

"Sharpley" Karaoke written by my "double" first
cousin. Mama Gracy was their step-grandmother
My mother, Era Gracy, married Aunt Ellen's
brother "Red". Peggy Farmer 6/10/2010

May, 2005

Dear Ones,

After the trip to El Paso for Era's funeral (April 4), I began thinking about pictures of the brothers and sisters that I have displayed in the Sharpley memorabilia bedroom in my house and decided to see if I could get copies of them for everyone in the family. Some may already have them, or have better pictures, but I thought I would send these along. Since this is mainly for the generation below ours, it occurred to me that you might like some memories as well, so that is what I am sending, **my** memories of us all. If the different brothers and sisters who are left were to write their memories, they would surely be different, but the ball is in their respective courts for that. These are mine, off the top of my head and before I get too old to write them down.

Before I begin, I might say, our trip to El Paso was a wonderful family experience. We, the four siblings flew in and out on the same day. We all got there within an hour of each other on Monday morning. Rob and Sharon had arranged for us to eat breakfast at the airport hotel. Lillard and Sara met us there; and Frank, the only cousin who could come, got in soon after we arrived. That was the beginning of our day of celebration of Era Chloe's life. It was not a sad time for we were all glad that she was, as Lillard pointed out, "at peace at last." We remembered so many good times together. And it was such a great time to be re-introduced to Sara, Rob and Sharon, and Lillard. If there had been more of us there, we could not have done that, so in some ways it was good that there were only nine of us. Of course there were many friends who were at the funeral service, but just nine relatives.

It was pleasant to be in their little city and their church and their home. After the service and a lovely noon meal at the church we went to their home and sat and visited awhile longer. This was a very, very special time for us all.

And so it will be from this time on. It will come our time to go and we will gather and reminisce and give another back to the God we all came to know when we were growing up in Emhouse and Corsicana. What a great heritage we have. Most of you appreciate Mama and Daddy just like we do, but it never hurts to reiterate how great they were and how blessed we are to have been apart of the eight! You who are to carry on the Sharpley name and traditions are fortunate indeed.

Best love to you all,

Betty



What can I say about Mama and Daddy that you do not already know? They were pillars; they were a "matched set." Now, that might strike you funny but it is true. They were matched in God's eyes, He joined them together. They were matched in our eyes, too, as we saw them work and live and love together for sixty-eight years? Funny the things we remember. I can hear Mama say, "I am not going to clean that oven, the next woman Sweet brings in here can clean the oven." Well, that was ok, the oven cooked pretty well without being cleaned, or it wore out and we got a new one! The first time we ever had an electric stove was pretty exciting. So was our first electric refrigerator, and that first electric washer with the ringer.

Gee what a difference that made. After Mama started sewing for the public, there in the big double doorway of the living room at 608 West Seventh, she would often say to Daddy as he sat in his rocker near by, "Sweet, come kiss me." And he always got up and came around the machine with his crooked little grin and did just that.

Mama and Daddy had a work ethic that could not be beat. Ruth is perhaps the only one left who might remember living in Emhouse and Daddy being a farmer, but from my earliest memory, Daddy drove a produce truck, mostly from Corsicana to Dallas and to Houston. I guess he would go to Dallas and load-up, then go to Houston the next day to deliver what he loaded. He was gone in that truck from early till late. WW II got the trucking business, but it didn't get Daddy. For a while he worked as a policeman, downtown foot patrol. Soon he got his first service station and that is what most of you remember, especially his downtown Humble Station near the post office and the newspaper office. Being so close to the newspaper influenced him to take a rural paper route when he finally retired. A lot of you have made those routes with him when we would come to visit.

Of course, Mama's work was at home and it was never finished. We were never all eight home at once. Willie Sue was married and had a baby, Mary Ellen, twelve days before Ben was born. However, if anything, that made the workload heavier. No Sue to help with the twins.

