I am sure that she was glad to find Dad who was at that time financially sound. That being another reason for Aunt Betty’s disapproval of Mama.

The Well

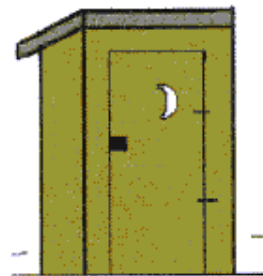
The dug well was one of my childhood fears and probably has been cause for many frightening dreams throughout the years. I feel sure that one of the reasons for those fears comes from my teenage Uncle Jasper who loved to tease us children by climbing down into the dug well in our back yard. He would hold on with his hand on each side of the well as his feet stretched across the well and stood on the rocks that jutted out inside the well. We children always screamed in horror when he did that.



The John

Our house was heated by a fireplace and a wood stove. Cooking was done on a wood stove and kerosene stove. Our lighting was with a kerosene lamp. Our toilet was the outdoor “john” that set at the end of the garden path, which separated Mama and Mrs. Sisson’s garden plots.

Although many toilets at that time had what was called open pits, we had the luxury of the more modern, more sanitary toilet, which had enclosed pits. Beginnings in 1935 toilets with enclosed pits were built by the WPA (Works Progress Administration) that was a part of President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal (Relief) program.



Baths

Our bathtub was one of Mama's wash tubs. She heated the water on the stove and bathed all of us in the same water. I am not sure how often we bathed but certainly not everyday. We did wash our feet in a pan of water before bedtime each night.



Dad's Injury

Dad had not worked at the cotton mill for very long when fate hit the family another blow. Dad cut off his index, middle and ring finger of his right hand, even with his little finger. I am sure that could have been predicted since other than working in the store, he had never worked with his hands. The work that he was doing at the cotton mill called for feeding the cotton into the machine which spun it into twine thread. I am sure that there were many fingers cut off with that hazardous job. With his fingers gone he could no longer work at that job so after his fingers healed he went to work as night watchman at the cotton mill at a much lower salary.



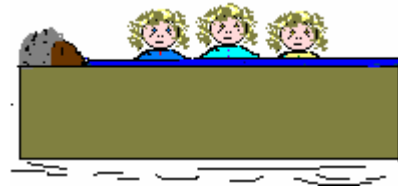
As night watchman, Dad was required routinely to make rounds of the cotton mill and check the doors. To show that he was making those rounds, he wore a punch clock around his shoulder and stopped at each door and with a little key at the door he punched one of the little holes in the clock. He told of many spooky things happening at those doors. He told about strange noises as he made his rounds. Sometimes he took me with him and needless to say I clung close to him as he made that round.

Aunt Sally

We called her Aunt Sally; she was a sweet old black lady who lived on the other side of the cotton field that ran between our house and hers. She hoed and picked the cotton in that field. She was always a comfort to us when we were left alone. We often took our tears to the fence as we waited for her to come to the fence and comfort us. She always assured us that we would be all right and that our mom would come back soon.



But one day Aunt Sally was not in the cotton patch and we were so saddened to learn that she had died. We three girls sat and cried and then decided that we would feel better if we went to see her. We went as we were, dirty I am sure, and knocked on her door with our tears. Some lady let us in and showed us Aunt Sally's open coffin. We stood in tears as we looked at her still dead body. This was the first dead body we had seen but we would see two more soon. I still remember how she looked lying in the coffin.



Playing with Matches

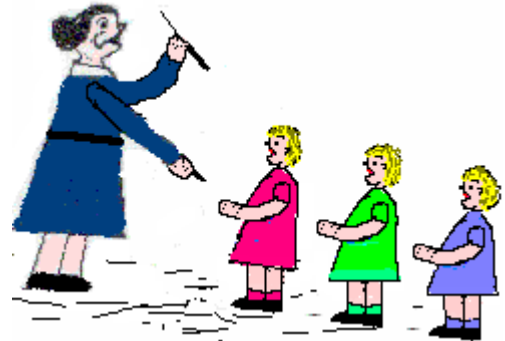
I think since the first match was made children have been fascinated with matches wanting to strike one; and so it was with the six of us one day when the adults were out of sight. Jeff got the box of matches and brought it outside and said, "Who will strike it?" Well, of course I was the one who volunteered. I took a match out of the box, pulled it across the strike pad several times before it came to life but then it burst into a puff of smoke that would set off any smoke alarm. At that time there was no such thing as smoke alarms but I had a built in one that went off into a scream that I am sure alarmed everyone in



hearing distance. I started running around the house as fast as I could run with the other five running behind me screaming **On fire! On fire!** I ran around the house until I was exhausted and then I fell to the ground and waited for the flames to engulf me. But to my surprise I did not feel anything as I waited for the pain to start. It was when the others ran up to me that I knew why I was feeling no pain----They were saying, “You are **Not** on fire”.

Typhoid Shots

We could not seem to get away from that frightening Public health Nurse. By now they had discovered an inoculation against typhoid fever. Before this time I don't remember any shots only the small pox vaccination, which was not a shot but a scratch, so the thought of having a needle stuck into my arm was unbelievable horror. After that discovery we were forced to take a round of three shots (one each week) every two years.



We met at the schoolhouse and watched the nurse as she set her black bag on the table and pulled out her foot long needle. “Get in line”, she said, as the little ones and big ones screamed and fought as they were pulled by their parents to the line to wait their turn for this frightening torture. I never screamed but it was not because I didn't feel like it, actually I felt like screaming and running away as fast as my legs would carry me. Little did I know that one-day I would be helping with the torture of the long lines of screaming frightened children.

A New Baby Sister

March 28, 1930 we came home from school and to our surprise there was another little baby sister in the bed with Mama. She had come prematurely and weighed only four pounds. She was so tiny that mama, to show us just how tiny she was, laid her in a shoe box that we were using for a doll bed. Mama had bought the smallest shoes available for a baby and they were too large for her.

The doctor prescribed a special brand of milk for Maxine, which had to be picked up in Morrilton each day and sometimes that posed a problem of who could go and pick it up. One day when Mama was in a bind to go and pick it up, I persuaded her to let me go ----she finally relented and let me go. I felt like I had spread my wings as I walked the distance of about a mile to get the milk. It wasn't long before Maxine gained weight and was strong enough that we girls could hold her and feed her.



God in Heaven

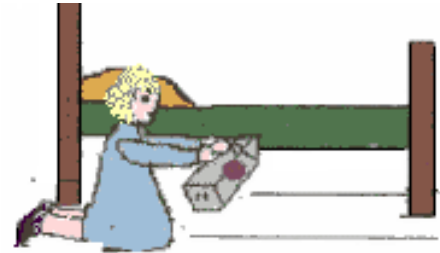
Mama did a lot of reading to us ---one book I remember was Heidi, she also read the funny papers with sad stories of Little Orphan Annie and Little Annie Ronnie. She sometimes read from the Bible and from the Watchtower. I suppose it was from hearing those stories that caused Geneva to think about us going to Sunday School I am sure it was too hard for Mama to go with the baby and with E.L., so Geneva led the way and started taking us to Sunday School at the Nazarene Church on the edge of Morrilton.

We walked the distance each Sunday and heard the lessons taught there. We heard about God in heaven and how he would help anyone who asked for his help. Well, I had my doubts thinking that it was impossible for anything to stay up in the sky without falling. But one day on that garden path (the one that almost turned me over to the devil) I looked up into the sky and thought, God if you are there show me. And there in the blue sky was a clear silhouette of a shepherd very much like the one that I had seen on the Sunday school leaflets. I was satisfied; there really was a God! And he knew how to stay up in the sky without falling.



I would again soon call on this newly found source of comfort. I had lost my favorite beautiful marble (a purple one) and I sat crying until I could shed no more tears then I remembered that I could ask God for help. So I thought, God please tell me where my marble is, and it was just like turning on a switch in my head that the thought came to me. It is in a shoebox under the bed, I ran and looked and there it was!

I think I was being made ready for the trouble times ahead. I did call on that childhood assurance many times in years to come and I can add--- I still do.



Nazarene Radio

One visit to the Nazarene church caused some excitement when it was announced that a radio would be brought to church the next Sunday so that the congregation could listen to it instead of a sermon. Wow! We were going to get to see and hear a radio. We had never taken little Maxine to Sunday school with us but for this Sunday we wanted her to see and hear a radio so we took her with us. We sat on the front row as we listened, through much static, to a political speech that meant nothing at all to us.



Maxine soon got bored and started crying and one of the good ladies of the church came and suggested that we take her outside. We thought that if that was a radio maybe we didn't want one of them.

Running Blues

Mama called it the "Running Blues". Our little dog would suddenly be jolted from a peaceful sleep into a scary fit which caused it to start running around the house yelping as it ran and bumping into things as it tried to maneuver around obstacles. When this happened, we girls would climb to the highest place until the fit was over. The chest of drawers was the highest point in the house so



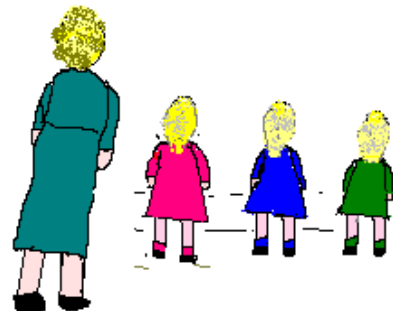
we picked that to climb upon. In order to make it easy climbing (when Mom was gone) we took the drawers out of the chest. I might add that forgetting the Running Blues we often climbed on top of the chest as a part of our play. Louise especially loved to climb to the top of it. But as time goes by bodies do change and bodies get a little heavier while the chest of drawers stay the same. And so it was that one day as Louise started climbing, the chest started falling over on her. She fell to the floor and Geneva and I watched as her body went into one of the drawer spaces. As she hollered “get me out of here” Geneva and I together lifted the chest off of her and was surprised to find her unscratched. So ended our climbing to the top of the chest-of-drawers.

First Airplane

It was about that time that I saw my first airplane. Mama had read that some World War I planes were being moved from one storage place to another one and would be flying over Morrilton. We waited with excitement and anticipation until we heard the roar of the plane engines and then we ran outside to watch them fly overhead.



That was my first time to hear about war as Mom told us that war meant killing each other and that those planes had dropped bombs on people. She assured us that the war was over and that no one would kill us. I hoped she was right. It would be several years later but war did come again and we would be a part of the war called World War II.



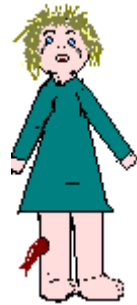
Family Problems

I don't know just when Mama started seeing other men but I think it was when Grandma (who was still in her forties) started dating again after Grandpa Batson died. I remember us spending many nights with Grandma and after we kids were put to bed there were parties with music from the victrola. Mama was still in her twenties and I am sure that the family

problems were taking its toll on Mom and Dad, so she could not resist the temptation.

Thorns and Stobs

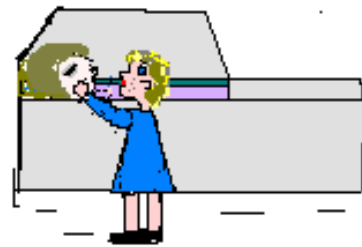
It must have been the summer of 1930 that Grandma moved from the Bottoms (the farming land near Point Remove Creek) to a place about one fourth mile from our house. I loved having her close enough that I could walk the railroad to her house, which was very near the railroad. It was one of those trips that on my way home I was bouncing a ball and accidentally let it roll down the steep railroad bank. I went down the bank and got it but as I crawled back up the bank I slipped and fell and stuck a large stob in my leg. The railroad bank was covered with the stobs left from the railroad crew cutting the large bushes along the railroad. I managed to pull my leg off of the stob and climbed back up the bank.



With the blood spurting from my leg I ran home screaming as I tried to decide what story I would tell when asked what happened. I had reason for not telling the truth because Geneva had just gone through the painful ordeal of having a large thorn removed from her heel. The thorn was so deep that the doctor had to cut around the thorn before he could remove it and I didn't want to risk having that done to my leg. I could not say that I had cut it because Louise had just cut her foot on glass and had to have many stitches, I didn't want that either. So each time Mama asked me what happened I screamed a little louder so finally she either gave up or could see for herself what had happened. She treated it with a "cure all suave" that she had bought from the traveling medicine man.

Grandma's Death

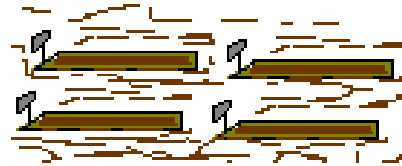
Sometime during the late months of 1930 Grandma took pneumonia which was a deadly disease to combat at that time. Mama went every day to help care for her and was hopeful that she was recovering. Dad thinking that she was lying about her mom being sick and was actually meeting a boy friend, tried to stop her one day as she was leaving. This was the only time that we saw



them get physical with each other, which was not much of a struggle because Dad soon gave up and let her go. A few days after that Grandma died and I am sure it left Dad feeling badly about his accusations.

Grandma's body was laid out at our house in a simple wooden casket, which was covered with white cheesecloth. I walked up to her casket and touched her face and was shocked at how cold she was. She was buried in the cemetery in Morrilton while we grandchildren and her children watched in sadness. In a distance we could hear the mournful call of the Mourning Dove.

A small marker marked her grave, which was among the graves of small markers. I noticed the difference in the graves, which were down under the hill from the graves on top of the hill with the large tombstones where Grandma and Grandpa Corkill were buried. I felt so sad that she was buried in that spot that to me looked so lonesome and forsaken. I loved her and I knew that life would not be the same without her.



Her dying caused another crisis for the family. She left four children; the youngest was only four years old and the oldest fourteen. The decision of how to care for the children was not an easy one to make. We children overheard some of the talk about putting them in an orphanage and we discussed that among ourselves. Fourteen year old Jasper told us horror stories of how children were treated in an orphanages I am sure those were stories which he had made up and enjoyed shocking us with them ----

Instead of sleeping in a bed at night, children were hung up by their toes. Instead of eating at the table, they were fed from a trough like animals, and worse still they were whipped every night before being hung up by their toes. Then of course we had heard the sad stories of Little Orphan Annie and Little Annie Rooney, so we were relieved when they didn't have to go to the orphanage but those stories would come back to haunt us later.

My Older Brother

We looked forward to Merchia's visits. He seemed to love to carry us around on his shoulders and show us a lot of attention. He was the older

brother that any little girl would love to have, but one day he came with his wife, May. I don't remember that we knew he had married until he walked in with her. We knew as soon as we saw her that we did not like her---my childhood memory of her was that she was tall and mean----and maybe looking very much like the dreaded public health nurse. She came in fussing about how we girls were doing or maybe not doing, and she intended to straighten us out before she left. She made sure that Merchia did not give us the attention that he had always given us (she called that spoiling). I suppose Mama was willing to let her see what she could do with us so she just stepped aside and let her work on us.

The only thing that we liked about her was the banana pudding that she made. And I might add that we have enjoyed that delicious dish and so have our children throughout these years. May was a schoolteacher and because the school at Hanaford was about to close she suggested that she and Merchia take Geneva home with them so she could go to school in Pine Bluff where May would be her teacher. Merchia was delighted because he adored Geneva and she too was willing to go since she could be with Merchia. Her excitement did not last long because May made sure that Merchia did not spoil Geneva (which meant spending very little time with her) Geneva soon became ill and they brought her home.

Mama Leaves

By now Dad knew that Mama was seeing other men but I am sure he was helpless to do anything about it. We girls knew too but were told to keep it a secret. We also knew that she was planning to leave with her friend but she had not told us just when, only that she would leave at night while we were sleeping. That was a frightening time not knowing when we would wake up and find her gone.

One night I almost spoiled her plan when I awoke sometime during the night to find her gone. I walked outside the back door and started screaming so loud that she, afraid that Dad would hear me, came running in from back of the garden where she was meeting her boyfriend, to put a "gag" (not literally) on my mouth.

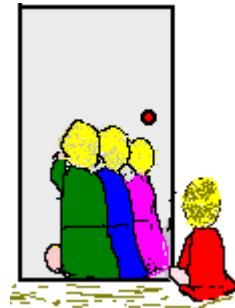


I think she left just after school was out the last of May or sometime in June 1931. And even though she had told us she was going it was still a shock to wake up and find her gone. Dad did not know until he came home from work that morning. It still amazes me that he stepped in and took care of the situation. I don't remember the particulars of how he did it but I don't remember feeling neglected. I remember happy times during that time with home made ice cream on Friday nights, new dresses that were too large and much too long. I was embarrassed to wear them when we walked into Morrilton on Saturdays with Dad.

I suppose you could say Dad was happy those few months that Mom was gone. He seemed to especially enjoy Maxine, today we would say he bonded with her. That bond and love she felt would help her through the troubled years ahead. We girls helped because there was much to do with four year old E.L. and one year old Maxine. I am sure Geneva being the oldest, felt the pressure of trying to help Dad hold things together.

“Ah Mista Chalie”

I suppose that no matter how bad things may seem one can always find something to laugh about and so it was with us. I don't know who this woman was whether she represented some circle of busybodies or whether she came on her own hoping for some attention from Dad, but she came one day. Dad sent us to the other room and closed the door while he sat and talked with her. Well the other room was in easy earshot, at least by sitting with our ears pressed against the door, of the visiting two so we could hear some of the conversation, which was not really a conversation. It went something like this---Dad would say something about the predicament he was left in and she would say, “Ah Mista Chalie”. He sat there and related many sad sob stories to her and with each story she said, “Ah Mista Chalie”. After all of these years we still laugh about that. “Ah Mista Chalie”.



Sting of Stigma

Mama had told us that she would come back and she did at the end of August or maybe September. Needless to say she did not receive a warm welcome from Dad especially when he found out she was pregnant. This might seem to be the time of the family break up but it wasn't, we managed to stay together for almost two more years. I don't remember Dad and Mama quarreling with each other but the thing that hurt was the stigma we felt at school when the parents learned of what had happened. I felt branded when an older sister of my best friend said, "I'm gonna tell Mama on you, she told you not to play with her". Well she played with me anyhow but the sting was there.

Mama didn't help by taking "The devil may care" attitude toward everyone. She sometimes embarrassed us to tears with her attitude at school functions causing even more talk and ill feelings toward her among the other parents and teachers. I suppose that was her way of surviving the situation she had gotten herself into, not realizing how it affected us children.

E.L. Dies

By now E.L.'s condition had worsened, with Mama pregnant she had trouble lifting him and with the family upset I am sure he was not getting the attention that he needed. Some time in November he was taken to the children's hospital in Little Rock. We all cried, as we felt saddened knowing how he must have felt being away from the family for the first time in his five and half years. He had been such a part of our lives as we all had helped care for him and now the house felt suddenly empty with him gone. I realized how much I loved him and I wished I could again have the opportunity to help take him for one of the walks the he loved so much.

We were delighted when Mama told us that we would go to see him on Saturday, so on the Friday afternoon we rushed home from school with the anticipation of going to see him the next day. As we entered the house we found Mama crying as she told us that E.L. had died that day (Dec. 2, 1931) He had lived only a few weeks in the hospital. A cold wind was blowing and the clouds were threatening rain or snow when we gathered again at the cemetery for the funeral. I cried many tears but at the same

time I felt he was better off because I knew the family was falling apart and I wondered what would happen to him when that happened.

Even though I was only eight years old at the time, I remember thinking that he had probably died from neglect and from the trauma of leaving us. His little body had sores around his mouth and I then wondered about them but did not know until Mother Moore died that sores around the mouth are symptoms of dehydration. Mother Moore had insisted that she not be hooked up with any life supports, and when they had tried to give her water intravenously she jerked the needle out. The stroke had left her paralyzed in the throat, so for that reason they tried to give her water. She lived a week without water and results was sores around her mouth.

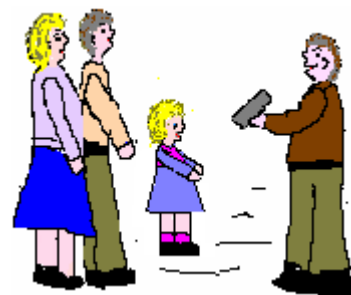
I feel sure little E.L. died starving for water, and for love from his family. I felt a sting of guilt that he had been placed in the institution, and if I felt the guilt surely Mom and Dad must have suffered from guilt.



I did find some comfort when I saw where his little body would be lowered in the grave. Instead of being buried down under the hill where Grandma was buried, where the graves looked unkempt and where there were only small markers marking the graves, he was laid beside Grandma and Grandpa Corkill on top of the hill. A large Woodsman of the World tombstone marked the grave where they laid. Even though I never knew Grandma and Grandpa Corkill, I left the graveyard with a feeling that they would take care of him.

Secret Witness

I have often wondered why Golda and Waller came to see us one night and insisted on taking me home with them. I was eight years old and although I was willing to go home with them, I sensed that there was a mystery behind them wanting me to go. We walked the distance at night; it was cold for it was near Christmas time. On the way to their house



we stopped at a little neighborhood store and stood in front of the owner of the store while he read something from a book.

They told me that they were getting married and it was a secret and that I must not tell anyone about it. I am not sure how long I stayed with them but I am sure it was not long because they lived in a very small house with only one bed and the three of us had to sleep together. I know I was home for Christmas to receive my much-desired black & white button-up Patten leather shoes.



Well of course the secret was that because they were living together, people thought they were married. This mystery was recently solved when; after Golda died one of her daughters called Geneva and wanted to know if she knew a person named Osa. My name is on their marriage certificate as the witness to their wedding. I don't remember signing it but maybe I did.

