

Orphan of the Storm

His entire family died in the tornado of 1903;
A poignant story of how **Little Paul** became **Mr. Paul**

By **PAUL KING**

As told to his daughter, Averil Beaver

“Here is the dress I was wearing the night of the storm”, I told my guests as they were leaving. The little blue dress was beautifully framed and hung near the door. Also enclosed inside the frame was a picture of a baby with bruises on his face, and a plaque, which read:

April 7, 1903

Tornado Strikes Little Red, Arkansas

Killed were Jim King, 30; Laura Middleton King, 29;

Three King Children: Ira, Dennis, and Alma.

Little Paul, 11-month-old son, was the only one of the family who escaped. He was found six feet from the bodies, crying. He was uninjured, lying under a thorn tree.

I tell my story for the purpose of giving encouragement to all who will read it. My motto has always been “Help if I can”. My earliest memory was of people saying that it was too bad Grandma and Grandpa had to raise me when they were so old and they already had a retarded daughter, Minnie, whose mind remained at about a two-year-old, after a spell of sickness. However, Granddad and Grandma wanted me and they made me know that.

My father, Jim King, and his family lived in a large house on Stevens Creek [northern White County, Arkansas]. It was corn-planting time. The storm struck suddenly. Dr. J.M. Wilburn was on a call to deliver a baby. He decided he could reach his home quicker if he cut through the King farm. He saw the terrible destruction and stopped his horse and buggy. He could hear me crying and found me lodged by a thorn tree. By this time, it was hailing so hard no one could have survived long. He took me to his home. Mae, his wife, wanted me so much, since she had no children. Grandma said NO, and I was placed in her arms. She began to shake with palsy and she shook for as long as she lived. At the gravesite of my family, one large opening was made in the Philadelphia Cemetery. The bodies of my mother and father were in one coffin. The bodies of the three children were in another. Some years later, I placed a monument to mark this large grave. [A young sister, Ova, had died of diphtheria before the storm.]



Mae Wilburn, wife of the doctor who found Paul King, holds the baby the morning after the tornado took away his family, April 7, 1903. The 98-year-old photo is faded but the bruise on the corner of Paul's left eye is very visible and his eyes appear to be swollen shut.

I believe my first conviction to do the right thing came from my grandparents. I sure did trust them, and it seemed everyone in the community did also. I guess they knew how to raise children because they had raised them: Jess, Fate, Ann, Laura, Dave, Lize, Fannie, Viole, Minnie and, of course, my dad, Jim. My grandfather did not talk much, but everyone liked to talk to "Uncle Tom". One day he was splitting wood near the school. One of the big schoolboys came and sat on a block. "Prince, are you on recess?" Granddad asked. At first, Prince would not tell what had happened. Truth was, Prince had thrown a tantrum, turned over desks in the room. After talking with Granddad a long while, Prince Wood returned to school, took his lickin' and stayed in school. Later, he became a well-known, wealthy businessman. This was repeated by others who needed to talk to Uncle Tom. Our house was near the school. Miss Edna Vick, the teacher, let me come to school. I was very small, but quiet. I guess I

dressed sort of funny, the way everyone seemed to feel sorry for me, but I thought I looked okay. I always felt good about myself. I always thought everything would be all right. My Granddad kept me with him whatever he was doing. It was always the old man and the little boy. One day when we were walking, we came to a creek. Granddad said he felt like a swim. He took off his clothes and told me to stay with them. He swam a while, dressed, and we went on our way. Sometimes we took the buggy. I learned early how to hitch up the mule and the old swayback mare. One day we were coming home from Judsonia. Our feet became so cold I couldn't feel mine. We stopped at Pumpkin Branch and washed our feet in the cold water, rubbed them and put on our socks and shoes. My feet did feel warmer, and I got sleepy. Granddad would not let me sleep. He made me walk a ways, holding to the buggy. I thought he was such a wise man, except when I had misbehaved. He'd point a gnarled finger toward the chimney corner, where I'd have to stay for a while. If I really riled him, he'd hold my other hand.

Everyone called Grandma "Aunt Mary," and call her they did. Every time anyone had a baby, or got sick, they would send for Aunt Mary. If she needed

help, she would blow her big “conch” shell. Men would stop plowing, or whatever, for miles around to come help out. Maybe it was a family that was sick and they needed food or cook-wood. Well, it’s different now. Grandma was a tiny lady, that would ride the old mare as fast as she could go. She was away from home, and I learned to cook. Even if she were home, I would cook – I loved it.

