
BIBB COUNTY DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION

(An Autobiography of Doris Warren Vincent)

What follows beginning with the next paragraph is a transcription of my mother's autobiography that she wrote in longhand. I transcribed it in 1990 on a UNIX mini-computer then converted it to a PC .txt file. I moved it to my first IBM-PC in November of '90. I reformatted it and saved it as a PDF file Sept. 9, 2012. I hope her story will always be preserved, shared, and treasured. Dates in headers are the dates she wrote. You have my permission to print, copy, and share this so long as you preserve it in this format with no changes.

- Ron Vincent

January 1, 1979

I was just remembering my childhood today & something came to mind that still means a lot to me today. Since I grew up during a rough time for the whole country, I got to thinking why so many things mean so much to me. The Market Crash and the Great Depression of 1929 meant nothing to us because we had nothing before, so it didn't matter too much we had nothing afterward. It was an uphill climb all the way. Nobody we knew had any more than we did. Now, I figure this is why I cherish everything I own, especially my home and family, my whole family, aunts, uncles, cousins & all.

I was five years old in 1929. That was the year I had typhoid & spent my first night (two weeks) in a hospital, saw my first fire engine & saw Birmingham, Ala. for the first time (from my hospital room window). Of course, I didn't know where I was till my fever broke and I started recovery. I don't remember much except for the last week, cause I also had chicken pox while I was there. I loved my nurses & they must have loved me because when I left, one gave me her manicure scissors, one gave me the saucer and bowl I ate mashed potatoes and ice cream out of, all of which I still have 50 years later.

The earliest I can remember, I must have been about 3 years old. We lived somewhere near Briarfield & Montevallo.

My paternal grandmother died & is buried at Cahaba Valley (Carlton Hill at the time), Cemetery. the road going to the church was under water & we had to go in a wagon. The hearse couldn't get thru so they put the casket in a wagon to get there. Aunt Lillie Warren verifies this. Somewhere between that time & the time I was four, I remember walking at nite with my sister and parents thru the woods & fields to my Aunt Lucille Warren Lucas' house. I got so tired & my daddy would not carry me!

I don't know how long we stayed with them or why. My daddy must have been out of work. I was running thru some plowed ground while there & ran into an old rusty plow blade which was buried. The point hit my right foot an top & down I went. It cut a bad gash across a vein & bled & bled. My mother and Aunt Lucille bathed my foot & soaked it in kerosine & bandaged it with a piece of clean white cloth. While we were there, my cousin Rosie Lucas struck a match & blew it out & stuck it to my arm, just to see if it would burn. It did & I still have the scar to prove it!

I remember my mother and Aunt Lucille slicing apples and laying them out to dry on a sheet spread over some boards or wire. They turned all of them over every few days.

I have no idea where we went from there but I believe my daddy got a job in a mine because we moved into a house of our own -- rented of course. We must have moved to Piper or Coleanor or Marvel. Maybe he went to work in a sawmill because I remember my sister started to school. And I know we lived near a sawmill when she started to school. We had no furniture except a mattress, a table & chairs. My mother cooked on a fireplace. We had flapjacks & potatoes & beans. All our belongings were packed in boxes & a trunk.

We played in a sawdust pile near our house. After that I know we moved near a mine because my memory is sharper as I get near school age. I know we lived at Marvel near a company owned store.

One day my mother went to the store to get something to go with our supper & left me with my sister. I cried to go. After mama left, my sister called me in from play & put a freshly ironed dress on me (over dirt & all) & told me to go after mama. She was embarrassed to have me there in my clean dress over all that dirt but she bought me an ice cream

cone. I took one big lick & the cream hit the floor & I was left with an empty cone. The storekeeper felt sorry for me & gave me another one. I was so happy!

We also saw our first movie while living in Marvel -- a silent film of course. The year was 1928 probably. We had electric lights, too. First we'd ever had or probably seen. A drop cord bulb in the middle of each room, with a pull chain to turn it on & off.

I remember so well my mother rocking me to sleep singing, "My Baby, I want you tonite, Dear, after my work is thru. To rock you to sleep in my arms, Dear & sing lullaby to you."

While we lived at Marvel, I was playing on the porch rail & tumbled overboard & landed on my head & back on our rocky yard. When I came to, Dr. H.C. Cochran was examining me & telling my parents I would probably be alright but I might have some kidney damage. Well, I did - which is another story. Or rather, kidney trouble is what he said.

My grandparents lived near Cahaba River most of the time I can remember. At one time it seems over half their ten children and their offspring lived with them. My Uncle Son (J.M. Blake) & his wife lived with them. So did Aunt Pearl, who was a widow with three sons, my mother (Oney Blake) & her two girls, Aunt Lorene & uncle Cotton (Kirby) who weren't married yet. My mother & daddy were separated at the time. All this before my sister started school. I remember living with my grandparents at least three different times. Once at Six Mile, once at Bulldog Bend on the Fancher Farm & once near there, maybe on the same farm, different house. Two places stand out in my mind, both near the river. Of course, the most vivid is when I "drowned", about 2 miles below Bulldog Bend, according to my uncles, Cotton & Son. We had all gone swimming & I was in about 2 ft. deep water when I went to the bottom. My cousin Jack England, Aunt Pearl's son, stumbled over me, & picked me up.