A New Sister

We were spending the night with Golda and Waller when in the wee hours of the morning Mama went into labor with Nida. We all got into the T-Model Ford with Waller getting into the driver's seat only to find out that we had no lights. Waller hung a kerosene lantern on the front of the car and we drove the two or three miles by that light. Nida was born soon after we reached home. She was a beautiful little girl and we loved her but we would always think of her as a half sister. I think Dad accepted her as a part of the family as well as he knew how, but the distance between him and Mama grew wider, the talk in the community grew worse and we knew that life as we had known it was crumbling away bit by bit.

One of Our Miracles

May came and with it Decoration Day. It was customary on that day to visit the graves and place flowers on them. This incident will read like an article from the Guide Post titled "His Mysterious Ways".

It was raining the night before Decoration Day and mama sat crying because she had no crepe paper to make flowers for E.L's grave. I am sure there were some fresh flowers placed on the graves but I remember only the hand made crepe paper flowers. Of course we girls were sad too, we had

seen flowers that Mama had made and we wanted so much to have some to put on E.L's grave. And so with heavy hearts we went to bed that night with plans to visit his grave with no flowers to place on it. The next morning we awoke surprised and mystified but delighted to find a huge blue and white crepe paper ribbon draped on a large shrub near the house.

Although it had rained all night and the shrub was wet all over, the ribbon was dry. Mama took the ribbon from the shrub and made blue and white flowers; we then went to the graveyard and placed them on little E.L's grave. We sisters still talk about that and call it one of our miracles.



Making Osa a Zeere



We girls often hovered around Mama as she sewed on her treadle sewing machine; watching as she sewed. Geneva had watched enough that she felt that she knew something about putting a garment together. She was now experiencing the change in her body and realized that she would soon need a brassiere to wear over her little sprouting boobs, so she got the materials together and made herself a brassiere. She was so pleased with it that she then offered to make me one. Well, I knew that I didn't need one now but I realized that I too would some day go through the same change that Geneva was going through so I was pleased to have one ready when I needed it. But as she sewed she sang over and over again, "I'm making Osa a zeere, zeere, zeere, a zeere, zeere, zeere, I'm making Osa a zeere, zeere, zeere". I asked her to stop singing and she wouldn't stop, she just kept singing and sewing and singing and sewing. By the time she finished, I had decided that I didn't want a brassiere, not then and not ever. So when she finished it and handed it to me, I threw it on the floor. End of story ☺

New School

Sometime during the school year of 1932-33, Hanaford School had to be closed and grades four through six were transferred to Scroggins Farm School (a little one room school about three or four miles from where we lived) Geneva and I rode to school with our teacher each day. I was in the fourth grade and Geneva was in the fifth. Louise did not go to school that year, I don't really know why but I am guessing that the third grade was transferred to Morrilton and Mama had no way to get her there. I don't remember any school buses at that time.

School was much more pleasant at Scroggins Farm because there seemed to be no talk about what had happened to our family. The distance was too far for Mama to take part in any school functions thus risking someone spotting her and then realizing who we were.

Pet Show

The teacher planned several daytime fun activities and Geneva and I failed each one of them. The first failure was a pet show where we were to bring our pet to school the next day and show it off. We had never been to a pet show and no one had told us how to properly show off a pet so we simply caught one of our little alley cats, put in a toe sack (gunny sack) tied a string around the top and took it to school. I think both Mama and the teacher, who allowed us to put the sack in her car, must have been in a coma to allow us to do that, but they did and we got to school with it.

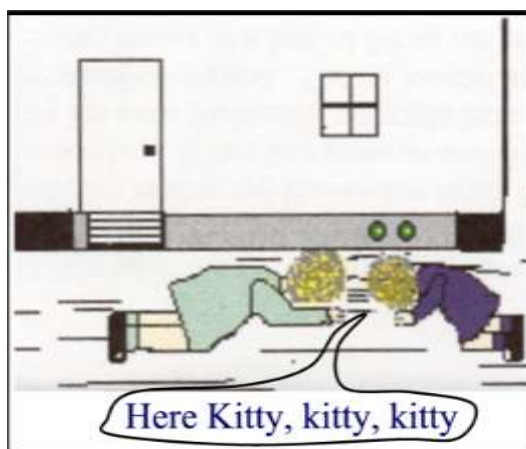
Of course the poor cat was in a state of freight and was scratching and clawing trying to get out of the sack. I don't remember just when during the school day we had the pet show but I fear it was after lunch, meaning that the cat had to stay in the sack all of that time. As soon as the show started and I saw the other children with their little dressed up cats and dogs, which they held in their arms, I knew that we probably would not receive any honors that might be given for the best dressed, the best behaved or



any others.

Had they given an award for the most unusual, the most entertaining or the most frightening we surely would have received it because when we dragged that sack out onto the stage and opened it, pandemonium erupted. The cat jumped out, leaped across the stage, darted around the room, hissing as it looked for an exit with everyone screaming and scurrying to find a safe place. The teacher tried to get some order in the room as she too scurried to avoid the cat. Finally the cat found an open window, jumped out and ran under the school building and stayed there until the school term was over.

Every day we children called it to come out but we could only see its shining eyes in the dark. We left a part of our lunch each day so it could come out and eat after school dismissed in the afternoon. The food was always gone the next day so we had to assume that the cat came out and ate it.



Kite Flying Contest

Failure number two was a kite-flying contest. The teacher told us to make a kite and bring it to school for a kite-flying contest. Geneva and I got our scissors, paper, glue and sticks and made a kite (well it was sorta like a kite). Again I suppose Mama was too busy to be bothered with what we were trying to do because I don't remember any help from her.

We took it to school and after lunch we students gathered in the schoolyard to fly kites. As I looked at other kites I did notice that they looked different from ours, the main difference being that they had bent their sticks while ours were straight. Well, I supposed that their sticks were too long so they had to bend them to make them fit. The teacher told us in order to get the kite airborne we must run with it, and run we did with Geneva holding the kite and me holding the tail. We ran and ran until we were exhausted and our kite was torn to shreds but it never left the ground.



I left that contest with the idea that kites don't really fly. Someone made up that story just to see kids make a fool of themselves. It was not until Charles was four years old that I found out that kites really do fly. Charles wanted a kite and although I told him that kites don't really fly, he wanted one so I bought him one to prove to him that they don't fly. As I put it together, I noticed that the instructions called for bending the sticks and I remembered that Geneva's and my kite had straight sticks. So I bent the sticks as the instructions said to do but I still had my serious doubts that it would fly. We started out of the house with the intentions of going to the Razorback football stadium parking lot so we could have running room. As we stepped out on the little porch, which was about a four by four, the kite took off. I think I was more excited than Charles was, I just could hardly believe what I was seeing. I handed the string to Charles and he stood on our tiny little porch and flew the kite.

The schoolhouse sat in an isolated place with only one house within sight of it and the teacher was the only adult in the one room school. One day she screamed and we looked up to see a man looking in one of the windows. She quickly closed all of the windows, pulled down the shades and locked the doors. We were then instructed to be very quiet and so we sat for a time until she had the courage to go on with the classes. The teacher tried to hide her fear but we all knew that she was frightened. I know she was glad when that day was over.



Facing Changes

The days spent at that little white school house were pleasant ones with memories of hop-scotch, jump the rope, pop the whip, the teacher holding me on her lap when I had a headache and stories read by the teacher each day. But now it was May, the school year was over and it was time to face the change in our family, which we knew, would happen soon.

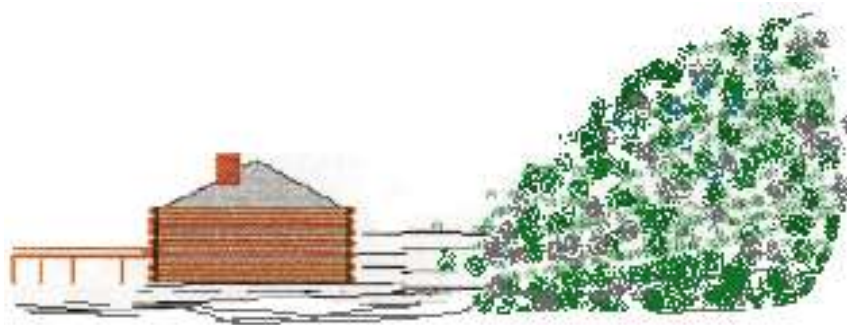
Mama had told us that we were going to move to the country where Aunt Beatrice lived; which was down a little dirt road from a little spot on the map called Birdtown, out from a little community called Sunnyside. She tried to make it sound like an exciting adventure but we had been at Aunt Beatrice's and we never liked going there. We surely did not like the idea of going there to live especially since we knew she was leaving Dad. But sometime after the school term was over we left loaded with a few pieces of furniture. I remember only two beds, a table and some chairs.

I have often wondered what happened to our good furniture and other belongings; among the things was our mantel clock that I loved the comfort of hearing the ticking and the striking on the hour and the half-hour.

Many years later, Charlie would help me recover that little piece of my childhood when he shopped for me and found a clock just like the one that we had then. I am sure that it is not but I like to believe that it is our lost clock that somehow found its way to that antique shop in Knoxville.

Goodbye to Yellow House

Yes, we were sad to leave Morrilton and the house that we would always refer to as our yellow house, but we were even sadder when the truck pulled up to a little two-room log cabin at the foot of Lost Mountain. There were no houses in sight, nothing but us and the mountain looming in front of the cabin. We unloaded our few belongings and settled down to live away from home. I wanted to go home, this I thought, could never be home. Well, except for Dad, we did have our family and for that I was thankful, and at least we were away from the intimidating talk of the neighbors.



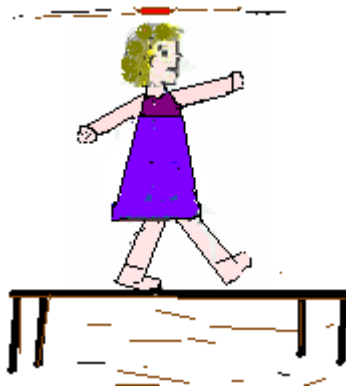
Drawn to the Edge



I suppose you could say we were survivors because we soon found that together we could find excitement there. We explored the mountain and found a cliff that Mama warned us not to go near. From then on I had to fight the urge to run to the cliff and jump off. I am sorry to say that recently I learned that I passed that little insane streak on to Robert and then to Tyler. Sorry about that you will just have to stay off the front row when you go to hear the Baton Rouge Choral Orchestra perform. Oh, but why? Just go ahead and do it, SCREAM!! Right in the middle of her high note. (See footnote VII)

Bullet Whistle

The owner of the house had started to add a room but got no further than the floor beams which became our private gym set. But one day we were playing there walking the beams when a bullet whistled over the top of my head. A hunter was hunting back of the house and had shot up toward the house. He came running to see if he had hit me and when he found out that I was all right he scolded me for being in his hunting territory leaving me feeling guilty again as I had when the car hit me. I suppose the scolding helped because since then I have stayed out of the way of both cars and bullets.



Ghosts at the Spring

We no longer had the luxury of a dug well in the back yard. We got our water from a spring, which was in a heavily wooded area a distance away from the house. We had heard that ghosts had been seen near the spring so, when we girls went to get the water, we never got home with more than a bucket half full because we ran so fast that we spilled half of the water. I could always hear the ghost just one step behind me.



Lumber-Jack Girls

I suppose it was at some of our visits with Aunt Beatrice and Uncle Riley that we had seen them cut down trees and cut them into firewood for the cook stove and for the fireplace. We had seen them chop a wedge on one side of the tree so they could control which direction the tree would fall. So one day when Mama was gone we decided to chop down the tree that was in our yard. We found the ax and took turns chopping until the tree fell to the ground. I think you will be relieved to know that it was not a large tree. ☺



Vipers of the Earth

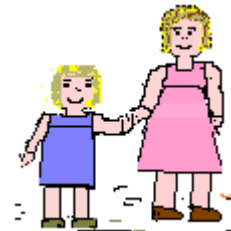
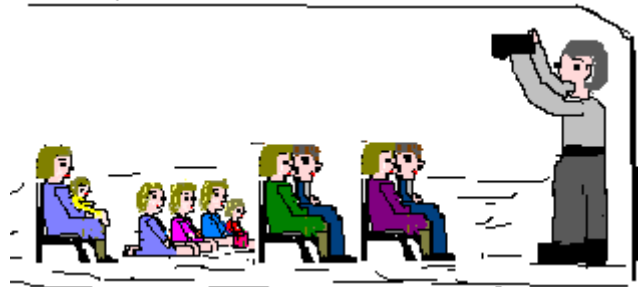
If Mama thought she could run away from her reputation she soon found out that she could not. The people there were just as critical as and maybe even less tolerant of her than were the people in Morrilton. I am sure that one thing that added fire to the feelings toward her was the tent revival that summer. Brother Prather came and he preached against sin and

corruption. He condemned adultery and fornication (the vipers of the earth) all who committed it were headed for hell.

The people in the community felt it their righteous duty to rid the community of such sin. They let Mama know that they did not approve of her which again left us with feelings of rejection, disgrace and shame I don't know if Mama was feeling some pangs of guilt or if she just wanted to go, but we went to some of the meetings under the big tent and then to the baptismal service later.

Baptismal Service

The baptismal service was held on a creek bank where the converts were baptized in the creek. It was a big gathering with people from the surrounding communities there to attend the service. While there we girls admired this one family with a cute little two year old girl named Johnny Sue Harwood and her twelve-year-old cousin Margie Stobough. Little did we know that they would soon play a part in our lives.



Dysentery Epidemic

The dreaded disease at that time was dysentery and there was an outbreak of epidemic proportion that summer. It hit almost every household in that area and killed many children especially babies in their second summer. We all had it, Louise having a worse case of it. Later we would learn that word had gotten around that she had died.

This disease would be a plague for many years before the cause of it was discovered. We would learn that it was caused from contamination of food and anything that might be put in your mouth. The common housefly, of which there were many, carried most of the contamination. By the time our babies came along we knew to boil everything that was put into the baby's mouth. When we breast fed, before each feeding we washed our breast with sterile water. Some mothers went so far as to boil the baby's bath water. After the cause of the disease was found it solved the mystery

of why so many babies died during their second summer. By then they were walking and putting contaminated things in their mouth. I might add that Mother Moore lost two little boys in their second summer with that disease.

Pesky Houseflies

The pesky housefly was certainly a part of our lives at that time, one that we fought against with several weapons. One weapon being the ordinary towel. At mealtime we each grabbed a towel and with the door open we rounded them up and shooed them outside. Another was the trusty fly-swatter.

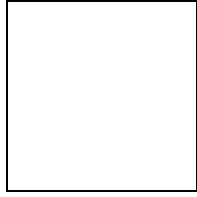


I wonder if Medical Research has ever looked into phenomena that we girls saw many times. After we swatted a fly and it lay smashed and dead on the floor, we waited and watched for the *emergency crew*. The emergency crew consisted of a small swarm of flies that came and surrounded the dead fly and feverishly worked on it. In such a short time the dead fly got up and flew away.

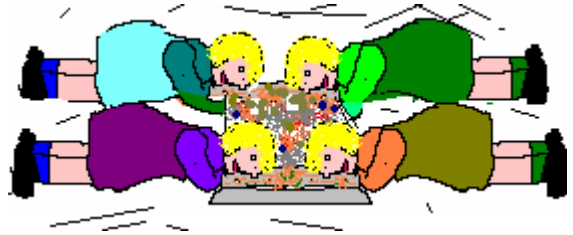
Facing Our Worst Fears

School started and I suppose that Mama just didn't have the initiative or the money to send all three of us to school (at that time no books or school supplies were furnished by the Government) but since Louise had missed the year before, she sent her. Sunny Side School was in easy walking distance of our house and Louise was eager to go.

Christmas came and went unnoticed. We had brought our tree decorations with us when we moved but Mama did not bother to put up a tree. Maxine and Nida would not know the Christmas as we had known it in the good times.



Sometime during the Christmas days Mama took us to visit Golda and Waller in Morrilton and while there Dad took us for a physical examination. We were not told what this was about but would later learn that this was a requirement for being placed in the Children's Home in Morrilton. We were about to face our worst fears, the Orphans Home where they fed you from a trough, whipped you every night and then hung you up by your toes to sleep and we didn't have Daddy Warbucks like Little Orphan Annie had to rescue her.



Mom leaves

It was January and it was cold in that little poorly built log cabin. Our only heat was from the fireplace, which was fired by scraps of wood that we could find on the mountain. Our food cupboard was bare and I am sure that Mama was having a hard time coping with the situation that she found herself in. One early morning she left for Morrilton and didn't come back. We never knew whether or not she had intended to leave that way or that maybe something happened between her and Dad that caused her not to come back. Dad came that afternoon and took us to Aunt Beatrice. Either Dad or Aunt Beatrice told us that we were to stay there until a later time. Aunt Beatrice seemed not to mind taking on four extra children even though she had three children and was pregnant with her fourth. I am sure that Dad gave her money to help with the extra mouths that she would need to feed.

Hiding on the Mountain

Although an orphan home was one of my worst fears, I had reasoned that we could not be sent to one because we were not orphans; we had a mama and a daddy. And we all thought we would just stay with Aunt

Beatrice until Mama came back for us, we thought surely she would come back. But Geneva must have had some idea of what our destiny might be because one morning she looked out the window to see Dad and Uncle Leonard drive up. She started screaming as she quickly herded us together to run out the backdoor and up the mountain. We climbed to a high point where we could watch the house to see if Dad and Uncle Leonard would start following us. We sat by a stream of water and cried buckets of tears while we waited until Dad and Uncle Leonard left. I suppose they thought it best to leave us rather than try to subdue us. Or maybe they realized that it would have been hard to find us on the mountain. This was Maxine's earliest memory, which was a frightening one for a little three-year-old.

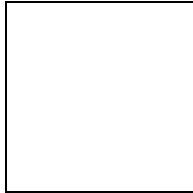
It was not until we went back to Morrilton that Louise and I realized that our idea of an orphanage was so wrong. We went to school with the children from that *frightening Orphanage*, which was called The Children's Home. Those children could have been the envy of anyone; they were beautiful people, they didn't look like they had been hung by their toes, fed from an animal trough or whipped every day. They were well dressed, well groomed. They were leaders in the classes and all had the offer of a higher education if they chose. It seems insane that none of the adults talked to us about the plan and explained to us what the Home would be like. I am sure we would have been willing to go had they done that. Maybe they did not know the fears we had about it or maybe they were too caught up in their own problems and fears that they could not deal with.



“Gonna Give’m Away”

I don’t know who made the plans to place us in homes in the neighboring communities; again no one talked to us about it. I would like to think that Uncle Leonard and Dad investigated the homes but in reality I know they didn’t. We knew only a few days before the day set for us to go, so I suppose by then we had resigned ourselves to whatever was to come. The words we remember well was Uncle Riley saying “we’re gonna give um away tomorrow at two O’clock” Those words seemed harsh, uncaring and with no sympathy for us. We felt that we were being given the same consideration as an unwanted litter of little kittens or puppies.

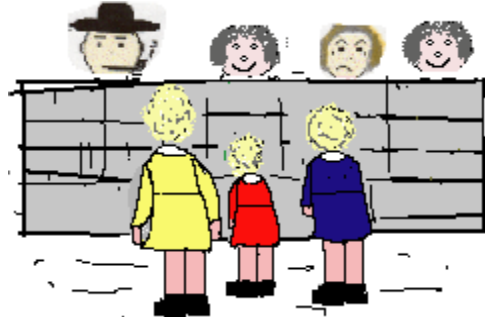
Uncle Riley (Aunt Beatrice’s husband) was born totally deaf and so was referred to as “deaf and dumb”, but actually he was far from dumb. Although he had no training and no schooling he had learned to talk by reading lips and so was able to work at odd jobs to support his family. We really could not blame him; he was only taking care of a problem that had somehow become his so he did the best he knew how to do.



So at 2:00 one afternoon sometime between my eleventh birthday February 9, 1934 and Maxine’s forth birthday March 28th Uncle Riley and Aunt Beatrice led us outside to the front yard where some people were standing on the other side of a fence. I think it was the fear of the moment that causes me to remember that there were many strange faces staring at us as they looked us over probably trying to decide which one to choose, and probably deciding which one would make the best cotton patch hand. But in reality I think there were only a few faces at least I don’t remember anyone fighting over us.

Geneva, Maxine and I stood and waited for the faces to decide which one they wanted.

Louise was at school and it was decided that she would stay with her teacher Mr. Howard, his wife and family until school was out. She was one of his prize students and he wanted her to finish the school year



We are not sure when Nida was placed in the home of Grandma and Grandpa Flowers (Maybell's mom and dad) but she was there while Louise was with Reedy. Louise would later live for a short time with Grandma and Grandpa Flowers.

Some time later Mom came and picked up Nida. The word used was that she snatched her from the Flowers.

The decision was made; we would go with one sad faced woman who talked constantly with a voice that sounded as if she was crying named Eva Lee Scroggin. Later I would realize that she always sounded like that and she always talked constantly. Then there was a tall man who never said anything whose name was Anse Flowers. The three of us left carrying our few belongings, going to, we knew not where, and with, we knew not who, to a place which would be our home for the next five to seven years.