As long as I can remember, Monday was washday. My first memories of the wash were when Mama did it in a wash pot over a wood fire out in the back yard. Two tubs with cold water were there beside the pot to rinse and ring out and then hang on the line. There was a rub-board there somewhere, but I am not sure where it fit in, maybe in the first rinse, surely not in the boiling pot! Maybe there were three tubs, but I am sure there was bluing in the last rinse, I am sure of that. Every day had its special responsibility, but I don't remember what they all were. I do remember that Friday Mama cleaned house. When I was old enough for the responsibility, I dusted. However, no matter what the day, there was always food to prepare and beds to be made and the day-to-day jobs that always got done!

We all remember fondly the food Mama would prepare. To say it was good is totally inadequate; everything from red beans & cornbread to fried chicken and chocolate pie was always the best, for Danny's sake, we must include chicken & dumplings. Wonderful, wonderful memories of wonderful, wonderful parents!

Willie Sue was the oldest of the clan. How dear she was to us all. We will never understand why God took her at such an early age, 59 years, but what wonderful memories we have of her. I barely remember Sue looking like this picture, but obviously she was as beautiful as a young woman as she was in her later years. God gave her a wonderful personality and spirit. She could have talked with ease, grace and intelligence to anyone, even the President.

Sue and Guy made a carefully matched set too. I have heard the story, and recounted it many times, of how she came to the bed where Mama lay after Billy and I were born and cried and said, "Mama what are we going to do with two?" I have always thought that was the reason she and Guy married when she was so young (the day before her fifteenth birthday). Taking care of twins was just not that much fun! She missed the terrible two's with us. Billy and I were one and a half when she and Guy married. Mary Ellen was born twelve days before Ben Owen. Poor Era had to take over the hard stuff after they married.

Sue was fun and her laughter was contagious. You never knew from her countenance that anything was ever wrong. After her brood was gone and Sue worked outside her home, we would walk into Beal's where she was in charge of piece goods and when she saw us that great smile would break out. Always happy to see us and make us feel special.

I remember her sitting over on the stairway, there in the kitchen on Seventh Avenue, after she had her first bout with breast cancer, saying, "Well, the doctor says if you have to have cancer, mine is the best kind to have;" always optimistic, always ready to make the best of things. Even at the end when Dan & Doris were leaving to go back to Brazil, she smiled and whispered, "I'll see you when you



get back again." Of course she knew she was not going to make it, but she never wanted anyone to think anything but the best.

As a child I clearly remember going out to Black Hills where Sue and Guy lived in the big old Poarch house on the hill. Mary and I would play dolls and do all sorts of fun things. We would bathe in a washtub and, when night came on, Sue would light kerosene lamps for us to see by. I am sure we went to bed pretty early (probably for more reason than the lights). In the morning, we would waken to the smell of bacon frying and biscuits cooking. The best part was the bacon flavored cream gravy we had on those biscuits. All the leftovers went to feed Guy's gray hound dogs. Can you imagine dogs eating anything that good!

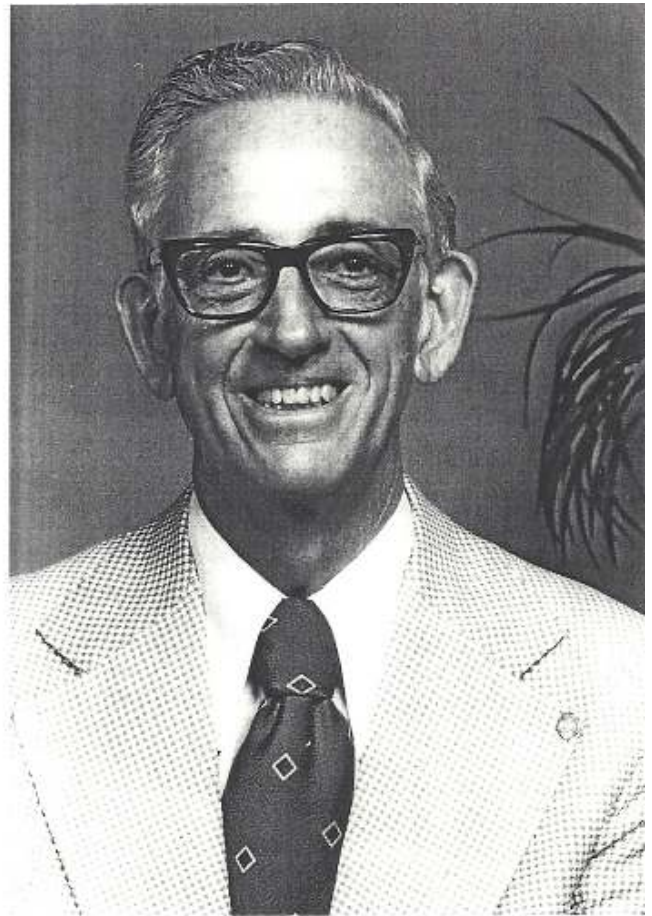
Sue and Guy moved to town long before I was grown and Guy worked as a mechanic for the John Deere Tractor Company.

