

THE BEAVER STORY – ATKINS SIDE

.....as told by Ernest Beaver in July of 1986

FIRST KNOWN STAGE

It all happened so long ago that hardly anyone has any real knowledge and certainly no actual memory of it. According to the story passed down through the generations, a young Cherokee Indian girl, possibly traveling along “The Trail of Tears” in the late 1830s, or maybe native to the area, ended up living with a white family somewhere in Tennessee. We don’t have any real knowledge of the name of that white family. However, it was our understanding that the Tennessee family, including this Cherokee girl, travelled to Arkansas and settled in White County in the Little Red River area along the banks of Holcomb Branch/Creek. When I was young, my brothers and sisters and I heard about stories that had been told by the woman that our mother and our grandmother referred to as Grandma Bryant, stories about her life as an Indian girl living with the white people. All this was probably taking place during the 1830s or 1840s, either while they were still in Tennessee or after moving to Arkansas. She told of her work being hard and she received very little kindness and respect. She told about her bed being in a small lean-to that was attached to the side of the house. The lean-to had cracks in the walls and during snowstorms her bed would get covered with snow. However, she obviously survived and we were told that she grew to be a strong, pretty girl.

We don’t know her age when she married a man named Bryant, nor do we know much about the early life of this particular Bryant family. We were told that the newly married couple made their home east of Fourteen Mile Creek, near where it runs into the Little Red River (this is also the area of Holcomb Branch). This stream was very important to them, providing water for cooking, washing, bathing, and other basic necessities of life. Several children were born to this Bryant couple, but the children were apparently orphaned when the family was young. Some of the children told stories of how hard their lives were, even to the point of having to eat pig feed at times.

Two of the children, Sarah and Albert, remained in this area and raised families. Their birthdates are not known. Albert Bryant is buried in the Roosevelt Cemetery in White County and more about Sarah will be shared later in this story. We’ve been told that some other names associated with the family are Swaggerty and Porter, but I don’t know exactly the connection.

SECOND STAGE



J.C. (Cal) and Sarah Atkins

Sarah Bryant married John C. “Cal” Atkins. They are my Grandfather and Grandmother Atkins. (See photo) Although I was just 8 years old when she died, I can remember Grandma Atkins, but Grandpa Atkins died the year before I was born. Cal (J.C.) Atkins was born March 31, 1836, and died January 11, 1916. He was a small man with a light complexion and kept a small beard. He had a stoop because of a back injury he received during his service in the Civil War. The Atkins’ first home was also made along Fourteen Mile Creek near the Little Red River but they later moved to a farm in the Holly Springs community in northern White County. All of the stories told about this family indicate that they were a very frugal, careful about the saving of even little things. This seems to have been an inherited trait, sometimes even to a fault. But when you think about just how hard their lives must have been, it is understandable. Sarah Bryant Atkins died October 31, 1925, and she and Cal (J.C.) Atkins are buried in Roosevelt Cemetery, just behind Roosevelt Missionary Baptist Church.



Some of the first children born to the young Atkins couple died at early ages and are buried in Philadelphia Cemetery, west of Sunnydale along Hwy 124, also in northern White County, near Fourteen Mile Creek. We don't know the names of those children and have been told that the graves weren't even marked. However, four other children (Carrie, Willie, Lizzie, & Joe) born later lived long productive lives in the local area.

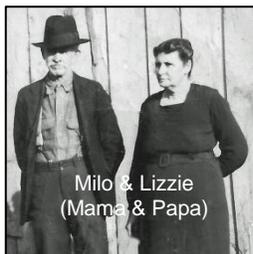
Their oldest child, Carrie, was born September 23, 1876, and died March 9, 1962, at the age of 86. Aunt Carrie married Jim McAdams. I can remember our family taking a wagon pulled by a team of horses over to near the community of Denmark (several miles east of here) to visit Aunt Carrie and her family. Sometimes I'd ride and sometimes I'd walk along the way. Mama was real close to her sister, Carrie. Aunt Carrie and Uncle Jim had four girls; Janie, Edna, Alma, and Eunice. At the time of this writing in 1986, my cousin Janie, is still active, both mentally and physically, and comes to our family reunion each year, although she is about 90 at this time.

The second Atkins child, Willie (W.M.), was born August 13, 1877, and died February 6, 1963, at the age of 89. Uncle Willie married Lou Joyner and they had three daughters and a son: Ella, Edna, Myrtle, and Junious. Ella married Finis Sims and Myrtle married Willie Britton. Finis was my mother-in-law's brother. They attend our family reunion each year as well. Edna Crisler died several years ago and Junious was killed in a hunting accident several years ago.

Mama was the third Atkins child. Sarah Elizabeth (Lizzie) was born July 14, 1881, and died June 29, 1966, at the age of 85. I'll mention more about our family later in this story.

The fourth Atkins child, Joe (J.M.), was born May 20, 1883 and died in 1976 at the age of 93. Uncle Joe married Lenora Meacham and they had two sons, Dillon and Calvin. Dillon died several years ago of a brain tumor. At this writing, Calvin and his wife, Elsie, still live near Bald Knob and continue to attend our family reunion.

THIRD STAGE



Now, I want to go back to my family and tell you a little more about us. Mama (Sarah Elizabeth) married Milo Benjamin Franklin Beaver in 1900 and they had a large family. I'm going to list all of the children born to Mama and Papa and a little about each family. Mama and Papa are buried in Roosevelt Cemetery.