My feet hurt which was not unusual because at that time feet hurt either because you were breaking in new shoes or because you had outgrown them and they were too small, so feet always hurt. We walked down a dusty road, past fields, pastures, woods and a few houses. I kept hoping to see a brown or a yellow house surrounded by giant trees with a swing hanging from a limb, a grass covered yard and oh! How good it would be to see a railroad track close by. But the few houses that we saw had never had a coat of paint; there were no big trees with a swing and certainly no railroad tracks.

Fork in the Road

We came to a fork in the road and I sensed that we would have to part here and we did. Geneva and Eva Lee went one way and Anse, Maxine and I went the other way. Maxine had clung to Geneva and me until we got to the road separating us and then she clung harder to me as the tears began to flow. As she reached her arms up for me to take her Anse offered to carry her but she refused to let him. As I picked her up I felt her little arms tighten around



my neck with a determination to never let go of this last bit of security that she felt. I only hoped that we would not be separated, that maybe this man was taking both of us to his house, wherever that might be.

We walked on and on until finally I saw a house setting off from the road. We walked down a slope, across a branch of water and up the slope to the house. Maybell and Riley met us on the porch and it was then that I realized that this was to be Maxine's home. She knew too and she clung to me as Maybell tried to persuade her to come with her.

Finally after several attempts to pry her loose from me, Maybell brought out a little, much used tricycle and with much persuasion Maxine loosed her grip on me and got on the tricycle. While she rode it down the porch, Anse took me by the arm and led me away. We made it down the slope and across the branch before I heard Maxine screaming and calling



my name. I felt my heart would surely break and the tears, which I had managed to keep in check, began to flow non-stop and I am sure that Anse was at loss to know what to do. We kept walking as we traveled down the road separating me further and further from Maxine as her screams faded in the distance. I did hope that we would soon come to the end of this long journey so the distance would not be so wide that I could not go back and see Maxine because I was already making plans to do that.

“That por little girl” arrives

Finally we came to a house that not only had no paint but also had a boy about my age, with his nose running down past his chin, standing in the yard staring at me. I thought, Oh please! Don't let this be the house, an unpainted house with a snotty nose kid standing in front of it, but it was! His name was Carl J.R.D. It is strange that I don't remember anything else about him all the time that I was there except that he was their son. I can't even remember whether or not he wiped his nose.



We went inside and there sat his mama Dell so fat that she could hardly stand on her feet. She had on a dirty red dress and when I went over for her to hug me she smelled strong of unwashed body but she did seem pleased to have me for her little girl. Oh, but I did not want to be her little girl, I wanted my mama and my sisters. I wanted to see Maxine; I felt the guilt of having slipped away from her and her screams haunted me always but especially at night.

Dell's grown daughter Helen who lived close by with her husband and little son came rushing over when she heard that *that por little girl had arrived*. She seemed to be a very happy person and certainly the youngest adult that I had seen since I left Aunt Beatrice. Actually she was probably still in her teens knowing how young some of the girls married in that area.

Old Pump Organ

The house had only two main rooms; one which served as the living room and bedroom and the other was the kitchen and eating area. But then there was a small room off from the living room that soon became of much interest to me. Dell told Helen to take me into that room and show me an old pump organ, which stood covered with dust in the corner of the room. This eased my pain somewhat when I thought, “I might be able to stand this for a while if I can play this organ”. Since, while living in Morrilton, looking through the window of the locked door and seeing the pump organ, I had dreamed of one day getting my fingers on some key board. I am sure

that only a few notes on the organ would make a sound and it was heavily covered with dust but I didn't care, I loved playing around with it.

Dell told Helen to show me the fabric in the trunk that they were planning to use to make me some dresses. She opened the trunk and the smell of mothballs almost knocked me off my feet. I didn't know much about fabric but Mama had made me enough dresses that I knew I could not wear dresses made from the fabric they showed me. It was stiff scratchy see through organdy.

Blind Inspection

For the next few days I felt like a celebrity in a negative way as Dell's relatives came from around the community to see "*one of them little girls that their mama gave away, por little thangs,*" I hated that. Among those who came was Dell's sister who was also fat and stinky. She said, "I want to see your little girl". Dell told me to go and stand in front of her so she could see me, so I went wondering how she was planning to see me when it was obvious that she was blind.



She started at the top of my head and gently ran her fingers down my body touching my hair, my eyes, my mouth, and on down to my feet while she asked Dell about the color of my hair and my eyes. "She's a pretty little thing", she said "*now why did her mama give her away*"?

Name Change

Dell didn't like my name Osa so she decided to call me by my middle name, which was Venita. I would not have objected to that if she had pronounced it right but she butchered it by calling me Veneshur which I hated. This would prompt me to, later, change my name to Osa Ann. This happened after Louise, Maxine and I went to live with Hettie. We realized that we did not have a registered birth certificate so we filled out our own

and Dad signed them. It was after I did this that I found out that my Grandmother Corkill's name was Ocieannah. This explained why Dad always spelled my name Ocie while Mom spelled it Osa. I think if I had known my grandmothers name I would have picked Ocieannah instead of Osa Ann. I feel sure that Dad felt that I was named for his mom.

Paint, Wallpaper & Electricity

I soon found that Geneva lived close enough that I could walk to her house and it was there that I finally found a painted house. They also had electricity, which was furnished from a Delco system, but they used it so sparingly that no one dared to turn on a light without permission. Mr. Scroggin (Henry) controlled the switches. Not only was the house painted but had wallpapered walls, was clean and smelled good. But it was soon easy to see that they were not looking for a little girl but for a big girl who could do much work to help with the mounds of work in taking care of the house and six boys. There were floors to be scrubbed, clothes to be washed and ironed, meals to be cooked, eight beds to be made, gardening to be done, vegetables to be picked and canned, cows to be milked, farm work to be done which included hoeing and picking cotton, hoeing and thinning corn, and many other jobs which Geneva had never even heard of and certainly never done. Geneva lived in a pretty house, which smelled nice and clean, but she did not have the freedom that I had. Maybe that dampened my desire for a painted house but phew Dell and her house surely did stink.

Pleasant Hill School

I started to school in the little two-story white schoolhouse next door to Dell and Anse. The ground floor served as the schoolhouse, the church for two different denominations, the theater for an occasional silent movie traveling through and for other community gatherings for the Pleasant Hill community. The upper floor served as the Masonic Lodge. I was in the fifth grade and by now it was somewhere around the first of March with only three months left of school,



but when school was out I was promoted to the sixth grade. I think the teacher felt sorry for me and so promoted me.

Playing Hooky

Maxine's birthday was approaching and I started planning how I could go and see her. I was afraid to ask Dell or the teacher (Mr. Barnes) for fear that they would say, "No" so my plan was to just walk away from the school but I was not at all sure where she lived. I had this agonizing fear of getting lost in those hills and so wandering around in them the rest of my life, which would knock a hole in my plan to go back home to Morrilton.

I told one of my friends about my plan and she offered to go with me even at the risk of getting a whipping at school. We knew the school rule was a whipping if you played hooky from school. We sneaked away during first recess and walked the distance to where Maxine lived. It did not seem nearly as far as it had seemed the day I walked away from Maxine and heard her screaming my name. Maxine was overjoyed to see me; she jumped into my lap and smothered me with hugs and kisses while all of us cried tears of joy. I am sure it was a comfort to her to know that we were not so far apart and I told her that we would see each other often. We stayed until early afternoon and then left to go back to school and face the teacher and the punishment that might be dealt us. Maxine cried when we left but not the agonizing scream that she had cried before, which relieved me of some of the agony and guilt that I had felt having left her that sad day. When my friend and I got back to school there was no whipping waiting for us only a gentle scolding.

Those Nagging Questions

I loved going to school, it was easy to make friends and I liked my teacher, but oh! How I wished I could hide from the constant repeating of the same questions-----where are your sisters? Where are you staying? Where is your mama? Why did she give you away? All of these questions added to the feelings of not belonging and of being different from other children, of being unwanted, abandoned and inferior. We wanted to be identified as a family with pride. Those feelings would cause us to want to hide from those years later in life. It would cause Louise, Maxine and me to

change our name (not legally) to Maxwell which was Hettie's name at that time.

Life at Dell's

Life was not at all bad at the Flowers'; I had plenty of freedom playing on the school ground during school and after school with friends who lived close by. I suppose I got accustomed to Dell's body odor because it didn't seem to notice it. It could have been that I was beginning to smell just like her. I had very few chores such as drawing water from the well in the back yard and helping a little in the kitchen. I remember digging sausage out of a big stone crock, which set in the kitchen. Their way of preserving sausage was to cook it and pour it grease and all into a five-gallon crock to be dug out, as it was needed. It was left in the kitchen where it was cold in the wintertime.

The Devil's Billy Goat

It was one of those play times on the school ground that I thought the old devil had me for sure this time. The upper room of the schoolhouse was off limits to everyone except the Masons and the doors stayed locked. One of my playmates was a daughter of a Mason and she had managed to get a key to the locked door so she suggested that we go and see what was in that room. I had heard that there were billy goats belonging to the devil guarding the place so I was reluctant to go because I had not forgotten the narrow escape I had had in the cucumber patch, but I went.



The four of us went up the stairs through a second locked door to a room that was so dark that we could see nothing until we stood for awhile to let our eyes adjust to the dark. After our eyes adjusted we saw nothing but other closed doors and I was sure that behind those doors were the devil's billy goats ready to burst through the door at any given moment. I had seen enough and I was ready to get out of there before that happened. I suppose the others felt the same way so we all bolted for the door screaming as we went. It was locked! Just after the three of us broke out in blood curdling

screams the Mason's daughter unlatched the door, which she had secretly latched as we went into the room. She had had her thrill for that day.

Louise Moves to Pleasant Hill

Soon after school was out Louise came to live in the same community as Geneva, Maxine and I lived. She first lived with a relative of Dell and Anse and then with Eva lee Scroggin's brother & sister in law, Garret & Edith Harwood. Do you remember little Johnny Sue at the baptismal service? Well, she died sometime in the summer of 1933 during the dysentery epidemic. She was Edith and Garret's only child and they wanted Louise to help fill the void that they felt after her death.

We were now in the same community of Pleasant Hill, which made us feel more secure. We saw each other often at church although we were separated by denomination. Louise and Geneva were with Baptist families and Maxine and I were with Church of Christ families. The two churches were always at word wars with each other, condemning each other to hell because they belonged to the wrong church. So it was that Dell had to make an exception and let me go to the Baptist services to be with Geneva and Louise but with the fear that I would go to hell because of it. Well, I thought that if Geneva and Louise go to hell maybe I want to go there too, but I was not so sure about that.

Thrill of Country Music

It was in that schoolhouse, Masonic Lodge, church, community gathering place that I was introduced to the thrill of country music. Friday nights the young men came with their fiddles and guitars and they played and sang. Later years I enjoyed going to what they called Singings. This was an all day affairs held in different communities with dinner on the ground. Quartets from surrounding communities performed. Music has always been a great joy to me and I have always been thrilled and thankful that my children love music and have taken an active part in it.

Move to the Harwood's

I really don't know just how Louise and I went about arranging for me to go and stay with Ella and Jeff Harwood (Garret's mom and dad) and their two daughters Roberta and Loita. I would hope that our plan met with their approval. It sounded like a good place to stay;



the main reason being that it was close to Louise, not too far from Geneva and no further away from Maxine than I was at Dell's. Anyhow I told Dell that I was leaving and she consented with no tears. She told me to take the fabric that she had planned to use to make me some dresses, and so Louise and I packed my few belongings in a little flour sack with the fabric Dell gave me and went down the road smelling strong of moth balls and probably Dell's body odor.

I don't remember an element of surprise when we arrived at the Harwood's, neither do I remember a red carpet welcome. The Harwood's had raised eight children in that little three room house so one more with the two that they had left at home would not seem crowded. The self-elected head of the household was seventeen-year-old daughter Roberta and I soon learned that the clue to keeping peace was to keep her happy.

Mrs. Harwood was a kind sweet lady who treated me as her own. She loved working in the fields and spent all of her time there as long as there was something that needed to be done. In the fall after the cotton was all picked and the other fieldwork done, she went up and down the rows in the cotton patches and picked the fuzz that was left in the cotton bowls. From that fuzz she made the batting for her quilts. I loved helping her cord the cotton to get ready for the quilts. There was a peaceful serenity about her that I have not seen in many people and I felt a sense of security with her that I had not felt in several years.

Much to her daughter's disgust and embarrassment she cared nothing about how she looked. She wore sack dresses that she had sewed up herself, wore no shoes and wore a man's battered old hat on her head. Roberta was especially embarrassed by her and

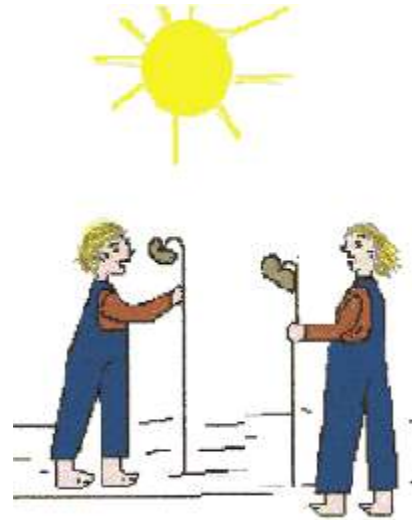


nagged at her to change her ways.

Fieldwork

There was much fieldwork to be done; in the spring there was cotton and corn to be hoed and thinned and it didn't take them long to hand Louise and me a hoe. We had never before held a hoe in our hand but we soon learned what we were supposed to do with it.

It was a miserable job with the hot sun beaming down on us and our bodies hurting as we tried to keep up with the crew of workers, as we were expected to do. We struggled to cope with it by laughing at the situation that we found ourselves in, which sometimes got us in trouble. Edith tried to keep us out of trouble by, at times, hoeing a section on our rows to help us catch up with them.



Cool Breeze

We soon found that by calling on our guardian Angel, we could cool our bodies just a little. At the risk of getting in trouble we would stand up straight, look up and say, "Oh, it sure is hot" and of course, giggle as we did this, while we kept an eye on the adults ahead of us. With no hesitation the cool breeze would come and cool us off enough that we could put our bodies back to work again.



It didn't take us long to realize that, just maybe, they did not so much want two little girls but they wanted two more field hands. The head of the household (Roberta) elected to stay at the house and do the cooking and

housework. I am thinking that since I could take her place in the field, it enabled her to do that. I would realize later what a luxury it was to go in tired and hungry to a meal already cooked and on the table.

House Chores

Washing and ironing was done on Saturdays which all the girls helped with. The washing was done down by the creek and clothes brought up to the house and hung on the clothesline to dry. The ironing was done outside where the irons were heated on an outside fire. Scrubbing with a broom and a bucket of hot soapy water cleaned the floors. The water was poured on the floor, scrubbed with a broom and then swept through the knotholes in the floors. Then of course they must be rinsed with clear cool water.

The yards were scraped of all grass and then swept clean resulting in a hard dirt surface. Only the Scroggin's had a grass covered front yard. The other farm work to be done in the spring was the debugging of the potatoes. This was done by picking the bugs off of the many rows of plants, squashing them with your fingers and then dropping them in a can of kerosene to finish off any survivors of the smashing.

When it was time to harvest the potatoes we walked behind the plow and picked up the potatoes as the plow dug them. The garden vegetables were picked and preserved by canning them. The cotton was hoed twice, once to thin it and chop the grass out of it and the second time was to hoe the grass out of it. The farmers strove to finish (they called it laid by) by the fourth of July so everyone could go to the big picnic at Center Ridge. This was the only commercialized event in that part of the country with concession stands, and other attractions. Geneva had her first date who I am sure was very much annoyed with Louise and me. We stayed right beside them the whole day. We did not see Geneva very often so we were glad to spend the time with her, not to mention the ice cream cone that her boy friend bought us. ☺ Maybelll and Riley did not go so we didn't see Maxine.

Decoration Day

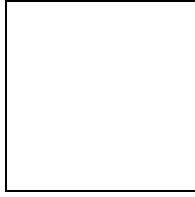
Another summer event was Decoration Day. We gathered at the cemetery in our best dresses with people coming from surrounding communities and some from Morrilton for the occasion. A program was planned with a speaker or two, group singing and little short poems recited by the children. The graves were decorated with home made crepe flowers. Among those decorated was little Johnny Sue's and her little two-year-old cousin Ida Ruth Powell who had died just one week before Johnny Sue died. It was an all day affair with dinner on the ground. We also attended Decoration Day gatherings in other communities, some far enough away that we traveled by wagon pulled by two mules. On one occasion we went in a rubber tired wagon, which belonged to the Harwood's daughter and her husband. What a luxury!

Fried Green Onions

Louise and I cooked our first meal together that summer. I can't remember where the women went after church that Sunday but Louise and I ended up at home with the men and they were hungry and they kept asking us when dinner would be ready. At that time men had no idea what went on in the kitchen, no idea how to heat a pan of water let alone how to cook a meal and I think Louise and I knew even less than they did. But after they called for dinner several times we realized that we would have to come up with something, after all we were females and the men thought all females knew how to cook. So we went to the garden and pulled a big bunch of green onions, washed them (I think) cut them into small pieces, fried them in a lot of bacon grease and served them with nothing else. That was the Sunday dinner. They ate all of them and didn't complain. If anyone would like the recipe for fried green onions just ask either Louise or me.

Picking Cotton

As if the hoe that was handed us in the Spring was not enough to send us into a state of shock, that Fall we were handed a cotton sack which we were to fill over and over again. Good Grief! I think that was worse than hoeing cotton but again we coped by laughing at ourselves while our aching backs were bent over those cotton rows.



What a relief when it was time for school to start, however school was delayed a week or two to give the farmers time to get their cotton out of the fields. By that time there was little cotton left in the field for us to pick in the afternoons after we got home from school that seemed like a vacation compared to picking all day. I did hope Mama would come and get us before cotton-picking time again.

School Days with Louise

It was the school term of 1934-35 and Geneva was in the seventh grade so she went to school at Center Ridge. Louise and I went to Pleasant Hill. Maxine was now five and had not started to school. There was a feeling of joy as Louise and I walked to school; I felt some sense of security after many years of not knowing what would happen to us. My dream, my fantasy, was to some day go back to Morrilton but for right now life was good and it was several months before cotton patch time again. Louise and I sat together in the two-student desks which kept us on the edge of trouble much of the time because of our giggling but the teacher was patient with us.

As always we had to face those never ending questions by those who wanted to keep the story alive. Of course the question, “who are you staying with now”? Was justified because Louise and I could not seem to settle down and stay put. But then there was “where is your mom and why did she give you away?”

Teased

I had one thorn in my flesh named Grover Howard (the son of Maybell and Riley) who loved to tease me to tears. He and I seemed always to be the chosen team leaders on opposite teams for the spelling and arithmetic matches which always ended with the two of us against each other after everyone else had been defeated. He nearly always won leaving him laughing at me and making me angry. One day I sat crying at my desk and the teacher came to comfort me. When she asked me why I was crying I am sure she expected me to say, "I want my Mamma" but instead I showed her what Grover had written so high on the black board that I couldn't reach it to erase it. "Osa + Grover" She laughed and made Grover erase it.



At a picture making time I wore a dress which Roberta had made me; a red one with a white collar with buttons down the front, looking very much like Little Orphan Annie's dress. I was proud of it. When we got our pictures back I saw Grover with one of mine showing it to other boys as they all giggled. It was then that I noticed that my dress was gapping open between the buttons showing evidence of my sprouting boobs. More tears!

Christmas season was approaching and we got ready at school by planning to stage the play "Hansel & Gretel" and I played the part of Gretel. That all went fine until we got to the part when Gretel was to lie down by Hansel (Conover) in the woods to rest and Grover laughed. I balked and refused to do it until Grover took the teachers threats seriously and decided he had better stop teasing me.

Christmas Trimmings

To decorate for the up coming play we needed some Christmas tree trimmings and no one in the community had any. I knew that our family tree trimmings and other decorations from the good days in Morrilton were in Aunt Beatrice's attic so I persuaded the teacher to let me go and get them. I had not seen Aunt Beatrice since we had walked away eighteen months ago and I thought she would be glad to see me and it never dawned on me that she would not let me have the decorations but she would not. I

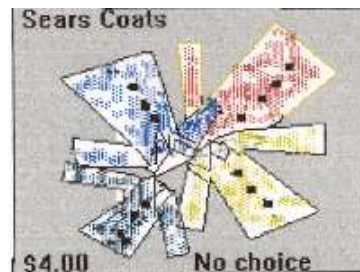
tried to go into the attic and get them even though she had said, “No”, but she was bigger than I. I am sure she was looking forward to putting up a tree with sparkling trimmings which she had never had before. Her decorations had consisted only of a few homemade crepe paper ribbons.

No Hard Feelings

I saw her only a few times after that but with no hard feelings. After the “big give away” none of the other relatives on Mama’s side of the family ever contacted us or checked on us or seemed concerned about us. After seeing Golda in recent years we decided it was because they felt guilty about not helping us, by taking us in their homes. They did not know that even though we were kids, we knew that they could not take us and we never expected it of them. I might add that we never expected them to check on us.

