

Myrtie Alford Hunter
Jul 6 1904 - Dec 3 1996
AAFA# 0519

Myrtie Edith Alford Hunter
1904-1996
AAFA #519

Myrtie Hunter of Houston, AL, died on 3 December 1996. In the March and June 1992 issues of *AAFA ACTION*, we published "Memories of Myrtie (Alford) Hunter," transcribed from her handwritten drafts by Robin Alford Sterling, AAFA #320, Myrtie's great-nephew. Many members met Myrtie when she attended the Decatur, Alabama meeting.

From the write-up on Aunt Myrtie which was in the hand-out at her funeral:

Mrs. Myrtie Edith Alford Hunter

Mrs. Myrtie Edith Hunter was born in Winston county, Alabama on July 6, 1904. She witnessed and played a formative role in the life and history of her beloved county and state for almost all of its 20th Century. The President of her birth was Theodore Roosevelt. In 1923, her name was entered on the Methodist membership rolls of Houston Methodist church.

She was a committed member of the church and beloved congregation for 73 years. She attended regularly until illness prevented. After several Sundays away in convalescence from hip surgery she returned for worship



just one week prior to her graduation. She loved worship, bible study, and singing. During last August's Community singing at Houston Memorial UMC, she made her way to the front of the sanctuary, cane in hand, to lead the assembly in song. She has been a living witness to all who would question the value, need, and worth or worship.

In 1925, she began a 41 year teaching career in Winston County elementary schools. She taught at Pleasant Hill, Upshaw, Sardis, Moreland, Nesmith, Double Springs, Meck, Houston, and Addison. Her salary for the first year of teaching was to be \$90, but Alabama was too poor to pay on time. Finally, after the three month school year, she received a voucher for her salary which she cashed in for \$45. She claimed never to have had a bad student.

She met and married Mr. Otis Bryan Hunter [on 3 Aug 1933]. Together they raised two sons, Mr. John Ottis Hunter and Mr. Frank Owen Hunter. She celebrated 11 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren. Her memory will be cherished by a church family and many friends.

Remembering Aunt Myrtie

By Robin Alford Sterling

Like many of us Alfords, Myrtie was opinionated and sometimes ornery. But she was in equal amounts caring and kind. Her sense of family was legendary. She talked often of how she missed her parents (John Warren and Amy Alford) and her grandparents (Alexander and Fanny Alford). At her funeral, it was told how as children, Myrtie and her brothers Owen and Marshall and sister Daisy, would sit in front of the fireplace on a Sunday night while Papa John would read the Bible, lead a song, and then pray.

Her husband Bryan died in 1976. She kept house by herself for years and grew flowers out in the yard next to the house. The house was across the road from the lumber mill along Highway 278. She would sit for hours and watch the cars go by and entertain the occasional visitor who would come by to reminence with her of days gone by. Her mind was keen until the very end.

She was an Alford in the grandest tradition of the family. She was a direct descendant of the Alfords of Troup County, Georgia of the 1840s and 50s. She was also descended from the antebellum aristocracy of the Shank family of near Hogansville, Georgia of the same time period. She was one of the last "unreconstructed rebels" in the woods of Winston County, AL. In her eulogy, she was compared to Granny Clampett. She would have been pleased at the comparison.

Aunt Myrtie's Story

Contributed by Bob Alford Sterling
AAFA Member #320

Until they died, Myrtie Alford Hunter always lived with her grandfather and grandmother, or they lived with her family. Her grandfather was Alexander Alford, who eventually settled in northern Alabama. Myrtie says Alexander often wondered and talked about where his family was laid to rest and how he longed to find their graves or the plot of land where they were buried. But he never did.

Alexander's father was Spire Alford. Spire was one of the West Georgia Alford's who moved to East Texas about the time Sippy Alford moved there. Spire and three of his children died shortly thereafter. The remainder of the family, including Spire's widow, Caroline, moved back to Georgia. Spire's youngest son was Myrtie's grandfather Alexander. Spire and his children's gravesite in Texas has been the subject of other articles in this journal. [See 9/90 and 12/90 issues].

Down The Road by Myrtie Alford Hunter

The Civil War has been fought and forgot by most people, for it has been over one hundred years. But to some, there is still a note of sadness. We still read and know about all the hardships, heartaches, and sadness of a Civil War. Time has healed the hatred and sad memories to a great extent. But as we look around, we can still see the results of a War that brings tears to our eyes, especially the burial lots of the Southern Soldiers where one hundred were placed in one small trench. But we, as the third and fourth generation, have forgotten about Rebels and Yankees and are striving for unity and love of a united Christian nation.