I must have been all of 2 1/2 to 3 yrs. old. It scared me so bad, 'til I still have a fear of Cahaba River, yet I love that part of Alabama because it also brings back some happy memories.

Once, when we lived near the river, my daddy acquired a Model T Ford. We were on our way home one night when the

lights went out just as we got on the bridge to cross the river. This time it had rained very hard & the water was up near the bridge, which was being repaired. It had no side rails on it! the repairmen had placed 2 by 4 boards along the sides near the edges. My daddy had a carbide miner's lamp & he lit it & got out & looked. Our front tire was over one of the 2 by 4's already. We were scared stiff. Mama had to hold the lamp & walk backwards across the bridge 'til daddy could inch his way across without going overboard. The wind kept blowing out the lamp, they had to stop & relite every few minutes. I'm sure we all gave a prayer of thanks once we got across. Today that bridge has been replaced but part of the old one is still there. It's to the left of the first one crossing the river going from West Blocton toward Centreville.

After talking with my Aunt Pearl last week, we decided that my family had to live at Helena or Coleanor when I had typhoid because Aunt Pearl had it the same year. She says there were five members of the family besides me who were sick with fever at the same time, my grandparents & 2 aunts & an uncle. I have no idea how they contracted it but the County Health Dept. decided they would condemn a spring from which we had been getting our drinking water. I also have no idea how my parents & sister avoided it, if that's where I got it.

After my stay in the hospital, I had to learn to walk again, which took about a week or 10 days. All my hair came out & came back a different color & not nearly as curly.

We had to get water from a neighbor's well, which was tested & declared safe. Just a short while later we moved to somewhere else.

As I mentioned in the beginning we had little to eat, very few clothes, or belongings. I do know that none of the children in my family seemed to realize how little we had. We treasured all that we owned, especially an old cedar pencil with no eraser & a rough, first grade tablet. If the pencil HAD to be sharpened we would get our parents to do it with a very sharp knife so as little as possible would be cut away.

We were always happy & played hide & seek, climbing trees, whittling wood - if we could get hold of a knife, or

we played school & church & sang. We had to amuse ourselves because we had no toys & our parents had no time to help us stay busy. We stayed out of trouble too. We knew all too well if we didn't we'd have stripes on our legs for everyone to see. We didn't get a spanking or a beating, we got a switching we didn't forget. Doing anything really bad just never occurred to us. If it did, we knew to put it out of our minds.

We were absolutely delighted to find an old innertube. That meant we could make slingshots. We didn't shoot each other, we shot to see who could get a rock or gravel as far from where we were standing as possible. The one who won just won & that was it, just plain old competition. We also played with bottles like castor oil or medicine bottles. They had to be flatsided because we laid them on the side & used them for cars. Our people inside them were little sticks or match sticks - already burned.

When hickorynuts fell the whole family would go into the woods & hunt hickorynuts. That was fun. We would crack them on the hearth at nite & pick the meat out with horseshoe nails & eat 'til we got tired of them.

On rainy days we would all huddle up in a bunch & get our grandpa to tell us stories. He also whittled dolls out of apple crate wood occasionally. My sister has one he made for her. It's shaped like a gingerbread man or woman.

June 22, 1980

Today was homecoming day at Cahaba Valley Church in Bibb County. We always have a good time visiting with aunts & uncles & cousins and eating all that good food. Everyone wants pictures of everyone else. this year was a lot sadder than usual because we had two of our precious members missing. Two of my mother's sisters died within the past fourteen months, one just five weeks ago. My oldest living aunt, Pearl who was 84, died in May. the year before our youngest aunt, Lorene had died. She was 66.

Thinking on this got me started looking in the Church Cemetery for markers on graves. On my father's side I have two cousins, an aunt & uncle & both grandparents. the uncle is my grandfather's brother, Byrd Warren & his wife. One of the cousins is Thomas Warren, who was a soldier in the Civil

War. The other cousin's grave is unmarked. My grandparents are LaFayette and Frances Farmer Warren. These graves are near the Church at the back. They have markers.

Across the small road in front of the Church are the Blakes, including my mother, her mother & father, my mother's sisters, Myrtie Bell Blake Barnett, and Lorene Blake Parks.

There is another cemetery at West Blocton, also in Bibb County where more relatives are buried. My Uncle Earnest Blake and his wife Ilar, and my Aunt Pearl Blake and her second husband, Early Miller are buried there. This one is named Mt. Carmel & Hickory Hill Cemeteries next to one another.

My parents and another family, a cousin I think, went fishing on the Cahaba River one nite & we all slept on quilts on the ground. We were afraid of the nite sounds so they kept a fire going all nite. The next morning we had fresh fish from the river and flapjacks for breakfast -- Umm -- best fish in the world! All cooked on our campfire.

We had taken our little black & white dog with us & he had jumped out of the car & disappeared just as we neared the river. We never saw him again. My sister and I were so sad about losing him. We kept hoping we would wake up & find him the next morning but he didn't come back.

I believe we left that part of Bibb County about 1930 or 1931 because we moved to Brent, Ala. & lived there for nearly a whole summer.

Let me go back to my first year in school, which was at Bull Dog Bend. The school was a one room building - a former church. We had one teacher for 6 or 7 grades of pupils. Her name was Miss Narramore, & we loved her. Even tho she spanked my hand with a ruler for accepting a note from my first sweatheart, name of Wilburn Parks (a cousin of my Uncle Oliver Parks, who was to marry my Aunt Lorene). Oh, he got a spanking too.