Sears Coats

Dad’s brothers, Uncle Leonard and Uncle Emmett kept close tab on us especially Uncle Leonard who furnished anything that those in the homes we were staying in asked for. I am sorry to say that Eva Lee took advantage of that offer. After I went to live with her she asked for and received many things that I never got. On one occasion she asked for a beautiful coat which she kept for herself and ordered me a cheap one from the Sears Roebuck catalog. I vividly remember how those coats were pictured in the catalog, a collage of coats \$4.00 each.... No choices just take what you get. The coat that I got was an ugly green with one sleeve shorter than other and one sleeve twisted which made it uncomfortable to wear. At that time coats were the most expensive item in a woman’s wardrobes so it was probably a financial strain for Uncle Leonard to give her that coat.



“We would have helped but...”

Uncle Leonard and Uncle Emmett had wanted us to go to school and so offered to furnish all of our school supplies and I am sure they did. Later we learned, from Aunt Betty, that Uncle Leonard had kept what he did a secret from her, probably thinking that she would object to his helping. It was many years later that I learned that, even though Merchia and Mae did not consider helping us, that they had at least discussed the possibility. I learned this in 1956 when we were in the middle of looking for another job and were making preparations to sell our house in Pine Bluff and move. Merchia had been ill for some time and although I had gone to see him several times, I had not offered any help. One day May came to see me, obviously angry at me, as she told me that she had taken care of Merchia as long as she could and that I would have to take him with us and take care of him. I suppose it was because I looked at her with a startled expression on my face that she thought I was remembering the days past when we might have wished for help from them, that she said, “well we would have helped when you girls were given away, but-----“. She also may have been thinking that they had offered no help when Dad was unable to care for himself and was living with F.H. and me. She left soon after that and nothing else was said about me taking care of Merchia. Little did she know that we girls never thought that there was a possibility of them helping us but at the same time we did miss and we wished for the visits that we had enjoyed from Merchia years ago Aunt Betty had told me not to expect any help from them with Dad, so I never asked them for help.

Dad Moves Close

By now Dad had moved to the neighborhood close by where we lived. He worked as a handy man doing little odd jobs for a farm family who knew our family. It was a comfort to all of us to have him close by but it was especially great for Maxine. She felt a need for him that we really did not feel. He gave her the love and the feeling of a little security that she needed. He went to see her every Sunday and took her little gifts, which she loved and looked forward to. On one



occasion he gave her a little wristwatch which she adored. He nearly always stopped by to see us on his way and we sometimes went with him. On some occasions he picked up Maxine and brought her over to see us. I am sure Dad felt much happiness in the love that Maxine felt for him; they would remain close through all the years until his death in 1946.

Maxine's Monster

One night Mama came and gathered Geneva, Louise and me together outside the house to tell us that she was planning to ask Dad to take her back and bring us all back together which excited us but Dad's answer was "No". We were disappointed but looking back of course we can see why he would not want to do that. He was content where he was and would not want to risk going through trying times again.

As Mama left she tried to take Maxine with her but Maybell would not let her take her. When that happened Mama either threatened to or Maybell was afraid she would snatch her, so she told Maxine horrible stories about Mama making her seem like a monster lurking behind every tree and bush ready to snatch her. For years Maxine would live in fear of monster mom. Maxine remembers none of the good days we had as a family.



Shelling Peas

There was some farm-related work to be done in the wintertime but I don't remember objecting to those things. We shelled dried peas, butter beans, corn and peanuts. But all too soon the winter was gone, spring was here then school was out and it was time to sharpen those hoes and head for the cotton patch again. And Louise and I, in order to stay out of trouble, just might need to work a little harder at keeping up with the adults.

I almost got in trouble in an incident of shelling dried peas or maybe not shelling peas. The family had gone for the day and left me at home sick with chills and fever. They also left the black hired man (Cleve) at home shelling peas, with the instructions that if I felt like it I should help him. Cleve sat shelling peas close to the bed where I lay with a high fever and I somehow sensed that he was getting angry as he kept mumbling to himself.

Suddenly he got up and as he went out of the house, I thought I heard him say, "I'll get you out of that bed". I jumped up to see where he had gone and saw that he had gone out to the barn and was coming back to the house with a horse whip. I ran out the back door and hid at the side of the house while he went into the house and then came back to the porch and hung the whip on a nail on the porch. I then ran down the hill to Edith's and stayed there the remainder of the day. I told Edith about it but I don't know whether or not they confronted Cleve about the incident.



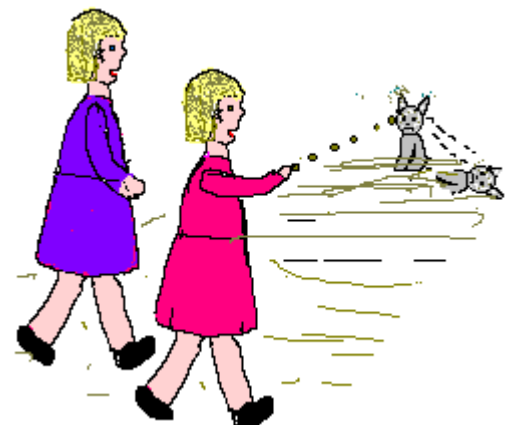
Fishing with a Bucket

Springtime very often brought the heavy rains that flooded the creek that ran behind the house. Sometimes the flood came suddenly with a wall of water and we had to be cautious about getting caught down the hill at the creek. Very often the water went down as quickly as it had come up leaving holes of water caught in the deeper spots trapping some fish. Louise and I loved spending time down by that creek as I was doing one day when I saw a big fish caught in one of those holes. I ran to the house and got a big bucket, put the bucket in front of the fish and then pinched his tail. The fish went into the bucket. We had fish for supper.



Rabbit Hunting

Although Louise and I worked in the fields and garden and helped with the washing and ironing also scrubbing the floors, we had



time to be children. We spent time outside the house talking, laughing and walking. It was during one of those times that she and I were walking the short distance between where she lived and where I lived when we saw a little rabbit in a field near the road. With no intentions of hitting the rabbit, Louise picked up a little rock and tossed it at the rabbit, hit it in the head and killed it. We were both surprised and sad about that ☹.

Maze of Ghost and Goblins

Sometime during that summer three grand babies were born to the Harwood family. The first one was to their daughter Opal, who lived about a mile from the Harwoods. To get to her house you followed a narrow path through the fields, through a section of woods, across a branch of water and up a hill. I remember that well because I stayed with Opal near the time for her to deliver so I could run and get her mom when she went into labor. I did hope that I could make this run in the daytime because I was so afraid of the dark and I had no light to guide me through the maze of ghost and goblins that I was sure lingered along that path. But as most babies do, this one came in the middle of the night, so with all of the scary creatures breathing down my neck as I ran I somehow managed to outrun them. During the night Opal gave birth to a little girl. She named her Patricia Ruth, a name that was used much at that time with thoughts of Patricia Ruth Lindbergh. The Lindbergh's were much in the news at that time with the kidnapping and murder of their little son Charles Lindbergh Jr.

Evil Street Dances

The second baby was born to their son Freddie who lived in Morrilton. Freddie and Lona had been married for a few years and had no children so Mrs. Harwood was especially happy for them to have the baby that they had long awaited. One day Freddie drove up to the house and as everyone looked to see what he was taking out of the car, he picked up a little wooden casket with his little dead son in it, brought it into the house and without a word set it down. Mrs. Harwood stood weeping over that little body as she blamed the wife Lona for the death. She said, "I knew she would kill that baby by going to those street dances", I have always wondered what she meant by street dances. The next day we went to the cemetery and buried him beside little Johnny Sue and Ida Ruth.

The third baby, Benny Royce, was born to Eve Lee Scroggin. I would spend many nights rocking him in the middle of the night while everyone else was sleeping. Well maybe not everyone, the dirty old man managed to be awake with his roving hands.

Rumble Seat

Sometime during the summer Garret bought a car with a rumble seat and Louise and I had the exhilarating experience of riding in that fun seat. I don't remember that we went anywhere in particular, but we rode the dirt road and felt the wind and I might add the dust blowing in our faces.



Cotton Patch Torture

All too soon the summer was over and it was cotton-picking time again and Mama had not come to rescue us from the torture of the cotton patch. The sun was hot, the rows were long and we could never pick enough to please those in charge. The ground was so rocky that we had to put the sacks on a sled to keep from wearing it out, which made it harder to pull. Our poor bodies hurt all over: our backs from bending, our shoulders from pulling the sack, our fingers from being pricked by the sharp cotton boles, and our feet from the sharp rocks, the bull needles and the cuckel burrs. All the while our bodies were tortured by the scorching heat. But all things both good and bad do finally come to an end and so did that year of cotton picking.

School Truck Ride

It was school time again and this time we went to Center Ridge. We walked to the Pleasant Hill School and caught the bus to Center Ridge. Well, it was not really a bus but a truck with a tarpaulin over the truck bed. It had two rows of seats built along the sides and one in the middle of the truck. We traveled a dirt road that became very muddy when it rained, so

we did a lot of slipping and sliding and had to hold tightly to our seats. I did love school but always those same questions were asked over and over again. Would they ever stop?

Turning Point

One day I was sitting in the study hall and someone came up behind me and put her arm around me. I was shocked to look up and see Mama. We went outside and had a short awkward visit. I mentioned that she had some gray hair and her comment was that I could not expect her to stay young forever (she was only 33 year old). The remainder of the conversation was light and meaningless and would not be remembered. I can't explain just why I felt as I did when she left but somehow my feelings for her had changed. I think I did realize that she was gone from my life and I could no longer hope for the time when she would come back for us. Maybe it was time to let go of the grief and the longings for the time when she would come back for us. It was time to move on to whatever was to be the rest of my life. Maybe she too felt that we were better off without her and it was time to let go of us. I think that was the turning point in my life in that I felt no regret when she left without me. I neither wanted to go with her nor did I wish for her to come back again.

She had her boy friend, Raymond, with her and although I had seen him before, I had never thought about how I felt about him. I suppose I was too traumatized about the separation from her that, until that day, I had not taken a good look at him. I do know that on that day I did not like him. I neither liked the way he acted or the way he looked. By this time some of the children had gathered around us to listen to our conversation. I felt embarrassed and was glad when they left. After they left I was again faced with those much-hated embarrassing questions. Why didn't she take you with her? Did you want to go with her? Was that your dad? Where does she live? Where do you live? Do you like to live there? I was twelve years old at that time and I saw her only briefly eight years later. I have not seen her since.

Sorghum Molasses

I have pleasant memories of helping make Sorghum Molasses. The Sorghum Cane was cut and gathered then loaded on the wagon and hauled to a local Sorghum grinder. There the whole family was involved in making the sorghum. The cane was unloaded and fed into the grinder as the mules walked in a circle around the grinder thus turning it. As it was ground the juice was caught in a large container and carried to a big cooking pot. There it was cooked for hours until it was condensed into dark syrup called Sorghum. As it cooked we dipped the foam off the top and discarded it. The syrup was put into jars and stored for the table; this was an all day job that started at daybreak and ended at nightfall.

Gathering Firewood

As wintertime approached it was necessary to gather firewood for the fireplace and the cook stove. The team of mules was hitched to the wagon, which was loaded with hatchets and saws, and we headed for the woods for an all day of tree cutting. After the trees were cut they were cut into fireplace size logs and stove wood size pieces. Louise and I helped with loading the wood onto the wagons. I loved the aroma of wet leaves and underbrush also the great smell of the cut wood and the feel of the coming of winter.

Edith showed us the Sweetgum trees and how to break open the bark and gather the hardened sap for gum. I never developed a taste for it as Edith did but it was fun gathering it. We also searched for Hickory Nuts and enjoyed cracking them between two rocks and eating them.

First Flush

I don't remember the occasion but one Saturday Edith, Louise and I went to Morrilton. While there we went to the train depot to use the rest room and I had the frightening experience of flushing a toilet for the first time. This may have been the first indoor toilet that I had seen but, if so, I had no problem knowing what to do with the part that was mounted on the floor but it was the tank up near the ceiling



with a chain hanging down from it that I was not sure about. Should I pull that chain? I saw no sign saying, “Don’t pull chain” neither did I see a sign saying, “pull the chain”. Well, I pulled the chain and I thought the whole ceiling was falling down on me! I felt like I had destroyed the whole train depot. Thankfully there was no one who saw me do it, giving me a chance to run and hide while the depot was being destroyed. To my surprise the toilet flushed and the noise stopped and I had survived that first time experience.

Packing My Bag Again

It was November and my life was about to be changed; a change that would last for four years. Henry Scroggin’s brother Columbus and his wife Julia lived in Damascus and they sometimes came to visit Henry and Eva Lee. It was one of those visits that brought about that change. I was not told a reason but only that they wanted to take either Geneva or me to live with them. Geneva told me recently that the reason for the move was that for some reason one of the Harwood children needed to move back home for a while and if that was true certainly there was not room in that little two room house for all of us. I do remember that their daughter Clara and her little son Billy was living there at that time so maybe Willie (Clara’s husband) needed to come and live there too. It would make sense that they would keep me until the cotton was picked and then let me go.

So the decision had to be made as to which one of us would go and live with Aunt Julia & Uncle Columbus. Well, of course both Geneva and I wanted to be the one to go for several reasons. Columbus and Julia lived in the town (though small) of Damascus instead of out in the country on a farm. Having tasted the hot cotton patch, we both wanted to get away from the farm. Uncle Columbus was a gentleman and not a “dirty old man” like Henry. Julia and Columbus seemed more refined and they were certainly more educated than Eva Lee and Henry. Since their children were grown and away from home, their household consisted of the two of them, a little grandson and Grandma Scroggin. That small household, in town, versus a family of ten at Eva Lee & Henry’s, on a farm, certainly made Damascus the more attractive place to live. And one of the most important reasons was school. We knew that whoever lived with Aunt Julia and Uncle Columbus would go to school and it was obvious to us that whoever lived with Henry and Eva Lee would not be allowed to go to school.

And so when I was told about the plan and asked if I would be willing to go to Eva Lee's and let Geneva go to Damascus, I had no problem saying "no." I did not want to go to Eva Lee's. I had been there and I knew too well what life was like there, I wanted to go to Aunt Julia's. I hope I felt a tinge of guilt when I said "no" because I surely did know that Geneva wanted to go to Aunt Julia's and I knew that she would be much disappointed and saddened with my decision. I am thinking that I was selfish enough to have no regrets and no guilty feelings about my decision.

And so thinking that the decision had been made, I gathered my few belongings and sat waiting for Aunt Julia and Uncle Columbus to pick me up. I sat alone while I waited with no one there to explain to me why this move needed to be made. My waiting was in vain because they never came but instead Eva Lee came to tell me that Columbus and Julia had already left with Geneva and I was to go and live with her and Henry.



Perhaps the adults had already made the decision before I was told about the plan. Perhaps neither Geneva nor I had a choice in making the decision. I really don't know; I only know that I had no choice in the matter and I was left wondering why they even bothered to consult me. My feelings would have been somewhat eased had they given me the consideration of talking with me about the decision. If they had picked me up before they left and if I had been given the courtesy of a little time to say good bye to Geneva but perhaps they thought it best to just slip away and leave me to find out my fate when Eva Lee came to get me..... Perhaps!

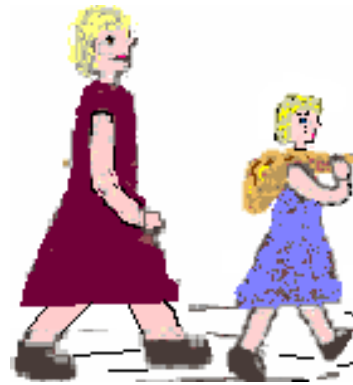
Perhaps it was best for Geneva to go with Uncle Columbus and Aunt Julia, her grace and beauty fit in their life style much better than I would have. I was an ugly twelve-year-old, overweight with stringy straight hair, looking like I belonged in a cotton patch. Geneva was a lovely slender fourteen-year-old with beautiful curly hair looking like a model. It would seem that Aunt Julia would have chosen Geneva because she had been around her and so knew her better than she knew me. I also think that



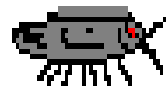
she would have chosen the pretty one. I am sure that Eva Lee was looking for the stronger of the two of us and was willing to give up the pretty one in exchange for the strong one. I think sometimes that did bother her because many times she told me how much prettier Geneva was than I. Well looking in the mirror and at Geneva, how could I argue with her? ☺ Once she told me not to put my arms upon the back of the church pew because they were too large. (She was right they were too large then, and they still are. ☹ But don't tell anybody.) Oh, but I was planning to work on my body and one day I would be pretty, but it would take time.

Leaving Louise

So I picked up my little bag of belongings and walked into a life that would be mine for the next four years. At least this time I was familiar with the place where I would be living so I would not need to go through adjusting to my strange surroundings. I was sad because I not only was going to a place where I did not want to go, a place where I knew life would be difficult, and a place that would move Louise and me further apart. Louise and I had spent much time together and had depended on each other to help as we laughed our way through the life that we found ourselves in. Then too, Geneva had gone away to some far away place called Damascus and I didn't know how long it might be before I saw her again. But I didn't have long to lick my wounds because, as I already knew, there was much work to be done at the Scroggin's and much of it was assigned to me.



It was November so there was no fieldwork to be done at that time but there was much to be done around the house including a baby to be cared for, with diapers to be washed and getting up at night to rock and feed him. (Enter the “dirty old man” with his roving hands) There were eight beds to be made, dishes to wash for ten people, clothes to be washed and ironed, cooking for those ten people, floors to be mopped and on and on it goes. Then of course there were cows to be milked and animals to be fed and watered. I fed the chickens and I sometimes helped with the milking but usually Eva Lee and Henry did that. The cooking involved picking a wash tub full of turnip greens, washing them, sometimes in ice cold water. Eva Lee instructed me to wash them one leaf at a time and



inspect both sides of the leaf for bugs. As I followed her orders through several tubs of greens I decided that I could get by with doing several leaves at a time and that progressed to a hand full at a time which cut down on the misery of washing turnip greens. But one day I let a bug slip by and get cooked in the pot of greens. Eva Lee found it ☹ I was in trouble. I had to go back to one leaf at a time inspecting it on both sides.



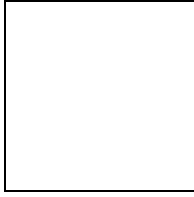
Deceitful Beasts

If you have ever noticed cows grazing in a pasture you know that they stand and stare with their big brown eyes while they slowly chew their cud and then walk slowly to another spot grazing as they go. A perfect picture of a peaceful slow moving creature that never gets in a hurry, one that would be easy to manage, a loveable creature. Well, don't let them fool you they are deceitful beasts. It was my job to go and get those big brown eyed, slow moving, cud chewing, deceitful beasts each afternoon and drive them to the cow lot for milking.



There was a space of about fifty yards between the pasture gate and the lot gate where they could escape and it didn't take them long to size me up as a green horn and know that they could easily escape me. As I opened the pasture gate they marched slowly and peacefully out of the pasture and headed toward the lot gate lulling me into thinking they were going into the cow lot thus causing me to let down my guard. But then as swift as lightening they would take off running down the hill with their full bag of

milk swinging from side to side as they ran down the hill to the creek. I am sure I heard them laughing as they ran.



The graveyard was down by the creek and of course they always scattered themselves among the tombstones making it harder for me to round them up. And there I was again with ghosts surrounding me. It was a real mystery as to why they always willingly walked back with me following behind them. I suppose it could have been that my threats of killing them with the stick that I held in my hand, that scared them into slowly and peacefully walking back to the cow lot ready to repeat the ordeal the next afternoon.

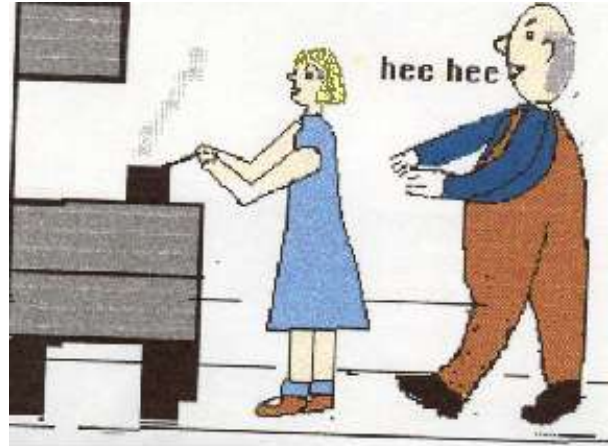
No Garbage or Trash

There were many chores around the house and farm but one chore that seems to be a major one now for today's families we didn't have, and that is taking out the garbage and the trash. Nothing was thrown away; there was a use for everything. The table scraps along with the water left after washing the dishes were put in a big bucket in the kitchen and fed to the hogs at the end of the day. The newspaper was used to wrap school lunches after the food was wrapped in wax paper. The last season's Sears catalog and any leftover newspaper was cut into six-inch squares and deposited in the outdoor toilet to be used as toilet paper. Flour and sugar came in sacks made of cotton, which were used to make underwear, little dresses, quilt pieces and other items.

Dirty Old Man

The dirty old man was nothing but a disgusting nuisance but he was enough of that. There was surely no reason to feel flattered by his advances

because he not only was as ugly as sin and certainly repulsive to any young girl, but also had eyes for anything with a skirt on. On one occasion a big busted distance relative of Eva Lee's whom she had not seen in many years came for the day and he was after her with his roving hands before the day was half over. She was so mad that she didn't



hesitate to tell Eva Lee which gave me the courage to also tell. Eva Lee scolded Henry and showed her disgust for him which slowed him down for a while but not for long. That poor guy probably died with bruises all over his big fat belly caused from the girls elbowing him when he walked up behind them with his roving hands.