One of my grandfathers [Pinckney] cooked for the Southern army during the Civil War. He left his wife and two very small children, a little boy and a girl, and had no contact with his family during the War. When the War was over, he made his way home—walked most of the way. When he got there, his wife had been dead for six months and a neighbor was caring for his children.

My other grandfather [Alexander Alford] was in the Army from Georgia. After the War he married Fannie Elizabeth Shank from Hogansville, Georgia.

The Shanks decided they would move to Alabama. Of course, they moved in a covered wagon. They first moved to Cullman County, but the drinking water was not good so they came on to Winston County where they found clear fresh water. The springs are still running some of the purist and clearest water in the United States. Winston County seceded from the State of Alabama when the State seceded from the Union. So the people of Winston County were called Yankees.

After a few years in Winston County, my grandfather and grandmother decided they would go to Georgia to visit some of the folks who were perhaps very sick. They went in a buggy and it took a week for the trip. They traveled during the day and camped at night. My grandfather was a Confederate soldier and he had a little Confederate pin he wore on his coat. Although his army was defeated—they lost the war, lost their money, and had very little to eat—he wore the little pin with much pride. As they traveled on their journey to Hogansville, the roads were rough and winding. They forded streams where they could or crossed on a ferry. Late one afternoon, they came near a farm house and asked if they

could camp in the field. The man said, "No, go on down the road." Just then, he looked at my Grandfather and saw the little Confederate pin on his coat and said, "Yes, you can spend the night where you like. Stay a week if you want to. I though you were one of them Damn Yankees."

Winston County still goes by the Free State of Winston, and Houston, once the county seat, is called a ghost town.



Memories of Myrtie (Alford) Hunter—Part 1

By Myrtie⁴ Alford Hunter (John Warren³ Alford, Alexander Marshall² Alford, Spire W.¹ Alford), b. 6 July 1904

Sent by Member #320 Bob Alford⁶ Sterling (Johnnie Evelyn⁵ Alford, Owen Warren⁴ Alford, John Warren³ Alford, Alexander Marshall² Alford, Spire W.¹ Alford)

Note from Bob: Myrtie Alford Hunter was born in Winston County, Alabama, on July 6, 1904, the eldest of John Warren Alford's four children. She will be 88 this summer. She taught school for over 40 years in the Winston and Cullman County area. Aunt Myrtie has a wonderful facility for remembering people and events from years ago. She is always glad to reminisce with different groups and family members. She still keeps house in Winston County just across from the Alford Lumber Company and just a few miles from where the original Alford in Winston County—Alexander Marshall Alford—settled in the late 1870s. She drives her own car to church at Houston, Alabama, almost every Sunday. The following stories were transcribed nearly verbatim from her handwritten drafts.

Grandmother and Granddaddy

My Grandmother [Frances Elizabeth] was a Shank before she married my Granddaddy [Alexander Marshall] Alford. Her mother [Sarah Ann] was a Hogan from Hogansville, Georgia. Her mother came from Holland, "so I've been told." Her father, William Hogan, had a large plantation, owned many slaves. He owned cotton mills, grist mills. He was married twice and had two sets of children, about 20 in all I think. My Grandmother's father [John Alexander Shank] was also owner of many slaves. They were what you might

call wealthy, they had beautiful colonial homes, nice clothes. Clothes were made of cotton material. Silk was almost unheard of. My Great-Grandmother's sister Aunt Betty Montgomery had a dress made of silk that cost a dollar a yard. It took thirty yards of material to make the dress. She would say, "I have a black silk dress with white silk trimming with black silk edging." She is buried in the Hogan cemetery in Hogansville, Georgia. The cemetery had a wall around it. The slaves are buried just outside the wall. Most all the Hogans are buried in this cemetery.

The Hogans all had nice homes and lived well before the Civil War, but after the War, they had nothing. Absolutely nothing. No money, no slaves. No money to pay debts. They still had homes and some slaves lived on with them, but not as slaves.

I've heard by Grandmother tell how they would go into the old smoke house where they once cured meat, dig up the dirt, boil and strain it to get the salty water to cook with.

Yankees took what they had, sometimes burned homes. They hid their silverware. My Great-Great-Granddaddy hid a barrel of syrup in the cellar and it exploded. Then they had a sound mess. The Civil War left deep scars.