It was necessary that I take on responsibility early in life. One day when I was nine, Granddad gave me a list and told me to hitch up the team and go to Judsonia for supplies. Was I ever scared when I climbed onto that old big spring seat! A 40-mile trip. Oh boy! I held the check lines real tight, but of course the team knew more than I did. When I drove into town people came out to watch me drive by. Finally, I reached the store. A very big black man came out, unhitched the team, and fed them. He took me inside and gave me some “store-bought” food. Is there anything you’ve never tasted? It was different with me. The big man had started to load the wagon. I wanted to see the town. I watched the townsfolk walk up and down the streets. I looked in the windows of the stores. Well, I guess I did look a little funny – that big hat I was wearing made me look even smaller than I was. On my way home, I remember looking up at the birds and daydreaming about what I would be someday.

One time I went to the Fourth of July picnic. As usual, I didn’t have any money. Just think of the times kids go into Wal-Mart for a toy and then do it again tomorrow. At the picnic I walked proudly by the ice cream stand and there on the ground was a shiny new quarter. Can you guess what I bought? Three whistles! Yes, that’s right – I spent it all on whistles. I’ve said to myself many times when making a decision, “Now, Paul, don’t spend it all for whistles.”

My favorite Uncle and Aunt were “Mon” and Tenny Pinegar. Uncle Mon was a gruff man with a black beard and she was a very fat woman. They really liked to have me visit them. Aunt Tenny liked to read and tell stories to me. She would fill the lamp, shine the globe, and settle down to read. Uncle Mon and I would listen. The year I was 12, Uncle Mon said “Sit down there, boy, I want to talk to you. You plow pretty good, boy. Would you like to grow your own crops? Well, I have \$40 here for you. Here is a list of things you’ll need. It won’t cost \$40, but leave the rest at the store so you won’t lose it. Now here is the note.” “I’ll take it to Granddad to sign”, I said. “Who said I wanted Tom to sign ... you sign!” he boomed. I did. My crop turned out very well. Granddaddy was not able to help except to advise and show me. When I went to Uncle Mon to pay my note I took enough money for the interest, too. “Who said anything about interest?” he boomed. I learned when someone gives you a chance to do

something, take advantage of the opportunity, and let them know you can be depended upon.

I felt I was growing up now. Our house was always full of children. Grandma helped raise several little children whose mothers had died. I was asked to look after them sometimes, but I needed some money for clothes. Up until now, I had only work shoes. Ica Castelberry needed a history book I had. She picked strawberries and bought the book for 55 cents. I bought shoes. I was hired as the school janitor and bought shirts and pants. Do you know what happened to my job? It burned down! We had no school that year.

Richard Morris came by Uncle Dave's going to Oklahoma to work in the oil fields. "Hey, Paul, how about going with me?" he invited. I went, I worked, I learned, and then I got sick. So I came home, broke out with the measles, swelled up with the mumps, and had a good case of the itch. Grandma got me through all right, so I asked around if I could work off some days for some of the men. A law had been passed that each man had to work on the roads six days a week. If you were a school director, doctor, or preacher, you didn't have to work. One morning, I just didn't feel like working on the road. I had the backdoor trots. It was a hot August day, so I made me a pallet under the stairway in the hall. There were rooms on each side so air usually blew through the dogtrot. Granddad went out to pick some butter beans in the garden. He came in, sat down, leaned his head against a porch post, and died.

Everything changes all the time, but then fast changes happened. Grandma and Minnie went to Stevens Creek to live with her oldest son, Jess. Uncle Dave moved into the big house. And I, well, I just moved. At first, I went to El Dorado to work. We built an oil separator and laid pipes on top of the ground. But I had a girlfriend, and I didn't have a home. So I began to think about making one of my own. I had known Blanche for some time. She visited Eulys and Ollie Joyner, her cousins, and Aunt Tenny was her father's sister. She was a lot of fun - sort of a tomboy. She loved to ride horses. She would catch and saddle her own horse, then outrun us all. She was tall and healthy. Taller than me, but then I was still growing.