Even though we had the added convenience of a washing machine, wash day was an unpleasant time because it meant spending the time with Henry



and his dreaded advances. I missed the cool shaded bank of the creek where we had done the washing at the Harwood's. It was my job to catch the clothes as Henry put them through the ringer and then push them down in the rinse water. They were then put through the wringer again as I caught them. I then hung them out to dry.

Ready in a Flash

I soon realized that my fear of not being allowed to go to school would be true. I was allowed to go only two or three days per week, Eva Lee saying she had to have me to help take care of the baby and help with the work around the house. I could never assume that I could go that day but had to wait for her to tell me that I



could go. She always seemed to wait until it was too late for me to get ready and catch the bus. She just didn't know just how fast I could be. She probably judged me by the way I dragged my feet while helping with breakfast, washing the dishes, fixing the school lunches, making the beds and other things that I did while waiting for her word that I could go. Her giving the go word was my wake up call and I could be ready in a flash.

Wrong Side Out

Louise always stopped by the Eva Lee's on her way to the bus and the days that I did go to school she and I walked together. We used that time for me to tell her yesterday's chapter of the story that ran in the daily newspaper. The Scroggin family was one of the few families who took the daily newspaper, which came by mail. The paper carried a story, which ran for several weeks continuing each day. I remember one in particular that was about some unknown evil force that did frightening things to the characters in the story. I have forgotten all of the happenings in the story except for the end of it. The shocker was that the evil force turned some of the characters wrong side out. It scared the living daylights out of Louise and me.

The Bodiless Funeral

It was customary in the hills of Center Ridge for the volunteer grave diggers to gather and dig the grave for the funeral. The funeral that was announced through the "grapevine". And so it was when the word was passed on from one to another that young Nadine had died, the grave diggers went promptly and dug the grave. They then went home and changed into their Sunday best clothes and came back for the funeral. In the meantime several other well wishing good people had gathered and with tears in their eyes they waited for the body and for Nadine's family to arrive. As they waited and waited and the family didn't show up, they began to wonder about the delay. Finally the word came that although Nadine had been very ill she did



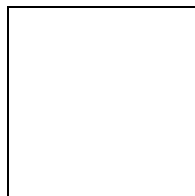
not die. There would be no funeral today. I suppose the moral of this story is. "When people gather for your funeral, don't go."

Revival Time

The two churches held their Revivals each summer, hiring preachers from Morrilton to come for one or two weeks. They seemed to compete with each other to see who could hold the longest revival and the preacher was judged by the length of time he could preach; the longer he could preach, the better preacher he was. I did like the revival time because we got away from some of the daily routine of hard work and were allowed a time of -----I suppose you could call it celebration.



I loved the gathering of the people as they came with their lanterns not only to light their way to the church but also to light the church for the meetings. Most lanterns were kerosene lanterns but the Scroggin's had an Aladdin lantern, which gave good light. I loved the singing and some of the preaching especially the words of comfort. "Come unto me all ye who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest". "In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you in the presence of my Father so that where I am there you may be also".



The fire and brimstone scared me. Since we had no piano to give us the melody of the songs, the singing was done using a shape note song book. Our leader was one of the members of the church who had been taught shaped note singing and we could follow him

Our dates centered around church services. It was after the service was over that the boys gathered outside the church to be ready to walk us home. We girls always lingered inside long enough to give the boys time to gather.

I loved the baptismal service after the Revival services ended. We gathered on the cool shaded creek bank for the baptizing of the converts. They were led hand in hand down into the creek and while those gathered on the banks sang "Shall We Gather at the River" they were immersed in the cool waters of the creek. It was there that that I was baptized and I felt the presence of the loving God that I had found as a child.

One of the exciting things about Revival time was that Geneva, E.S. and Lucille came for one week. E.S. and Lucille were Henry's brother's children who lived in Paris Arkansas. I always looked forward to that time of fun times together. It was during that time that I learned to swim in the creek. After the one week with Henry and Eva Lee they (Geneva, E.S. and Lucille) left for Damascus where the three of them would visit for one week. Since Geneva had gone with ES and Lucille the year before, I thought, maybe I could go with them this summer but Eva Lee wouldn't even consider it.

Only the Servant Girl

There were good times and there were bad times during those four years. Mostly the bad times was the feeling of not belonging, of being only the servant girl or the bonded girl, which Henry often let me know that, that in fact was my status. This was his effort to try to convince me that I was under his control and should stop elbowing him. I think he was surprised when that always brought on a flurry of elbows 😊 Of course I had no fear of his threats to cast me out of the house because I knew that Eva Lee would have me back in a flash. 😊

To help with the feelings of being inferior and not belonging, of not having a home I did a lot of daydreaming and fantasizing. Some day my day would come and I would leave from there and some day come back driving a car well dressed and pretty and they would respect me. I would no longer be the little servant girl whose mama left her and ran away with a

man. People would no longer ask, “who are you staying with” Also I would find my prince and we would live in a nice home and have a family.

Dollar Perm

All of those dreams would have to wait for that day to come but I decided the pretty part could be worked on right then so I persuaded Eva Lee to let me get a permanent so my hair would be pretty like Geneva’s. Eva Lee knew of this little off beat beauty salon in Plummerville that would give me a permanent for \$1.00. So with much excitement we went there to get my hair curled; the beginning of my becoming beautiful.



Getting a permanent at that time could be classed as low grade torture but I was willing to endure the long period of time hooked up to the hot machine that tried it’s best to pull out all of my hair. I could feel one or two places that it was burning my head but that was a small price to pay for beautiful hair. The torture was finally over and I got the instructions on how to take care of it – shampoo it every two weeks. I don’t remember her having a mirror to show me her handiwork but that didn’t matter because, even though I could smell burnt hair, I was sure I had beautiful curls. I climbed into the back of the truck and stood against the cab of the truck on our trip home and felt the wind blow through my beautiful curls. I had seen a magazine picture of just such a scene; a lovely young girl standing in the wind with her gorgeous radiant hair flowing behind her.



As soon as we got home I ran for a mirror and was shocked at the ugly mess I saw. Instead of gorgeous flowing blond curls, I had a head full of burned straw. I then knew why I had smelled hair burning while under that torture machine. I not only would have to wait for future dreams to come true but I would have to wait to hopefully become pretty.

Hell Fire and Brimstone

I must say there were good times, enjoyable times and feelings of contentment during that time. I remember a few parties but there was a limit to what we could do at the parties. There was no music or dancing; neither was allowed in the Baptist church. We did push our luck and had a few square dances, without music, in Edith and Garret's front yard. Edith never seemed to mind living on the edge of trouble so it was there that we had two square dances before we were discovered by the saints of the church. The results was that the saints gathered, discussed our sins and threatened to excommunicate us. I don't know what brought about the decision to let us stay in the church but I suppose it was because they needed all the members they could get to outnumber the Church of Christ members. So they decided to hold on to us sinners for a while longer and shame us by preaching "hell fire and brimstone" to us.



"Ole Dan Tucker's in this town swinging them ladies round & round"

"I'll dry if you can keep up..."

Life went on month after month with the work on the farm and in the house. I did have one considerate member of the family that I am forever grateful for, I think not for the actual work involved but for the consideration he gave me. It was my job to wash all of the dishes for the family of ten after each meal. After many nights of washing mounds of dishes, Afton (the oldest son) got up from his chair, where the family was



sitting listening to the radio, and came into the kitchen to help me. He

picked up a drying towel and said, "I'll dry for you if you can keep up with me, but if you get behind me I'll quit". I learned to sling those dishes out and I never got behind his drying. That did give my ego a big boost. None of the others offered any help .

Afton was about four years older than me, Wilburn two years older than me, Ray was about my age and then there was Wendell, Doyle, Carol and Benny.

Pie Auctions

Occasionally we had pie suppers for fund raisers for the church. The young girls made pies which were auctioned off to the young men. Although the maker of the pie was supposed to be a secret, the young men always found out which pie belonged to the girl that he wanted to share the pie with and so he would bid on that pie. The prettier the girl, the higher the bid and so the more money the pie brought. Needless to say my pie never brought in much money. My day had not yet come, but it would---- just you wait and see. The next permanent would work.



Bowl Weevil and Army Worm

The year 1936 was a bad year for the cotton growers in the hills of Arkansas. The Bowl Weevil and the Army Worm had found their way to those parts of the country and so destroyed a big part of the cotton while it was in the green bowl stage. Eva Lee's sister and family had moved to Missouri to grow cotton there, so some of us went to live with her and pick cotton for a few weeks. We had read about the tall cotton, which grew shoulder high and thought it would be a treat to pick cotton in such a patch. The cotton in the hills of Arkansas did well to grow knee high. But before the first day of picking cotton was over I was ready to go back to the knee-high cotton. The tall stalks and the heavy foliage blocked any breeze that might be blowing. The rows were so long and there was so much cotton on them that we seldom got to the end of a row, so we had to wait for



a water carrier to bring water around twice in the morning and twice in the afternoon. I was always thirsty, hot and tired. In the hill cotton we picked many rows each day with water and shade trees at each end of the row.

Louise and I had looked forward to picking cotton side by side again but with that tall cotton we could not see each other. There was a great deal of satisfaction of being able to fill our cotton sack much quicker with the

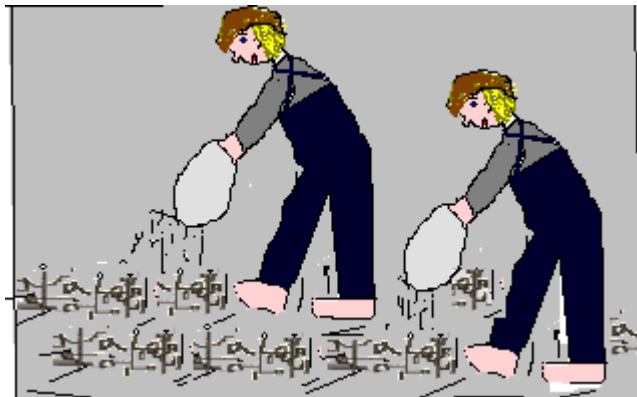


shoulder high cotton and that meant carrying it to the end of the row where the scales and the wagon waited for the cotton. Sometimes our sacks were full at a time when we were a distance from the scales causing us to sometimes feel like we might collapse under the weight of that heavy cotton sack before we could make it to the scales. We always welcomed the break while those in charge weighed it and emptied it into the wagon.

The above drawing (collapsed) was drawn by Duncan Moore-see footnote pg vii

Dusting Cotton

Cotton growers soon came up with a poison for the Bowl Weevil and Arm Worm, which had to be distributed by hand at night while the dew was on the cotton. All who could walk helped with that chore. We each loaded a flour sack with the poison, tied a string around the top and dusted the cotton by shaking the sack over each cotton stalk.



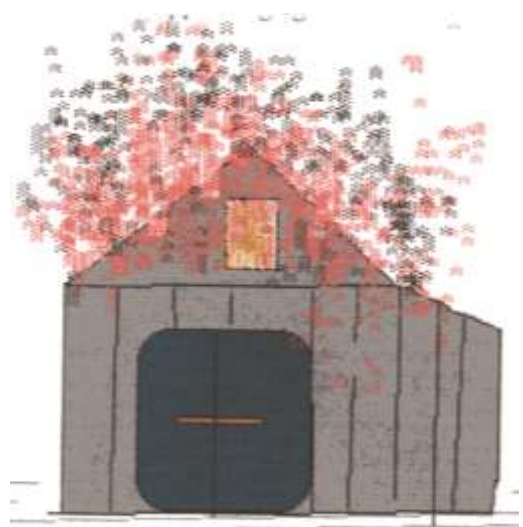
There was something exciting about this task maybe it was the coolness of the night air, the moon light, the sound of the night creatures and; yes even the smell of the dust mixed with the damp cotton stalks. What would be said now about children dusting that poison and breathing the dust of it as they dusted?

Arson

Weddings were usually a very simple occasion with the couple going before the Justice of Peace in that area and were married. Sometimes the relatives did not know about it until the couple announced that they were married. So it was a big occasion when we all gathered at the church to attend the wedding of Loeta Harwood and Forrest Garret.

Forrest was a handsome young man whose family had recently moved into the neighborhood and I am sure he turned the heads of all of the young girls in that community but it was not long before Loeta and Forrest announced their engagement. I don't remember too much about the ceremony but I do remember admiring the beautiful gray suit that Loeta had bought for the occasion. I am sure it had been a financial drain for the Harwood's to purchase the suit. After the wedding the bride and groom went home with the Harwood's to live with the family in the small three-room house. They soon moved into the Harwood's rent house a distance away, but it wasn't long before Loeta came home pregnant and crying saying she no longer wanted to be married. She would only say that life with Forrest was frightening but she would never say why.

Soon after the divorce was final the community was thrown into a state of fear when barns began burning. Almost every night a barn would burn to the ground so it was easy to speculate that someone was setting the fires. This was a real crisis since it meant not only the food for the cows and mules for the winter but sometimes the cows and mules were caught in the fire. The owners of the barns tried to set up a watch at night but the "fire bug" was clever enough to get around the watchman.



We all dreaded the sound of the bells ringing at night to call everyone together to try to put out the fire. The only fire fighting equipment was the bucket brigade. And of course the effort was made to save the animals and any equipment possible. There was no such thing as fire insurance so the owners had to take the loss when the barn burned. There was also the fear

that whoever was burning the barns would start burning houses; in fact the first one to burn was the Harwood rent house where Loeta and Forrest had lived when she left him, so for that reason Forrest became the prime suspect. I can't remember how many barns burned before Forrest was caught at one of the fires which confirmed the suspicion that he was the fire bug. He was arrested and tried but there was not enough evidence to convict him so he spent no time in jail but the fires stopped.

Saved by the Bell

Almost every homeowner had a bell mounted on a ten or twelve foot pole with a rope to pull to ring it. They were used to call the field hands in for lunch or to sound an alarm for whatever reason. It was the ringing of those bells as the owner of the burning barn sounded the first alarm; the nearest neighbor picked up on it and rang his bell and so on down the road until all the bells were ringing. That was the dreaded sound, always at night.



It was on my last visit to that area that Edith Harwood told of how her life was saved by the bell. She was home alone working in her garden while her husband worked in the field a distance from the house when she was bitten by a water moccasin. She was able to get to the bell and sound the alarm. Her husband rushed her to the doctor in time to save her life but she had a long slow painful recovery. She showed F.H. and me the scar on her thigh where the infection had eaten away a big portion of her thigh.

A Pawn for Eva Lee

With Dad close by and knowing that we were in walking distance of each other, Maxine had adjusted and seemed content with Maybell and Riley, she especially loved Riley and he gave her much attention as she followed him around in his every day work. She did have one interruption in her life when Maybell became seriously ill and could not care for her. Eva Lee (the self elected Ruler of that part of the earth stepped in and the word was, Gave Maxine to Sant & Laura Hill. The problem came when Maybell recovered and wanted Maxine back and Eve Lee didn't want to

give her back and so the dispute started. To settle it Eva Lee decided to go to court, which was an embarrassing situation for me. She needed some financial support for the court cost and I was a pawn in her asking for money. She took me with her as she went to several places in Morrilton asking for money. I was an example of one of those *pore little girls* that she was concerned about as she looked after their welfare.

One place we went was to Dr. Biggs (a dentist) and he noticed a big boil on my finger and, as Eva Lee told him the sad story, he lanced it for me. Little did I know that I would soon, again, cross paths with Dr. Biggs. Then to add to my stress, I was to be a witness with Eve Lee telling me what to say. Thankfully the judge saw through her scheme and awarded Maxine to Maybell and Riley without a court hearing.



Heart Attack

We girls were hit with another blow when one day we heard the news that Uncle Leonard had died and had already been buried. Although we seldom saw him, we knew he was there and we felt a sense of security knowing that he was watching over us. He had stayed in touch with us and had often sent us little gifts of candy just to let us know that he cared. And of course I have told you that he bought all of my clothes and any school supplies I needed. I don't think he was asked to buy many items of clothing for the other girls, so I am sure he must have thought that I was the extravagant one. Eva Lee asked for many things that she kept for herself. Uncle Leonard had died suddenly with a massive heart attack. We felt somehow left out when Aunt Betty did not let us know about his death in fact I don't think she let Dad know about it.

Ticket Out

As the years went by much to my distress, I went less and less to school and by the time I entered the tenth grade I was absent many more days than I attended school. I didn't know at that time that Uncle Leonard's death would be my ticket out of that situation. In spite of my poor

attendance I made passing grades, at least the teachers passed me to the next grade each year, but at the same time wheels were turning between the principal of the school and the proper authorities. I learned later that the principal of the school knew our family and was concerned that I was not going to school but, knowing that Uncle Leonard was keeping an eye on us, hesitated to interfere. What he didn't know is that Eva Lee had led Uncle Leonard to believe that I was attending school regularly. So soon after Uncle Leonard died the principal notified the authorities. I have certainly been thankful for that because it was not at all unusual for boys, and certainly girls to drop out of school after the eighth grade. It was only because the principal knew our family that there was concern for me.

Back to Missouri

The year 1939 was another bad year for the cotton growers at Center Ridge, so we loaded up a truck and went to Missouri to pick cotton. This time we went to Edith's Mom and Dad's to pick in their fields. The six of us stayed in their little rent house on the farm. It was while we were in the field picking cotton around the first of September that we heard that Germany had invaded Poland and the talk was that the United States had no choice now but to enter the war. I had heard about the Civil war and World War I and the horrors of war so it was distressing to hear that we might be going to war.

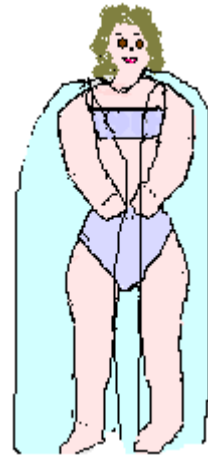
Louise and I were among the six who went to pick cotton that year and in spite of the hard work, we loved being together. We got up at four O'clock each morning so that we could be through breakfast and in the field by daylight and we stayed in the field until sundown. One of the must items that we had taken with us was a loud alarm clock to get us out of bed in the wee hours of the morning. But as days wore on and our bodies got so tired that we could not hear the alarm clock and so overslept a few mornings. To solve that problem Edith put the alarm clock in a metal dishpan. We all heard it as it rattled the pan and jarred our bodies into a state of shock. ☹ To add a little spice to this and maybe take away some of the torture of the rude awakening, we had a little money pot that we



each dropped a nickle in at night. The one who heard the alarm and hollared “John” got the thirty cents that day.

Carnival

But, with Edith leading the way, we did find time for some fun. I went to my first carnival and was shocked at some of the sideshows. One being the scantily dressed young women dancing on a stage to entice the young men. I got my second permanent (some improvement over the first one, but still far from that glamour girl that I planned one day to be) I bought a party dress but I never found a party to go to, so I wore it around the house. ☺



Welfare Worker

I saved most of my money only to have Eva Lee take it away from me when I got back from Missouri. Her argument was that she had to stay home while I got the privilege of going, so it was only right that I should give her the money that I had earned. She also felt that since I had been gone for a few weeks I would have to wait to start to school until we caught up with the work that needed to be done. I would have to say that that was



no surprise to me because she seemed to have no problem finding an excuse for me to need to stay home and work. One such excuse was that one of my class mates (Lois) who lived close by, was ill with the flu and it would not be fair for me to go to school until she got well enough to go too. Of course I had not been going anyhow but that did give her the relief of needing to say to me each morning, “I just can’t do without you today”

It was nearing the end of October and there seemed to be no plan to let me go to school. I suppose since Uncle Leonard had died, Eva Lee didn’t need to allow me to go at all. She no longer needed the token few days that I had gone so that she could report to Uncle Leonard (in case he should ask about me.) I was beginning my fifth year of very little school and I realized that my plans to finish high school and then go back to Morrilton was passing me by and I was seriously considering running away with my

friend, Nova. She had heard about a camp for girls that was comparable to the CCC camp for boys and she suggested that we join it. It was then that my guardian angel stepped in. There was a knock on the door and in walked Geneva with the child welfare worker. Geneva took me outside and told me why they were there. In the meantime the lady talked to Eva Lee and within a short time I was told that I would be leaving with Geneva and the child welfare worker. I am thinking that, if Eva Lee objected, she was soon convinced that she had no choice, that she (the child welfare worker) had the authority to take me against her will. Soon after I left, Eva Lee sent Henry looking for me to try to persuade me to come back.

On one other occasion a child welfare worker had come to talk to me about my not going to school and she also asked me about sexual abuse but needless to say, I was not very open with her because I was afraid of what the plan was for me. Eva Lee had told me that I should not talk to her saying that she knew that they were planning to put me in some institution. I surely did not want to go to an institution so I didn't answer her questions, certainly not truthfully. I am sure she knew that and so she brought Geneva along with her to calm my fears. It took no persuading to get me to go, I packed my party dress along with my few other belongings and we left.

Mrs. Maxwell

Oh, but they did not tell me that the Mrs. Maxwell who wanted me to live with her was a public health nurse----Good Grief!! -----But I had made my decision and I would see it through and besides she did not look like the Public Health Nurse I had seen years ago. I knew immediately that I would love being with her and I would love being with Mrs. Morton who stayed there during the week and took care of Hettie's invalid husband. Together they made me feel spoiled which I loved.