My Granddaddy [Alexander Marshall Alford] was in the Confederate Army from near Columbus, Georgia. His father died when he was a small boy. I've heard him tell how good his stepfather [Thomas Winston "Lawson" Slaughter] was to the slaves. He always gave them Saturday evening to wash and get ready for church on Sunday. My Great-Granddaddy Shank [John Alexander Shank] was good to the slaves. I've heard my Grandmother tell how they all worked together.

I have seen the old church in Hogansville, Georgia that Great-Great-Granddaddy William Hogan built during slave days. White people sat in the lower part of the church; slaves sat in the balcony.

I have been told that some of the in-laws were not as good to the slaves as they should have been. Slave days were just as they are today: some people are kind and helpful, others abuse their own family and everyone else.

My Granddaddy and Grandmother decided to come to Alabama with my Grandmother's family. They had one small child. Grandmother's older sister, Izora A. [Tidwell] was married to Jim Scogins. Others coming were Great-Grandfather and Great-Grandmother Shank and unmarried children. They married Winston County people. Benjamin Franklin Shank married Francis Amanda (Mollie) Rowe. Lillie Francis Shank married Walter West. Nannie Celestia married John Rowe. Etta George married William A. Gamble. They decided to stay in Winston because of the good, fresh water. They could enter land and build a home. They settled near Sipsey River, around and near where the Houston Recreation area now is located. There are six or seven old house places to be seen there now.

The came to Alabama in a covered wagon, bringing what earthly possessions they had. I've been told that my Grandmother walked and led the milk cow through Birmingham. There was only one store there at that time.

Uncle Chris Shank married Mollie Rowe who was born in 1859, died in 1883. Uncle was born in 1857, died in 1885. They had one small child. Aunt Lestie Rowe raised her, she married and died at an early age leaving four small children. Aunt Lestie raised them. They were

McGoughs. Aunt Lestie had one little boy. He died when he was just a child with appendicitis.

I have been told when Uncle Chris died, they lived near Sipsey River and there was so much snow on the ground that women and children rode in the wagon with the casket. Men walked with axes to cut the trees out of the road. They were bent down with heavy snow. That was in 1885. Uncle Chris and Aunt Mollie are buried on the hill at Houston, so is Aunt Lestie's little boy.

As time went on, the Shanks decided to move to Natural Bridge, a small town just south of Haleyville. All went except the Scogins and Alford's. Grandma Shank is buried on the hill at Houston. Granddaddy Shank is buried below Haleyville. Aunt Lestie and the others are buried in the cemetery at Concord Church at Natural Bridge.

The Alford's and Scogins remained in Winston. But it wasn't an easy life. They all worked hard, living on the farm. They raised plenty to eat, but money was scarce. I remember my Grandmother telling about her hen and baby chickens she was raising for Christmas dinner. They had grown to be almost large enough to fry. She had them in a coop. Then, one night a pole cat got in the coop and killed them and ate part of them. My Grandmother killed and skinned the pole cat, sold his hide for 25¢ and bought enough sugar for the 25¢ to cook all her cakes for Christmas dinner.

So Many Years Ago

We lived in the house with my Grandmother and Grandfather. My Daddy was the only boy and baby, so my grandparents needed him. They had a big house room enough for all. Well, I remember a large plank house, two rooms with a fireplace at the end of each room. These rooms were large enough for two beds,

chairs, trunks, a place for clothing and anything needed.

Two side rooms were for cooking with a wood stove, tables, and chairs. A homemade cabinet for dishes and food. Room for whatever was needed in a kitchen. Between the rooms was a wide hall. Two shelves at the north end of the hall: one for water bucket and dipper, one for a pan for washing face and hands. A long porch extended across the front. It was between two cedar trees in the front yard. A fence was completely around the house and yard to keep out cows and pigs, for it was free range. My mother washed at a spring on a rub board using soap made of lye dripped from ashes. We carried water from a spring under a bluff. How I wish I had a drink from that old spring now.

The floors of the whole house were washed and scrubbed with a mop made of a block of wood filled with corn shucks. We all farmed. I can remember carrying dinner and hoeing all day at the Beasley house. The old Beasley house was two large log rooms covered with white oak boards.

A hall was between the two rooms—all the floors were dirt with no glass windows. This was near Sipsey River where the Houston Recreation Center is now. Then in the fall, we would carry dinner and pick cotton all day.