So I came home. George Siler asked me to stay with him. George had helped me before and would do it again. He had several boys that he thought he bossed very well. He began to notice that the boys stayed in the barn a lot. So one day he called, "Say, Paul, what are those boys of mine doing in the barn ... gambling?" I told him they were playing cards but weren't gambling. "Well, Paul, do you have any cards? Do you think you could teach me?" I did. It makes you feel good when someone trusts you to tell the truth.

I asked Blanche to marry me. She was thrilled. On October 23, 1921, we went to Uncle John Bell's to be married. Lorene and Harry Lindsey went with us. After the wedding, I had one dollar and fifty cents and one horse. Blanche had one horse and one cow. You can understand, with all those riches, why we would get up the next morning at 4 a.m., saddle our two horses, and ride to Eighty Eight to pick cotton. We picked for the next three weeks and accumulated \$35.

Mr. Sims heard of 40 acres for sale. He let me have \$450 to pay for it, for the time being. I was to pay him back as soon as I could borrow it somewhere else. It was November, and a house needed to be built. Mr. Sims and Mr. Hammond came down to help. We hewed sills, drew boards to make shingles, then went to town and bought \$12 worth of lumber and \$3 worth of nails and hinges. One week before Christmas, we moved into our \$15 home. I built shelves and tables from scraps and slabs. I had some furniture and we gathered up some dishes to make do. I had a home. I guess God looked after us those first few years. The house had no ceiling and it was cold. We had a good heater and the best little cook stove. It cost us \$2.50. Blanche was a good cook. She would dream up a recipe, then dare me to come up with something better. I would try, because I could cook, too.

She became pregnant, but that didn't stop her from being her same tomboy self. The winter was bad, flu was raging, and neighbors were dying. Blanche and her father rode horses to Providence to a friend's funeral, just one month before our oldest daughter was born. The roads were blocked because of ice. Dr. Davis delivered our little girl, Averil Marie, on February 27, 1923. Now, that old doc liked to name babies, but on one of my trips, I had met a beautiful French-Indian girl named Averil. That was what I was going to name the baby. I did let the doctor add Marie.

Very little of our land was cleared, so we worked hard at clearing it. We carved rings around trees. When they died, limbs would fall. We would pile and burn them. We had to clean around trees as we hoed. The land was good and we had plenty to eat, but that was about all. In 1924, the Sims family decided to go to the bottoms to farm. Tom, Mandy, Goldie, and Finis were the Sims family. One day while we were all working, I stopped turning the corn grinder [sheller]. Mr. Sims said, "Mandy has a hankering to go up to her brother's in Rector and farm for a year or two. We figured you and Blanche could live here. You can take care of things and make a crop here." Well, that was the day that I grew up! I did keep growing after I married. My shoe size was two sizes larger and I was as tall as Blanche. But, that's not what I'm talking about. That year it didn't rain. Cows didn't stay in their pastures ... they roamed the cornfields. It was the first

year of the stock law. We did have a big garden with strawberries, gooseberries, and blackberries to be picked and canned. We dried mountains of apples and peaches on sheets that were spread on the tops of sheds. And we had another baby. Robert Vondell King was born on July 15, 1924. About this time, Averil took the dreaded colitis. Babies were dying every day. Was I ever scared! I was a young man with a two-day-old son and a very, very sick 1 ½-year-old daughter. I did all in my power to cope with everything. We got the best medical help available to us. No one, yes, no one, could give Averil a single dose of medicine except me! I worked when I could, and stayed awake nights. Blanche and I were both weak. Averil could say a few words: "all right meat." We knew she was begging for meat. The doctor told us to fry some belly meat, blot out all the fat, and try feeding it to her. We did as he said and she began at once to gain strength. Our new son was just fine - a beautiful, dark-complexioned comic.

We moved back to our house in the winter of 1924. The McFaddens moved in next door. They were the best neighbors I had ever known.

We had nice fields cleared, but the roads were terrible. One could lose a wagon wheel in some of the chug holes. A little plain white envelope came in the mail. The letter said, "Come and get me and Minnie". The problem was, how could I bring Grandma and Minnie into the little two-room house with my family? When I got there, they were all packed. We built a kitchen and a porch. And we did make it.

