

I Dedicate This to All My Brothers and Sisters with All My Love

BY: Ruby Jewell Pelfrey Collins

1908-1988

Daughter of **Bud Pelfrey & Eva Porter** (d/o **Steve Porter**, s/o **Andrew J. Porter**)

I was born April 18, 1908, in Olive Hill, Kentucky, Carter Co., Kentucky population Approx 2,000. The house located on Tygart Branch branch, near Harbison Walker brick plant, was owned by my maternal grandparents, the **Rev. S.L. and Emily Porter**.

My parents **James Herbert Pelfrey** and **Eva Porter** were married at age 16 & 18 yrs. To this happy couple were born 12 children - 4 girls & 8 boys.

My grandpa, **James Herbert Pelfrey**, died when my father was 12 years old, so he being the oldest boy, one sister, **Cora** was older than he was, had to quit school and help his mother provide for the family. Among other jobs, he hoed corn for neighbors, for .50 cents a day. He was working at General Refractories Brick Yard when he and my mother were married.

Since my dad was a farmer at heart, we most always lived where we could at least have a garden. Of course dad had to work at public work for an income, so the garden was mostly the family's "chore." He'd always help after a 10 hr workday like plowing, etc. All of us kids always had our chores to do. Like getting in coal and kindling for overnight. I learned to milk the cow at about 12 years of age. Then that was one of my chores. There were times us kids argued among ourselves, but we loved each other always.

My dad enjoyed "trading" very much. A trait I'm sure he inherited from his dad. He even enjoyed telling us kids of going with his dad on "trading trips." Their transportation was horses so sometimes these trips would take 3 or 4 days. These trades consisted of a horse, hog, cow or even a pocket knife. He most always got "boot" (money). Many times these trades helped out financially, and dad was doing something he really enjoyed. The day he was killed at work by the collapse of a brick kiln, Jan 14, 1935, he had been to the "trade-ground" on his lunch hour. The trade ground was a rather small plot of ground by the highway – about 15 or 20 minutes walk from work, where people from other counties even, who liked to trade, met one day a month and brought whatever they wanted to trade. This day was called "Trade Day." I believe it was the second Monday of each month.

Shortly after my parents were married, my grandparents, the Porters, (**Steve Porter**, son of Andrew J. Porter) sold out and went to Antigo, Wisconsin. Sometime after **Earl** (the one after me) was born, we also went to Antigo. They only stayed one winter there. Dad worked in the woods cutting timber. They never said why they came back to Ky. I imagine the 30 and 40 degrees below zero had something to do with it. The first home I remember living in was a 4 room house on Henderson Branch, near where Erie

school now stands. I remember when Erie was being built. We'd take Sunday afternoon walks up there and look around. Mother's sister, **Pearl Fouch** (d/o Steve Porter, s/o AJP) lived next door to us. One day while mom had gone over there for something, me and **Earl** got into an argument just after he'd thrown his toy hatchet & hit me in the head & blood came running down into my eyes mom came in, Needless to say, the hatchet disappeared forever

I started school in the public school that was in the bottom by Tygart Creek, at the upper end of town. One day dad came for me before school was over. I wondered why, so on the way home he told me my baby brother **Kermit** had died. These were sad days at home and for my parents to. We buried him in the Fairview Cemetery in Elliott Co.

When **Edward** was born our parents watched him so close for fear of losing him I guess. I am sure he was a normal healthy baby, but mom thought a visit to Wisconsin would be good for him. You see Wisconsin was a different climate. So off we went for a visit with **Grandma and Grandpa Porter**. Mom, Earl, Ed and I. It was a two day train trip. I don't remember just how long we stayed. Maybe a month so I had to go to school while we were there. I never heard dad complain once about our visit.

It was about 12 miles up in the country to **Grandma Pelfrey's** house. I remember many visits with dad. We'd walk up on Sat. and back Sun. We took our time and rested often. I really enjoyed the trips. When **Earl** was 5 years old, or so, he got to go with us. I remember a "worked out" rock quarry at Lawton we rested a long time there. What a nice place to play, nice white sand with lots of odd shapes and color rocks. The visit to grandmas was such a treat. I loved to sleep upstairs and hear the rain on the tin roof. I can still see the bedroom papered with catalogs.

If **Asbury and Lyman Evans**, he was Grandma's daughter's only son that she raised from a baby after both parents died, were working out in the field when we got there, Grandma would ring the dinner bell, that stood in the back yard, just outside the kitchen door, this was the signal to come home to the house at once.

When I was about 10 years old, dad bought our home on Tick Ridge from **Charley Greenhill**. It was 12 acres or so, a real farm to us. We had a horse, cow, chickens, & hogs. **George and Sara Bailey** were close neighbors. When their daughter, **Ollie Oppenheimer** came to visit them I got to know **Clarice, Doval, and Marjorie**, the baby. A few years later the Oppenheims bought the farm next to Bailey from **Pleas Walker**. **Cecil Oppenheimer**, a carpenter, still worked in Prestonsburg, Ky and only came home on wk ends. Some of the Oppenheimer kids stayed all night with us or I at their house real often. Ollie was like a 2nd mother to me. I was treated just like her kids, the same rule applied when they were all at our house. Once when **Clarice** and I were doing a fast job with dish washing so we could go play, like putting leftovers away in the same bowl instead of putting them in a smaller one, **Ollie** came in on us and made us do it right. She took the time to teach me and her girls to crochet and embroider. We had the run of the fields to play in but we got our orders not to run through "**Granny Bailey's**" house.

