

Walk Through Mother's Garden Life Through Her Prose and Poetry

**Reverend Mary E W Nelson
and
Fran Cheryl Nelson-Riddick**

DLite Press
P.O. Box 824
Yorktown Heights NY 10598-9998
<http://www.dlitepress.com>

The author does not guarantee and assumes no responsibility on the accuracy of any websites, links or other contacts contained in this book.

Walk Through Mother's Garden
Life Through her Prose and Poetry

All rights reserved.

Copyright © By Fran Cheryl Nelson-Riddick

DLite Press/ published by arrangement with the author

PRINTING HISTORY
DLite Press/ 2014

Cover illustration
By Christina Carpenter

No part of this book may be used or reproduced by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including scanning, photocopying, recording, taping or by any information storage retrieval system without the written permission of the publisher except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. Please do not encourage piracy or plagiarization of copyrighted material in violation of the author's rights. Purchase only authorized editions.

ISBN: 978-1-937143-35-0
Printed in the United States of America

These are my memories; I am the teller of my own story. Certain episodes are imaginative recreations. To protect the privacy of others, names have been changed and characters conflated.

Introduction

Almost four years have passed, and about seven years since she said to me "Fran, I want you to help me write my book." It was a promise that I likely made, accepting her two journals in one hand, smoking a cigarette in the other, with a patent reply of "Yeah Mommy, of course I will." There weren't too many people who told my mother "No." Not because she was a formidable yet graceful diplomat or because she knew the Bible like catfish know muddy rivers, but I think because her spirit was so pure, negativity just didn't cross her mind when she asked for a service or issued a task in her nonchalant manner. I took the red and blue journal books, and neatly deposited them on a shelf in my office.

Mommy and I were often at my home together, but only journeyed to my office long enough for me to type up her "Annual Report to Conference." Then we would be off to the stores, to buy shoes that neither of us needed. My mother and I could literally shop until we dropped. We'd meet the guard opening the Mall store, and my mother would make it a point to say good night to him when the guard locked the doors behind us at the Valley Stream Mall. Then life just seemed to happen. Maybe once I flipped open one of the books she gave me, which I'd used to hold down my stack of bills; the bottom cover for my stack of bills. I likely looked at the magnitude of the filled pages, scribbled in her doctor-like handwriting, so similar to my own, and then closed it before neatly depositing both books in their special place, the "Important Paper" shelf. She didn't ask too often if I still had them, and I told her I would definitely get around to helping her write her book. I do, however, recall her saying to me often, "You know Fran, Mommy likes to write just like you." And I would reassure her of my promise to help her write her book; "Of course Mommy, I will help you write your book". Her response was "I know you will baby, Mommy knows you will." She smiled and I don't recall after the year 2008 her never mentioning it again.

My mother had a distinctive accent when she was relaxed and spoke a mix of a southern and what I call Williams Gullah Speak, despite, from what I know, not being from the Low Country in South Carolina. Her sisters and brothers seemed to slip into that special language that they shared when they got together. My cousin does a great imitation of the Williams Clan; his imitation is hilarious, but not mocking. We couldn't understand too much of what they said, except for the final word of a sentence, which seemed to follow with an exclamation point, then a hardy laugh from all of them. I could tell my mother's laugh, even if I wasn't in the room. A very thoroughly-taught lesson was to stay out of and away from grown folks business. Maybe that is why I didn't learn a lot about my mother's life, at least the way she saw it, until I made the journey through her journals.

Some stories I do remember, having heard them over and over again. Her favorite, when it came to me: "You know Pussyfoot, the doctors said I wasn't

supposed to have any more children and if I had you, the doctors said I would die. Your father carried on so bad, they asked him to leave the hospital." She'd say that followed by a quiet laugh. "But God knows what he was doing. The doctors said after we both lived that you would be my company when I got older, and they sure were right."

To say my mother and I were close would be more than an understatement. My mother had five children, and she was close to each of us. As the youngest I grew up with her the longest without the company of other siblings; I *was* her company as she got older. If you asked each of us how our mother was, we would each give you different answers. But there was one constant that I believe all of us would say: "We had a good mother who loved the Lord and studied her Bible, and she loved each and every one of us." And we would all agree that she loved us all the same in each of our different ways. I also believe each of us would also say that our mother never made a promise that she didn't keep. If she promised you a spanking, you got it. If she promised you a treat, you got it. If she didn't promise you, don't ask her again.

After Grandma died, I made my mother promise me that she would never die. And after some reluctance reluctantly, she made me that promise.

Like our mother I try not to make promises I don't intend to keep. I never promised my mother I would behave, I never promised my mother I would stop talking, stop fighting or would do anything other than "try" to succeed in 'self-control.' And I did eventually bring that grade from "F-failed" to "N-needs improvement" on my report card. Staying quiet for me was a difficult chore; I'd almost rather just take the spanking. Often I did.

But I did promise Mommy "of course I will"; I said I would help her write her book.

The gravity of grief had its fair share in the delay of fulfilling this promise; maybe even the reality that I wrote poems and reports, and Mommy, I thought, wrote sermons and gave lectures. A book seemed like a daunting task. Or maybe the delay came from that ounce of guilt I felt for not taking the time to read the precious journals Mommy had placed in my hands and I had placed on the 'important shelf.' Now I know that these journals will keep me company as I grow older, as I kept my mommy company as she grew older.

And with these journals, as I journeyed through them, I discovered I was not alone, never alone in Mother's Garden.

REVEREND MARY E W NELSON



**In Appreciation of the Loving Memory of Our Mother,
Reverend Mary Elizabeth Williams Nelson**

Mommy,

*Yes I do love you, and your advice is always taken with great priority
But I have to learn myself.*

God made everyone different, including the Stubborn,

So bear with me

I'll make it.