Crops were real good in 1925. I remember going into town to sell cotton. There were many things we needed to buy. We had been making a list for days. I bought a cooking range for Blanche. Not one of the real large ones but it had a nice warming oven. It was a pretty stove, but Blanche never did admit it cooked better than the \$2.50 job. I carefully bought clothes for all the family. Then I bought each a surprise. Vondell liked candy, but Averil could make a box of brown sugar last a long time. I bought food that would last all winter: a barrel of flour, 100 pounds of sugar, coffee in gallon buckets. It was always dark by the time I got home. It was such a good feeling to see the lights of my house as I came over the hill. It was an even better feeling to see the smiles as we unloaded the wagon.

One time, we all went to Pangburn to buy food. Blanche thought I had spent too much (and I had). She had said just about enough, so I told her I'd as soon toss the hoop of cheese into the Little Red River. I didn't hear a word from the kids until after we had crossed the bridge. They wanted that cheese to make it home!

It was crisis time again. Our home was over two miles from the school. That was too far for the kids while they were so young. Averil stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Sims and went to school at Roosevelt one year. Blanche and I began to think about moving back into the old King house. The old house was in real bad shape, but we knew it would make Grandma happy to be "home" again. They settled right into the big kitchen and put their twists of tobacco on the mantle, as I had seen them do years before. The winter was bad. It was noisy with the kids and Minnie in the house. Vondell and Averil were both in school. Our house was always filled with visiting children. We also boarded teachers. Blanche sewed for neighbors. I farmed and worked out when there was time. We had a new car ... a Whippet. Times were better.

Hold it! The stock market crashed in 1929. Banks failed, people lost their money, and men in cities lost their jobs. Herbert Hoover was President, being blamed for everything - even the dry weather!

We planted our crops and gardens in 1930 but it didn't rain. No harvest was made, no food was put up. Men came out from side roads to pick up their mail. There was nothing else for them to do. They would stand around, pull their hair, and talk about what they would feed their families. We did make a real late garden. We grew some turnips. We also fattened up old George - a big boar hog. So we had meat. In 1930, we had to let our new car go. We got a ton and a half truck from Elmer Collins. This old truck came in handy for hauling things from one farm to another.

In 1933 the government started a program for the poor. It was called the WPA. Men worked on the roads. It paid them enough to buy food. Everyone wanted to work. Some thought the program might be the "mark of the beast". I wanted to work, but was not allowed to get on. Neither was Eulys Joyner. We decided to make railroad ties. We made three sizes: An 8-cent size, a 9-cent size, and the larger 11-cent size. But that got me some flour. I could buy a 100-pound bag for 60 cents.

Eulys and Ollie Joyner were our very good friends. In those days people valued friends. It was really necessary to help each other sometimes. Real and true bonds of friendship were established that lasted a lifetime. Such a bond was also welded between Paton and Cora Sellers, and Blanche and me. Paton was a stubborn man. He had the flu but felt he should go out to do some work. He took pneumonia. Eulys and I would sit up with him. We knew he was very ill. He was not a religious man but one night he began to sing hymns and later died. His death had a lasting effect on me. I was saved and baptized the next spring. Blanche moved her membership to the Holly Springs church.

So many people had been good to me that I just couldn't turn anyone away from my door. In those days, men would come asking for food and a drink. Blanche would scald everything they touched, several times. Mr. Kelly came asking and I let him stay. He worked some, but mostly he liked to play checkers. He taught the kids to play. We had an extra big room and people would come in to have a checker tournament. I was always amused by the fingers that moved the checkers about. Some of them were gnarled with corns and crusts from outside work. Others were clean with well-manicured nails. Everyone seemed to enjoy the games and fellowship.

I usually kept a team so long they almost became like members of the family. Old Red was a big mule, as mean as Satan. One day I was behind him in the barn and that devil kicked me. His foot struck the ends of my fingers, forcing my knuckles back almost to my wrist. Now, I never talked ugly, I took great pride in the fact that I didn't drink or cuss. But just then a group of words came out of my mouth I didn't know I could say. Mrs. Sims came rushing out of the house. She formed her apron into a ball and made me squeeze it, thereby forcing my knuckles back into place. If my gun had been there, I would have killed Old Red. But we needed him.