Dan was second oldest. He was the missionary. He & Doris spent thirty years in Brazil. They did a wonderful work. I will never forget Danny telling of their accomplishments in Brazil when Dan died. They did so much good. I wish we had that text to insert here (Hint, hint, Danny).

But it is my purpose to tell you what I remember. One of my earliest memories is Dan going off to Rice Institute to College. Dan had graduated Valedictorian of his class. He packed a trunk with all his things, and Daddy took him down on one of his Houston trips. He got a job working as a night clerk for Houston Power and Light. He could study on the job and I think he did a lot of that. He eventually transferred to Baylor and graduated there. Even then he felt that nudge toward "God's work."

His first post college job was in Liberty, Texas as education director at the First Baptist Church. We were all so proud of him for being such a great man. Billy and I got to go visit him there one summer. He was not the best housekeeper in the world, so I proceeded to clean house. He had an old, heavy dust mop, which I used, on the floors. I added some more oil (furniture polish). Well. I got those floors so greasy that you couldn't walk on them without tracking oil everywhere. Dan had to mop with hot soapy water to get all the oil off and then he threw the dust mop away. On that trip Dan took us to the San Jacinto Monument. This was a great experience for Bill and me, something neat to tell at school when we studied Texas History. He even bought us a little souvenir statue to take home.

Soon after this, the war came on and Dan joined the Navy. Again, we were proud of him. He became an officer and was stationed in Brazil as a Naval Attaché. I guess it was then that he gained a heart for Brazil, although it was not until after the war and he and Doris



had married that the two of them felt called to be missionaries. It was during a chapel service at the seminary that they met at the altar, each feeling that tug toward missions. Their children were MK's, missionary kids, born and reared in Brazil.

I am getting ahead of myself though. When Dan was in the seminary, he pastored the little Emhouse Baptist church where Baw (our grandmother on Mama's side) was a member and where Mama had been baptized as a little girl. You can imagine how thrilled and proud Baw was to have her grandson as her pastor.

It was a great loss when Dan died. We miss him very much, and we miss Doris too. She lives with Brenda and William now and we don't see or hear from her often. Busy lives, busy highways, and aging keep us apart, but we cherish good memories of the mixing and mingling of our lives.

Era was the third child. My memories of her began in the old green house at 1109 West Seventh. She was so awesome to me. Smart, funny, regal, just the person a younger sister would look up too. I was ready to be of service at her beck and call. I remember how exciting it was when she went off to Mary Hardin Baylor. She got a job in the President's office. She would come home with such funny stories about all she was doing, and we were so proud. One of the things that impressed me most was that the girls had to wear hose all of the time, and long dresses to dinner every evening. Remember, this was not a co-ed school. After college she came back home and worked for the draft board, not a real fun job. There was an air force training base there and I can remember her dating some of the cadets.

One of the most exciting experiences occurred when Era went to California to work in the movie world. There she hob-knobbed with some of the best of the technical people in the industry. I really don't remember what brought her back home again, but that was not for long. Soon she was off to Albuquerque to work as a paralegal secretary. It was there she met and married Robert Sprecher. I remember they moved to Roswell where he was district attorney. Sara and Rob were born there. Later they moved on to Silver City.

I also remember well a Christmas when we all gathered at the big house at 608 West Seventh and the fun we had, and the fun all the kids had with each other. There was a touch football game that was probably the greatest of all time. My kids still talk about it. I think that was the last time we all got together for Christmas. How Mama stood us all, for that long, is beyond me, but it surely made for great memories.