We had a Christmas party at school, where every child received a gift. Who bought those gifts, I don't know. On Valentines Day our teacher gave us beautiful Valentines. We enjoyed every day of school because it was somewhere to go &

we were learning how to read & write & do arithmetic. The winter must have surely been hard on us because we had to walk to school but I don't remember much about the weather.

Our school had a big pot belly heater which burned wood. The older boys had to bring the wood in & the teacher kept the fire going. this was the year my mother & daddy were separated most of the year because I don't remember seeing my daddy the whole winter.

The latter part of April or the first of May my daddy came to the school & got my sister & me & told us we were going to pick up mama, that they were getting back together. Of course, we believed him (what child wants to believe their daddy or mama would lie to them? After all, weren't they the ones who taught us not to lie?). He took us to his sister's house near Montevallo. We didn't mind, but after a few days & our mama didn't come we realized she wasn't coming at all. He had literally kidnapped us!

We did not get to finish school that year. I know now we weren't there long but it seemed like a year because so much happened while we were there. Our maternal grandmother died. My mother's sister, Lillie, who was married to my daddy's brother, Sam, came to take us to the funeral. My daddy's sister, Genie Warren Hughes, would not let us go with her. She was afraid my mother would get us, (and she fully intended to) & she would lose her "little girls", as she called us. My sister and I cried because we wanted to go. We wanted to see our mama so bad. After that, if she let us go to the highway to get the mail we would sit by the mailbox & wish our mama would come by & get us.

This is a tale of something which happened to me there, unbelievable but so true. Remember, I was 6 yrs. old & my sister was 8. My aunt & uncle made us work, my sister helped with the housework & I helped my uncle feed the animals. He worked for a man who ran a dairy farm. I went with him every evening to feed. I honestly don't remember actually seeing him take feed for his own hog, but I'm sure he bought no feed. The dairyman, a Mr. Holloway, called him before him one day & told him he was missing feed or that he was feeding too much at one feeding. I suggested (remember I was 6 yrs. old) the animals opened the door to the feedroom themselves. I was to regret opening my mouth later. My uncle, took me back to the house, got my sister & my aunt &

a rope & we went walking into the woods. He tied my feet with the rope & hung me by my heels from a tree limb. He told me he was going to leave me there 'til the buzzards came & picked my eyes out. I have no idea how long I hung there but they walked off & left me. I'm sure my sister was wishing she could kill both my uncle & aunt. they finally took me down & told me to keep my mouth shut from then on. Would you believe I wouldn't try to mind anyone else's business to this day. But, if I see someone taking something that doesn't belong to them, I will if possible, report them to the proper authorities.

My daddy finally came & got us & tried to get back together with my mother. We never visited that particular aunt & uncle again to my knowledge. The Uncle's name was Dutch Hughes. I never liked him very much because he always called me PugUgly. We were so happy to get away from their house. My aunt had us wash dishes and every time one got broken we got a spanking, or rather, a switching. I find it hard to punish a child for breaking dishes or glasses to this day. The one thing we learned from that was if you aren't careful with them they will break. Everybody breaks them sometimes.

Remember, all these times we lived with our different relatives, my mama & daddy were always separated. Still, I don't remember ever hearing them fuss at each other or fight at all. If they did, it was out of earshot to my sister and me. I believe most of the time we were left with relatives, my daddy was looking for a job. Where he stayed, I never knew.

We lived for a time, perhaps a couple of months with my daddy's brother, Sam, but he was always with us there. He helped my uncle work in the fields. Once, we had an old Model T truck and my daddy brought vegetables to Birmingham and peddled them from the truck bed. I came with him once and I'm sure he parked at Owen's Station along Third Ave. which is now known as Bessemer Road or Hiway 11.

There is one particular spot where Arkadelphia Road crosses 3rd Ave. West that I remember. It was vivid in my memory because the buildings were only torn down a few years ago. I remember every one of them, a grocery store, a drug store, & a barber shop. Later, the grocery was used as an apartment and my own sister-in-law, Celia Vincent Bass,

lived in it. It was attached to a two-story house. That road was the main road coming into Birmingham from the northern end of Bibb County toward Bessemer. Still is, except for the freeway which by-passes it.

The truck bed had stake sides that held up a piece of old muslin sheet, or maybe feed sack sheet, which kept the sun off the vegetables. We had moved from Brent, Ala. in that truck & probably moved to Irondale in it later. We moved there in June or July of 1932. Again, we moved in with relatives. This time with my mother's sister, Aunt Lucille Vest (later Davis). My Uncle Ed had a job in a mine & he helped my daddy get one there, too.

Later on we moved into a house by ourselves which we liked. This was one of 6 houses in a cluster on the corner of 20th St. in Irondale, all owned by the same family. We lived in 4 of them at various times, with & without relatives. The first was a three room apartment in a house which had about 6 rooms. Since nobody owned that much furniture we rented part of a house. Another couple with one son rented the rest of the house. The rent was never more than 2 or 3 dollars a month. If we lived with relatives we each paid half the rent. Remember, this was 1930, the worst part of the Depression.