That year Averil was big enough to hold on to the planter handles. Red would pull it through the field, and stop near the end of the rows and wait for me to turn him around. I used a small black mule named Kit to lay off rows. I could lay off rows as straight as an arrow. Kit liked to have kids ride her, one at a time. If two climbed aboard, she'd run away, bucking until they fell off.

Mr. Sims bought land just east of our home and built a house. Goldie and Bob Reaper built their home on the south. Finis and Ella lived in our house but it seemed to me it was about time to go home.

Strawberries were a new money crop, so we decided to try our luck. There was a good two-acre patch in front of our house. We always made things a family project. One child would mark with a measuring stick while the other would drop the plants. They traded jobs. Blanche and I set the plants, using short-handled hoes. Have you ever been so sore you couldn't make your legs move? We were.

Grandma took a cold that developed into pneumonia. "Pshaw, pshaw, it's not serious", she said. But it was. She died smiling about Averil having the itch and not being able to go to school. Blanche was smearing sulfur and grease on Averil to help stop the itching. We made Grandma's casket in a room we were not

using. I went to town and got some nice pine, cloth, and lace. Neighbors came in and helped. It was a beautiful funeral because she had so many friends. It was a celebration of a life lived. Minnie was lost without her "mommy". We moved back home in the spring. Uncle Dave's folks decided to move into the King house and care for Minnie. We signed the deed for him. Blanche was so proud to be back home. She painted and papered everything. I made her some cabinets. Edgar Bell stayed with us to help with the farm work.

I had been elected to the School Board and as Justice of the Peace. I considered it an honor to be allowed to serve my community. I really worked hard to "Help when I can". The JP gig lasted 22 years. Since I had little formal education, I studied law books to learn the law. I learned to correctly fill out legal papers. Many of those were marriage certificates. Several times, I remember three ceremonies in a single night. I remember one couple walking in with their hair frozen stiff. We really had some bad winters. One year eight inches of sleet and ice stayed on the ground for three weeks. We drove nails through strips of old tires and strapped them to our shoes in order to feed the stock. We couldn't meet at Christmas time so we had a late get-together. Get-togethers were important to me.

When spring came, we had a house cleaning. We didn't plug in a vacuum cleaner or fill the washing machine. We didn't have them. We did it the hard way. First, we took down the beds. We carried everything outside. We painted the iron bed frames and washed the springs. We emptied all the straw from the bed ticks and washed them in strong lye soap. We sunned the feather beds and then sunned them some more after turning them over. They were good beds. Blanche and her mother had plucked the geese and made the beds. We swept down walls and washed windows.

Vondell drew water, filled the wash-pot, and chunked the fire. Averil hammered sandstone to use to scrub. We sprinkled the sand on and Vondell poured on the hot lye water. We scrubbed with a new corn shuck mop. When the rinsing was over, the floors were smooth and white. While the floors dried, I pitched down some fresh hay to fill the ticks. We had fun filling them until briars caught our hands. Clean sheets, new quilts, and high fluffy beds were worth the effort. Smelled like pure sunshine.

The kids and I started having chills. It seemed we were losing ground. We got all kinds of advice from people. "It's your water," some said. We had it tested. "Your barn is south of your house." We tore it down and still we were sick. Times are bad when you are not well. We began to have boils or carbuncles. We were poisoned up good. The year was 1934 and Blanche was pregnant again,

after 11 years. She sewed and embroidered every moment she had, keeping her condition hidden from everyone. Kenny King came to help out on the farm. The boys who stayed with us really needed a place to stay and board. Kenny was a hard worker and a quiet boy. We were working two very large beautiful black mares. Fan was temperamental, but Nell was steady. One day while Kenny was harrowing with them, they ran back on the harrow. They were injured very badly. I just knew they couldn't be saved. They did live, but never completely healed. Neighbors came in and worked my crop.

It was Sunday morning, May 5, 1935, and rain was pouring down. The baby was coming fast. There was not time to start to Searcy. I bundled the kids and sent them out for help. Averil went to the McFaddens. Lemus was to saddle a mule and go after Mrs. Watson. "Hurry and tell Mrs. McFadden to come here." Then "You go to your grandfather's and tell them to get other women to help. Vondell, you go by Goldie's, then on to your grandfather's. I'll send for you." My help arrived just in time. First born was a tiny girl, weighing only 3 ½ pounds. Twenty minutes later a boy was born, weighing 5 ½ pounds. The boy was named Jimmy, after my father. We named the girl Joyce. There were no middle names. We all worked hard and the deliveries went well. The women gave Blanche and both babies the best of care. I sent for the kids. "Well, I love you both", I told them. "So you won't be jealous, I have you a brother and a sister." In a little while, I found them out back, crying. I asked Blanche what to say to them. She found out that some of the women were saying that the little girl wouldn't live. Blanche talked to them. She told them she knew better than anyone. "The little girl is strong, she nurses her milk very well. I'll take good care of them and everything will be all right." It was.