New Start, New Alias

Here I was back in Morrilton, which I considered home but wait! This is where it all began. The feeling of guilt because of what had happened to our family, the stigma that it carried with it and I would be seeing some of those classmates from years ago. Would they recognize me? Would they remember? Would those feelings come back to me? The

answer, of course, would be yes. With a name like Corkill they would remember. There were so few Corkills in Morrilton that there would be no way for Osa Corkill to hide, so I welcomed Hettie's suggestion that I register as Osa Maxwell. I was surprised that Hettie knew that I had not been going to school and since I would be going to a much bigger school she suggested that I repeat the tenth grade, which I was willing to do. It was then that I learned that the principal of the Center Ridge School had been working with the child welfare department, and that Hettie was a personal friend of the Child Welfare Worker.

Hettie went to school with me and helped me through the registering and the trauma of finding my way in a school that was the largest I had ever seen. I recognized some of my early childhood classmates and wondered if they recognized me. There was my best friend Beatrice Nation (the one whose mom had told her not to play with me) and another friend Margaret Stallings. If they recognized me they did not say so. It was good to be back and I began to feel like my day had come.

Hettie's Family

It was October 24th and Hettie told me that we would go that night to Pottsville to have dinner with her family celebrating her little bother F.H.'s seventeenth birthday. She told me how her family had lost four little baby boys during the eleven years between Chalmers and F.H. And how they had almost lost F.H. with dysentery during his second summer and then again when he was six years old with a kidney disorder. She also told me about her little thirteen-year-old sister who they adored.

I fell in love with Pottsville as soon as we turned off of new highway 64 and on to old highway 64 crossed the Galley Creek Bridge and stopped at Boyce Sinclair's store to buy a wedding gift for Julia Oates. Hettie introduced me as Osa and she did not mention that I was one of those poor little girls who were given away. One of those little girls whose mom left with another man and no longer wanted her children. One of those poor little girls whose dad didn't want them either. I began to feel like someone with an identity, well I might, some day, have class.



I was nervous at meeting the family especially the seventeen-year-old F.H. The warm loving atmosphere of the family made meeting them an easy comfortable experience. I liked the looks of F.H. but I knew that I had neither the looks nor the class to catch his eye but I planned to work on that. I needed to work on getting rid of the look of having recently escaped from the cotton patch.☺

We sat down to a meal served on a white tablecloth with white linen napkins. This was the first time since I was a little girl that I had sat down to a meal with such style. And then----- the birthday cake with seventeen candles. I had all but forgotten about cakes with candles on them. Life was really changing for the better for me. Soon after the meal was over F.H.'s friend, Franklin Oates picked him up for a night out. Margaret talked non-stop to me the remainder of the time we were there.

Rural Visits with Hettie

As public health nurse, Hettie visited schools in the rural area, the school on Petit Jean Mountain being one of them. When she learned that I had never been on Petit Jean she took me with her on her next trip. I was thrilled to not only see the mountain that I had heard and read about but to visit a school with a public health nurse. A public health nurse who treated me with love and respect, so unlike the public health nurse that I had known as a little child. When summer came Hettie sometimes took me with her to the rural areas to give the dreaded typhoid shots and make the home visits. After I learned to drive she took me to do the driving for her. I was beginning to overrun my Fantasies. But I am getting ahead of myself, I am now only sixteen and I didn't learn to drive until I was eighteen years old.

Return of Christmas Joy

There were many good things to come with Louise and Maxine visiting occasionally and there was a mention of them coming to live with Hettie. There was much to do about Christmas with a tree, extra cooking, and the programs at the church. There were wrapped gifts of pajamas, socks, combs, hairbrushes and other needed items. It was great to again feel the joy of Christmas.

Pottsville and the Piano

In January 1940 Hettie went to New York City for a two-month study course in Public Health nursing. To make it easier to take care of her family she moved us to Pottsville to live with her mom and dad for the two months. Two rooms had been added to the house several years earlier for her and her husband Mark to live in and it was there that we lived (we being Mark, Mark's nurse Mrs. Morton and me.) I loved being a part of the family as Margaret and I became good friends. I went to school in Pottsville those two months and became friends with Lillian Oates. I knew she had her eye on F.H but much to her distress he had his eye on another girl.

My dream of some day having access to a piano was there in the Moore's living room. I had not had any music and knew nothing about playing but I was encouraged to spend time at the piano so I learned to play some by ear. I suppose I managed to impress Mother Moore, which led to my inheriting the piano years later. It was the piano that we had for year before replacing it with the new Charles Walters. I passed it on to Robert and after he bought his new one he passed it on to Vanessa's brother Aaron. So it is still in the family and being enjoyed.

No Going Back

One morning I looked out in the front of the house and there was Henry Scroggin asking to see me. He told me that Eva Lee had given birth to a little girl and wanted me to come back to live with them. It took me no time at all to send him on his way. I would have never gone back. I know Eva Lee, after giving birth to seven boys, was delighted to have a little girl. I am sad to say that she died when she was eighteen months old. But Eva Lee didn't give up easily. After she knew that I was not coming back, she started stopping Louise as she walked past the house on her way to school and keeping her for the day to do the work around the house. It didn't take long for Edith to put a stop to that.

Loved and Appreciated

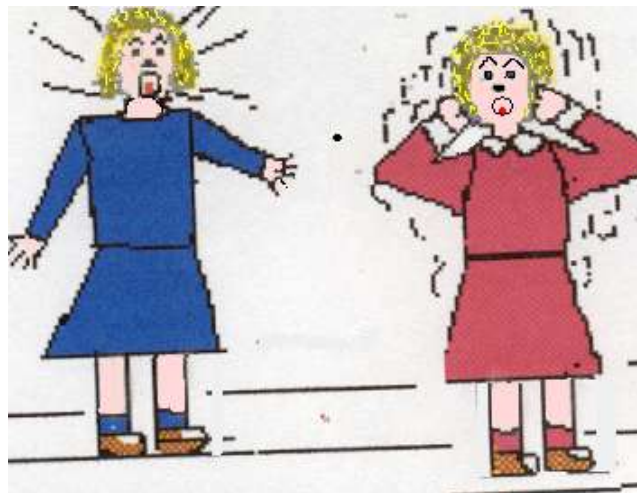
Summer came and Louise came to live with us. We were sisters together at last sharing a bedroom.—sharing a bed. I was feeling more and more like I at last had found a home. There was no cotton patch, no cows to take care of and no farm work to do but we still had chores. Since Hettie worked we took care of the housework, the cooking, washing and ironing (Hettie's white uniforms were a pain to iron), helping some with taking care of Mark, planting a garden and many other things but it was different, we felt loved and appreciated.

Louise had also lost the money that she had made picking cotton. Edith had taken her money to buy her ninth grade books but would not let her have the books so she could sell them to buy her tenth grade books. We have always wondered what Edith wanted with the books.

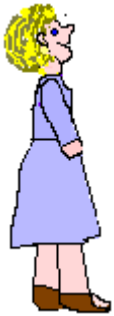


Train Whistles

We were back where the trains were again and although we were not close enough to see them from the house, we could hear the rumble of their heavy engine and hear the blast of their whistle. But wait, Louise had developed a thing about train whistles, a thing that affected everyone around her but mainly me. The loud whistle as the train neared the crossing drove her to the brink of insanity and she responded by screaming so loud that it caused me to go into a state of shock. It took many trains but I think I finally learned to brace myself for the shock.



Associating with Professionals



The summer of 1940 was a fun summer as we sometimes went with Hettie on her nursing route to visit with her patients and oh, yes to the country schoolhouses to give those dreaded typhoid shots to the many frightened people. I helped by filling out the cards for those taking the shots. Just a short time ago I was one of those frightened ones feeling intimidated by that professional nurse or doctor and at the same time admiring them and wishing I could be one of them. I felt so proud to be helping Hettie, to be associated with one of those professionals. Hey, I might have felt like a snob 😊

Time for Rook

Louise and I sometimes went to Pottsville and were surprised to find that women and girls did not work in the fields. Mother Moore gathered the garden vegetables and canned them but the garden work was done by the men and hired help. On those visits we spent the time playing cards with Margaret. I think we must have played Rook because Mother Moore allowed no playing cards in the house. Playing cards were a sin. On one visit we went to the cotton patch to keep records for each cotton picker as they brought their cotton to be weighed. I felt like I must be dreaming but I will have to admit that it was temptation to pick up a sack and again pick a row of cotton. I loved the feel and the smell of cotton then and I still do.

F.H. Lies About His Age

September of 1940 F.H. lied about his age saying he was 18 years old and joined the National Guard in hopes of going to Alaska with them in the near future. He was stationed at Robinson in Little Rock which was close enough that he could slip out at night, hitch a ride to Morrilton and he, Louise and I would have fun playing cards until it was time to hitch a ride back to camp before reveille. Louise and I always managed to do our homework early so we could stay up as long as F.H. felt he could stay.

Cries of Help

It was obvious that Mrs. Scarburgh who lived across the street from us did not approve of us. I suppose because she felt that teenagers would disturb the quiet life that she enjoyed living alone, so she never spoke to us but gave us many hateful stares. Then I am sure as she watched F.H. (the soldier) come to our house and leave in the wee hours of the morning, that she thought of us as wild teenagers that she preferred to have nothing to do with.



One day I heard an agonizing scream coming from her house screaming, “help, help, help”. I had never been inside her house but I ran to her door and finding it unlocked ran inside and started looking for the source of her screams. I opened her bathroom door and found Mrs. Scarburgh straddling the bathtub with both hands pinned with the window above the bathtub. She had gotten up on the bathtub and raised the heavy window and then it slammed down on all of her fingers. I got into the bathtub and tried to lift the window off of her fingers as she screamed in agony. I realized that I could not lift it so I ran to the house and grabbed a crowbar then ran back and prized the window off of her fingers. I lifted her down from the tub and almost had to carry her to her bed.

I saw that six of her fingers were cut to the bone and her fingernails were already filled with blood and had turned black. I called her doctor and stayed with her until he came. She did not lose any of her fingers as the doctor thought she might but she was a long time healing. I went to see her a few times as she was healing and she thanked me for responding to her call for help. She was `always friendly with us after that incident. I am sure she felt better when she found out that the soldier was Hettie’s brother.

My Fantasy Was Coming True!

School started and Louise and I were walking to school together again. We both took Home



Economics and through that and with Hettie's help we learned the importance of a good balanced diet, and the importance of good grooming. We learned how to take care of our hair and with the help of Aunt Betty we had a few pretty dresses. We were both losing the extra pounds that we did not need and we were becoming pretty. Aunt Betty, who had turned up her nose at us years ago, now seemed proud to be related to us. My fantasy was coming true!

It was about that time that Hettie felt that I needed to go to the dentist. It was my first time to see a dentist and so I was apprehensive about what happens at a dentist office. My apprehension turned to distress and shock as I walked up to his office and realized that it was Dr. Biggs! The Dr. Biggs who had lanced the boil on my finger and saw me as one of those pitiful little girls. Would he remember me? I still had the scar on my finger, could I maybe hide it from him? As I walked in his office he looked a little confused as he took a second look at me. I thought Oh, No! He does remember! He recognizes me! But it was too late I couldn't run away, I would have to wait for his comment on his memory. I was so relieved and felt so complimented when he said, "for just an instant I thought you were Margaret Scroggins, you look so much like her". Margaret (not related to Eva Lee) was one of the beauties at Morrilton High School. I had many cavities that needed to be filled which, had he recognized me, would have been torture but, with the compliment he gave me, there was very little pain. To add to this story; Dr. Biggs had two sons (Wayne and Robert) who were in my class at school. Robert was one of the outstanding leaders in our class and was surely among the best all around students. I was surprised to find out that he was an orphan. Dr. Biggs had adopted him from the Children's Home. The Children's Home which only a few years ago was the Dreaded Orphanage that we had run from.



It was when Geneva graduated from high school April 1940 that I realized that we were reaching adult age. We had actually made it through those years of being those poor little girls who were given away when their mom left their dad for another man. We were on our way to being respected as adults and that was a good feeling.

Soon after graduation Geneva went to live with mom's cousin May, her husband Bill Hickman and May's sister Dora Janette. It was there that she had her first job working with May and Bill in their dry cleaning business in Brinkley Arkansas. She wrote about some good times in Brinkley as she now felt that she was back with family and could enjoy the feeling of belonging again. She wrote about her first trip to a beach at Biloxi Mississippi and how it almost ended in tragedy when she and Dora Janette almost drowned in the swimming pool. They had to be rescued by the lifeguard.

Surprise Wedding

It happened in May 1941-----F.H. Surprised everyone by marrying Lillian. He was only eighteen years old and Lillian was only sixteen. Although I had not had serious thoughts about him Louise and I were both unhappy about the marriage. The four of us- F.H., Margaret, Louise and I had had fun times together and we knew those times were over. We had made plans and were looking forward to a fourth of July family gathering on Petit Jean Mountain and we wondered if F.H. and Lillian would attend and join in the fun of swimming, hiking and game playing. They did not attend the picnic but we did have fun that day. Nina & Fred (Mother & Dad Moore) and Margaret were there. So were Uncle Ralph & Aunt Hettie Oates with Mary Amanda and Robert. Then, of course, Hettie, Louise, and I finished the list. We rented one of the cabins for the day (by the way it was one of the cabins that we rented in 1980 for a family reunion).

Surprise Divorce

The marriage lasted only five months. Louise and I felt guilty as we hid our smiles while everyone else frowned on the ending of the marriage. This was the first divorce in the Moore family so they were shocked and looked at it as an embarrassment, and a sin of adultery. They were Associate Reformed Presbyterians where the word divorce was not in their vocabulary. But Louise and I knew the word divorce and we knew that there was survival afterwards and so we smiled. ☺We had our F.H. back.

Well, maybe not fully because he started seeing a little flip of a girl by the name of Bonita Bohanan. Why did I object? ☹ Could it be that I was

jealous? No, I thought, I was thinking of him as only a friend more like a brother or in this case an Uncle? Well maybe-----

Before F.H. and Lillian parted, the authorities had found out that F.H. had lied about his age so he was discharged from the National Guard, which was a disappointment to him because that meant that he didn't get his trip to Alaska. He was sure that Lillian's dad Knox had reported him. Needless to say F.H. resented that.

Note: April 2006----F.H. has always said he did not sign the divorce papers and we have wondered about that. Recently I looked at the papers for the first time and saw that it was not a divorce but an annulment. Because Lillian was only sixteen, her dad could legally have the marriage annulled. So neither F.H. nor Lillian needed to sign the papers.

ARP Rules

If Louise and I found the rules of do's and don'ts strict at the little church at Center Ridge, we found it even more so at the ARP church. Besides the no drinking, no smoking and no dancing we realized that were many other restrictions. No singing of hymns in church (only psalms) no reading the Sunday newspaper (read only the Bible) no doing your homework on Sunday and the list went on. Needless to say, F.H. found a way to slip around and break many of those rules.

Geneva Marries E.S.

Way back in 1935 while Geneva lived with Eva Lee & Henry, Geneva had met E.S. As she and I were washing some clothes in the Scroggin's back yard she told me how they had gone to Paris Arkansas to see Henry's nephew E.S. and niece Lucille. She told me about good looking E.S. and how she would like some day to marry him and have a little boy that she would name Eddie Dwayne. That day came January 19, 1941---she and E.S. were married. After graduating from high school they had gone their separate ways but had found the path back to each other.

Maxine Joins Us

The first of June 1941 Maxine came to live with us and we now felt that we had made it out of the “bondage” that we had walked into seven years ago. We were a family again.

Louise and I were sleeping in the same room and in the same bed. We were the Maxwell sisters---no questions asked. Maxine was eleven years old and only a few months older than I was when I had left her screaming for me that day in 1934. In later years I realized that Maxine was hurt the most by what happened to us and was angry with Mom for putting us through such turmoil. She remembered none of the good days when we were a family, only the trauma of being pulled apart and then the fear of being kidnapped by the monster mom that Maybell had warned her about. Maxine was a joy to Mother Moore, as they seemed to develop a bond that would last throughout the years.



Pearl Harbor

We had gone to Pottsville for dinner at Mother Moore’s on December 7, 1941 when news came that Japan had bombed Pearl Harbor. We were now at war. We all were devastated by the news, that is, except for F.H. and maybe Robert Oates. They came in the house bubbling with excitement. F.H. was now eighteen years old and could legally sign up and was eager to go but was persuaded to wait until he finished high school. I might add that since his dad was in very poor health and could no longer work the farm it became necessary to prepare to move from the farm. The Moore’s worked up a swap with the pharmacist Mr. Henry, who lived in the house that you would remember as Grandmother’s house. He moved into the house on the farm. The two moves were made near the end of the year.

Old Pictures

I now have some real pictures and have bought a scanner so I can finish the story with that



added nice feature. I am thinking that the snow pictures were taken with Margaret's camera and then later pictures were taken with E.S.'s camera. I do know that at that time very few people owned a camera

Rabbit Tracks

That was the year of the big snow when the schools had to be dismissed for several days. With this good fortune we three girls (Louise, Maxine and I) caught a bus and went to Pottsville for two days. We had fun playing in the snow with F.H., Margaret and Margaret's friend Lorene. We had never been rabbit hunting so F.H. took Louise, Margaret and me hunting. After showing us how to shoot a gun, we went tracking through the snow looking for rabbit tracks. It did not take long to find the tracks and a little rabbit hopping ahead of us. I raised the shotgun, aimed at the rabbit and fired-----which ended the rabbit hunt. Either F.H. didn't tell me or I didn't listen when he told me that guns can kick a wallop! I ended up with a busted mouth that bled profusely. I said, "Oh, I had the gun turned around the wrong way" ☺ Needless to say the rabbit got away unharmed. We went to the house and patched up my busted mouth.

News from the War

It was good to have that time of fun to take our minds off of the war which had all of us troubled as news spread fast of just how destructive the attack on Pearl Harbor had been. The news was that it had almost wiped out our navy and that many people were killed. News traveled incredibly fast considering that we depended on the newspaper and the radio for news and very few people had a radio. One good source was the movie theater where a long newsreel was shown before the movie

Victory Gardens and Rations

The remainder of the school year was spent training the students for the war that was upon us. We girls who were in Home Economics knitted sweaters for soldiers. Mine was so big that I am sure three soldiers could have fit into it. Hettie being a public health nurse came to the school and taught us how to wrap and sterilize bandages. We were instructed in ways

to cope with shortage of things that we had been accustomed to being plentiful. Many items would be rationed, such as coffee, sugar, meat, gasoline, tires, and shoes. We would soon be issued rationed stamps on those items. Items made of any kind of metal were almost nonexistent, bobby pins being one of those items. At that time we girls used bobby pins to curl our hair so when all the bobby pins we owned broke we learned to use tooth picks.

We grew what was known as Victory Gardens, which was not new to Louise and me since we already grew a garden, but maybe it made it a little easier to work since it was now a war effort. Gasoline and tires were so rationed that we could use our cars very little so we walked, rode a bus or train. Busses and trains soon became so crowded that it was not unusual to stand in the isles through the whole journey. The coffee ration did not affect Louise, Maxine and me because we did not drink coffee but I remember Mother Moore drying the coffee grounds and using them a second time.

Coffee Memories

We girls had drank coffee as little girls but after we were placed in the different homes we were not allowed to drink it, the reason being that if children drank coffee it would turn them black. Mom had served us coffee each morning with the brown crust of a biscuit floating on top. I remember how good it was and how hard it was to give up that bit of goodness.

Link to the Future

April 26, 1942 our first baby came. Eddie Dwayne was born premature so had to stay in the hospital for a little over a month. We were delighted when the time came for us to see him---he was adorable and we loved him dearly. It was a good feeling to think that even though our family had been so broken and different we now joined the chain that linked us to the future when we would have families like normal people. Even we, those poor little girls, could have normal families where there would be no



stares, no pity and no questions. We felt that we could close the door on the past and all of its shame.

Downhearted

I think it was early one morning in March that I was running an errand before time to go to school when I saw F.H. and Tommy Dunn over on the highway hitchhiking a ride. They were on their way to Sommerset Kentucky to enroll in a radio school. They were excited that the high school principal (Mr. Russell) had heard about this school and had offered to sign their High School Diploma early and let them go. I said goodbye to them and then ran home to get Louise hoping that we could catch them before they caught a ride so she could also tell them bye, but they were gone before we got back to the highway. Either Mr. Russell did not know, or he failed to tell F.H. and Tommy that on their arrival they would have to pass the Civil Service examination before they could enroll in the school. F.H. passed the test but Tommy failed it so had to return home.

I was very downhearted at F.H.'s leaving. I knew that he would go from the Radio School directly into the Armed Service and the thought that I might never see him again was devastating. But a brighter day came when Louise and I both received letters from him. He told us about the school and how much he loved it and we were happy for him to find something that he really liked. When it was time to send graduation invitations, I sent him one and was delighted when he sent me a gold locket and chain. That was my first piece of real jewelry and I loved it.

Class of 42

My class of 1942 graduated with an air of bittersweet knowing that there would be some who would go to war and not come back. As I looked at all of those faces I wondered who and how many would be a casualty of this thing called World War II. Needless to say there were casualties – Roberta and Mary Lee lost their husbands, Jack Matthews was killed and Joe Hurley's brother was killed.