1. Henry (W.H.) was born January 28, 1903, and died January 17, 1923, just 11 days short of being 20 years of age. About three weeks before his death, he had married Ethyl Beals. They had been digging strawberry plants. Henry became ill. That illness developed into pneumonia and Henry died. Can't you just feel the sorrow that young bride had to endure at such a young age? I was just 5 years old at the time and don't remember very much at all from that time. However, I've been told since then that my mother-in-law, Blanche King, pregnant with my unborn wife, Averil, rode on horseback several miles in the rain to attend Henry's funeral. Henry is buried in Providence Cemetery near Hwy 157, north of Judsonia.
2. Johnny (J.E.) was born December 18, 1904, and died November 8, 1906, just six weeks short of his second birthday. I can remember Mama telling us about him dying so young

and just three weeks before the birth of his brother, Jesse. Johnny is buried in Roosevelt Cemetery, just down the row and near the graves of Mama and Papa.

3. Jesse (J.N.) was born November 28, 1906 and died September 25, 1975, at the age of 68. As I mentioned, Jesse was born just three weeks after the death of young Johnny. Don't you know how tough those few weeks were on Mama and Papa as young parents? Jesse married Wilma Pate and two boys and two girls were born to them: Dale, Burnace, Velma Jean, and Thelma Ruth. Jesse is buried in the Union Grove Cemetery in Independence County, in the community in which he lived.
4. Ina L. was born February 11, 1909, and died January 8, 1911. She, like little Johnny, died just a few weeks short of being 2 years old. Also, ironically, her death came just 18 days before the birth of her brother, Willard. Don't you know the sadness that Mama and Papa endured just over four years after the death of young Johnny, followed by the birth of Jesse. Mama used to tell us about how precious Ina was to her and how little but active that she was, letting her run under tables and such. Little Ina is buried in Roosevelt Cemetery, just down the row from Mama and Papa and next to Johnny.
5. Willard (G.W.) was born January 26, 1911, and died September 8, 1941. Willard is buried in Roosevelt Cemetery, also just down the row from Mama and Papa. The months of September and October of 1941 were a couple of the worst months of my life. Willard and I were doing sawmill work when a large piece of timber caught in the saw and kicked back endwise, striking Willard on the head. Though he was bleeding heavily, I rushed him to the hospital in Searcy, about 45 minutes away, where he lived for only about 30 minutes after we got to there. He was actually even able to walk into the hospital, but they were not able to stop the bleeding. Willard never married and he and I were very close, were good friends, and worked together much of the time. But the family troubles didn't end there. Just a month later, Papa died. He had heart trouble and had been ill for some time.
6. Lucille L. was born April 20, 1913. She married Louis Sutter, an older man, while she was still quite young. In 1947, she moved back home and lived with Mama for a while. Later, she married Tom Conder. They had two children, Betty Lou and Tommy Lynn. At this writing, Lucille is afflicted with arthritis so badly that she has to stay in bed most of the time.
7. Bessie J. was born April 8, 1915 and died May 10, 1970. Bessie married Samuel Martin and they raised one daughter, Avinell. Bessie suffered much before her death which followed a long and painful battle with cancer. Sam died only recently and they are both buried in Union Grove Cemetery.
8. Ernest P. – I was born October 13, 1917 and will be 69 on October 13 of this year, 1986. I married Averil King in January of 1946, and have two children, Harold and Carol.
9. Ruby I. was born September 18, 1920. She married Harry Ettlind and they had two children, Harry and Cindy. A few years after her marriage to Harry ended in divorce, Ruby married John Owen, a fine man and U.S. Navy retiree. They live in Little Rock at this time.
10. P. Modean was born August 18, 1922. She married Melvin Key and they had one son, Gary. They live in Lone Star, TX.

That made ten (10) children born to Mama and Papa over a period of nearly twenty years. As I remember it, our home was quiet and orderly, it certainly wasn't fancy, but was warm and clean. The primary aim was to have food and clothes. Our parents were very good to us and we always felt loved and cared for.

THE BEAVER STORYATKINS SIDE (2014 Update)

Updated by Harold Beaver (son of Averil & Ernest Beaver)

This is to update the status of the ten children born to Milo Benjamin Franklin Beaver and Sarah Elizabeth Atkins Beaver. At this writing, all of the ten children, as well as their spouses, have passed on. My mother, Averil, was the last one. She reached the age of 90 years, 5 months, 6 days, having received excellent and loving care during her final 5 years at a very good nursing and rehab center in Fort Smith, AR, near where I lived at the time.

1. Henry: No additional information to report.
2. Johnny: No additional information to report.
3. Jesse: Jesse's wife, Wilma, died on May 24, 1988, and is buried alongside Jesse in Union Grove Cemetery in southern Independence County. Their oldest son, Dale, died on May 24, 2002, and their youngest daughter, Thelma Ruth, died on January 20, 2002.
4. Ina: No additional information to report.
5. Willard: No additional information to report.
6. Lucille: Lucille's husband, Tom Conder, died on January 11, 1993, and is buried alongside Lucille in Roosevelt Cemetery.
7. Bessie: Bessie's husband, Sam Martin, died on August 8, 1985, and is buried alongside Bessie in Union Grove Cemetery. Their daughter, Avinell Martin Stephens, died on March 27, 1998. She is buried alongside her husband, Steve, in Union Grove Cemetery.
8. Ernest: Ernest (my father) died on October 15, 2000, and is buried in Roosevelt Cemetery. My mother, Averil King Beaver, died on July 29, 2013, and is buried alongside my father.
9. Ruby: Ruby died on July 8, 2009, and is buried in Roosevelt Cemetery alongside her husband, John Owen, who died on March 27, 1993.
10. (Pearlie) Modean: Modean died on June 24, 2011. She was preceded in death by her husband Melvin Key, who died on January 22, 1994. They are both buried in cemeteries in Texas.