One man, who owned a mine my uncle & daddy worked for didn't pay money at all. He paid in flour, meal, lard, salt, coffee & beans & sugar. Fifty cents a day was good pay. The staples were weighed & measured & the amount received was judged by how much coal you had dug or how hard you worked that week. Anyone fortunate enough to have garden tools & seeds & a place to plant them had more food. The only tools I can remember us having were a hammer, an ax, a pair of pliers and a shoe last. The shoe last was for keeping the shoes fixed & for cracking hickory nuts on, in the winter time. The ax was for cutting wood & fingers & toes & the hammer was for pulling nails out of one thing & putting them in another. The only nails bought were shoe tacks. Of course, the hammer was used for cracking nuts on the shoe last.

Remembering teachers.

I remember all of my teachers because many of them had been with the school I went to since their beginning & many also lived in the same community. Teachers are numbered

grades 2 thru 9, 1931 thru 1940.

First grade was Miss Narramore whom I loved dearly, even if she did spank me & Wilburn Parks for my acceptance of a "love" note from him! She also made me stand & read it to the classroom. No, we didn't get taken to the cloak room, we got the palms of hands spanked in front of the whole school which went through the 6th or 7th grade -- all in one room -- all the same teacher. We learned right quick we were there to study, & learn to read & write & do arithmetic. I doubt she had over 25 or 30 kids, if that many.

Second grade was Miss Margaret Pope who married in the summer & became Mrs. Naff. To me she was beautiful. She took up a lot of time with me & made me feel like "somebody". She got the room mothers to buy me a new dress which I treasured very much. It may have been the first "bought" dress I ever had because mama made all of our dresses & slips & panties. I cried the first time it got dirty 'cause I knew I had to wait a whole day for it to be washed & ironed.

In the third grade I had Miss Booth who was in love with our school principle, Mr. Millsap, whom she married in the summer. She was a pretty woman, with very black hair which was long & she wore it in a bun at the back of her neck. All during the school term, Mr. Millsap would come by our classroom door & look in several times a day. In a few minutes she would go out in the hall & they would talk & she would come back in all smiling & happy. It took us a while to catch on but we were happy too, when we found out they were going to be married. Then, that summer they had their wedding in one of our community churches.

The fourth grade brought Mrs. Esther Turnham. She was a close friend of Miss Booth, now Mrs. Millsap. She really believed in writing legibly & neatly. We had writing classes & she was very strict. We had tests & were graded just like for math or any subject. If we wrote sloppily on any test paper we got points off, also on homework. I made A's & B's but you'd never know it now. She probably wouldn't admit to being my teacher. In mid-year one day she was called out of the room by another teacher & she came back in crying & dismissed us for the day. Our beloved principle had committed suicide. We found out later that he had cancer & couldn't face life because there was absolutely no cure then. This was 1934. He had shot himself in the head at his

& his bride of about 4 months, home, just a half block from the school. We didn't go back to school until after the funeral. His wife quit teaching & left Irondale shortly after & we never heard from her again.

The fifth grade brought us Miss Tillie Wood. She was old & taught different from any teacher in school. She was tiny & wore glasses & wore her black hair in long Shirley Temple curls as long as anyone can remember. She was the first teacher there after the cornerstone was laid & as far as I know never taught any where else. Every morning she had prayers to begin the day & a Bible reading & then a story from Peter Rabbit. Oh, we looked forward to that because it was always continued. She was easy going, never scolding very much & we all loved her, as did every one she taught. The fifth & sixth grades were joined by a partition which could be raised which turned them into the auditorium. In front of our room was the stage & the piano used for plays & choir practice was in our room. We got to listen in on a lot of things the rest of the school didn't.

When I reached the sixth grade I had a teacher who was very strict on everybody & none of the kids liked her. I started making bad grades in math & never did catch up again. All my other subjects were not as hard to learn as math. I believe all the kids were so glad when that year was over that we shouted. By the way, the teacher's name was Mrs. Macon.

The seventh grade was just heaven compared to sixth. Everyone loved Mrs. McClendon. She was another teacher who had been at the school since the year One. She was very sympathetic & understanding about all our problems. I once showed her a patch of poison oak on my arm, which I had gotten on a field trip, & she brought medicine from home & gave it to me to heal my arm. Since we were in junior high we didn't mind leaving our homeroom teachers we loved because they taught us from grades 7 thru 9. Mrs. "Mac" taught English & history. Miss Margaret Haynes taught P.E. & health. Mrs. Rayfield taught Home Economics & spelling. Mr. Hammond came as our homeroom 9th grade teacher & he took over history class & math. Miss Haynes had us for a half year as 8th grade homeroom & then Mrs. Rayfield came, so Miss Haynes took over science & health & they worked together as P.E. teachers.

When I mentioned field trips, I meant hiking & walking thru the woods, around dirt roads wherever we went. Not enough folks owned cars, nor made enough money in those years to charter a bus or drive us anywhere. we visited a sand pit a few miles from school. We walked thru woods identifying trees & flowers as we went, & making notes as we walked. One year we did get enough parents to take the home Ec. class to a popular swimming place on Cahaba River nearby. We spent the nite, & did our own cooking & went swimming & had a great time.