Church Camp

Ferncliff is a beautiful Church Camp west of Little Rock on a small lake bedded in the middle of four mountain peaks called Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Soon after school was out teenagers from the Presbyterian Church in Morrilton went for a week of fun and fellowship. I think you could best describe it as one of those life time events that is suppose to be fun, one of those once in a life time events that you reluctantly take part in. One of those times that you feel out of place with a camp full of strangers some probably feeling just like you do.

I loved the big gatherings in the central meeting place under an arbor with the singing and the devotion but I dreaded the cabin bedtime devotions with prayer sentences expected from each one of us. I truly believe in prayer but I was not then (am not now and never will be) good at praying aloud. It is the looking back and the lasting inner feelings of the church camp that has meant much to me through the years. So it is that I have some really good memories from that camp. Louise and I had gone the year before (1941) and 1942 was the year for Louise and Margaret to go. It was my privilege to drive them over there using some of the scarce gasoline.

Wedding Plans

I returned from Ferncliff, walked into the house and there was F.H. I was so surprised and happy to see him (and I suppose he me) that without thinking we fell into each other's arms for a long embrace. We had a few real dates the three days he was there. We went back to Ferncliff using F.H.'s truck to pickup Margaret so she and F.H. could have a little time together.

We walked up on the hill by house and talked about the war and what lay ahead for us. We valued each moment together and as he left the 12th of June we knew that we wanted to spend the little time that we might have with each other. Later that summer we set the date for September 12th.

That summer was a high point in my life. I was so much in love and letters from F.H. came every day. There was a flurry of wedding plans with

the minister's wife helping with the plans. She loaned me her wedding dress and she made my veil to her specification. She wanted my hair to show so she made it so that it went around my head and fastened under my hair. This was the same hair that I had struggled with years ago to no avail I had now reached my goal of being proud of my hair. My high school Friends gave me a shower of many gifts some of which I still have. I felt like my fantasy dreams were really coming true.



We did take time off from the wedding plans to entertain three soldiers who were stationed at Camp Robinson in Little Rock. People in the area had been asked to do that and we had made those plans some time ago. Louise, Margaret and I invited them for a Saturday and Sunday. We went to Petit Jean Mt. For a picnic

and a swim I think we all enjoyed it except maybe Margaret. While looking through pictures, I found this picture made of the three soldiers with us while visiting Geneva & E.S. in Little Rock. Louise and I have their autographs in our High School Annual. It is just another memento of World War II and I have often wondered if they made it through the war.

Name Changes

Plans had been made to officially change Louise, Maxine and my name to Maxwell. We realized that would present a problem for me. Since I was now engaged to Hettie's brother, I would have been marrying my uncle.☺ So it was that Hettie adopted Louise and Maxine. It was not until later years (I think at our family reunion in 1981) that in talking we decided to change Louise and Maxine back to Corkill. We did not know how complicated that might be but when Louise went to see about it she found that the adoption papers were never registered so that was easily taken care of. The name Maxwell had helped us to hide from our past but it was good to have our name back. We are now very proud of that name and I later would give the name to our second son (Bruce Corkill Moore)

Our Wedding



The wedding was a family affair with the exception of Maxine's friend Ella Ann Armond, she and Maxine were the flower girls. Margaret and Louise were the brides maids, Geneva sang, Robert Oates was best man and Hettie gave me away. The church was filled with well wishers among them Uncle Emmett, Dad, and Aunt Betty. It was a thrill to get a call from Merchia apologizing for not being able to attend. At that time long distance telephone calls were a rare thing and cause for excitement. This might have been my first long distance call.

Our wedding was the last one to be performed in that church as it was soon torn down and a new one built in its place. Our honeymoon was a trip to Petit Jean Mountain for one night spent in Mather Lodge. F.H. had only a short leave so we left the next day September 13th for Lexington Kentucky.

Lexington

The trip to Lexington was my first train ride and probably F.H.'s since he had done his traveling either by hitchhiking or by Greyhound bus. We took the Pullman, which had the luxury of closed windows and air-conditioning, but we got none of the benefits from that luxury because we didn't know how to turn on the air. We were afraid to push any buttons or pull any cords for fear of wrecking the train so we suffered through the heat ☹



The time in Lexington was a happy time. We settled in a little apartment to be there until F.H. would finish the school sometime within the next six months. We were in a duplex with Billy Warren and Mary

Jones from Pottsville. On a few occasions we baby sat with their little son while they went to a movie. And, we went to the movie many times walking the distance of about a mile and a half loving every step of the way. We laughed as we dodged the bird droppings as we walked under the trees filled with roosting birds. I loved the array of beauty of the trees dressed in their fall color and the smell of the coal burning stoves as the cold air moved in. But that would last only two months before F.H. got his draft notice calling him to active duty.

6th Army Signal Corp

F.H. was told at the school that the notice from the draft board was a mistake but it would be hard to correct so their advice was to report to the draft board. Later F.H. realized that it was probably not a mistake but rather it was that the 6th Army needed a radioman and they picked him because he had the highest grade in the class. They were preparing to move to the Pacific Theater of war and needed to get their communication section together. So it was that he was assigned to the 6th Army Signal Corp.

Our first Argument☹

As we prepared to leave Lexington we had our first argument. It was over the utility deposit slips. F.H. said he gave them to me for safekeeping but I knew he didn't and so we argued. As a result we had to leave without the money refund that we did surely need. When we got to Morrilton F.H. found them in his wallet.☺

War Becoming a Reality

We had only a few days to go back to Arkansas and settle me in at home before F.H. reported for duty. Realizing that we knew not what the days ahead might bring, we took time to go to Conway and have our picture made together (the one on the piano). By now I was beginning to suspect that I was pregnant and this war was becoming a reality. This was the last of November and it would be the first of April before the 6th Army would be ready to go into action. We were able to see each other a few times during

that time with F.H. coming home on short leaves. We lived for letters each day.

Journey to Joplin

It was the first of February when the 6th Army was confined to camp in Joplin Missouri to make last preparations for going over seas. Thinking this would probably be the last time that we saw each other, I went to Joplin to spend two nights with F.H. This could have ended in disaster. I had spent the night with E.S. and Geneva in Little Rock and went by train from there. It was 2:00 in the morning when E.S. and I left their house to walk to the train station about one mile away. It was very dark when we crossed the street and I stepped up on what I thought was a side walk but it was a curb separating the street we were on from the one that went down the hill. So I fell about five feet to that street below. I walked on to the train station and caught the train to Joplin.

As travel was at that time, there were never enough seats for all of the passengers so there were always many who had to stand in the isles until a seat was emptied. I stood that night for some of the trip adding to the risk I was taking. I suppose my guardian angel was looking out for me and the baby I was carrying because I suffered only bruises over most of my body that healed in time. F.H. and I spent the two nights together feeling sure that this would be the last time we would see each other for the duration (this was an expression used at that time meaning, until the end of the war.)



V-Mail

F.H. did manage to come home one more time for a very short time. I met him in Pottsville and we said our final good-byes. This was a hard time for the family because we knew that this time would be the last time that he would be able to leave camp. So began a long time of waiting until

we could hear from him. We wrote letters every day but they could not be delivered until he had reached his destination .All letters were sent to a central location and were censored, photo copied and sent from there- this was called V-Mail.

Time of Waiting

The time of waiting was spent getting ready for the babies. Hettie was due in March and I was due in June. Since there were few baby clothes on the market, Hettie and I spent much time making baby clothes. And of course there was gardening to be done. Everyone was encouraged to grow a garden and preserve the vegetables. We listened to all war news, some discouraging and some encouraging. We would learn later that much of the bad news was kept from us. We loved to go to the movies to see the newsreel, which showed us, winning the war on all fronts.

Nina Margaret & Charles Fred

To Hettie's delight her little girl, Nina Margaret, was born March 3rd and as we had planned, when Margaret was six weeks old Hettie went back to work and with the help of Louise and Maxine I took over the care of Margaret. I know this was hard on 13 year old Maxine because she was called on to wash many diapers. At that time we did not have the luxury of running water. We drew the water from the well, took it inside, heated it on the stove and washed the clothes on a rub-board and hung them out to dry.



Surreal Feelings

Some time in May 1943 Geneva. Louise and I visited Hanaford (Our first school. It was a surreal feeling as we took a look into our past of

feelings of being outcasts and different- feelings that would follow us for years to come.).

June came and with it our baby boy Charles Fred. I felt the joy of becoming a mom. I think of my life as mountain top and valley experiences. This was a Mountain top experience as would it be each time another little baby boy was presented to me.



She Shook Him Awake

This of course was during the war and many of the doctors were in the armed services leaving a skeleton crew at home. But actually at that time, compared to today, there were very few doctors either in peace time or war time. Nurses were also few, so at that time there was only one nurse on duty at night to take care of the two floors of the hospital. I awoke in the middle of the night with a pain and soon realized that this was the time that I had known would come.

Hettie went with me to the hospital and kept watch over me trying at times to get the nurse to call the doctor but the nurse was there to protect the doctor sometimes at the expense of the patient. When the nurse finally realized that it was time to call the doctor, she couldn't get him on the phone so she began to anesthetize me in order to slow me down. At that time Hettie panicked and went to the doctor's house to get him. When she got no answer to a knock on his door she went into his house and into his bedroom and shook him awake. By this time I was out from the anesthetic.



Ordered Out of the Room

I know this was hard on Hettie. She as a nurse and my sister-in-law and felt responsible for seeing that this delivery was done without the risk she could see were being made. When Charles was born the cord was wrapped tightly around his neck, his color was blue and he was groggy

from the anesthetic. Hettie was so upset when she saw him that she said, “The baby is dead” The doctor, then, ordered her out of the room. I was out and unaware of all except I did hear Hettie say, “the baby is dead” Those words kept repeating in my head until I woke up.

Well, of course she had a reason to be frightened because she knew that it is dangerous to anesthetize a mother to the point that she is asleep as Nurse Scarborough had done to me. I was so very thankful to awake and find that those words that I heard were not true and that I had a strong healthy baby boy even though he did look like he had been through a battle, and of course he had been. He had probably been battling to survive since the night that I fell on my journey to Joplin.

V-Mail to New Guinea

Margaret Moore stayed with us to help with the much work that needed to be done with the two babies. She wrote F.H. a V-mail letter announcing the arrival of his little son. It had been two months since we had last heard from him while he traveled by boat to we knew not where. Later we would learn that he arrived at Dutch Hollandia, New Guinea June 17th, which was June 18th in Morrilton Arkansas. Charles was born in the early morning of June 18^t

Last Time I Saw Mom

It was sometime that summer that I saw Mom and Nida for the last time. She was visiting someone within two blocks of where we lived. We answered a knock at the door to find Nida standing there. She was two years old when we last saw her so of course she had to introduce herself to us. She was now eleven years old, the same age that I was when our family was scattered. She was a beautiful little girl and seemed much younger than I felt that dreadful day nine years ago.



Later that afternoon when Mama came by to pick up Nida she tried to persuade Maxine to go with her. She offered many attractive things but Maxine was not persuaded and of course we sisters were standing by to discourage Maxine had she had a thought of going with Mom.

Anchor in a Storm

I don't remember just what month that summer that Roberta came to our door crying and telling us that her mama Ella Harwood was in the hospital and had had surgery. Roberta stayed with us the few days before Ella died leaving Roberta overcome with grief and I think she had a hard time recovering from it. I too was saddened by her death; she had been an anchor in a storm for me at a time when I was looking for a hand to hold on to. She was only fifty-four years old when she died.

Louise Enters College

Louise having graduated from high school in May entered St. Teachers in Conway Arkansas that fall. I missed her and so did Charles Fred. She will still say that she felt that Charles Fred belonged to me and to her. She took care of him so much of the time. Maxine entered the eighth grade and I settled down to taking care of the two babies and writing F.H. while the war raged on.

Reflections

This covers the first twenty years of my life and as I write these words I realize that there was much good even in what seemed to be dark days of my life. I feel like the trauma of going through those days when we were scattered as a family made me a stronger person and certainly there were times that were very dear to my heart. I appreciate the simplicity of living especially while I was at the Hardwood's. I appreciate knowing many of the people during the five and half years that I spent at that little community called Pleasant Hill. The work in the fields was hard work but at the same time it was good for me. Hard work is good for one's soul. Perhaps the four years that I spent with very little schooling caused me to want to push to learn new things to try to keep abreast of change. Or

perhaps “What I don’t know doesn’t hurt me”. ☺ Maybe my childhood was shortened and scarred by the events but I do appreciate the childhood that I did have.

Of course we were wrong in thinking that we could close the door on those years. Our past whatever it might be is just as much a part of us as is the present and the future. And I now know that our children have a right to know about our past and why there has been so much secrecy surrounding our early years.

In the struggle to understand these early years, I would love to know more about our own family. We know so little about the Corkills and the Wyatts and I fear in our struggles to hide from our past we have lost the opportunity to better understand the reasons why.

I am glad that I have written this down so that in reality we sisters can see that there is nothing to be ashamed of, to hide from or to protect our children from. But try as we may we still struggle with those thoughts of being different and inferior. As we grow older and our life is winding down, it seems that those thoughts keep creeping back into our thoughts and so we struggle.

Osa Ann Corkill Moore -----1997

Revised -----2003, 2006

Future Revisions: stay tuned; my sons have convinced me
that his book will be an ongoing project

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INTRODUCING THE CHARACTERS

FAMILY

Charles Amos Corkill & Alta Viola Wyatt Corkill & children

Geneva Hazel

Osa Ann (me)

Ada Louise

Emmet Leonard (EL)

Mary Maxine

Vinida Faye (Nida)

Charles Merchia -----Dad's son by his first wife

Mae-----Merchia's wife

Uncle Leonard-----Dad's brother

Aunt Betty-----Leonard's wife

Elizabeth-----Their daughter

Uncle Emmett-----Dad's brother

Aunt Clara-----Emmet's wife

Raymond-----Their son

Grandma Wyatt Batson & children

Wyatt's

Alta Viola Wyatt Corkill ----Mom. She later married Raymond Sutton

Aunt Beatrice Wyatt McCoy

Uncle Riley McCoy----- Aunt Beatrice's husband

Uncle Edward Wyatt

Batson's

Golda Batson Williams

Waller Williams-----Golda's husband

Jasper Batson

Jenny Lee Batson Mitchell

Jeff Davis Batson

Lillian Batson

Non Family

Mr. & Mrs Sisson-----Our Yellow House Landlord

Anse & Dell-----I lived with them for a few months

Carl JRD-----Their son

Helen-----Their daughter

Scroggin Family

Henry Scroggin-----The Dad

Eva Lee Harwood Scroggin----- -The Mom

Their seven sons:

Afton

Wilburn

Ray

Wendell

Doyle

Carol

Benny

Harwood family

Jeff Harwood-----The dad

Ella-----The mom

Eva Lee Scroggin-----Daughter

Ethel Stobough-----Daughter

Margie -----Ethel's daughter

Freedie-----Son

Garret-----Son

Edith-----Garret's wife

Johnny Sue-----Their little daughter who died at age of two years

Opal -----Daughter

Clara Harwood Powell---Daughter

Willie Powell----- - Clara's husband

Roberta----- Daughter

Loita----- -Daughter

Forrest Garrett-----Loita's husband

Maybell & Riley-----Where Maxine lived for seven years

Grover -----Their son

Moore family

Fred-----The dad

Nina Cousar Moore-----The mom

Hettie Moore Maxwell---The daughter where Louise, Maxine and I lived

Mark-----Hettie's husband

Mrs. Morton-----Worked for Hettie
 Chalmers-----Son
 F.H. -----Son
 Lillian Oates-----F.H.'s first wife
 Margaret-----Daughter

Hettie Cousar Oates-----Nina's sister
 Ralph Oates-----Hettie's husband
 Mary Amanda-----Their daughter
 Robert-----Their Son

E.S. Scroggin-----Geneva's husband
 Dwayne-----Their son

Mrs. Scarborgh-----Our neighbor while at Hettie's

COPIED FROM MAMA'S BIBLE

Children of Jennie Melissa Wyatt

Dasey Mae Wyatt-----Sept.5, 1900-----Nov. 1902
 Alta Viola Wyatt----- Dec. 21, 1902---- 1979
 Dora Beatrice Wyatt----- Feb. 16, 1906---- 1967
 William Edward Wyatt----- Feb. 16, 1908

Children of Jennie Melissa Wyatt Batson

Golda Batson----- May 22, 1914
 William Jasper Batson-----Sept. 23. 1916
 Jennie Lee Batson-----Feb. 22, 1919
 Jeff Davis Batson -----Aug. 15, 1922
 Lillian Corine Batson-----June 11, 1926

Children of Golda Batson and Weller Williams

Waller Williams Jr.----- June 19, 1932

Alta Wyatt and Charles Albert Corkill married Nov. 11, 1920

Children of Alta and Charles Corkill

Geneva Hazel-----Aug. 5, 1921

Osa Ann-----Feb. 9, 1923

Ada Louise-----July 30, 1924

Emmett Leonard (EL)-----July 13, 1926-----Dec. 2, 1931

Mary Maxine-----March 28, 1930

Vinida Faye-----March 2, 1932

Charles Albert Corkill (Dad) was born May 5, 1883-----Died Oct. 1946

Our grandfather was T.R. Corkill

Note: Since Geneva is the oldest I gave her Mom's Bible.

EMMETT LEONARD (E.L.)



I was overjoyed when I found that Geneva had this picture of our little brother Emmett Leonard (E.L.) This picture has, over the years, been permanently pasted in my memory as I remembered little EL and the tragedy of his short life. I remember Momma pushing him in this wicker-buggy as we girls walked along beside them. I remember the pleasant smell of the wicker, the slight squeak of the wheels and slight groan of the wicker as it moved along the rough road. We are told that time heals everything but time does not wipe away some tears that seem to find a permanent spot in our hearts. As I said in my story; I feel pangs of guilt that I did not do more for E.L to make his life more meaningful for him. He seemed to ask for so little as he sat on the bed playing with a little tin cup that he loved. I was eight years old when he died at the age of five.

The house in the background is where Aunt Sally lived. The fence is the fence where we girls stood and waited for Aunt Sally to come and comfort us when Mom was gone for a few hours. She always assured us that our mom would come back. We could have used her comfort when Mom left for the long stay but she had died before that time.

Note: Thanks to Charlie for touching up the picture. It was badly faded with time. He spoke of it as a haunting picture. That is certainly true as I look at it I am haunted by the memory of that sweet little boy of so long ago.

FOOTNOTES

After having finished my story I realized that I have used some expressions from past years that are family jokes which only my immediate family would know and so might need some explanation to some who might read this. So let me attempt to explain those expressions.

Page 5

The Helicopter Man is a Bruce story dating back to when he was seven or eight year old. His playmate had a bad habit of taking things that did not belong to him including some of Bruce's things. We came home one day after having been gone overnight to find all of Bruce's little treasures gone (this was back in the days when we never locked doors). Of course we were upset over Bruce's loss but very soon Bruce's playmate came to the rescue by telling Bruce where his treasures were. He had seen a man come down in a helicopter, go into our house, gather up Bruce's things and bury them in our backyard. We looked in the back yard and sure enough there was a freshly dug hole with Bruce's treasures buried in it. We were glad that Bruce got his things back but it was a little hard to believe his playmate's story. ☺

Page 24

Go ahead and scream in the middle of her high note is a Tyler story. A few years ago I went with Bruce & family and Robert & family to hear the Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra perform Handel's Messiah. Since our seats were near the back and could not see very well, during the intermission Robert and Tyler moved up to a front row seat. On our way home Tyler said, "Dad, I was afraid that I would jump up and scream while the lady was singing those high notes". Robert laughed because he too had had that same fear. I might add that had I have been on the front row, I too would have had that same fear.

EPILOGUE

One reader said of the first edition of **Early Years**, “It is a story of four little girls trying to survive’. A story of four little girls looking for a home”



Osa----Geneva----Louise---Maxine--1952

The four little girls did survive and they did find homes. Homes with



husbands and children. Homes which maybe they could appreciate more for having gone through those days of searching and longing for a home.

Geneva



Geneva & E.S. had another son and a daughter. Eddie Dwayne was two years old when David Fred was born and in 1952 D'anne

was born.

In 1944 they moved to California close to where Mom, Nida and Raymond lived. Geneva was excited about being close to Mom again and looked forward to getting reacquainted with her and Nida. But she could never feel the mother – daughter relationship that she had hoped for. Mom with Raymond and Nida had a habit of leaving town with no word of where they were going only to show up again many weeks or months later. Then one day they left and Geneva never saw them again. Geneva and E.S. moved back to N. Little Rock Arkansas in May 1986 where they are spending their retirement years.

Osa



The war ended in 1945 and F.H. came home, took advantage of the GI Bill and studied to become an Electrical Engineer. Our lives were interrupted again when F.H. was called back into service during the Korean War.

We added three more sons to our family. Charles Fred was three and half years when Bruce Corkill was born. Five and a half years later Paul Lewis was born. Seventeen months later Robert Doak was born.

For a few years we lived in Pine Bluff Arkansas where this picture was made, but in 1956 F.H's job took us to Plaquemine, Louisiana where F.H. worked for Dow Chemical Co. until he retired.

While living in Pine Bluff we were happy to get reacquainted with Mercia & Mae and their family (Charles, Connie, Ann and Patsy).). We were a family again as we along with my sisters and their families gathered at either Merchia & May's house or at our house for a meal and a visit. I am sad to say Merchia died in June 1957. He was only forty-nine years old.