It was in Silver City that Robert



died. It was a really hard time for them, but Era opted for them to stay there and go back to the local teachers college and get her teaching certificate.

During these years she met Lillard Thompson. He was her "knight in shining armor" and we bless God for him and for all his contributions to her and Rob and Sara. He was high school principal at the time. They migrated back to Texas and both taught in Alpine schools for awhile. Actually Lillard was an administrator, Era taught English. Then it was back to El Paso where Lillard continued in education, but Era went back to the business world.

What a good life Era and Lillard had together. Lillard became mayor of Horizon City and they had lots of fun with that.

Lillard's care for Era during the waning years of her life was just extraordinary! We solute him and love him for all he was to her.

Loyd was next in line. As long as I can remember he was good looking! All the girls swarmed around him. After school and on Saturdays he worked at Boyd's Grocery Store. That was before the days of the big grocery chains. At Christmas time he would buy our tree and help to decorate it. He loved to use all blue lights. I remember when he brought in our first "sprayed white tree." With those blue lights, it just looked like something out of a magazine or movie. He was artistic and always loved pretty things. He was a big tease and was constantly after Mama about her shaking hands. He talked about her "symphony with cup and saucer."

Loyd enlisted in the Marines soon after he graduated from high school. He was a clerk typist for his company. He was in the Eighth Marine Division on Iwo Jima during that fierce battle. Even though he didn't carry a rifle or dig a bunker to lie in, when the war was over and he got home, he was a pretty shook up young man.

My memories are vague after he came home from the war. He lived in California, the San Francisco area mostly. He worked for the company that made Scotch Tape for many years. He would come home for a visit every few years, but we really didn't know too much about him. He had antiques for a while and ran a motel/hotel in Seattle during the worlds fair. When he would come home he was always sweet and generous and kind. I loved him very much. He even came to Lubbock one time and Billy flew him up to Canyon to visit with us. I remember what I cooked was not to good and I was embarrassed, because I knew he was a great cook.

He never married but always seemed to have lots of friends. He loved to go to the opera and get all dressed up. As I said, he loved to cook and I think did lots of entertaining for friends and co-workers.



Eventually, he was diagnosed with cirrhosis of the liver. He spent some time in a hospital there in California, but then came back home to live in a little house in the back yard of Mama and Daddy's house on Sycamore. Ben fixed it up for him. It was a neat little place and he liked it. He was there when Daddy died and I know that was a comfort to Mama. He couldn't work anymore and never did really give up his drinking, although he tried to control it.

I believe Loyd came home to die, and when he did, even though we were scattered, the six of us made it home. Loyd was the second one of us to go. He was the second child Mama had lost.

It was just a simple graveside service, with his body in a plain serviceman's casket, draped with an American flag, just the way he wanted it.

We honor his memory just as we do each of the others.

Ruth, Ellen Ruth, Ruth Duddle, take your pick, she will answer to any one of them. We have finally gotten to the living siblings. In El Paso Ruth kept reminding us that she is the matriarch now. I will attest to that, she was always too old to play with Bill, Ben and me. There were times when Bill & Ben would just as soon not have me tag a long, but they let me play with them. Not Ruth! And, if I dared touch something that was hers, I got into trouble with her.

That all changed when I went off to Wayland College and wrote and begged her to come the next year to join me there. We roomed together, wore the same clothes, just one wardrobe for the two of us. Sometimes we even dated the same boys without a cross word. We were known as "the shapely Sharpley sisters." Growing up changed us considerably and that was good.

By the time Ruth graduated from high school the war was on and it had to be a job for her. Ruth and several other girls from Corsicana went off to Washington. Ruth worked at the Pentagon for several years. I am glad she came back to go to school. We had so much fun during those years. Wayland was a great school for both of us. This picture was taken during Ruth's Wayland days. Her blouse is one we shared!

Ruth graduated in 1951, Bill and I were gone and living in Canyon by then. H.J. was an old Canyon friend of Bill's and we introduced them. The rest is history.