We also had a girls choir which got to go sing at other schools for special programs, & we got to sing on two radio stations, W.A.P.I. & W.S.G.N. This was the highlight of the whole year. We thought we were absolutely beautiful in our navy blue skirts & white blouses. We only had one music teacher throughout our junior years, Mrs. Irene Ziegler Hill who also lived to teach my own children in the nineteen fifties.

Mar. 9, 1982

Now, I'll go back to our first years in Irondale. As I said we moved in with my Aunt Lucille & Uncle Ed Vest. Her son James is about 2 or 3 yrs. my junior but we played together good for several years. We all had to move so we got the 2 room apt. I mentioned earlier, on the southeast corner of 20th St. in Irondale. They moved to East Irondale with my uncle's parents. This was before school started in the fall of 1930, or maybe '31. Anyway, my daddy had a job at the time. The house we lived in needed a roof so bad 'til when it rained we had to use all of our 2 or 3 pots & pans, dishpan, washpan, washtubs, water buckets & still move the bed to the driest part of the room & even then it would get wet sometimes! But we liked living there because we were a family again & we had something to eat & good neighbors. Besides, one of our neighbors had a cow & we could get milk & butter when we had the money. Milk was about 20 cents a gallon & butter about 15 cents a half pound cake. Of course, that was a very rare treat because nobody had 20 cents or even 1 cent most of the time. We ate a lot of rice, and or, bread & thick gravy.

I just don't know about prices much the first year or two, but later on I remember that a dollar would buy quite a few groceries. My gosh, if somebody had a 2 dollar bill they were rich!

The house we were living in was coming apart. The walls & ceilings were falling in. They were plastered & painted & the leaky roof didn't help. After we moved out it was condemned & torn down. We moved across the street to another house owned by the same family. A whole house for \$3.00 a month! That was a dollar per room but we only used two & couldn't fill them up. We had a bed & a trunk in the bedroom & a table & chairs(4) & stove in the kitchen.

Now this stove was something else. It was a gasoline stove. A tank held gas & there was a pump that had to be pumped up like pumping a tire before it could be lit. And you had to be very careful because it would blow up! It did once & caught my daddy on fire. We were scared half to death. Mama got the fire out by beating it with her hands & a towel & trying to get his shirt off without tearing it. He probably only had two shirts to his name, one to work in & one to put on at home. From that time on, mama would not let us in the kitchen when the stove was being lit. All the food cooked on it had a taste of gasoline. The only thing that didn't seem to pick it up was beans, maybe because they cooked with a lid & were always steaming up away from the fumes.

This was the house where my daddy was keeping some white mice for a man who raised them for the government. Mama hated them. They were just rats to her, but I enjoyed playing with them, when she wasn't looking. We moved from this house to the one next door. My Aunt Lucille & her family moved into this one. While we lived there her daughter Betty came down with diphtheria & then we were all quarantined. That meant nobody could come in or go out of our yard or houses. She nearly died but they finally got someone to take her to the hospital & they saved her. I remember her brother James praying for God to not let his baby sister die. Later on I wondered how anybody as mean as he was could get God to do anything. We were left to look after him while his parents were at the hospital with Betty. He would not mind my mama no matter what. My sister & I held him down so mama could switch him but he still didn't mind unless the notion struck him! He was forever doing things to make my sister & me mad at him.

My daddy finally left us again & was gone a very long time. We moved again to a house behind & down the street from

this one, along with Aunt Lucille & her family. This house we stayed in from 1932 til I had married & moved away & my mama & sister stayed until mama died in 1942. It had 3 rooms and a large hall which we took for storage along with our one room and my aunt & uncle had 2 rms. including the kitchen. We set up a pot bellied iron stove on the outside wall & put the pipe thru the top part of the window. In this room we had a bed, an easy chair & dresser (the latter 2 pcs. compliments of Welfare) a table & four chairs & a little table for storage of food, which didn't hold much but there wasn't much available, not to us anyway. It also held all the pots & pans & dishes & silverware.

Mama was & had been for quite some time taking care of washing & ironing & scrubbing for anyone who could afford to pay her, with money or food. She also had a half day work on Sat. for a bookbinder in Birmingham. We were able to buy flour, meal, lard, white meat & eggs. Eggs were only 10 cents a dozen. Also beans which we had quite often, & peas. Since there were only three of us we could get by 4 days on a dozen eggs.

For a long time we bought a half gallon of butter-milk & bread for supper every nite. Since mama was earning a few dollars we were able to buy dress material. She sewed all our clothes by hand. Our slips & panties were made from flour sacks.

My aunt & uncle finally moved out in 1932 or '33 & went to Kentucky for a year. He got a mining job there. We were so happy to have the whole house again! My daddy showed up again in 1933 but he didn't stay long, maybe just a day or two. Anyway, it was spring & he wanted mama to go with him to run a motel. She would be the cleaning woman & we would live in one of the cabins. Now, back then a motel was NOT used exclusively for travelers. It was used mostly for hanky-panky & the operator was not supposed to notice who came & went at what hours. Of course, my mama would have no part in trying to raise two girls in a place like that, much less work at one. So daddy bade us goodbye & we watched him out of sight, walking down the railroad in front of our house, toward Birmingham. We figured he'd catch the next freight that came by. He must have because four years later came a letter from my Aunt Lillie (married to daddy's brother, Sam) saying he had died in Kentucky in March 1937.