We asked Miss Ider Church to stay with Blanche. She was a crippled woman. A wagon had run over her head and one arm, but she could do many things in the house. That spring was cold and rainy. It stayed so cold we couldn't get our crops in. Strawberries were rotting. So when it dried, I went ahead with the farming but my nerves were a little short. We had this feisty bantam rooster whose crowing sounded just like a woman screaming. After a few weak spells and runs to the house, that squeaker lost his head, and landed in the dumping pot.

During this time, we didn't always own a car. But more and more strawberries were being grown, so I got a truck. Some days, with many hands and truckloads, we would still lose money. It seemed to me the farm was not going to yield enough for a family of six. So I began to get jobs off the farm. I worked at the Siler Gin as bookkeeper. Many times, we would have to work all night. When ginning season was over, I took a job with the Agriculture office. My job

was to measure the fields of the various crops. My maps were cut into three-foot squares and I made a cover of oilcloth. (That was our waterproof material before plastic came along.) I tacked on a handle like a book satchel and carried it on one shoulder and a surveyor's chain on the other. I walked all over the community. People were real nice to me and I was asked to eat with folks if it was near mealtime.

One rainy day I came upon a mountain man, splitting cook-wood. His two small sons were stacking it nearby. He was angered at the government for having his fields measured. He said so, using some very terrible words. I said, "Frank, if you stole something I think I could understand you would do it for gain. If you lied, it would be for gain. But what do you get out of talking like that before these fine boys." I left him, feeling that I had overstepped my rights. After all, that wasn't part of my job. Later, Frank Babb told me he began to think about his life. He left his wood splitting and went to visit Leroy Goodson, pastor of Roosevelt Baptist Church. He was saved and became a fine deacon of the church. He related this story whenever he spoke of his conversion.

Baseball games were very popular. Farmers would work hard all week long and on Saturday afternoon, there would be a big game. They played as hard as they worked. They freely vented their anger about plays and calls. Sometimes, really big fights broke out. Wives and children brought their pallets, visited, and yelled. Parties were really big, too. There would be dancing and music. Groups would play many instruments. Almost everyone could play music. Some men would bring home brew by the gallon jug. Usually a brawl would break out before the night ended. I remember one night the men went to their wagons and got singletrees to use as weapons. There will always be that group of people. It was different from mine. I never drank. I know it takes all the sense I have to do the best I can.

Averil was in the eighth grade. She wanted to go to high school. But how? Everyone would say to her, "Where there is a will, there is a way". So I went again to George Siler. "George," I told him, "I need \$10 to get Averil started in high school." He wanted to let me have more, but I knew it would have to be paid back. We bought her a pair of shoes and material for two dresses. Blanche made the dresses. Averil stayed with one of my cousins and her family. That was the winter of high water and high doctor bills. Joyce had diphtheria. She was real sick and the other children had to take shots.

Blanche was always willing to help out. We had a picnic to raise money for the school's second room. They sold all the meat for sandwiches. Blanche had a big bowl of potato salad that was to be our lunch. She made it into sandwiches and

sold it all. The government had projects to help people. One such project was a canning kitchen. We worked helping teach people to use the pressure cookers and can sealers. Cotton and ticking were issued to make mattresses. We taught people how to make them. There go our strawbeds. Thank goodness!

Vondell would take care of Jimmy and Joyce. He could cook too, as well as do farm work. He and his mother did most of the farming. He was a neat boy. His shoes were always shined, every button and string was always in place. We were so proud of him.