Louise



After Louise finished college she taught school for awhile. She married her college sweetheart, Weldon Davis. They had three sons Benny Weldon, James Lynn

and Thomas Carl.

Weldon's job as State Claims Manager for Farm Bureau would keep them in Arkansas through their working years. Louise gave up her job as teacher and became full time Mom.

Maxine

Maxine married Bunn Falls who was one of F.H.'s childhood friends. He had grown up in Pottsville attending the same school and church as F.H. had attended.

They had one daughter Bunita Kathryn, and three sons, Thomas Max, Michael William and John Corkill.



Their jobs as teacher and school principal would take them to schools in Arkansas, Oklahoma and Colorado. After their teaching days were over they moved back to North Little Rock Arkansas where they are spending their retirement days.



Dad

In May 1946 Dad had a heart attack and could no longer live by himself. F.H. and I made room for him in our small apartment in Russellville Arkansas where F.H. was attending Arkansas Tech. He seemed old beyond his years of sixty-three when he died in October 1946.

The funeral was held at the funeral home in Morrilton Arkansas and he was buried beside his mom & dad, his twin brother, Raymond, and little E.L. It was pleasing to meet some of his old friends who had kept up with him through the troubled years. The tears I shed was not so much for the loss of him but for the sad life that he had led through the years that we had known him as our dad. I now, would love to have known about his early years of success and happiness. I know, from the things that Aunt Betty told me that, Once upon a time, he did have a good life.

Surprise Encounters!

Jasper

After Louise graduated from St. Teachers College she taught third grade at Scott, Arkansas. During the school year the school in England, Arkansas burned down and the students were brought over to Scott to finish the school year. As Louise looked at the names of the new students that were placed with her she noticed a boy and girl with the last name Batson. She looked at the parent's name and realized that they were Jasper's children. She thought it best not to tell them. That was another lifetime; a lifetime to move on from, or maybe to run from.

Golda

In later years as Louise stood in a school function line for one of her boys she recognized Golda who was standing in the same line. Golda recognized her also and was happy to see her. After that we saw Golda a few times and as we talked, it was obvious that she felt a sting of guilt about not helping us. I suppose it was then that we realized that that was the reason why we never heard from her during those years. Little did she know that we, as little girls, were wise enough to know that we could not expect help from her. We knew she had a family plus her two sisters and brother who were our ages and left without a mom or dad. But at the same time, it would have been a comfort to us to have had a message from her or any of the other relatives.

After their chance meeting, we saw Golda a few times and she talked about a trunk that she planned to go through thinking that she might find some pictures of us when we were little girls. She told us that her son Waller Jr. (who we knew as a baby) had died and she talked lovingly of her son **John**

whom we had not met. She told us that both Jasper and Jeff had died and that Lillian lived close by.

John.

While Geneva worked in fine jewelry at Penny's she made friends with Lou, a co- worker. Lou talked about her husband John and when John became ill Geneva sympathized with Lou. Then the day came when Geneva was saddened to learn that John had died. When Geneva looked at John's obituary she was shocked to find that John was Golda's son. He was our cousin John Williams.

Lillian

It was through Golda that Louise met Lillian for a short visit and she hoped that maybe they could see each other again but soon after the meeting Lillian died mysteriously

Jenny Lee

Soon after John died, Golda died with cancer of the brain. Geneva and Louise went to Golda's funeral and were happy to see Jenny Lee and after that they were invited to a shower for one of Jenny Lee's granddaughter's. We had planned to make an effort to spend some time with Jenny Lee but before we could do that she was killed in a car accident. And so, again, all ties with Mom's side of the family are lost.

We visit our past

June 2004 Charlie took F.H. and me on trip to Arkansas and other places. While in Arkansas we, with Geneva and Louise, drove to Center Ridge and on down the road to the little community where we lived for the five to seven years. It was a surreal feeling to see those places, which are now open fields or overgrowth, and realize where we had once been. I remembered my daydreams of that long ago and realized that they did come true. I did find my Camelot and I did gain the respect that I had longed for. We did rise above *those poor little girls who were given away*.

Respect

Through the years after we had left that area, we had gone back for visits and were treated with much respect, adoration and in one case an apology. The apology was in the form of two letters from Ray with words of regrets for the way that I was treated by his mom, dad and the family.

I was touched when I was told that Afton, in his dying days asked for me. I learned of that when Afton's wife called a relative and asked the question, "who is Osa"? Afton had had brain tumor surgery and was left with brain damage. During his last days and in his confusion, he kept asking for Osa. I had not seen or heard from Afton since 1943 when he had surprised me by coming to see me while I was living in Morrilton.

Pump Organ



As we traveled those roads, which are now gravel, instead of the dirt roads that we remembered, we looked for the houses where we had lived but, except for the remnants of the house where I lived for a short while with Anse and Dell, they were all gone.

The little room that you see added on to the house is the room where I found the old pump organ. The room with the trunk full of organdy moth scented fabric ☹

The Road



As we drove down the road we remembered the many times that we walked that road between The Scroggin and the Harwood houses. It was that road that Louise and I walked down when I packed my few belongings and left Dell and Anse to go and live with the Harwood's. It was the road that I

reluctantly walked with Eva Lee as I went to live with her and Henry for the next four years. I suppose now it seems to be The Road to Nowhere.

Many of the people along that road have moved away and many have died. Henry died many years ago. Eva Lee lived to see her 100th birthday. Of the seven boys, only Doyle and Carol are still living

. OLD PHOTOGRAPHS



this is the only picture that we have of us as young girls. It is a picture made by Henry Scroggin with an old type camera that he seldom used. The camera was a big awkward box that had to be set up on a wooden tripod. One, which the glass plates were inserted in the camera and then the photographer, got under a black cloth to take the picture. He then developed the picture in his dark room.

It was made when Geneva was visiting with us during the summer either 1936 or 1937. We girls were fifteen, thirteen, twelve and six. Or sixteen, fourteen, thirteen and seven

I am sure the hat was to hide my burned hair from that first perm. 😊



October 12, 2005

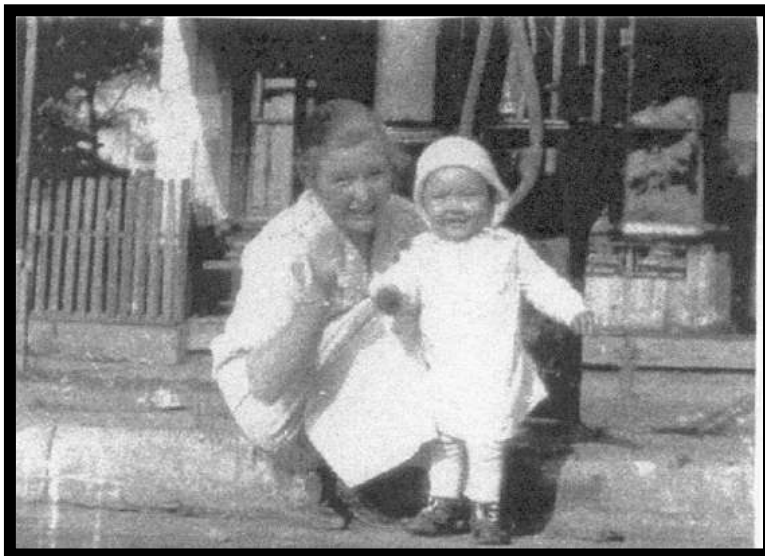
Today I had a letter from Geneva telling me that she has found two more pictures of the long ago. One of Maxine when she was about six months old and one of Nida when she was about one year to eighteen months old. I am happy to include them in this copy of Early Years.



These pictures were made at a do it yourself picture making machine at the carnival in Missouri 1939. We are on our way to becoming glamour girls. This was my permanent # 2. You be the judge?



Mom and Geneva



This is a picture of Mom and Geneva made in 1922. Recently Geneva and Louise discovered it in a box of things that Hettie had given Louise. Because of the age and damage of the negative, it was not easy to find someone who was willing to try to develop it, but thankfully they

did find someone who was willing to take the challenge. The developer was so amazed at the results that he wouldn't charge for his work.

Geneva was about one year old, which means that Mom was pregnant with me (Osa) at that time. We are supposing that the picture was made in front of Dad's store in Morrilton Arkansas. We have so few pictures from that time that we consider this one a treasure.

Mom, Raymond and Nida

This is a copy of a picture that Geneva gave me. It is of Mom, her husband Raymond Sutton and our sister Nida. It was made in Oakland California in 1948 or 1949. This was while Geneva and E.S. lived in Oakland.



Confirmation of Mom's Death

Recently I found a web page that listed deaths of all recipients of Social Security and I found Mom listed as having died in 1979. She was 77 years old at the time of her death. At this revelation my sisters and I had the strange feeling like maybe we had just gone to Mom's funeral. We felt saddened by it because maybe deep within us we did want to find a way to touch her again, to feel the mom that we once knew. Maybe we wanted to talk with her and find her feelings about us. Maybe we wanted to hear her say that she missed us and loved us. Maybe we wanted her to meet her grandchildren and feel the pride that we feel in our grandchildren. Maybe we were left with those longings that now could never be fulfilled. But we now have a closure and yes we do feel sadness for a life that might have been.

See you in the next book "Later Years" which tells the story of my next twenty years.

Osa Ann Corkill Moore

WORLD WAR II MEMBROBILIA

Radio School

At the Radio in Somerset, Kentucky, F.H. finished these courses:
Mechanic Learner, Junior Repairman Trainee and Frequency Modulation



F.H. got his draft notice early in November 1942 and reported to Camp Chaffee Missouri for boot training. He was then assigned to the 6th Army Headquarters Signal Corp.

Embarked April 12, 1943

F.H. sent me this card which was a code to let me know that he was on the boat and headed for the war zone. His message on the card was, "this is a lovely morning"
Love, F.H.



His return address was to be his address throughout the war:

Sgt. Fred H. Moore 20739916
832 Sig. Ser.co 8th Rad. Sta.
Sec
A.P.O. 3713
% Postmaster
San. Francisco, Calif.

May the 22 1943 I received this telegram to let me know that he





had landed. Which, although he couldn't say, was Australia

I would learn later that he landed in New Guinea June 17 which was June 18 in the states. Charles Fred was born June 18th.

On the back of this picture F.H. wrote
"Going down the cargo nets to the L.C.U. for our ride to the shore

Charles Fred Arrives

When Charles was born Margaret sent this V-mail letter to F.H. to let him know that Charles had arrived

Quote from a letter from F.H.

April 23, 1943 5:00 PM

We sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge on the M.S. Cape Flattery (a freighter loaded with explosives and some troops) We traveled unescorted to Glade Stone Straights (off the coast of Australia). There we were met by a destroyer that escorted us to Townsville Australia. This trip took 26 days. We stayed at Camp Armstrong Paddoc for three weeks. Then we loaded on a Liberty Ship and went to Milne Bay, New Guinea. We arrived there on the 17th of June and there is where our work began. Around Sept. 1st we went to Good Enough Island on a small ship where we set up our own radio station there.



After a short furlough in Sidney Australia, Feb. 24, 1944 F.H. talks about joining the 58th Signal Corps for the Hollandia Operation.

Note: Living in the jungles and the tropical damp climate was hard on the soldier's health and for that reason they tried to give them short furloughs.



Transmitter shacks and Power house

Quote from a letter from F.H.

We arrived at Hollandia on the morning of the 24th of April (1944) but did not go ashore until the 25th due to exploding ammunition on the beach. One of our dumps was set off by a Japanese bomb.



F.H. wrote, "Our tents lined up on the beach"

F.H.'s job was to install the radio communications and to keep them in running order for the 6th Army. They were set up in shacks a distance away from the main army camp. This was to protect them as best they could from the enemy. They slept on cots close to the radio to be ready for around the clock call..



Army on the move



F.H. is at the front

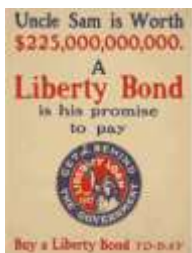
Good Morning!

Soon after F.H. arrived in New Guinea he was walking a narrow path through the jungles and ran face to face with one of the natives of the island. F.H. feared the worst thinking that this must be one of the cannibals that, as a little boy, he had heard and read about. And maybe he is out here in the jungles looking for his evening meal. While F.H. stood facing him and waiting for the ax to fall on his head, the man said, “Good Morning” The natives were friendly people and were awed at these American soldiers.



F. H. and I wrote to each other every day and waited for the day when the war would be over and he would be coming home. He would be coming home to a son who he had not met. Charles Fred would be two and half years old when he and his dad saw each other for the first time.

On the home front we did our part to help win the war. We learned to condition our lives to adjust to do without items that were no longer available. The shelves, which had just begun to fill again after the years of depression, were now empty. We



lived with our ration books and learned to spend the stamps wisely on items that were really needed. There were many rationed items such as: sugar, coffee, tea, meat, shoes, gasoline, tires and others. We were encouraged to eat soybeans to replace the shortage of meat. We ate them but I will have to say that we never found a recipe that had a good taste. It was much later that the soybean taste was extracted from the foods that contained soybeans. We bought war bonds and Stamps. There were war posters that summoned us to answer the call to duty and we willingly responded to that call.



Ration Stamps



Each member of the family was issued a



war ration book. This food stamp ration book was issued to Charles. I think the stamp below is a shoe stamp. By spending our



shoe stamps wisely we adults could manage to keep shoes on our feet but it was difficult to stay within the ration with the children's growing feet.

To solve that problem, when their toes reached the end of the shoe we cut the toes out to give their little feet room to grow.

After the war in Europe ended May 7th 1945 we were sure that the war in the Pacific would end with a victory and we hoped that would be soon. We were now hearing news of the Kamikaze pilots as they went on their suicide missions and we wondered how many more of our ships would be sunk and how many more of our soldiers would be killed before that was stopped. That day came August 6th 1945 when the Atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. The war was over and now it was time to bring the troops home. This would take many months.

At this time all mail to and from the troops stopped and we were told to watch the list of troops arriving at the different ports to find when our soldier would arrive. F.H. arrived at the Seattle port in November and he traveled by train to Ft. Smith Arkansas where I met him and we traveled by bus from Ft. Smith to Pottsville.

War Weary

Although F.H. had not been wounded the war had taken its toll on him. He had had dengue fever and his skin had turned yellow from the treatment for it. He had lost weight and was nervous from having been too long in the jungles. Maybe a good description is that he looked "War Weary" His clothes and everything that he brought home with him smelled of tropical mold.

War weary picture



This picture was in F.H.'s wallet when we said our last good bye. He carried many pictures of his little son Charles Fred and me throughout the war. Along with this one, many of the pictures had the look and the smell of having been in the tropics for too long. War Weary

In a short time F.H. was well on his way to recovery and ready to move on with his life. January 1945, he took advantage of the GI Bill and started pursuing a degree in Electrical Engineering. We rented a duplex in Russellville until he finished his studies at Arkansas Tech and from there we moved to Fayetteville so he could finish his education at the University of Arkansas.

F.H. graduated with honors in June 1949 and went to work for Arkansas Power & Light in Pine Bluff Arkansas. We were now ready to settle down with our two little boys and live the *American Dream*, but our lives would soon be disrupted again. But that is another story which you will find in the book, "Later Years"

Readers Comments on Early Years

“Mom, I finished your book this morning. I’m sure that I represent all you children, grandchildren, and future great grand children in saying – Thank you for this priceless treasure. I think it is also a seed for future stories from your children and grand children who have inherited your talent to writing autobiographical stories”.

“I think your style of writing is so powerful. Each paragraph is a story that stands by itself. They are all hauntingly beautiful by themselves and so delicately woven together into their larger story and picture. The tapestry of your early years after all these years is a work of art. You have a graceful prose and sense of timing that many people not connected with this tapestry would enjoy reading. Others will certainly read it but it is your family that is deeply thankful that you sprouted your writing wings in time to share your vivid memories. I am certain that these written stories are deeply appreciated by your sisters. It is a wonderful story of the determined survival of a family of four little girls and also the story of the survival of faith and humor. The transitions and hooks you made are masterful and your brevity is poetic. It reads like you have been honing your writing skills for many years. You are a natural!”

“Your words also provide an insight in the life of a most remarkable spirit. I am proud that in a small way that I am part of that story. You made my “early years” heaven by comparison, Osa Ann Venita (Veneshur) corkill, daughter of Alta Wyatt and Charles Albert Corkill you are my loving nourishing mother, my dear friend, and my artistic and spiritual inspiration. I love you more than I can say.”- Charlie Moore

*“MaMoore, I want you to know how much your book moved me. As I read my mind and my imagination would create each scene just as you described them. It was as though there was movie playing in my head and your words created each scene”. **Hannah Moore***

“MaMoore, I got your book on Friday and starting reading it on Saturday night, finished it early Sunday morning. I COULDN'T put it down. Please tell me that you are working on the “Middle Years”! I truly enjoyed it. I laughed out loud a number of times and cried a couple of times. I also love the drawings! I would find myself glancing ahead to try to figure out what was going to happen next. I am so glad you have written this story.”

Daley Connelly

“Mom, what an incredible story! It is filled with incredible stories of happy, funny and oh, yes sad stories. I cried when I read about E.L.'s death. Hey! I think you were the bad one in the bunch”.- **Robert Moore**

“Dad, I second all the adjectives you used in describing Osa's book. I'm on page 40 or so. I've had to fend off Jessica. Maybe we should have ordered two copies. Jessica woke up a little solemn this morning saying that the book had affected her dreams”- **Rhett Moore**

“Aunt Osa, I picked up your book from the post office, went home and started reading it and I couldn't put it down. It is an incredible story. I cried and I laughed. I love the drawings they add so much to the story. Thanks for writing it and thanks for sending me the book, I will treasure it always”.

Bunita Falls

“Your book is amazing - what a memory you have It is wonderful that you are saving all those wonderful stories of your family's past. Take care”.

Donna Moore

“Mom, I love your sweet little stories, they are all so tender and touching I am in awe of the struggle of you and your sisters to stay a

family. Your stories are heart warming. I am enjoying working on your book so much. As I said on the phone, its like being one of our road trips but I am with you as a child. Its a trip that makes me smile and laugh and sometimes cry. It is not only your story but also mine.. I am related you and to your sisters. I am related to your dad and I am related to your mom. I have enjoyed thinking about how it has all come to be. Its all pretty amazing". **Charlie Moore**

"Osa, I have been meaning to tell you that I finished your book and I really am pleased with it. You told our story so well. You and I could always see the funny side of our story and those feelings came through loud and strong in your writings. ☺ You are a good writer". - **Louise**

"Osa, I started reading your book last night and couldn't put it down. I stayed up into the wee hours of the morning reading. It is a well told story!" **Mark Hooker**

"Osa, I read your book and just love the way you have written our story. I love the drawings; they help to tell the story so well. Thanks for writing it for us"- **Maxine**

"Osa, this explains so many things that I have always wondered about Louise and all of you Corkill girls. It solves the mystery that I have known surrounded the lives of you four sisters. Thanks for writing the story". -**Weldon Davis**

"Osa, you did a beautiful job writing the story of our early life! There was not a boring spot in the entire book you managed to hold one's interest to the point of not being able to put it down! It was almost like living it again remembering the early times when we were a family with a loving mother and Dad, and the love we had for each other! I think it was that love we have that has carried us through our entire lives! Circumstances tore

our family apart and separated us physically but nothing could take away our love for each other! Thank you for writing the book and sharing it with your sisters and our families!" **Geneva**

"Mom, you are a good writer. You have a way of holding the reader's attention from one page to the next causing the reader to never put it down. Where did you learn to write? Thanks for writing both books."-

Bruce Moore

"Aunt Osa, reading your book brought tears, laughter and tremendous respect for all four of you and what you managed to tolerate at a time when you all were so young.

It explains "what Mother is all about" and why she "looks" at life the way she does. All of us "kids" grew up not knowing what it took to bring us into this world and why "family" is so important to all four of you.

My only memory of your Mother has always been a "sad" one for me because I remember her visiting us when we lived on 15th street in Oakland and how nervous and out of sorts Mother was while she awaited her arrival. I remember seeing this older woman at the door and sitting on our couch and then my running away and hiding in the house, I think. I know Mother cried before and after her visit but never knew why or understood why. I can still see her in my mind and even think I would recognize her today.

All four of you have become such an influence on my life and so much apart of my memory and memories of such happy times. Growing up with Charles and Bruce, Benny and Lynn, Max and Bunnita and seeing them every summer is a time that I will always cherish. There is more than just a "cousin" bond that exist, it is a love only reserved for brothers and sisters. I am sitting here "crying" as I type this. They are definitely tears of joy.

*You, F.H., Bunn and Maxine, Louise and Weldon are not "Aunts and Uncles" to me, you are what I am and have become and you continue to influence and make my life what it is. Thank you for sharing and caring and I love you deeply".—***David Scroggin**

May 23, 2006 In response to the disc (Revised copy of Early Years) that I sent to Paul for him to make any changes or corrections.

Mom.

Oh my goodness, this is SO exciting I've taken the disc to work where it actually seems I have more time these days and am loving it. Also read David's letter... very very sweet. You should be so proud, mom..."

Paul Moore

Mom,

I read some of the book and am enjoying reading it with Gracie. Aunt Osa surely has a vivid memory of when you girls were 8,9,10 etc. she described the situations as they came about as if it were just now happening. She has a good style of writing. We love the pictures and have looked at all of them

Lynn Davis