April 1983

Back at the house that had the plaster falling and the leaky roof, we had a little puppy. As I said we ate a lot of rice so the dog did too. The little thing got rice stuck on his paws & it dried & he walked thru the house sounding like he had on tap shoes. There was a boy next door whom I really liked. His parents had a cow & that's where we bought buttermilk & butter when we could afford it. He gave me my first Valentine from a friend. He had his daddy come over with him & slipped it under our kitchen door. Then he went back home & his daddy got my daddy to the door & told him to get me to come & look what I had under the door!

I started to school while we lived there & we walked to school together. I didn't like him very long though. I had a new store bought dress, that the teacher & one of the mother's had given me. I loved it. My other dress was homemade. On our way home one day, I had lost a "cracker jack" ring & this boy found it & wouldn't give it back. We got in a scuffle & I jerked my hand back and poked myself in the nostril with my pencil. Blood went all over my new dress. I was so heartbroken I never liked that boy afterward.

At the house we moved to, the one where daddy had the rats, our daddy left us again. Now, since we had been in the County of Jefferson long enough to qualify my mother filed a claim for welfare aid. It was no easy thing to get. The social worker couldn't seem to understand why we couldn't go back to Bibb County to my grandpa's house, or to some other relative. She couldn't believe that none of our relatives were financially able to support their own family, much less take on three more. In the meantime we were surviving literally on handouts & leftovers from the neighbors. A dear friend, who had a mean non-compassionate husband who actually had a job just cooked a little extra & went out to "feed" his dog after meals & brought it to us instead. Oh, we had rice, don't ask me where we got it but it was always there. The gas stove, which we were afraid of, and had to "charge" a nickel's worth of gas for, was rarely lit. I'm sure the poor gas station owner died with us owing him at least a couple of dollars 'cause we never saw money. Someone came to visit us once and brought a very small jar of mayonaise and box of crackers & sister & I ate every bite of it in one sitting. It was manna from heaven to us. Somehow

we survived.

Our daddy came back & we moved into the house next door. We did not stay in this one but a short while until we moved into the one with my Aunt Lucille. The one we stayed in the longest. We had finally gotten Welfare Aid, food, or rather a slip of paper worth so much on food at a store. My mother had started washing, ironing & cleaning for a family who had a wage earner in the house! We had biscuits & white meat [bacon fat] for breakfast & beans & bread for supper. We bought eggs, too, which we all loved, & potatoes & every now & then sausage.

We ate more blackeye peas & potatoes & cornbread for supper than anything else, & more biscuits & thick gravy & white meat for breakfast. Since my mama liked greens we had them & cabbage every chance we got to find some. The foods we got from Welfare were grapefruits & juice, powdered milk & canned beef. None of it was good but it was food. We used a lot of sugar in the grapefruit juice. We even managed to buy a nickel's worth of bulk peanut butter from the meat market. That's what we took to school for lunch. When our school got a new lunchroom with a steam table we got a lunch ticket thru Welfare. For a dime we got a plate lunch & a half pint of milk. By this time mama was working for two families & at the bookbinding place. We could buy shoes & thread, & good soap to wash our face with instead of Octagon. We could afford shampoo & deodorant & face cream. We also had rayon slips & panties. Mama could buy hose that looked nice & silky.

Sunday June 10, 1984

In 15 minutes my precious sister will have been dead exactly one week. That is just one thing I never came to grips with. I still hope some one will wake me & say it isn't so. Even tho I held her hand as she died (as we did together when our precious mother died) it is just unbelievable. She talked many times to me lately about dying. She knew she was going & she felt that it would be best for her family. She would call me on the phone & tell me nobody loved her anymore & she wouldn't be missed. I can't even remember the last time we talked but it was only a few days before her death. I never dreamed she was so sick. I knew she had many physical problems but she refused to go to the doctor. The last time I saw her I told her to please go for my sake

because there were only two of us.

Since our mama died we had stayed very close & in touch with each other. Sister talked a lot about mama recently. How she wished she had talked with her about different things. She also talked about Aunt Pearl & Aunt Lorene. She gave her testimony to me & to her daughter Judy & to a cousin (Betty Vest King). I'm sure she talked to others about it, too.

We shared so much in our lifetime it's hard to pinpoint any one thing. She figure's all through the little book I've been writing since Jan. 1979, because what was my life was also hers.

I think she felt so lost after mama died. After all, I was married & had a baby. She felt that we didn't want to be bothered with living with us. She did stay until she found a job & then got herself an apartment. Neither of us realized how much we depended on mama just being there. She was in the hospital from Thurs. to Sun P.M. & sister was in from Sat. A.M. til Sun. A.M.

Sister thought it was wonderful because my children & grandchildren all get together 2 or 3 times a year. She'd managed to call & talk to at least 2 of us at those times.

I loved her so much & told her so, many times. I'll miss her call & telling me her troubles & her cheerful little "Hi" when she felt good.

January 29, 1991

My family has been asking me to write some more about my life to add to the first part I wrote during the 1970's and 1980's.

Time has a sneaky way of getting away from us in a big hurry. It only seems like yesterday when I wrote all the first part.

Oh so much has happened in our current life it's going to take some thinking to go back to 1940 and come up to date but I certainly will try.

Let's begin by saying that 1940 was the last year I

went to school -- to my dear Mama's sorrow. I do believe I was destined to quit school because my precious Mama only lived two more years. At least she saw my sister graduate high school.