One year we got a radio. It was battery operated and came with all the pops and squeaks. I thought it was wonderful. Lum and Abner always played on the radio with their Jot-Em-Down Store from Pine Ridge. Averil made it really well in Searcy but the following year, the kids were to be hauled to school in Pangburn, in a truck. The roads became impossible to get the truck through. So again, we had to find a place for her to stay. She stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Arch Roberson, a very fine couple. Blanche had her first big operation that fall. She was seriously ill but came along real well. One day, as I was walking down the streets of Searcy, Mr. C.D. Christian called out to me, "Hey, Paul, we had a meeting last night and hired you as my assistant." The days that followed were some of the most enjoyable times of my life. I worked with Mr. Christian, the county extension agent, as he helped farmers. I also worked with the 4-H boys and girls. I wish I could have had a better education, but I made up my mind to use what little education I had.

When you work with people, something interesting happens every day. The county agent's office was helping find jobs for men who needed work on farms. I went with a busload of men to Batesville to meet a train. I had their papers and asked for the conductor. "He is there on the platform and his name is Paul King." I said, "No, that's my name." The man said, "By gum, that's my name, too!"

I remember going into schools with our 4-H programs. Some assemblies were orderly and neat. The children were clean, smelled clean, and were well-behaved. Other times this wasn't so. All my life I have practiced neatness and cleanliness, and I believe the Bible teaches that things ought to be orderly.

Blanche wasn't very well much of the time. We couldn't seem to find the trouble. Later, a brain tumor was located and removed.

I drove a little red Dodge pickup to Searcy to work every day. Everyone along the way knew me. They would either want a ride or want to send after something. You know how badly I needed to get home after work.

One year Vondell dropped out of school and made a crop. Blanche had a small herd of registered Jersey cows to be milked. The milk had to be separated, and Vondell took care of that too. Jimmy learned how to do it early on. The year Vondell finished school, he joined the Navy. One of the hardest things I've ever had to do was walk up to get his diploma when we didn't even know where he was. After he went into the Navy, he was always called "Bob" instead of "Vondell". Averil married Ernest Beaver and had a boy, who called me "Pop." We don't know why, unless he was trying to say Paul, like Blanche did. Now everyone calls me Pop, and I sort of like it.

One day in 1948, Mr. Tom Watkins called me into the Bank of Searcy and offered me a job as Agriculture Appraiser and Farm Loan Officer. I was thrilled, of course. He said he would hire me temporarily. I retired 20 years later. Remember my hang-up about no education? Again, I was going to do my best. The Pyeatt brothers took charge of the bank and its name changed to The First National Bank of Searcy. Those men respected me, and my opinions. They always treated me with respect. I tried to help the poor farmers and at the same time not endanger the bank. I would hear men come into the bank and ask for "Mr. Paul". By this time, I knew almost every man in White County. I had traveled to all the farms and businesses.

Blanche got very weak and I needed to be home more. So we bought the Floyd Bradbury farm. It is known today as "Kingwood". Jimmy and Joyce were able to finish school in Searcy, and Blanche could be near her doctors. We platted the acreage and sold lots, which helped me make a good living. When you need to do something for the better, do it. I did that on September 1, 1950. We built a new house. I tried to include things in it that would be good for Blanche. By now, Averil had another child besides Harold - a daughter named Carol. Bob married Doris Clark and they had two children, Tim and Paula. Joyce went on to nursing school then married James Gay. They have two children, Teddy and Linda. Jimmy married Shirley Hays and they adopted Stan when he was born.

My, my, how time flies! The year came for me to retire. The bank made me feel like a celebrity when I left. I felt so young. I had to have a housekeeper all the time, so I felt a need to do something with myself. I took a course in Real Estate and really enjoyed and understood it. On the first try, I passed everything with flying colors - even the Broker's License Test. Some of the young people were a

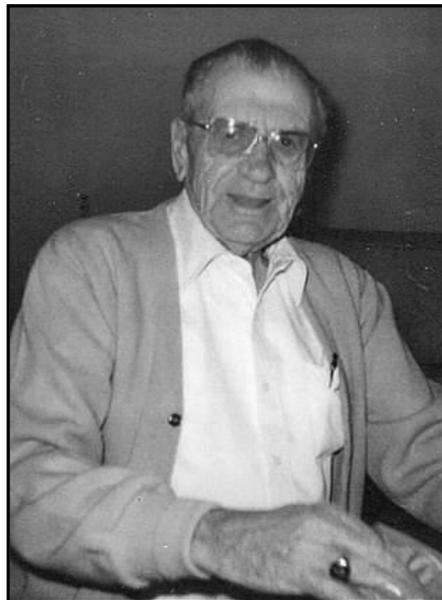
little jealous of the 65-year-old man! I did some Real Estate work for a couple of years.