Love,

Fran Cheryl

June 12, 1981

All of the Poems in Part I and some of the Poems in Part II were written by Reverend Mary Elizabeth Williams Nelson.

Poems in Part II were also written by Fran Cheryl Nelson-Riddick.

This book is in appreciation and loving memory of our Mother, Mary Elizabeth Williams Nelson

CONTENTS

Part 1

Chapter 1

The Treasure 1928

Chapter 2

Marion Mullins Highway

Chapter 3

Talk About Love

Chapter 4

No Wallflowers

Chapter 5

When troubles

Chapter 6

My Growing Garden

Chapter 7

Love is the Mission

Chapter 8

Watering Garden

Chapter 9

Picking Flowers

Chapter 10

Don't Dig In My Garden

Chapter 11

Wisdom From the Garden

Chapter 12

Honor Thy Mother

Part II

Chapter 13

Used to Be

Chapter 14

Fall Fall

Chapter 15

Indian Giver Summer

Chapter 16
 Merciless Mrsa May
Chapter 17
 Mother I Honor You
Epilogue
 Angles Have Wings
Acknowledgements
Postscript

PART I

CHAPTER 1 TREASURE 1928

MORNING GLORY

February 1928. Mary and Quincy Williams became the parents of a three pound baby girl, named Lively. The baby was too small to nurse the mother's breast milk. The baby was healthy, but so very small; it was kept on a pillow and was fed with flour water and sugar tits. Sugar tits was sugar placed in a clean white cloth and made small enough to place in the baby's mouth so she could learn to suck it. The mother would teach the baby how to suck it by slowly keep putting it in her mouth. The flour water for a while was also placed in a cup and with a dropper it was placed into the baby's mouth. As the baby grew, the process was increased until the baby was strong and large enough to take the breast and other feeding.

Being such a small baby, when neighbors and friends heard about her they came to visit to see just what the baby looked like. But among the visitors was a white couple who took a liking to the baby and would come every day to help the Mother with this small baby. Their names were Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Smith. They lived in the city of Marion, South Carolina. The baby and her parents lived in the country on the farm. The couple was well off. They were sweet and kind, and good close friends of Mary and Quincy. They would come to the house and take care of the small baby and the older brother Elderwood, while Quincy and Mary went to work.

They were still friends even when Elderwood and the small baby, Lively, were big enough to go to school. They were true, real friends. The Smiths lived in a big pretty white house in Marion trimmed in green with a big front porch and a big front yard. They had a back yard where their big pretty car sat. The Smiths would sometimes take Elderwood and Lively home with them. They would watch the

pretty green grass with the flowers alongside of it; Mrs. Jerry Smith kept everything so pretty.

Our house was a big house. It was the color of a lot of houses. It was built up on big blocks and sat very high from the ground. Elderwood and I even went underneath sometimes to play, especially when we wanted to get out of the sun or hide from Mother. Our house had a big front porch and a small back porch. It had a big front yard as well as a large back yard. On the front porch, from the top under the roof there were four large holes through a beam. Through the holes of the beam was a metal chain. On the floor of the porch sat the long wing chair seat made of wood, wood colored light brown. The seat of the wing hooked from the seat through the arms and a heavy chain. Then it hooked up to the beam in the ceiling of the porch, to the place that you sat. You could swing your feet, but not every day did we get to sit and swing our feet on the front porch. As our family grew, the little ones took the wing if they were able to sit safely, while we older ones took a seat on the porch floor.

Mother always sat near the side of the porch reading to us Bible stories. She would read to us our Sunday school lesson, and this was very important. She would test us. The porch was also where Mother would check our school work; she would ask us questions to see how well we were doing and how well we remembered. Mother would sing to us on the porch; one of her favorite songs was "A Mother Child."

Oh the days those used to be, the lessons on the porch. Mother would say, "Don't take everybody to be your friend, I got the keys"; "Watch your secret keeper"; "Always bring your own news"; "Telling lies, keeps your soul confused"; "Mind your own business; Don't repeat" and if someone says something that hurts you, just pray for them.

It was a joy to hear her voice, and sitting on our porch. Oh the days those used to be, and the lessons we first learned. Mother sat on her rocking chair, on the side of the front porch, as I loved her even more.

We did not have phones, any electricity or hot running water. We used a lantern to go outside at night. The lanterns were safer to use outside when we had to go and needed a night light. We used torches to do our homework, and Mother would make sure the homework was done; she checked it and asked questions. The lamps inside the house were on the shelf. Our house had a huge kitchen with shelves built on the side of the walls. These shelves were very high, so things we were not to touch, we did not touch. I was short, and could not reach, but I did not touch. Mother and Father would put things on the top shelf and say "now children do not touch." And these words they did not repeat, unless we attempted to touch and then something would happen. In the kitchen was a large wood stove. The stove was made of iron, black with warmer shelves so that food could be stored inside to be kept warm. The stove had a reservoir on the side of it; it held about five gallons of water, other than the kettle. The tea kettle was our only means of hot water for dishes, baths, and for washing our wood floors. The water could be heated in the wash pot at the edge of the back yard. The stove was heated with wood. We started the fire in the stove by using dry chips and what was called 'Falter Lier' chips that we could get from the stumps in the woods. The stove was kept clean, and underneath it was a rack where the ashes and charcoal would go after the wood burnt down. As the wood burnt down you would have to keep

adding wood as long as it was needed to keep the stove hot. The green oak trees or maple trees were not easy to burn unless you started the fire with dry wood. In the summer we would try to get enough wood on the wood pile to last through the winter. In the South we had all kinds of trees-- pecan trees, walnut trees, black shell, sweet hickory, pear and peach trees, apple trees. Wood was very important in our house.