Ruth and H. J. lived in Canyon for twenty years. That is where they raised their boys. Since we were there a lot of that time as well, our ties deepened. Our kids grew up together. But, we moved off to Florida in 1967 and in a few years so did they. A job change for H.J. took them to San Antonio in 1975. It was a great move for them and they were happy and satisfied till H.J. passed away last August. They spent thirty years



there and put down some pretty deep roots. The climate was good, they had a nice home, many friends and a great church.

Ruth worked too, for a while in real estate, but then for many years at Dillard's in their home furnishing's department. She loved that till her feet rebelled. The last six years she has been in Bible Study Fellowship. She is finishing in May. No little accomplishment.

Since Frank lives in Amarillo, he has encouraged her to move back to Canyon and live in Pala Duro Village, a wonderful retirement center near the university. So, in June of 2005, Ruth is moving back! We are delighted for her. No more big city traffic, no more house to worry about, sinks to unstop, meals to cook, friends galore living right there in the same building. Who could you ask for more? Way to go Ruth!

Bill is the next in line, but not by much. He and I were born fifteen minutes apart. Bill did come first, keeping the girl, boy progression in tact. They tell us that we caused quite a commotion in the little town of Emhouse. My earliest memories were of living in Corsicana. It was always Billy, Bettye, & Ben. We all three looked alike and could have been triplets. Bill was a worker, even as a little boy, he liked to do carpentry. Mr. Warring, our next door neighbor, would hire him for odd jobs around his house and yard. This was back when folks had barns and stables in their yards. By the time he was old enough to do so, Bill joined the carpenters union and kept up his membership into his college days. However, football moved to the front when he got to junior and senior high school. He went to Texas Tech on a football scholarship. We were all so proud of him. He did well there, played wide receiver. It did get him through Tech. He coached and taught at Tahoka for several years, when he went to West Texas he just stayed. He loved Lubbock and Texas Tech and besides that is where he met Jessie Lee. He coached and taught at New Deal after he and Jessie Lee married. He got his Master degree in Education during those teaching years.

Bill decided to try the beauty business with Jessie Lee. It was fun for awhile and he did very well, but then the stock market bug got him and he traded his hair styling license for that of a stocker broker. I think he still dabbles in stocks at the age of 75. Maybe just keeps up with the market reports. His old friend "rheumy" keeps him down some. He knows everyone in Lubbock and attends lots of funerals.

Uncle Bud got Bill interested in joining the Masons and he is still active in both the Masons and the Shrine. He was Potentate for the Panhandle region for several years.



Bill and Jessie Lee are still happily situated in Lubbock. Jessie Lee has been an invalid for many years, but because of a great little Jiffy wheelchair, she can get around the house and do many things for herself. They have a van with a lift that allows her to roll her chair into the van, and they can get out for church and a few social functions. Bill was president of the Down Town Bible Class last year, so they were there rain or shine, sleet or snow. This class broadcasts the lesson on a local radio station, so Bill had to be careful to say just the right thing as he presided and presented their teacher.

Bill and I are closer now than when we were children. I suppose we were too busy with our own agendas till now. It has been a joy for us (Bill K and me) to visit back and forth with he and Jessie Lee since retiring. We try to go out for Thanksgiving every year and that is a very special time.

only Ben to follow. What does one say about his/herself. I followed Billy, we were not inseparable or identical. Even now if I mention that I have a twin brother someone will say, without thinking, "oh, are you identical?" No, not quite! As I mentioned on Bill's page, all I remember as a child is the three of us. I remember when Mama would not let us take a bath together anymore. I just couldn't understand that, same for not sleeping in the same bed, all so strange to me. Course Mama never did tell us much about the birds and bees and I was a slow learner.

I was slow in a lot of ways, when Billy and I were in grade school, I can remember overhearing one of the teachers say, "Billy is the bright one, Bettye is slow." And it really was true I guess, but in Junior High I finally had an English teacher who took a special interest in me and helped me see I could learn and did have some abilities.