All I wanted to do was get married and have babies. I loved babies, still do! That year of 1940 I had a birthday party at our community center. There were only 6 people there. When I blew out my candles my wish was that I would meet the man I would marry during that year! After all I was 16! My party was held like on a Thursday but my birthday was actually on the following Saturday. Our town was having a street carnival on that day. A girl friend & I were walking "up town" to the goings on & guess who started following us? Two boys -- one on a bicycle & the other walking. We both knew who they were but I had never met them. They lived next door to my girl friend. I liked her brother more than any boy I knew so far. Her name is Edith, her brother's name is Noel. The two boys are "Hap" (my future husband) and his younger brother, Harry.

If you read my first story do you remember what my first sweetheart's name was? Wilburn. Would you believe "Hap's" name is also Wilburn?

I certainly didn't know it then but that birthday wish turned out to be coming true sooner than I could have wished for. He stayed with us all afternoon & followed us home. Edith was spending the night with me so I didn't think Mama would mind us staying up & playing dominoes. It was 2 A.M. when Hap decided to go home.

Well, we dated every week on his off days. Oh yes he had a job, a good job, which weighed well with my Mama. After all, if some man was going to take her baby he'd better be able to take care of her. We saw each other every day. He had me walk with him to the bus stop. He had to ride a bus & streetcar to work because he didn't have a car.

We talked about marrying right away. My Sister liked Hap & so did Mama. All my family liked him. He lived with his sister Celia & her daughter Billie & also his Sister Evelyn & her husband John. Now Evelyn decided she didn't like me at all. Don't ask why. The only reason was I liked her brother & she thought God had not made a woman good enough for her brother. Later she was to love me like a

sister.

When Hap decided to ask "Mrs. Oney" for my hand he got down on his knees and told her he loved me & wanted to marry me & would be good to me & by the time he finished Mama was laughing so she couldn't say no! And so we had met June 25, 1940 and we got married Oct. 15, 1940 at a Birmingham minister's house at 4:30 on a Tuesday afternoon. The preacher's name was Stephenson. He had a beautiful handwriting but made a mistake on the certificate. He wrote "William" Glenwood instead of "Wilburn" Glenwood! We were so happy we didn't even notice it for several months. We decided to leave it because it was funny. Our marriage license was correct anyway.

After we married we went to town to Busch's Jewelry and bought the prettiest set of rings I had ever seen. They cost \$37.50. We paid about \$2.00 down & \$1.00 a week till they were paid for. We also bought a cookware set -- it had a colander -- I had never seen one. It also had a french fryer (I still have it and the colander) 2 boilers & a frying pan, all aluminum. It was so shiny & new & pretty. I loved to just look at it. It cost \$14.00. It also was paid for \$1.00 down and 50 cents a week.

We lived with Mama & sister till Thanksgiving & then we moved in with Evelyn and John. They had moved to a little community named Browntown. It was only 2 miles from where Hap and John worked. It made sense to move altho I hated to leave my Mama. I had never been away from her before more than a day or so. I believe they hated to see us go because we had been a lot of help financially. Sister had a part time job in a 5 & 10 cent store. Mama had finally landed a job as a seamstress in a factory that made slips & also one that made mattresses. They could get by very well, tho.

When we moved in with Evelyn we went to E. L. Kliner furniture store & bought a beautiful bedroom suit. It cost \$124.00. We got the bed, mattress, dresser, chest & two dresser lamps. This also was paid for by the week -- probably 8 or 10 dollars a month. We paid out the rings & pots & pans & then bought a set of silverplate spoons & forks & knives. Oh they were beautiful. They cost \$37.00. 50 cents down and 50 cents a week. Our \$28.00 a week salary was doled out that way. We paid Evelyn \$8.00 a week to stay with them. That included meals & my help with the work.

Mar. 1, 1991

John did not own a car so he rode to work with a neighbor who worked at the same mill he did -- the wire & nail mill which is there no more.

Hap had bought a 1932 Chevy at a car dealership in Birmingham. The name was Coyle-McMorris. I have no idea what the car cost but it was paid by the week or month after that for a while. Hap earned 60 cents per hour when we got married. After a while he got a raise -- to 65 cents.

Hap worked at a different part of the T.C.I. (Tennessee, Coal, & Iron) Company -- the blast furnaces.

We used our car to drive to Fairfield which was about 3 or 4 miles away, to buy our groceries at the A. & P. store and to use the post office where we rented a box. There was no mail delivery where we lived. Everyone had to go to Dolomite P.O. or Fairfield.

During that first year of our marriage Evelyn let two more of her brothers move in with us. They slept on a rollaway bed in the dining room. They, too had gotten a job at T.C.I. "Doot" (William, Hap's twin) went to work at the Tin Mill and "Nat" (James Nathaniel) had gone to work at the Blooming Mill.

I'm trying to remember dates for these times but it's not easy to do.

In March of 1941 Doot got married & moved out. She was Hazel Marie Owen (Miss Seventeen of 1940 from Birmingham, and had been to Hollywood, Calif. for a screen test for movies). I guess she wasn't a good actress!