In the kitchen was a small homemade table used for preparing food. Off from the kitchen was a long dining room with a large dining room table. The table had two long benches and two chairs, one at each end, one at the head and one at the foot. Father sat at the Head of the table, and Mother at the foot of the table. We children sat on the bench on each side of the table. Father or Mother would say prayer. Father's voice was loud when he prayed. Mother's voice was always soft. Then they would say grace the table. We were taught to say a Bible verse at the table and we had to learn them.

In the living room we had a long chair and two other small chairs. Flowers were always in place in the living room. Mother would cut them from her garden, and bring them inside the house. There was a large fireplace in the living room; over the fireplace was a very long shelf, made from a strong wood with rings that we could count. It was high enough for us not to reach unless we brought in a chair and tried to climb, which was hard to do. We were very small. The words we were always told was "don't touch". On the shelf was the radio. The radio sat in the center of the shelf. We did not have a TV, only the one small radio we were not allowed to touch. On the corners of the shelf, near each end, Mother would use the lamps. The lamps had a big base for kerosene and a burner with a wick going through. When the lamps are purchased the wicks come with it, but as they would burn you needed more wicks. On the two lamps we had, each had a shade; the shades were to keep out the air so if the wind blew the light would not go out. Shades also gave a brighter light. The shades had to be kept clean.

We would sit around the old fireplace while Mother would take little pieces of cloth and make beautiful dresses for us by hand. We would watch her; she would also make our slips and panties.

In the kitchen the lantern was mostly used for light. Because of the opening and closing of the back door, the light would go out because of the wind. Most of the time our meals would be prepared before dark and the meals were light, because we did not go to bed with a heavy meal in our stomach.

Our heavy meal was always eaten during the midday. So in the morning breakfast would consist sometimes of grits, fatback and hot biscuits or grits, fish or cornbread and syrup. Hominy grits, bacon or hot biscuits and syrup, was my favorite. Dinner at midday we had meals such as rice, cornbread, biscuits -- two breads always seemed to be a must. We'd also have collards, chicken, sweet potato, salad, peas or butter beans and okra. White potatoes came with a choice of vegetables. We were never allowed a lot of meat although we had it in the smoke house. Father always said a lot of meat wasn't good for us. We could have plenty of fish and chicken, but it was supposed to be eaten before dark. Even if you ate and went back in the fields, supper was the night meal and it would be light and maybe leftovers from breakfast. It might be a pan of hot biscuits, grits and scrambled eggs.

Our house had three bedrooms. The large bedroom was Mother's and Father's. My sister Melon and I had our own room, and Brothers had their own room. My sister and I, we shared a bed together. The mattress was made of hay. Every month we would take the old hay out of our mattress and put in new hay, so our bed would be high. But it didn't take long to get flat; we would add more hay. The Brother's also had hay beds. Mother made sheets for our bed from yellow *shasperm* material. Mother would buy 7 yards cut in half and sew the seams length wise, and make a two- or three-inch hem from the bottom and a one-inch hem for the top. Mother would also make the pillow cases from the yellow *shasperm*. As we used them over and over, washing them would make them white. Mother also made our quilts; she would piece together scraps until she got enough together for a top. Then mother would make the lining from the same material she made the sheets from, yellow *shasperm*. She would buy the cotton and place it between the lining and top, to keep it straight she would roll each side on a pole lengthwise and pin it. She would start the quilt in the middle and work her way to the sides, until it was completed, then hemmed. Mother did all this work by hand.

Mother and Father's bed was made of cotton. But she used the same type of sheets for all beds. We had a dresser in our room for our clothes. When in our room we sat most of the time on the floor or on our stool. In our room we had no light, until we started school and began to do our homework on our own. Then we were allowed to use what is called a Flame bow; but only to do our homework--and I mean homework! Our parents would check our homework and they would also check with our teachers. There *bet not be* a problem with us not listening in school or doing our homework. The children in the city would call us the 'black country kids' in school, so sometimes there might be a problem.

We had a large front porch on our house in the country, and we had a large yard and plenty of room. On the front porch, the biggest porch, Mother kept her pot flowers, and close alongside the porch were flowers of all colors. Mother had a little garden of flowers. To watch them grow up, the tiny stems to leaves, the little buds as they began to break out into all different colors was so pretty, like chewing on sugar cane. People would stop and look at Mother's flower garden; she also had rose bushes, deep red and light pink. The deep red had such a sweet, sweet odor; you could breathe on one or just gaze at them. Or you could keep putting them to your nose for the fresh sweet odor. We would often water the flowers of all different colors, all planted and growing together. The Morning Glory was another beautiful flower. They seem to always have a message. Early in the morning, with the dew so heavy on them, they seemed so full of joy. The Four O'clock flowers every afternoon seemed to drop their little heads to pray also. The pretty fresh green leaves, the purple blossoms. It was a joy and love to be in Mother's garden.

I remember we had a pretty black and white dog, with a brown spot. She would always lay or sit near the edge of the large front or back yard. She made sure no one entered the yard without us knowing about it. The door leading to the front porch had a screen in front of it. The purpose of the screen was to keep out the mosquitoes, flies and bugs; the same for the back door screen. These doors were closed from the inside by a catch.

The big back yard also had flowers at the end. One special flower was the Sunflower; it grew tall with the large green leaves and big yellow flowers with a

circle and a brown ring around it. The dog's finger bushes were plain green, like the elephant bush; the elephant plant was sometimes placed near the water pump on the shelf on the back porch. The water pump had a handle and a mouth where the water came through. Although the handle was used to pump the water, the pump was made by driving a 10 to 15 foot pipe into the ground or until the water well was reached and was clear. After the completion of everything, we would pump the water using the handle and the water would come through the mouth. This is how we received our water. There were wells also, but Father covered them up because we were afraid. That is why we used the pump. Thank God, because the well was not safe for children. At the edge of the yard was the woodpile, the wash pot and the chicken coop. Further down from the back yard was the pig pen.