One of my earliest memories was when my Great-Grandmother [Sarah Ann Hogan Shank] died April 30 [23], 1910. The roses were just beginning to bloom. She was buried the first day of May and it snowed so hard we could hardly see how to go.

My Daddy bought some land and at first he built a small house—one large log room, with a side room at the back for a dining room and kitchen. A fireplace was at one end of the log room. A porch across the front. It was hard but we all worked hard and loved each other. I can remember my mother would work so

hard and get so sick she would get in the shade of a tree and vomit. Then she would go back to work. My Daddy would work so hard there wouldn't be a dry thread on his body. When we were working so hard about the middle of the day (near dinner time), we would hear old Sang-puddle (our dog) bark and we could tell by the tone of his bark it was Grandma. She would have a sack of June apples. They were so good.

We had lots of pleasure working on the farm together. But there were hardships. I remember one year. My Daddy usually bought his fertilizer on time and paid for it when he sold the cotton. We usually made 15 or 20 bales. One year just as cotton began to make, army worms hit it and ate in all in a day or two. We pried open the dry burrs all fall and got one bale of cotton with no seed.

My Daddy had to buy cotton seed for another year. No debts paid, no clothes or food except what we raised. Old clothes were mended. We didn't give up; we kept on working. Neighbors were good, but we didn't see much of them unless it rained and when it was too wet to work. Then Alice and all the kids would come down. All of us kids would climb in the barn loft. Sing and have church. My, my, how Isabell could preach.

Did we go to the doctor? No, my mother and grandmother did the doctoring and they were good ones too. Yellow root or star root tea or whatever.

We worked hard all spring and summer, but the first week in August plows were put in the shed. Mules in the stables, hoes laid aside, for it was big meeting time. Everyone went to a large one room church. Methodist, Baptist, Congregational, Holiness, Nazarenes, we didn't know who was who and it didn't matter. We walked to church or went in a wagon. Preachers would take turns preaching. Methodist one day, Baptist at night and so on. After big meeting, most of us kids went to singing school for 10

days. We didn't have a coke or refreshments all summer, but we usually had watermelons. How we enjoyed eating them.

Pretty soon it was time to pull fodder, then cotton picking time was here. By this time, my Daddy had remodeled our house and built more to it. We picked cotton from daylight to dark. When the weather began to get cold, it was syrup making time. We stripped the cane, cut out the heads. Then it was time to go to the syrup mill. Oh, my what fun that was to carry pummies [pulp left over after the cane has been mashed] and smell that fresh sorghum. I can almost hear Uncle Bud Waid laugh now as he stirs that boiling syrup. After the syrup was cooked, but in buckets and sealed, it was potato digging time. When all the taters were dug and put in the cellar (by the way, we had fun trying to see who could find the biggest tater), it was time to gather popcorn and peanuts. By this time cotton had been sold, shoes bought and a few clothes. But my mother made most of our clothes. We had a few sheep that were sheared, the wool washed. Mother would card and spend thread then knit stocking. She would dye the thread with a moss she got on a glade rock.

By this time it was beginning to get cold and time for school to begin. My Mother began to card, spin piece quilts, and quilt. Sometimes she would help Papa saw wood. A large pile of wood was cut for the fireplace and stove wood for cooking. Of course summer and winter the cows had to be fed and milked. Hogs fed morning and night. Wood was hauled in. Hogs had to be killed, lard cooked out, sausage ground, and meat cured.

As a child, I loved my mother and father so much. I didn't think I could ever give them up. But in August of 1937, my mother [Amy Cleo Tidwell Alford] passed away and life has never been the same. My Daddy built a house for my Grandmother and Grandfather

near his house so he could care for them until they both passed on.

My Daddy remarried [Lidia Ira Hunter] and had one son [Louis] who was 15 when Papa died. Papa was sick for a long time and suffered a lot. He was a wonderful Papa. Then in less than a year, the boy was killed in a wreck [December 3, 1956].

The days were so lonely. My only sister [Daisy] taught in Cullman County for some time. She went to Baldwin County [near Mobile, Alabama] where she lived, taught, and raised her family until she retired. She and her husband built a new home on some land that my Daddy gave them.