Evelyn had a wood burning stove so it took a while to cook a meal for all of us. Also the men worked different shifts -- rotating from Days to Evenings to Nights, 7 - 3, 3 - 11, & 11 - 7, and it was a job to keep all the men fed & make that many good lunches. Evelyn and I stayed pretty busy.

We hired our laundry done by a black woman who lived behind us on a hill. She and her husband would come and get

the clothes & bring them back all washed and ironed. Nobody in the family had a washer.

We really had lots of fun at times. On our off days we'd get together and go to the farm in Calera, Al. to see Hap's Mom and Dad. Sometimes there were as many as six couples of us at one time. "Mamaw" had a table about 8 ft. long & it was full of good food and happy people. All the women helped fix the meals & clean up afterwards. We usually spent the night. We would wake up to the smell of the most delicious biscuits in the world! All of us tried to copy her cooking but we never could make anything taste that good.

About the time Doot and Hazel got married, I found out I was going to have a baby. I didn't think anyone in the house wanted us to have a baby as much as I did. We all have to face reality sometime so they finally accepted the fact that this baby was not going away.

I got so sick at times I just wanted to get away from everyone. We had no plumbing in the house so when I went to the outhouse I would sit there & cry & pray. I had been sickly all my life & I had withstood a lot of pain but this was a kind that wouldn't go away.

As I said in my first part of this story, Evelyn did not like me, not really. I believe she tolerated me because she loved Hap. After I became pregnant I was sure of it. She tried to get me to leave him & go back home. Oh boy, how I wanted to. But I wanted him to go too!

My mother was worried about me because I was so unhappy -- only the unhappiness didn't last long. She would tell me to pray and be good to Evelyn & she would like me someday. How right she was. Somehow I managed to survive all the nausea spells. Evelyn kept telling Hap if he let me lie down I'd stay there nine months! Just to prove her wrong I'd stand up & wash dishes, get sick -- go outside & do what had to be done -- come back & finish the dishes. I had to go out as many as three times but I was determined.

After all the bad part of the pregnancy went away, I started feeling great. I was happy all the time. Evelyn started helping me "plan" for "our" baby.

Hap and I started looking for a place to rent. We found

one in July. I wish I had a picture of it. This was Tourist Court cabin. The lady who owned it had been recently widowed so she decided she would rent the cabins monthly to couples who either had no children or would only have one, maybe. It was actually a large room with a half partition between what would be the kitchen & bedroom. The kitchen had a sink with storage space underneath. The bathroom had a shower stall & commode. I think we would have taken it just for the bathroom. Only we didn't have hot water. Cold showers feel good in July. We had a bedroom suit so we had to go buy kitchen "stuff".

Back to Klinner Furniture Co. We chose a 1940 Crosley-Shelvador refrigerator (beautiful) and a coal-oil (kerosine) stove, a porcelain top table and a double door utility cabinet. We bought two chairs & Mama gave us one so we had three. We used our dresser stool (bench) when we had two people for a meal with us.

All this new furniture was so beautiful I could just sit and look at it. We never had anything new & shiny in my lifetime. I would clean and polish it regularly.

Sometime during this first nine months of our marriage we had bought another car, a 1937 Plymouth. we had to be good penny pinchers to make that puny little salary pay for all that "new stuff" we had -- plus a car & still have plenty of good food & money to go to a movie once or twice a month. After all we had to go 'cause each week or two they had an encyclopedia they were selling for 25 cents per copy -- only at the movies! It is called the Encyclopedia American & we got the whole set. We were so proud of our new books.

We also had a large floor model radio record player we had bought from Nat, or rather we took up the payments on it. That was our only other entertainment. We didn't own too many records 'cause we couldn't afford them.

The lady who owned the places we rented, (Hazel & Doot moved next door to us) found out I was having a baby & insisted on loaning me a rocker. All babies had to be rocked, she said.

When it came time for our baby, I pulled a spoiled child trick. I refused to go to the Company hospital

(T.C.I.). I knew that my long ago childhood Dr. Cochran was in a clinic building in Woodlawn & I insisted that Hap take me to him for delivery. I regretted it later because he charged more and made Hap angry. He took his own sweet time paying him. It cost \$80.00 & he took nearly a year to pay him! We had heard he only charged \$50.00. Anyway, we were very proud of our 6 lb. 12 oz. boy. My Mama thought she was the very first & only grandmother, especially since we got her a boy. She always wanted a boy of her own. It's a shame she didn't get to live and enjoy him but 14 months. She made so many baby clothes for him. She bought his hi chair, and he took his first steps for her. She go to spend the first BIG Christmas with him. We had our day together early that year because she was gone before December 25th. She must have known it would be her last year because the things that happened seemed to have been pre-planned.

She suddenly got very sick about the middle of December. On Dec. 17th she went to the hospital -- a Thursday -- we didn't get to visit her until Saturday. She was semi-conscious. On Sunday when we got back to see her she was unconscious & never regained consciousness. We didn't get to have her funeral until Christmas Eve. Since our country was at war we had two flat tires on the hearse on the way from Birmingham to Cahaba Valley Church in Bibb County.

Doris Warren Vincent never mentioned she contracted emphysema from smoking. Although she quit many years before her death she finally succumbed to the disease the 23rd of February, 2001 at Lloyd Noland Hospital in Fairfield, Jefferson County, Alabama. Her grandchildren affectionately called her "Gana." She was remembered with love by many family and friends at her funeral.