I was involved in all sorts of activities in High School. I was always involved in things that were worthwhile, but never had a great deal of time to help around the house. I am sure I spent money that Mama and Daddy didn't have to spend, but they were patient with me. The boys worked more than I did. However, in Junior High, I finally got a job at Morton's Printing Shop. I never will forget my first pay envelope. It was a little brown "sack like" envelope with cash in it. Seems like it was twelve dollars plus change. I was so excited. I went to a used furniture store and bought a little desk to use to study. I was so proud of it. I still have it after more than sixty years. I don't know which of the kids will get it, but I do hope they will treasure it as much as I have through the years.

You know about my going to Wayland and meeting and marrying Bill



Knighton. God was so good to me! We were pretty young ourselves, when we married, at nineteen. God grew us up together and we have made a matched set for 56 years. Our children and grand children are our delight. We thank God for them and all the other blessings He has given us over the years.

We moved to Hideaway in 1981 and have had a wonderful life here. Our church is the focus of our lives since retirement. There is life after teaching! Bill worked on for a few more years, but we have never looked back since we retired. We both love to play golf and this is a great place to do that. We are in a wonderful church with great Christian friends. Bill sings more for funerals now than he does weddings, but he still sounds like a clear sweet bell, and I am not even prejudiced!

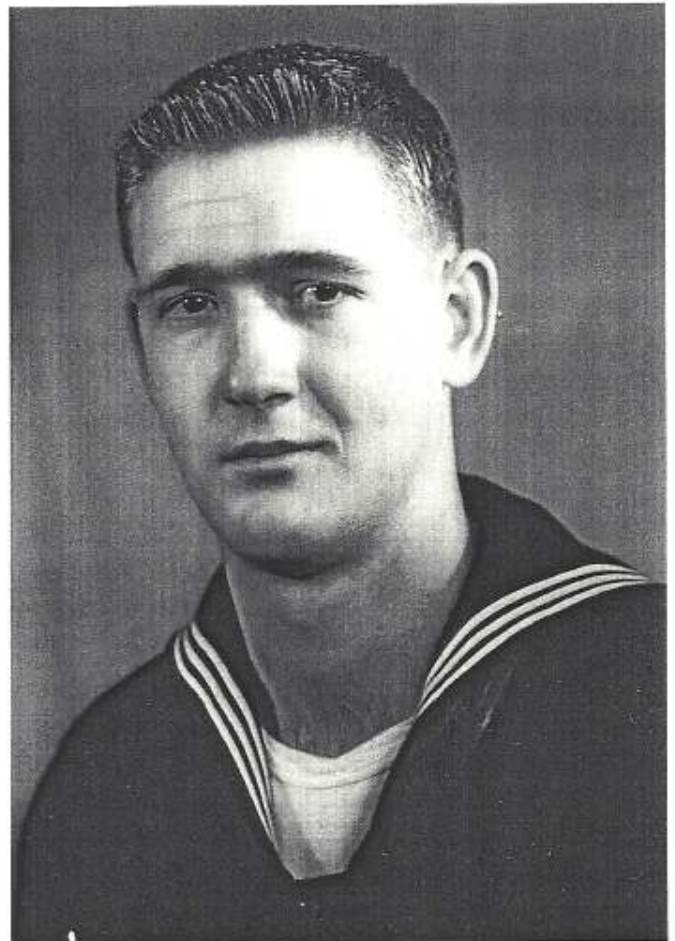
Ben is the last of the tribe! I guess God saved the best till last. Can you imagine how tired Mama must have been of being pregnant? She had been pregnant seven times and was 37 years old when Ben came. By the way, we would never have used the word pregnant, she was always "expecting." We were probably grown before we ever heard that word. To say we grew up in a sheltered environment is not an exaggeration.

Back to Ben, what can I say: he is the greatest! He is the only one left in Navarro County. He and Sue know everyone in Corsicana. Course Sue is an "import" from Megargel, but she worked with Ben for years at the car lot and just naturally became one of the old timers. They moved out to Corbett a few years back and are really country folks now. Ben came by this honestly, even as a little boy, he loved horses and worked for people who had cattle and horses in the country. He had a rural paper route by the time he was old enough, had a horse to ride when he delivered those papers. We were all proud of him and his horse, Lady Godiva.