Blanche continued to go downhill. The housekeepers would dress her and she would go to the table to eat. October 23, 1971, was the day we celebrated our Golden Wedding Anniversary. The children were looking forward to it. We had a big open house, and our friends came, and all went well. It was so nice. Just a few days after the celebration, Blanche fell and was never able to be up after that. She died on June 29, 1981.

I was able to do all my work. I kept my house and lawn really well, even though I was 80 years old. But I was lonely, so in January of 1983, I married a long-time neighbor widow, Dorothy Shands. We've made a very nice life together.

Even though I'm in my 80s, I'm able to keep everything in order: my business, my lawn, and my new red and white Dodge pickup truck. I'm still able to go Christmas shopping and I always have everyone a gift. Until recently, I played Santa every year. Most of my family has never missed having Christmas Eve with me. That has meant so much to me.

This year I'm 88 years old. I try to put on a good front but just don't feel good. So I'm going to skip the New Year's Day dinner. I always fried mountains of hog jowl, and cooked up a big pot of black-eyed peas, cornbread and poke "salet." This was a time we all got together to start a New Year out right.



Paul King - 1990

* * * * *

Paul King became very ill. He was taken to Central Arkansas General Hospital in Searcy. He would tell the boys that he just couldn't "get holt of it". It was a terrible month - - nothing helped. Finally, a kidney was removed, but the other kidney was so weak and it never worked. He died just before midnight on July 3, 1990, and was buried next to Blanche in the Roosevelt Cemetery on July 5, 1990.

My father told me his story. I wish I could have written it as well as he told it. I wish you all could have known him.

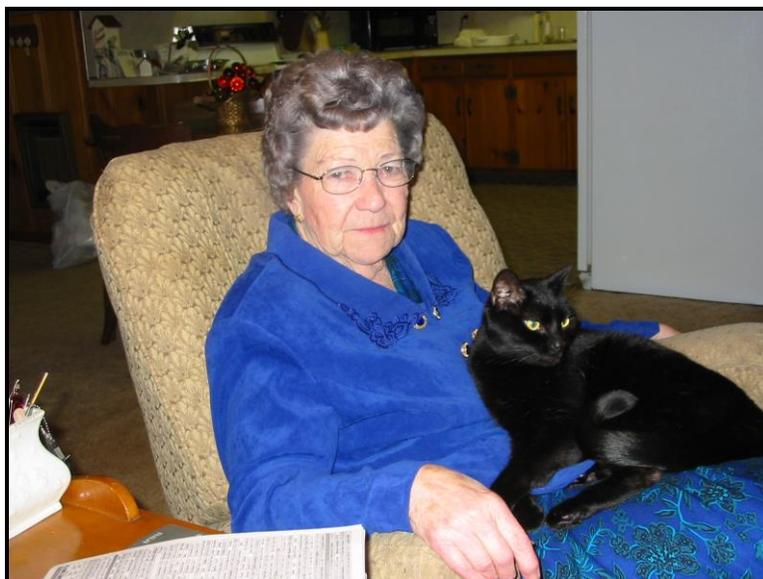
Pop's family has continued to grow. As of this writing, in October of 1992, there are six great-grandchildren: Karen and Sarah, daughters of Harold and Elaine Beaver; Richard Paul, son of Carol and John Sanders; Katelyn, daughter of Teddy and Julie Gay; Evan, son of Paula and Craig Datz; James Paul King II, son of Tim and Kelly King. And finally, *so far*, there is one great-great-grandchild, Megan Riane, daughter of Richard Sanders.

Averil (King) Beaver
October 1992

* * * * *

(The author, Averil King Beaver, was a member of the White County Historical Society. She lived at 5138 Hwy. 157, Judsonia, AR but later moved to Fort Smith, AR to be near her son. Mrs. Beaver passed away on July 29, 2013 and is buried next to her husband, Ernest, in the Roosevelt Cemetery. The number of great-great-grandchildren on the Paul King family tree has now grown to fifteen)

* * * * *



Averil Beaver - 2005