In our home we didn't have a refrigerator, we had an ice box. This was where a large piece of ice was put to keep mild butter and necessities cold. Salt pork was kept salted down in the box inside the smoke house. Hams, shoulders, sausage and ribs meats were seasoned and hung in there too. The cows were prepared and their meats were kept in cold storage in the city. My father would get it as he needed it. Fish we caught were split and salted down and placed in a barrel in the smoke house. We would take out the fish as we needed it and put them in the cold water to soak overnight to take out the salt. Friday was the day we would eat fish. Father would take out, cut it up and slice the fish into thin pieces. He would season it up, we don't know everything he put in it, but he'd slice up onions in a large bowl, and put a little vinegar on them. Then he served the fish fried with hominy grits or corn.

Mudding the Fish Pond

*Rub her boats, tubs and nets
Trouble the water, play in the water
But the poor fish, couldn't see
So they got caught with the nets in the pond*

*The Cats, we call them. The Catfish
Very black and very slick
Very hard to hold in your hand, even two
The Cats, some of them would get back to the pond.*

*Back into the warm, black muddy water.
Safe from neighbors sharing in the frying
The job of cleaning them, but*

Cats were easy because you'd just pull the skin right over their heads.

*Then the heads were used for gravies, right over our grits
Poor Catfish, tasty, and scale less, not much work
Except we have to catch you while
Mudding the Fish Pond.*

SUNFLOWER

Mother, the sweetest person God ever created. Mothers give so much of themselves. Mother watched so carefully the needs of her family. I was just a small little child, when I'd gather the tops of the sunflowers, and Mother would tell me to clean them, she'd hold them up to be sure no spots and they were crystal clear. She told me to make sure the tops were okay, or we'd have to get new ones, to put in my hair. To the vegetable gardens we would go, gathering tomatoes, okra and corn, getting ready to 'soup', put them in the pretty clean jars for the winter, for winter does come in Marion. Butter beans, sweet peas, green peas, mustards, plain tomatoes, peaches, pears could go in those jars. Or we would make jelly, pear jelly, and peach jelly and from the grape hulls we would make grape jelly. There was plenty for us to eat, figs, blue berries, made pies, and *farrgets* and apple made jellies. Dry peas we would beat out, blow out and put them in the barn for winter. We would do the same for the kidney, and green beans, and Mother would can them. Mother would can red peppers, green peppers, hot peppers, squash. Mother would even can sausage patties, stewed beef with watermelon rind.

Mother would make sugar cane syrup and store it in the smoke house. Mother and I would shell corn with our hands to be taken to the mill; Most likely a bushel at a time, half for grits and half for (corn) meal. Our flour was made from the wheat we grew. Our white potatoes were taken from the fields and placed on a rack in the smoke house and barn so they could get air. The sweet potatoes were removed from the fields and placed in what is called "potatoes banks", made from rolled straw and dirt, with a small door to remove potatoes when we needed them.

Living in the country, one sure thing you could never go hungry! In the summer there was always fruit trees, different kinds of berries, plus many raw vegetables. In the fall and winter there were always nuts of all kinds. Because of its place, on the plantation, our house looked just as good as some of the city kids' homes.

Our little house had a hardwood floors and we kept them clean by using hot lye and soapy water. Every year Mother and Father would do what is called "Spring Cleaning"; everything was taken out of the house, and they used pots of hot water, lye soap and turpentine to be sure the house was clean. The process started early morning, with time enough to finish and open the doors and windows so the house could be dry enough to put the things back in before too late in the night. Everything had to be moved out the house. Sometimes pots were borrowed from the neighbors to boil water, under the fire. Boiling water was poured through

every inch of the house, until the ceilings, wall and floors were hot. The house smelled good, after it was dried.

The wash pot was used for boiling the clothes. We washed our clothes by hand on the washboard, thoroughly, using three or four tubs of water, until they were rinsed clean. If they were hung on the line with any spots or soil, they were taken down and we washed again. Cleanliness was next to Godliness and our house was sterilized. Then Mother would cut roses from her bushes and put them in the living room the next day. Mother worked hard; she and Father had to be sure that we had food, a home and it was ENOUGH!

At another edge of the yard Father made a large chicken coop. Mother and Father raised chickens. The coop was built like a little house, but it was built with slats of wood going through from one side to the other. This was done from top to bottom. On the lower slats the small chickens would roost, on the higher slats the older chickens would roost. The Roosters and Hens usually sat on the very top. That was so they could look down on the others to be sure they were okay (the young and the old). On the side of the coop was a built row of shelves with compartments for each chicken ready to sit on her eggs. As the hen got ready to lay her eggs, she would fly up to the nest and lay her eggs, and before coming down she would make sure no one was around her or no one was going to bother her eggs. When the nest was filled, the eggs would be placed in a basket and taken in the house-- some were used in cooking, some were sold. But some of the eggs the chicken or hen was sitting on were hatched; they were carefully selected. At such time the when the hen or hens were ready; the eggs were marked with a pencil and placed in the nest for the hen to sit on until they hatched. The hens were good; they would sit until the process was complete. In six to eight weeks the eggs began to crack and the little biddies would start to come out. You could see them walking around their mom in the nest. This was so exciting. When she finished, the hen and her baby chicks were placed in a special coop, and she would care and teach her babies how to get food. And if anyone tried to touch her baby chicks she would pluck at them with her bill, the rooster might too. What an amazing sight to behold!

