

## Memories From My Childhood

### By Eleanor Tate

I was born on 12/24/35 in a small house my dad had built on the Tutt family farm. I had two older sisters and one brother. Another brother (Richard) was stillborn before my brother (Byrd), 17 months after my birth. There was another girl, Virgie. She was not strong and needed a lot of care. The first thing I can remember was feeding her cream of wheat and carrying her around. Mom said I looked like a cat carrying her kitten. Then 15 months later, another brother (John) was born in the daytime, and we were all sent to the brooder house, which was a log cabin type house we used for storage. Dad brought us grapes to eat, and the older girls tried to keep us busy. Another sister (Flossie) was born 15 months later, 23 months later, Nora, another sister, and 13 months later, Jack, another brother. Now there were nine living children.

About three years after Jack was born, Mom was expecting another baby. She was sick most of the time. She knew something was wrong. She was 45 at the time. She made clothes for my little brothers and sisters. I was 10 at the time. We had been told that the midwife brought babies in his black bag. I did not believe this anymore so when we were put to bed, I stayed awake. I knew the baby was coming. Some of my aunts were there. Dad sent my two older sisters, Virginia and Nevada, to get my grandparents and the midwife. I heard her screams and moans from the other room. Then my Aunt Callie came in our room saying, "poor little children." The next morning I took Virgie and went into my parents' room. They had Mom laying on a door or something by the window and the baby lying on a little table. I picked up its hand, and it was so cold. It was a girl, and Dad named her Lillie Edna. Mom had made gowns for the baby and herself. They took them to Grandpa Bailey's house where they sat up with them. At the funeral, they were both in the same casket, the baby lying on Mom's arm. The coffin had plush rose colored lining. Uncle Frank sang Precious Memories.

We had a lot of fun as kids. We did not have toys so we made our own. We played in the rock houses and built playhouses in the woods with tree limbs and covered them with pine needles. It is a wonder we didn't get hurt badly. We were always climbing trees going from one to the other and seeing who could climb the highest. We would go down to the river to see the waterfalls. We caught snakes and all kinds of creatures putting them in jars. Nevada tried to skin a snake once to make a belt. She said they cost a lot in the catalog. One time Nevada baked a cake for a boyfriend, and the cat ate part of it. She put rat poison on it, and the cat died. She made Flossie and me take it down toward the river and throw it over a cliff. As we walked, the cat kept swelling up, and we were afraid it would burst.

I remember walking to school and the older kids running off from me. I was always stopping to pick flowers or look at a bird's nest or rocks. When the older girls had company, they did not want me around.

When I was a child, we had family reunions at Grandma and Grandpa Bailey's house. Some of the cousins would come to spend the night with us. We would put feather beds on the floor and sleep on them. The older boys would sleep in the hayloft.

We went to a one-room country school (Bethel). Almost everyone there was related. Once in a while we would have someone new. There for a while we walked across the fields and through the woods to school in the winter. When it snowed, we would pull a limb of a pine tree with snow on it, and snow would fall on the one in back. We made sleds

and went down the hill in back of the school. Sometimes we landed in the creek at the bottom of the hill.

We were told that there were five-foot ferns growing behind the waterfalls in the winter so we older kids went to see one early spring day. The falls were still covered with ice. We went under them through one side of the ice. Dad came to get us with his razor strap. We never did that again. Dad said the ice could have fallen and hurt us or killed us. We respected Dad and his razor strap.

We had no electric or running water except in the creek. We had kerosene lamps and a battery radio. Dad would take the radio out in the yard and set it on a stump so he could listen to the news. During the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Dad made us stay in the house.

I remember Dad teaching school, cutting the neighbors' hair, and doing carpentry work. He also went to Louisville to work and came home on weekends. We could hear him coming home from miles away, playing the harmonica and singing. Dad taught us the names of trees and plants and a lot of songs and stories.

We picked blackberries, blueberries, and apples. We always had a large garden. Mom worked very hard making jelly and canning. She told us Bible stories. The one I remember most was about Moses and the bulrushes. We had a dog named Billy, chickens, pigs, two or three horses, and cows we milked.

We all got one new pair of shoes in the fall. By spring they had holes in the soles, and we put cardboard in them. We went barefoot in the warm months. Mom sewed us dresses and other clothes. All of us girls wore dresses—not pants unless it was awfully cold. Then we wore pants under our dresses. I had a dress for school and one for everyday—all out of feed sacks. We would pick out which feed sack we wanted a dress out of when we got feed in the fall.

In the winter, Mom and her sisters would make quilts. We would color a cardboard for a checkerboard and use corn for checkers.

The inside of our house was papered with newspapers and magazines. The seed catalogs were used to paper the kitchen. We had a big table and a long bench Dad had built. We had some cane bottom chairs, which were used in the other rooms when we had company. We cooked on a big black woodstove year round. We went to bed at dark and got up at daylight.

On rainy days, we played in the hayloft of the barn. All the hay was loose (no bales). We made tunnels in it, dropped from the rafters in it, and made nests to keep warm in. We would drop down through the hole they put hay down onto the horses' or cows' backs when they would come in. All the buildings had tin roofs or wood shingles.

Grandma and Grandpa Bailey lived in a big old plantation type house that belonged to Uncle Sherman Shackelford. We were not allowed to go upstairs, but they slept on the balcony in the summer. The mattresses were stuffed with straw or corn shucks.

Dad made us a swing out of cable in a big pine tree. We could really swing high in it. We had no boughten toys except sometimes our aunts (Dad's sisters) in Ohio would send us some for Christmas and clothes.

At Christmas we never had a tree. Our house was too small, but Mom made us fudge and sea foam candy. Dad would get oranges and apples for us. We didn't have much, but we had a lot of love.