

## “Growing Up in Hill Country” By Nevada Deadmond

Born in small weather beaten wood frame home in the hills of Eastern Kentucky.... I was the second child of a loving mother and father. This was the beginning of a large family; my father was already forty-seven and Mother thirty-two. A sister who was eleven months old welcomed me home. Mother, I am sure would be been overwhelmed with all this in such a short time, but she, too, had been raised in a large family so she adapted very well.

Our home had no electricity or running water so we studied by kerosene lamp. Two wood burning fireplaces heated our home, and of course our cook stove was wood fired too.

We raised all our food—vegetables, fruit, chickens, and pork. Mom canned lots of fruit, berries, and vegetables, most canned in gallon or half gallon jars. She made lots of jams and jellies too. We raised both Irish and sweet potatoes, about thirty to forty bushels of sweet potatoes and seventy to eighty bushels of Irish potatoes. We stored the Irish potatoes in a shallow pit with straw in the bottom, then placed the potatoes in and covered them with straw and dirt then with wood slabs from the sawmill that was near by. The sweet potatoes were allowed to dry well, then they were wrapped individually and placed in boxes and stored where they would not freeze for winter use.

I can still remember watching Mom as she cooked in the small kitchen and when she made jams and did canning. It was so hot, and she would have beads of perspiration on her face. Yet she never complained.

We baked all the bread we ate. I made my first pan of cornbread by setting the bowl on the oven door to stir it up because I was not tall enough to reach it on the table or cabinet. Our day started with a good hearty breakfast with biscuits and gravy or eggs along with cooked cereal, butter, jam, jelly, and sorghum.

We always had plenty of milk, butter, and eggs because we raised our own cows and chickens. Our milk and butter were kept cool in summer by hanging them in the well. We would churn the milk to make fresh butter and then discard the old butter, which was kept to make lye soap for laundry use. Nothing was wasted.

Mom made our undergarments and pajamas from the sacks that our hog and dairy feed came in. At times when the wind was high, our skirts would blow up. There in red ink was printed “100 lb. net when packed.” I can laugh now, but at the time it was not funny!

During World War II, elastic was hard to get to use in the waistbands of our undergarments and pajamas so Mom would make a band and attach a button. Too bad if the button came off, you just grabbed your waist and held on all day unless you could find a safety pin.

There was a small country church near where we lived which was served by a circuit rider minister. We would walk to church, and Dad would carry a kerosene lamp to be used in the church. Dad always loved to sing so he led the group in singing old hymns. (I am not sure, but I think Dad played the organ at times, or is it just my imagination?)

My dad was born September 20<sup>th</sup> 1886, the oldest of eight children. He had two brothers and five sisters. Both his mother and dad were teachers so they encouraged the children to get an education. All except one attended Berea College in Berea, Kentucky, located in the south central part of the state. They all worked at the college to pay for tuition and lodging. There were no co-ed dorms at that time. There was a Ladies Hall and a Men's Hall with a Dean of each hall to oversee all activities at the dorms. If a suitor came calling, this Dean of the hall was with them at all times.

To pay for their tuition, they did all types of work, such as farming, laundry, cooking, etc. I still have a blanket, which was woven by my aunt when she attended school there, graduating in 1913. They spun and carded the wool and wove it into blankets.

My mother only attended school to the fourth grade, when she had to drop out to help with chores at home. She could read and write, and do simple math. She could sew, quilt, crochet, and knit.

One thing I remember at age two was that my Grandmother Tutt lived with us. One day that summer two of my dad's sisters came from Ohio and made her go home with them. She did not want to go, and she cried when she left. Late that fall in November she died, and they brought her back to be buried in the family plot at Bethel cemetery near where we lived. I remember going to the graveside service and that she was wearing a light blue dress with a pink rose at the neck.

In December of the same year, we got our first baby brother.

Sometime in the summer of 1940 things got bad on the farm, and my dad found work in Louisville helping in the construction of one of the large bridges across the Ohio River from New Albany, Indiana to Kentucky. Dad would come about once a month, and we were all excited to see him.

We walked to school each day, which was about two and a half miles from our home. Our school was heated with a wood or coal stove, and the first one to arrive at school would build the fire. I liked doing this because when I did the starting of the fire, I would burn math books because I never liked math. In my small brain, I thought maybe we would not have math class if there were no books. I was wrong; they always seemed to find other math books.

The route we took to school led by a big white house with a large balcony or upstairs porch. The folks who lived there were, I was sure, very rich. Sometimes the ladies who lived there gave us big red or yellow apples, which we would have for our snack at recess time. One day they gave us each a banana, which I had never tasted before, and it was very good. In the well that they had, the water was so cold that it would hurt your teeth sometimes when you drank it. One day when we stopped there to get a drink on the way home from school, one of the ladies took us inside the kitchen and showed us a refrigerator. I had never seen anything like this before. There was a small blue flame that made everything inside very cold. She gave us some lemonade with ice cubes in it, all this here in the middle of summer. I was so excited. Mom would never believe this.

Many years later I found out that these ladies were my dad's first cousins who taught school in the city.