We would take grains of corn in a bag, and with the hammer, crack it up so the small chickens could eat it and we would give them water from the low jar top so they could not get wet. It was so amazing-- all the pretty different colors of the little chicks. Mother would purchase the small white baby chickens and raise them also. Mother also raised turkey and duck junes. It was just as fun to watch the ducks in the water and the turkeys gobble and stretch their wings, as it was relaxing. There wasn't much time to relax, our leisure was in the happiness we had for the animals on the farm.

Always, before Mother prepared a chicken for the table, the chicken was taken off the yard and put in a cleaning pen and fed only corn and water. It was so much fun to feed the chickens and to see them all gather together; to watch how they cared for the little ones. Even at night, when everyone was in, if the rooster heard a strange noise or something was about to happen, he'd let you know, and sometimes the hen too. When you heard them, you'd be sure to check, because mostly something was wrong. Most times someone was trying to break into their coop, and they knew one of them would go missing. Even in those days, people were stalking whatever you owned, even on the farm.

Observing the Sun

Look at the Sun.

*Coming up above the trees; Its rays heating the earth
The bugs come across the earth, traveling in all directions
While walking along, we hold our hand up to the Sun
Moves across the sky, at midday,
It's time to drop what you are doing, for its time to eat.
As we watch the Sun move across the sky
At Evening just above the trees
It's now time to eat!*

Growing Up On The Farm

*Ham Hocks, Collard Greens, Sweet Potatoes, Hog Cracklin, Corn Bread
dumpling, Mustard Greens, Ham Bone in Dry Peas.*

Growing Up on the Farm:

*White Potatoes, sweet peas, yellow squash with green peppers, tomatoes with
corn and okra. Sausage, Bacon, Eggs with Hominy Grits, Hot biscuits with
molasses.*

Growing Up on the Farm:

*Hog chitlins, steamed rice, green beans, yellow turnips, Hog Head Cheese,
butter milk biscuits.*

Growing Up on the Farm:

*Chicken and dumplings, Stewed Chicken and rice, Fried Chicken and Potato
Salad, Stuffed Turkey with cranberry sauce. De old fashion Fruit Cake,
soaked in homemade wine.*

That's what I liked, Growing Up on the Farm!

But it was hard work, Growing Up on the Farm. The same method was followed to bring the cows' home every evening. The hogs were fed with corn, special food for hogs and the good slop from the kitchen. They had a special built troth for their water and food. We also had to keep a place in the pen where the hogs could wallow in the mud. It was fun to watch them wallow then try to clean themselves up. Sometimes the hogs didn't clean up well. The hogs would attempt to break out the pen sometimes. And if they got out, then they could do a lot of damage to the farm. Especially in the sweet potato patches and other vegetables like the fresh corn in the fields. They would yell and tear down more than they ate. They would go on to other peoples fields and cause serious problems.

The hogs that were hard to fatten were put up in a fattening pen where they were watched and given special food to see how they would develop. October was the month they started getting the hogs ready for killing for the winter months. Before this happened the hogs that were selected for killing would be put up on in

a boarded pen. They would be cleaned out and fed special food. Hog killing was a sad day, because you didn't want to see them killed. Mother and we children would always hide and cry. Hogs, cows and chickens--after working with them for so long, they became pets and friends; even the mules and horses were sad to see them killed. Special care was given in this slaughter process. They would heat pots of hot water to clean and scrape the hog. They prepared clean benches to cut the hog on, but first they removed the liver. They would fry some of the liver and eat it before they completed the slaughtering of the hog. The hog was then cut up properly into hams, shoulder, and his head for hog head cheese. The feet were made for pig feet. The hog was cut up for sausage meat, the intestines was cleaned, scraped and washed out. They did a special cleaning before grinding the sausage meat. The intestines had to be hand washed each and tied. The sausage meat hung in the smoke house, but some of the sausage meat Mother would fry in small patties and stuff in jars for the winter. Then there were the skins, fat and lean cut pieces. These were placed in a big pot and cooked down into crackling. The grease from this was called hog lard and would be placed into large cans after it cooled. The lard was used instead of buying oil or Crisco. The crackling was good when hot. But it was better when it cooled, eaten with sweet potatoes. Mother also made crackling bread. This bread was very rich and good.

Many days when we went to school, we would take sweet potatoes and crackling. The children in the city would ask us to bring them some, and we would share with them. We were a poor family, but my parents made sure we ate and we did not mind sharing. We were taught to be rich with love.

RED WAGON TO SCHOOL

My mother would take old dresses from my Grandmother and make my sisters and I dresses. Mother would take the dresses apart and recut the pattern to fit us. Mother did all her sewing by hand; she would have to sometimes take the things people gave her, but she would wash the items and make sure they were cleaned. We were kept cleaned and loved. Every chance Mother could she would buy a piece of material, cut a pattern to fit us, and make a pretty dress for us. We had two new dresses a piece; my sister Melon and I would wear each other's, so we would have more than our own two dresses. We would save the new dress for church. The old dresses, Melon and I would use for school. We used our old clothes to put on after we came from school. We had high top black shoes and long black and brown stockings. Mother made us long legged, pink flanged panties, the *huspun*, and flanged slips.

Times were sometimes hard. I remember the early 30's, we were kept busy although we were very small. We had chores to do. Mother would take a bag after the flour was out of it, and she'd then put a strap on the bag to fit across our shoulders. And then Father would take us to the yard were the wood pile was, and show us how to pick the small pieces of wood called chips and place them in the bag. When we filled the bag with as much as we could carry, we were to empty them in a basket or bucket on the back porch. When my brother was old enough, he pulled a little red wagon; my Mother and Father had Santa Clause bring us one

(a red wagon). My brother Elderwood (I called him Woody) and my Sister Melon, we would put my little brother Maplewood Clarence and the bags of wood chips in the wagon and bring them both to the porch. We were kept busy until we were old enough to go to school.