Oh, how we enjoyed beginning to live our life over. Fishing, climbing the old hills together. Then, she was killed in a wreck. How awful. A part of me went then. In the same year, Bryan had a cerebral hemorrhage. He was in and out of the hospital for two years, but his mind was about gone. It was so hard. After his death [March 30, 1976], I have just been a wanderer. No satisfaction anywhere. But I'm thankful that I have as good health and mind as I do. All of the unexpected tragedies have shattered my mind. But I try to remember some wonderful things of the past and wonder if in all my teaching if I have made the world a little brighter or more meaningful to someone?

But as I sit on the old almost tumbled down porch watching the traffic, I wonder where so many people are going. Often a one-time pupil stops for a few minutes with some nice things to say and it helps to pass the lonely hours by. May God bless them. I had some wonderful pupils. Now, as the days go by and are so dreary and lonely, I just wonder what the next one has in store for me. Seems no one has time for you anymore. Old folks can get in the way so bad. Guess that's why they build nursing homes. Some day when I have time, I may start on my boys' families.

All the grand-children and great-grandchildren.

The Pecan Tree

About 65 or 70 years in the past my Mother and Daddy made a trip to Mobile, Alabama. Their youngest daughter lived near Mobile and they were visiting with her family.

In that part of the country were many pecan trees loaded with fine pecans. While visiting there, they enjoyed eating them very much. They also brought pecans home with them. My Mother planted one by the side of the house, it sprouted and begin to grow. But my Mother didn't live to see it grow. She passed on at the age of 51 [Amy Cleo Tidwell Alford; January 10, 1886—August 20, 1937], but the pecan tree kept on growing taller and taller.

Then one day, the State said the house was in the way of the road, so it was turned around and moved across the road, but the pecan tree kept right on growing. It grew until it began to bear pecans. Every year it would be loaded with the biggest and best pecans I've ever seen. A pasture fence was placed around the field including the pecan tree. One year I went down and gathered some of the best and largest pecans I've ever eaten, but the cows ate the most of them.

Then one year the tree was so heavily loaded with green pecans, a storm came and blew the tree across the road. Of course, it had to be cut out. Carl Godsey took most of the tree and sawed it into lumber, the planed the lumber and made this beautiful jewelry box using the lumber.

So, for many years to come, we will remember Momma's pecan tree. ❖

Memories of Myrtie (Alford) Hunter—Part 2

By Myrtie⁴ Alford Hunter (John Warren³ Alford, Alexander Marshall² Alford, Spire W.¹ Alford). She was born 6 July 1904 in Winston County, Alabama, and still lives there.

Sent by Member #320 Bob Alford⁶ Sterling (Johnnie Evelyn⁵ Alford, Owen Warren⁴ Alford, John Warren³ Alford, Alexander Marshall² Alford, Spire W.¹ Alford)

Editor's note: Bob Sterling transcribed his great-aunt's reminiscences nearly verbatim from her handwritten drafts. They have been slightly edited for publication here.

School Days

Some of my earliest memories are of old Pleasant Hill. My brother Marshall and I started to school there in the fall of 1911. Those present that first day were Olin Hilton, Minnie Straisner, Zenus, Amon, Earnest, Marcus, and Theodore Waid, Myrtie and Marshall Alford. As farmers began to get crops gathered, the attendance increased until we had seventy-five to eighty in attendance—and one teacher, Arthur West, and a wonderful teacher he was.

We walked to school about three miles to Pleasant Hill. We went and came in snow or rain. Clothes were changed, dried by the fire at night and ready for school the next day.

We got out of bed at 4 o'clock, breakfast at 5 o'clock, and started to school at 7 o'clock. Coopers, Hiltons, and Alfords went down one side of Yellow Creek mountain. Barnes, Scogins, and Wilsons came down the South side of the mountain. From the East came Scogins, Waids, Straisners, Walkers, Moseleys, and Cowdens. We usually met at Yellow Creek and climbed the East mountain together. Got to Pleasant Hill school

about 8 o'clock. Did we fight? No, it took all the energy that we had to climb the mountains!

There was a large bell in the belfry that was rung for school in the morning. A small bell was rung for books. Where did we get our books? Well, our mother and father bought all the books and pencils. Also, paper that we used.

A large bench was placed in front of a blackboard for classes. There was one teacher, seven grades and about 80 pupils. We sat on long straight back seats. How did we learn? Seats were placed in a circle around a pot belly stove in the center of the room, where we sat when it was cold. Men (fathers) would gather and cut wood for the heater. But they usually cut red oak wood and it wouldn't burn in hell with both blowers open. I can remember how cold I got. A large water bucket sat on one end of a bench with a dipper from which everyone drank. There were no johnnies. Girls went down the west side of the hill and boys down the east side or opposite direction and no one invaded the other fellow's privacy.