Ben graduated from High School just as the Korean War came on, so he joined the Navy. He was a handsome sailor. After he came home he went to Navarro Junior College and played a little football, but he never did cotton to school all that much. Bill encouraged him to come to Tech. The one really positive thing out of his Tech experience was his meeting and marrying Sue.

Thus they began their journey into becoming a matched set. Ben sewed a few wild oats along the way, but Sue stuck by him and what a great couple they have made, and what a great family they have.

They moved to Corsicana when their children were little, actually Misty was born there, but it was certainly what God had in mind all along. There is no



way to express how wonderful it has been to have Ben there through the years. Ruth teases about being the matriarch, but that is just because she is the oldest living sibling. Ben became our patriarch when Mama and Daddy needed him. He has been there for everyone who needed him, Mama and Daddy, Sue, Loyd and Dan. If anyone in the family needed him, he was there. He can put on a pretty gruff front, but his heart is made of gold and he does love his family. I bless God for him and for what he has meant to us all through the years.

Ben looks like Grandpa Sharpley and is built like him as well. However, he certainly has that determined O'Neal Irish spirit. He is like Mama in that he will tackle any problem and more often than not, solve it. He loves the out of doors, but is pretty handy in the kitchen as well. His family says his turkey and dressing are as good as Mama's. Reckon that is true?

Addendum

Dear Hearts, this did not turn out to be easy at all, mainly because I kept revising. Every time I tried to reread and correct errors, I ended up with more errors or changing something. I finally decided this is it, mistakes and all. Anything that is wrong, you will just have to forgive and know that I meant well. Also, there is so much more I would have liked to mention about individuals, but I was trying hard for one page for each. So anything about your mother or dad that you would like added, do feel free to do so, but I warn you, IT IS NOT EASY.

Since I do have a little more room on this page, I will add a memory or two. There is nothing mentioned about Daddy's family. It was quite a large family and Daddy was the baby. Grandpa and Grandma Sharpley were very well thought of in Emhouse. Their house was across the street from the Baptist church, but they were Methodists. Mama and Daddy lived with them in their early-married days. Mama told wonderful stories of Grandma's religious experiences.

Grandma died before we were born so I never did know her, but Mama certainly regarded her highly and I am sure her influence in Mama's life was profound. Some years after she died Grandpa went to some big Methodist conference (I don't remember where) and when he came home he had found a new lady. Mrs. Gracy is the Grandma that I knew. Grandpa always called her Mrs. Gracy, even after they married, so we called her Grandma Gracy.

Course Mama's parents were Baptist, although I don't ever remember Papa O'Neal ever going to church. Something happened along the way that turned him off where the church was concerned. Sad, but that happens often. Baw was very, very faithful and was an adult Sunday school teacher. Some of my most steadfast theology came from sitting at her knee when she studied her lesson. Her belief about the second coming of Jesus was especially unique and good. She said, "the second coming is when Jesus comes for each of us individually." There will be another when Jesus comes in the clouds, but the second one is an individual thing, unless we are still here and are ruptured! To me this makes death a thing to look forward too. Jesus will come and take me by the hand and I will go to be with him for all eternity. Awesome concept!

Hey, I am about to fill another page, so this will just have to do.

It has been fun to think of all of you as I have done this, so I hope you will accept it as my labor of love to each one of you.

God Bless!

Betty

Baw and The Second Coming of Christ

When I was a little girl, one summer I was visiting my grandmother out in the country. I called her Baw. She dipped snuff, but despite that she was a wonderful Christian lady and I loved her dearly. One morning we were sitting out on her front porch while she studied her Sunday school lesson, she was a teacher. The lesson had something to do with the Second Coming of Christ for I remember very distinctly her telling me that she believed the second coming was when Jesus came to get the individual Christian. What a powerful concept that was to me, and it stuck. Now I know that there will be a rapture and all those good things that are told about in scripture, but I truly believe that Baw was right and that for each of us there is that second coming when Jesus comes personally to take us home to be with him. It may be on a bright sunshiny day or in the dead of night, but when he comes we will see that wonderful light and the clouds parting for him to come and take us to be with him. I do look forward to that and know that you do too.