My Heart Cries

*For the children I see, never enjoyed farm land
Running in the field, playing with the rabbits,
Catching birds, feeding chickens, counting chicks
My Heart Cries*

*Catching birds, cleaning them and putting them on stick
To bake them over the fire; Milking cows, churning butter
Watching the hogs turn over in their troughs.
Walking in the grass, making music
My Heart Cries*

*Eating Sugar Cane, apples and pears from the trees
Pecans, black walnuts, and old hickory too
Hard to crack but when you got it open it was certainly
Good.
My Heart Cries.*

*We picked up cotton chips, at two years old,
But always plenty to do,
Horseback riding, or
Playing with the Mule;
My Heart Cries.*

*I can say thank you Mother, thank you Father
For all you taught us to do, My Heart Cries
Because I can say thank you, for those who
Didn't get this chance.
My Heart Cries.*

When we were old enough, my brother Woody and I started first grade in 1933 in the city of Marion. We lived in the country, but my father took us and registered us at the Marion County Training - Smith Swamp Elementary School. We met our teacher, Mrs. Robinson. I shall never forget, she was a heavyset woman. Mother took time to teach us a lot at home. Our first book was Jack and Nell book, a little blue and black reader with a little boy and girl on the front, with

a little motorcar. Jack drove the car, he said "honk, honk, here I come in my fine motor car." The car was yellow and red, Nell said "Honk, honk, here I come in my fine motor car." We had to read, and we had a lot of homework. And if the teacher had any problem with us she made sure to talk to our parents. Not only that she would use a ruler or a hedge switch on us, one that she would break from the near the door. The bushes were alongside the walk near Mrs. Robinson's door.

We were taken to school by our father until he made arrangements with our uncles and aunts to walk with us to school. These were my father's sisters and brothers. When my father didn't drive us, we would walk with them. My brother Woody and I, being small, had a hard time keeping up with them; we had a five-mile walk. We had to leave home early in the morning. Mother made sure we ate breakfast before we left, and when the weather was cold, we were wrapped up warm. We sometimes would take our lunch to school. Sometimes if we went to the lunchroom early in the morning, we could eat the schools two crackers and three cups of soup. Whoever was there first ate first.

But before we did any work in our class we said the Lord's Prayer:

Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, forever Amen.

The Lord's Prayer was always what we did the first thing in the morning. Then we would sing:

*My Country this of thee, sweet land of Liberty.
My Native Country, thee, Land of the noble free
Let music sell the breeze, and ring from all the trees
Our father's God, to thee. Author of liberty of thee I sing.
Land where my father's died, Land of thy name I love, I love thy rocks, hills,
thy words and sweet freedom son.; Let mortal tongues awake, Let all that to
thee we sing, Long may our land be bright with Freedom's The name I love, I
love the rocks and hills, thy words and sweet Freedom's song; Let mortal
tongues awake. Let all that to thee we sing. Long may our land be bright with
Freedom's pilgrim's pride from every mountain side. Let Freedom ring tempted
hills. My heart with rapture shrills like that above breath partakes, let rocks
their silence break, the sound prolong Holy light. Protect us by thy might.
Great God our King of Thee.*

Our teacher explained to us how important our land, our mountains and rocks were. The land brings forth the green herbs, the flowers, the green grass, and the fruit trees. It brings forth all food, the cotton from which our clothes are made, it produces food for the animals and the tobacco crops. Our Teacher would take the time to explain all these things to us, and teach us we must take care of these things because all this comes from God Our Father. And our teacher taught us not to throw rocks at one another; it would not please God.

School began at 8:30am in the morning. Mrs. Robinson would call the roll each morning; if we were there we had to say the word "present." And we would raise our hands so she would be sure to see us. And if a name was called and the

person not there, we would say 'absent.' But if they came late with a good reason she would mark them present.

I remember when I entered my first grade class there was a big tall, tall girl. I thought she was a teacher; she was taller than the teacher. But she answered the roll call. So we asked our teacher Mrs. Robinson if she was a student, because she was so big and tall. The teacher said she was very late starting school, and was hard to work with because she had no training at home. We could see the difference.

10:30 am was always recess time. Our teacher would put us in a line one row at a time, and we would march outside and wait outside the door, until all the children were out. Our Teacher would walk way ahead and she then stop and face us. She'd tell us to march in a straight line to her. We were to follow her instructions, quietly. No matter how cold, we would go outside; we had to run and play for a few minutes. But in the spring we would stay outside a little longer. The summer was much more fun. But we all had to listen, and anyone that did not listen was pulled from the line and had to sit or stand away from the class. The teacher would watch as she worked and played with us. The time we stayed outside depended upon the weather. Then we would line up and return to our classroom. We would continue our studies in the classroom until twelve o'clock. The bell would ring, and we would line up for the lunch building. For lunch we would also receive hot soup and crackers. We had to eat all of our food; we were not allowed to waste anything. Afterwards we returned to the classroom with our teacher. The second and third grade classes were upstairs. The stairs were built on the outside of the building. Sometimes they looked shaky-- I guess because so many children were walking up and down them every day. The building was old and made of wood. We would watch the other children as they would walk up the stairs. Sometimes we would be the last to enter our class although we were on the first floor. Mr. Jenkins was our principal at the elementary school. And Professor M. Johnakin* was the principal of the junior high school and high school.