At 10 o'clock, we had 30 minute recess. We usually played stealing sticks, old Sally Walker, old oak tree, town ball with a ball made of yarn from an old sock. Most everyone ran to the spring for a fresh drink of water. The spring was at the foot of a hill and the cemetery was on the hill. One day a group of girls decided to run up and down the hill for a few times—and didn't hear the bell. So when we came in, we were lined up and got a few licks with a hickory switch.

No lunch room—we carried lunch in a lard or syrup bucket, usually a baked yam, jar of milk, bacon, home made biscuits, and sometimes a fried pie.

When school was out about three or four o'clock, we hurried home to help keep

with chores: milking cows, feeding pigs and carrying in wood. For supper, we usually had fresh churned milk, corn bread, dried beans or peas, baked potatoes. After supper, lessons were studied supervised by mother and father. A big fire was made. Sometimes we parched and ate peanuts. Chairs were moved. Then a game of blindfold took place, played and enjoyed by the entire family. Then to bed, for we had to get up early for school.

We went to church and Sunday School on Sunday. Then on Sunday night, we would gather around the fireside and sing songs. Don't guess it sounded too good—Momma didn't sing tenor, we just all sang. Then Papa would read a chapter in the Bible and have prayer. Then sometimes he would read us a story from the *Atlanta Constitution*. I still remember some of the stories. As the weather got colder and colder and the snow began to fall, I remember my sister and I would get in bed between guano sacks sheets, three or four quilts. Sometimes we would cover our heads to keep the snow from falling in our face. Then maybe by morning, the snow would be six to 10 inches deep. What did we care! There was plenty of wood on the porch. Cows were fed and milked. Hogs and chickens fed. Well buckets put in the well to keep from freezing. Plenty to eat. No pipes to freeze, no electricity to cut off, for we used kerosene lamps. If no one got sick, we just ate ice cream and had a ball. Some hard times though, for we had to wash at a spring on a rub board, boil our clothes in a wash pot, and hang them on a fence to dry.

When the snow was gone, back to school. On Friday if we had been good we could cross spell. I was always good in spelling and usually got the prize for the most head marks. One Friday afternoon, the teacher told us we could cross spell. My brother, a little fellow, was so glad that not thinking, he

jumped out of his seat . You talk about a good switching, he got it. I've always hated that teacher. I would have like to pulled her hair. I didn't dare move a finger. Her name was Icy Rowe.

Down through the years, I had another teacher I didn't like because he whipped some of the boys until their shirts were torn. He had an old ragged cap that he called a dunce cap. One day he made my brother wear it and stand in front of the school and let them laugh at him. Tears ran down his face and on the floor. I hated that teacher. Many years after that, I taught with that teacher and did a lot of work for him, but I still didn't like him, for he was mean.

After we finished grammar school (seven grades), my sister, two brothers, and I started to Double Springs High School. We lived about 12 miles from Double Springs. Our only way of travel was by wagon. On Monday morning we got up about two or three o'clock. My Daddy hitched the mules to the wagon. We forded Sipsey River and got to school by 8 o'clock. We rented two rooms of a little house. Sally West had the other two. We cooked and ate what we carried from home. Wasn't much.

How homesick we got. One Friday my Daddy was so busy, he failed to come after us. It took most of the day to go and come and he was busy gathering the crop. So the boys decided to walk home. My sister and I followed. We left Double Springs about 3 o'clock. We walked and walked and waded Sipsey River. Went down the river through a forest. It was dark when we got to my Grandmother's, so Daisy and I spent the night, but the boys went on home. My sister and I went home early the next morning. My feet on bottom were a solid blister. We had to pick cotton all day Saturday, but I mostly picked on my knees. Guess my brother's and sister's feet were sore too.

Outside of being homesick and lonesome, high school was not so bad. We had a wonderful principal, Mr.

Picklesimon. We had wonderful teachers: Mrs. Baker, Miss Woods, Mr. Newton, Mr. Edmons, and others. But the one I loved best was Miss Agnes Smiley. It was hard and we had very few clothes. My brothers gave up and quit. But my Daddy said he could have never made it without them living on a farm—there was so much hard work to do.