In the first grade, my Brother Woody and I were in the same class. He was real smart. Mother would always check over our homework. My Mother would read one time to him and he would seem to remember everything. But poor me, I didn't have it like that. I couldn't remember everything the way Woody did. But my teacher thought I should do as well as my big brother Woody or better. She would say to me "Did you study your lesson, Lively?" I would say yes. She would tell me to read the paragraph, and I would read it. And she would say "Did you read it?" I said yes. She would say, "Now close the book and stand up and tell us what you read." I would try, but I was not able to remember everything. Then she would tell my bother to read, and close the book and stand up and tell what he read. And as I said-- he had it like that! He could stand up and recite word for word everything he had just read. Then she would have me do it again-- read the paragraph, stand up and tell the class what I read. I was able to do it after my brother Woody had done it. The teacher would say to me, "If your brother can do it, you can too!" If I was not able to do it like my brother Woody, she'd say "Come up here to my desk." She always kept a hedge switch or her 12 inch ruler, and she'd beat my little hands red. I cried, but I wasn't allowed to cry for long, if I did she would beat my hands again. So I shut up my mouth. Although I was still hurting I didn't want to get hit again. When we got home from school, my brother would tell my Mother

and Father what happened at school, and also what happened to me. Mother said to Father that my brother Elderwood was able to grasp and remember things much faster than me. I was not capable of doing as well as him.

My brother Woody was born a big fine healthy smart baby, and went straight from nursing to regular care. Not me. I only weighed three pounds, and wasn't able to go to normal feeding right away. So my Father went to the school and he had a talk with my teacher, explaining to her first that no two children are alike. There was no reason to punish me because I could not remember as fast my older brother. My father spoke to the principal of the elementary school, Professor Jenkins. Professor Jenkins took my brother and me into his office with our little first grade reader. My brother read then I read. Then the Principal Mr. Jenkins had us to write. My brother's handwriting was good. He looked at my writing and said "Did you really do this?" He said "I'm going to stand right here near you and I'm going to watch you write." He said he couldn't believe it, that is why he watched me. He said he was going to send for the principal of the high school, Mr. Johnakin and told me that I was going to write for that principal, just as I did for him.

Principal Johnakin came; Professor Jenkins explained to him what had happened and why we were in his office. Unless it was for a good reason, the principal's office was not a good place to be! Principal Johnakin was one very tall, straight black man. He came and stood in the door with his eyes blinking. He stood there for a few minutes. Professor Jenkins said good morning to Principal Johnakin and asked him to come in and sit down, because he wanted to talk to him. He told the principal that he wanted him to see this little first graders handwriting. Principal Johnakin said, "Handwriting in the first grade?" Professor Jenkins said "Yes." Principal Johnakin asked this little girl--signaling at me-- or this little boy, nodding at Woody. Professor Jenkins said "This little girl," looking towards me. Principal Johnakin watched me write again. Then he said he couldn't believe what his eyes were seeing. He took my writing up to the high school; he said he hadn't seen as neat and nicely written letters as this in the high school. But before Principal Johnakin left, Professor Jenkins told him that my Father was not happy with the punishment that the teacher gave me. I think they told the teacher not to let anything like that happen again, to me or to any other student. They removed my brother Woody from the class. For a long time I was afraid of my teacher Mrs. Robinson, I didn't think she liked me. I didn't know what else she might do to me, with my brother out the class. But I just worked harder after my brother was taken out of the class. I would still see my brother at recess time, and he would say "So sis, did she hit you again?" But I studied hard to get out of her class and Ms. Robinson gave me a good report card.

From then on my Father and Mother said to the principals and the teachers if there were any problems to write them a note and they would visit the school. Principal Jenkins was a nice person. He always spoke kindly to us and all the children. But he left when I was in the 5th grade. Everyone cried when we had heard he was leaving. The boys were upset; he played a lot of different sports with the boys, handball and football. We girls had a handball team, but we were not as good as the boys.

In the second grade Mrs. J. E Cooper was my teacher. She was a thin tall teacher, beautiful with short black hair, like a teacup with curls. She had a very

sweet personality and nice words for everyone. I remember seeing her a lot when I was in first grade. But I had no idea she would be my teacher. Her class was so different. She would talk to us in a sweet soft voice. She did not have a hedge switch or a ruler on her desk. We had homework, but she would take the time to show us and explain to us what we were to do. She would always say, "Now children, is there anything you don't understand about your homework? Let's talk about it." I felt so much more comfortable in her class. She would not hit anyone. But if she had a problem she would certainly write a note in your notebook to your parents! She knew our parents wanted us to listen to our teachers and do our classwork. So we did not want her to send a note home. We were reminded before we left in the morning to go to school to behave and listen to our teachers. My Mother and Father made it clear to us that they were sending us to school to learn; and that learning better happen.

In those days, the early thirties, we were too young to do much field work when we got home from school, but we had to shell corn to feed the chicken sometimes, enough for two or three days, so we could read and study. We'd get the corn from the barn, take it out the shucks and we were given a bucket by Mother or Father to shell the corn. We sometimes sat on the back porch and shelled corn before we went to study. The chickens would come up while we were shelling the corn, so we had to be careful not spill any. But every once in a while we would, and when we did the chickens would make to fly up to get it from the porch. If we didn't shell the corn, we would take wood from the wood pile before studying. But this was fun, my brother and I would race and count the pieces of wood to see who could put the most and stack the highest pile. My brother Woody always won because he could move very fast. And before studying we would sometimes have to help Mother gather eggs from the nests in chicken coops and put them in a basket, or help feed the chickens or the hogs. Mother would carry a large pale of water to the trough and my brother and I would take the smaller pails. But we could not go into the barn where the mules were. Mother would say "Now children, don't come inside here with me because you might get stepped on." And we did not. Sometimes we were afraid for Mother as she would go inside the barn, up in the hay loft, and take down hay for the mules and horses and cows. We did not want the mule to step on her. Especially if Father was not home, Mother would try to get everything done on the outside first. Because we did not have electric lights, we would have to use lanterns. As we grew older, my brother Maplewood and sister Melon (who were both younger) began to help us and join in with our after school chores. As soon as they were 5 ½ years old they started school also.

GLASS MARBLES IN DIRT

To Grandparents House We Go

We knew our Grandmom Maggie and Grandpa Clarence Williams, my father's parents, and Grandma Elva Taylor, my Mother's mother. They were always so sweet to us. As little children growing up, we were always home with Mother and Father, but I can remember when we were very young Grandmom and Grandpa Clarence would come over to visit with Mother and Father. They would

always bring us something and they'd talk and play with us. Mother and Father would prepare special food and a lot of food, because Grandmom and Grandpa Clarence's family was large. Grandmom and Grandpa Clarence had 17 children. Father had a lot of brothers but only three sisters-- Aunt Essie, Aunt Magdalene and Aunt Sarabell. My father was the oldest boy. I remember Uncle Howard, Uncle Herbert, Uncle Coy, Uncle James, Uncle Waddell, and the youngest brother, Uncle Willie. Uncle James lived in North Carolina; he died in the 50's. Some of my uncles would teach us how to play marbles. We would make a big round circle with a stick, and we would make a row of dirt in the center, and place the marbles up on the dirt. Then one person at a time would take their chance at the marble game. The marbles were made of glass, and they had all kinds of pretty colors. Some of them seemed too pretty to even put in the dirt, but it was a fun game. We would choose as to who was first, second, third-- usually three to four people would play at a time. After making the circle and making the dirt bed for the marbles to rest on, the first person to play would squat in back of the circle, and take one marble in his or her hand, place it between the thumb and right or left index finger and then take his or her aim to try to shoot all the marbles out the circle. The one that was able to shoot best won all the marbles and was named the winner. But the game rotated until everyone got his or her chance. If someone gave us money we would save it, but we would be sure to tell Mother and she would hold it for us until we had enough for Mother to buy marbles for us.

When we went to Grandpa's house, it was nice. Grandpa had a lot of chickens, turkeys, ducks and geese. He had a big turkey that was fun to watch but we did not go near him often. That turkey held his head up real high like up in the air, and made it clear to us that he was not a pet. The turkey would look all around, and would strut and then stop to wait for the mother hen to follow him. Grandmom would go and gather the eggs from their nest sometimes, when the chickens weren't around. The turkey eggs were much larger than the chicken eggs. The ducks also laid large eggs, but Grandmom kept the ducks near their pond. The ducks were different colors and swam in that pond; some were plain white. Watching them was so amazing-- to see how they would fly into the water and drop themselves in and swim. We would sometimes just sit there and play and watch. Grandpa would look to see where we were, him and Grandmom. They would tell us what we could play with and what we could not because sometimes the big machines, like the mowing machine, the stalk cutter and the rake machine, were about. The stalk cutter was a machine that cut down the stalks, in the cornfield or cotton fields. The rake machine was a large machine used after the stalk cutter to rake all the stalks up into piles. The corn stalks were gathered and placed into the corn barn. The corn was used as feed to the cows, mules and sometimes there was corn left on the stalks and it would be taken off and fed to the hogs as well. The rake machine was also used to rake the hay into piles. After they were gathered into big piles, a tall pole was driven into the ground. The hay was brought to the pole by a mule and wagon, and then stacked around the pole, until time for the machine to bail. The bail machine was brought to the haystacks, then bailed in blocks and placed into the corn loft. It was used to feed the animals during the winter months. During the fall we would climb the haystacks and pick off the dry peas, and eat them or play with them.

Grandmom's stove was very large, much larger than Mother's, and her kitchen was larger too. She had very large iron pots. She cooked a lot of food also; it seemed like she always had a large pan of baked sweet potatoes on the stove, with plenty of homemade butter. There also was a deep large pan of hog crackling. Grandpa kept a lot of candy canes! He would talk to us and give a piece to us before we left to go home. It was fun to go home to Mother, and my brother and I would talk about all the fun we'd had.

Thanksgiving and Christmas were very special because the families would gather together. Father would gear the mule or horse up to the buggy. We all would get in the wagon for the ride to Grand's house. Sometimes the dirt roads were so rough in the fall and winter that we would go hump bump over the ruts in the road. Sometimes there would be water in the holes in the road, and the water would splash on the wagon and on its wheels. But we would not get wet. Sometimes men with horses would stop us on the road, but Father would talk to them nicely and they would let us keep going.

Christmas was fun. Father would go out and cut a large limb of a big pine, and it would be our tree. He would bring it inside and put up the tree on the wooden slab boards. Mother would cook all kinds of different cakes. The fruit cake was first. Mother would make sweet potato pies and lemon pies. Father would buy the large candy cane sticks and there would be apples and oranges, walnuts and all kinds of nuts at Christmas time. There was always plenty of food, turkey and baked chicken.

A special table was set for Santa. We asked Father one day if we were setting the table for the real Santa. When we wanted to know about things we would talk to Mother or Father. But they would only tell you but so much-- a child was told to stay in a child's place, and to act accordingly.

The night after we asked Father about the real Santa, we all went to sleep. Father came into our rooms and woke us up, and took us outside by the big tall tree oak tree. There was Santa, his large sled, his reindeer and his wife. She was tall. They spent the night and we went back to bed. The next day Santa and his wife spent Christmas Day with us. Santa bought a big red wagon for my brother and a doll for me.

From that day forward I knew that Santa was real.

**(Johnakin High, formerly Marion County Training School and Marion High School.. 1932 - Agriculture •Milbia Johnakin, B. S., Instr. in Agr)*

If your enjoyed this sample buy now at www.dlitepress.com

Also available on Amazon & NookPress.com