In 1925, my Daddy managed to buy a new Ford car. He couldn't drive so the boys had to do the driving. My, my when we got that Ford cranked, how we would ride! Most of the time down hill, sometimes pushed through deep sand beds and maybe up a hill, but we got there quicker than a wagon.

I finished high school in 1925. I remember for our graduation singing we sang two songs. The singers were Lucy Gilbreath, Eunice Ivey, myself, Howard Tidwell, and Arthur Steele.

After high school, arrangements were made for college. I started to Florence the summer of 1925. The roads were rough and it took almost all day to get to Florence in a T Model. I had very few clothes to wear. My mother bought some of Pearl Rowe's old clothes and made them over, but they didn't look new and I was embarrassed. I borrowed \$50 from my grandmother to go to school on that first three months. I went three or six months. I don't remember one thing. I do remember I got so homesick and lonesome. I almost wished I had never learned my ABCs.

I finally got home and taught school five or six months in the winter at Sardis with J.T. Blake. I got \$60 per month. I had to pay board. We had 50 or 60 pupils and six grades. We taught in winter and went to school in summer. My sister and I taught there the next winter. The next part of the year attendance dropped and she had to quit. We just didn't keep the records right. If a pupil wasn't there, we counted them absent. But some principal told me if the supervisor didn't come in, all were present—regardless of where

they were.

I went from Sardis to Addison where I taught the sixth grade one year, then taught in high school the next year. From Addison, I went to Houston, for we only had three months of school and got \$30 a month. Ninety dollars for the whole school year. We couldn't pay board, so we had to stay at home if possible.

I taught at Stephen, Moreland, Meek, and Double Springs. Whenever I could, we always taught. My politics were never right to get a handout. But I worked on for many years, neglecting my two boys. We had it hard and they really had it hard, but they made two fine men that I'm proud of.

We had to farm. Bryan usually worked at the sawmill, heading mill or planer. We both got so little that we had to farm for a living. We made a garden, kept a cow for milk. Several years Bryan carried the mail, but that was about like other jobs—not much pay. I washed at a spring on a rub board. We had to do something for a living.

In all my teaching—about 40 years—I always had sweet children. Sometimes a bad one or two, but not often. They were wonderful, wonderful, sweet children, but sometimes I had a devil for a principal. I still love those children. They are mommas and papas and grandparents now.

Was I a good teacher? Sometimes the superintendent didn't know it. Sometimes the principal didn't know it, but I was—and the pupils knew it and I know it.

Owen's Appendicitis

About 74 years in the past, people were asked to get rid of lice and ticks on their cattle and it sure needed to be done. They built concrete dipping vats and filled them with a poison solution and ran the cows through. No one wanted a

vat near their home because of the poison solution, and some people were afraid to drink milk when the cow had been dipped. Now, my Daddy's [John Warren Alford] pasture took in most of Yellow Creek bottoms, so he agreed to have a dipping vat built on Yellow Creek. People came from all around to dip their cattle.

Now, a dipping vat was a long trench dug in the ground lined with concrete deep off or straight off on one end and slanting at the other end. Cows were led to the steep end and made jump off or shoved in and made go out the slanting end.

Now, Owen [John Warren's youngest son] had a little calf he called Buck, so he roped him when Papa begin to rope the cows. The calf seemingly didn't like the roping so Owen strained and pulled the calf up and down Yellow Creek mountain and got his calf dipped but before long he began complaining with his side. I felt like he hurt his side pulling and straining with the calf, but maybe not. Anyway, he got worse and worse. I recall how he would cry and scream with his side. Nearest doctor, 12 miles: Dr. Blake. No way to go except in a wagon. Doctor said he had appendicitis.

Well, one night he was so bad, we ran for Grandmother. She spent the night. He went into convulsions and passed out. My Grandmother gave artificial respiration and brought him back to breathing. The next morning my Daddy got hold of Uncle John Blake. Uncle John had an old T Model Ford. My Daddy put on his best clothes and got in the front seat with Uncle John. Momma put on her skirt and blouse that she had made to wear to decoration and put Owen on a feather pillow and put him in her lap in the back seat. They started down the rough, bumpy road to the Birmingham hospital which was the nearest one around. When they got to the hospital, he was near death it seemed, for poison had set up caused by the ruptured appendix. But, he went through a very

serious operation.

Papa and Momma both stayed near by for it seemed that death might come at any time, but he began to slowly improve. My Daddy said it was the Lord that brought him through, for Momma and Papa both prayed. In a few days, my Daddy came home. It was the middle of May and crops had to be planted. While my Daddy was at the hospital my Granddaddy [Alexander Marshall Alford] was so worried he got some neighbors and planted the whole crop in corn, but when my Daddy got home he said that would not do; he had to have cotton to pay hospital and other bills. Cotton was the only cash crop at that time so he had to plow the corn up and plant cotton. We worked so hard trying to get cotton planted until my Daddy was almost exhausted. But, one morning about 10 o'clock, we heard Uncle John's Ford car coming. The roads were rough and no other cars so we knew it was Uncle John. He went to Papa and read a message which said, "Come at once, Owen is dying." My Daddy fell at his plow and cried for a minute, then took his mule out, almost ran to the house, washed his face and hands, changed clothes quickly. During this time, Marshall or someone ran for Uncle Elbert. He put on his best clothes, hitched his mule to his buggy. By this time, Papa had his mule hitched to grandpa's buggy. Marshall [Myrtie's brother], Daisy [Myrtie's sister], and I had on our best clothes.

We took off across Slick Ford by Manchester to Jasper. They ran the poor old mules so hard trying to get to Jasper to catch the train, sweat was dripping and their tongues were hanging out. I was so sorry for them.

But we had missed the train and had to stay in the hotel until morning. No one slept. Uncle Elbert called the hospital and Owen was still alive and a little better. Infection had set up and he had to go for a second operation. He said, "Please Momma don't let them operate

on me again. I'll take their medicine, just don't let them operate." Momma, alone, not knowing if he would live through the operation or not. But God was there.

I can remember that the trip and worry was too much for me. The next morning when we got on the train, I had the sick headache so bad I could hardly walk. When we got to the hospital Owen was still alive but was so pitiful. Momma was too.

Uncle Elbert stayed for a while, then said he would go back. I said I would go back and carry Daisy. I was too sick to stay. Marshall and Papa stayed for a few days. Daisy and I went with Uncle Elbert. We got to Mrs. Scogin's some time in the night, so we spent the rest of the night there. Uncle Elbert went on home. Daisy and I went home the next morning. Papa and Marshall stayed for a few days, but Momma stayed 27 days. Twenty-seven lonely days. She knew no one and no one came around. There she sat day and night with her little sick boy. I don't know how she ate or slept. But she must have had a room somewhere, for she had made her a black skirt and white blouse to wear to decoration the first Sunday in May. She had managed to get her another blouse so she took day about wearing them by washing one out at night. Finally the day came when Owen could come home. He was still sick and not able to walk. We had a big rocker from somewhere that he sat in.

Crops had to be worked. Debts and hospital bills to pay. We all worked so hard. Owen had to sit by himself all day (except at dinner) while we worked. He had a big cowbell he could ring when he needed water or something. When the bell rang, someone would lay down their hoe and go see what he wanted. Usually, I had to go. He was on a strict diet, but grandma made him some dried apple pies, but he could have only one-half pie at a time. He rang the bell. I went to the house. He wanted one-half pie. I gave him a half pie, but he said it wasn't half and made me get the other half and let

him measure.

He had no television, no radio. Just sat. We hardly had time to eat. At night, supper was to fix, milking to do, hogs to feed, so he couldn't have had very much attention. Neighbors were good, but they had to work too. Before too many days, he got to where he could stir around a little, but not able to work for a long time.

While Momma and Papa were away Marshall, Daisy, and I stayed with Grandma and Grandpa. They helped in caring for the things at home while Momma and Papa were away.

Pleasant Hill

Ever since I can remember, we go to Pleasant Hill the first Sunday in May for decoration. It seems sometime now that I can hear Uncle Richard Rivers as he gave the welcome address. We all carried lunch—but I can remember Aunt Ann Baldwin going across the stage with a big basket of lunch and a jug of fresh churned buttermilk. I remember many, many others too numerous to mention.

Many, many years later I taught some sweet, loving children there for two years. Many, many years I enjoyed playing and working at old Pleasant Hill, but all my joys ceased when they carried my mother's body and laid it to rest in the little cemetery on the Hill. Not many years later my Daddy and half brother was placed near my mother's grave. Since then many other friends and relatives were placed on the little hill.

We still go there every first Sunday in May. It's just so sweet to meet and talk with old friends and relatives and place flowers in loving memory on the little mounds of clay and enjoy the wonderful singing. But all my childish glee and laughter have changed to tear drops. But I thank God for the lives and influence of those gone on. ❖

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