Also we had a certain time to get back toward the house. We didn't forget very many times.

The **Oppenheimers** are still my best friends & **Ollie** feels like my 2nd mother. When mother died in 1933 during the depression, **Cecil Oppenheimer** who had a carpenter shop in Olive Hill made her coffin & wouldn't take a penny for it. Dad may have insisted on paying for the lumber, I'm not sure. I must mention the Jarvis's who were also our next door neighbors. **Nelse Jarvis** didn't encourage visiting so I never stayed all night with **Artha**, or she with me, but she and her brothers & sisters slipped off, if **Nelse** was gone, and came to play at our house. We went to their house to play also if **Nelse** was away. I remember one winter us and the **Jarvis** kids decided to sleigh ride on the "horse sled." It took all of us to push it up the hill to the barn. Then every one got on and away we went over the hill. Work? Yes, but it was also fun.

Mom always insisted we go to Sunday school & church on Sun, but Sun afternoons were our own. In the spring we sometimes would go hunt young "mountain tea," or just take a mile or so walk. Many times kids came home from church with us. Sunday dinners were always special and we usually had company. Sometimes just neighbor kids. The friends we made then are still our best friends. Especially for the older ones. **Edd, Max & I.**

I only remember dad giving me 2 whippings. I'm sure I needed many more. I was a strong willed somebody. It was mostly mother's job to correct us. Or dad left it up to her anyway. I was 13 yrs. or so thought I was quite grown up. I'd gone to church with mom & her cousin, **Arabelle Walker**. This boy followed us for a short way, and I sort of lagged behind, he asked to walk home with me, I didn't know how to say no. I didn't even know him. Pretty soon mom looked back and saw what was going on. She came right back and told him to go right back where he came from. I thought that was an awful thing to do so I kept lagging behind even when she told me to walk with them. When we got home she woke dad up and told him the story. He went out and got a switch & let me have it for not minding mother. Next day I was hurt so bad, I said I couldn't go to school. They let me stay home, but ignored my story about being hurt. I went to school the next day.

The other time dad had to use a switch on me for some reason I can't remember, I left the supper table, and he told me to come back & finish my supper. After bringing me back to the table, I wouldn't eat. He said just take one bite and I'll quit. Well, after a few licks of the switch, I did take a bite of food. After he left the room I finished eating, of course he knew I was hungry.

Mom & dad were two of the best people who ever lived. If I could leave to my children the memories of me and their dad that I have of mine, I'd be very content. I marvel even now at how us kids grew up with such few punishments. We had to obey our parents too

We were punished for that quicker than anything else. That respect is still the same today.

Lillian and Marvin "Doc" were born on Tick Ridge. Dad traded our farm to one in Elliott Co., a bigger farm. He rode a mule to work since it was at least 6 or 7 miles. He always hoped to live by just farming, like he grew up, but with a big family it wasn't possible. Mom never liked the place in Elliott Co. It was a rougher neighborhood than we'd ever lived in. I don't think we lived there but 2 years till dad sold it and rented the "**Albert Mundy**" farm. The day we moved, Feb 19, **Elwood** was born. Mom wanted to move so bad she never said a word about being sick. Well we barely got a bed set up for her to get in.

Since Erie school, or Akin Hall as it was first called, was supposed to be the best school in our town, it was about this time they sent me there to live in the dorm. I made some very good friends, but I just wasn't used to that kind of life so I wasn't too happy there. I guess I just missed my happy home. So when **Jim** was born in Dec, the folks brought me home to cook and keep house while mom was in bed. The new mothers always stayed in bed 9 days after the baby was born. Even I did that since all 3 of mine were born at home.

Getting back to my school years, after being home for 2 weeks, this was my freshman year of high school, I got behind in subjects like Latin etc. I know now if I'd studied harder, I could have kept up, but I just became disinterested and in the spring just went home and told the folks I didn't want to go to school any more. They took it in their stride

and said nothing.

That summer, **Aunt Mollie Flannery's** daughter, **Glenna Gearheart** visited us. They lived in W.Va. **Glenna's** husband, **Dock**, was a teacher, she was also, but she was pregnant. Hired girls being hard to find in W. Va., she asked mom if I could go home with them and take care of her. So I did. I was 15 or 16 and had a crush on **Dock's** brother, **Russell**, who was working in W.Va. in the coal mines. He didn't board with them, but I saw him quite often. Glenna was responsible for our breaking up. She told me of some smart remark she heard **Russell** telling **Dock** about me. Well, that did it. I never went with him again I stayed in W.Va. a yr I guess. After **Glenna's** baby was born in Sept. I went to school the rest of the year. Then a lady I had come to know, **Mrs. Sammons** who had three boys, asked me to stay with her and help her with the housework. **Glenna** thought it would be alright, so she wrote and asked my parents permission. They said yes. So I stayed there 2 or three months. Then back to Ky. I came.

The older ones of us, **Earl, Edd & I** worked in the corn field while dad was at work. Mother was very busy doing the house work, watching the small kids. She always had a big garden also.

In the spring of 1925 while **Earl** and I were at the movies in Olive Hill, I met **Clyde**. He had a beautiful black horse he'd ride past our house on, almost every day. When he sold it and bought his first car, a Dodge, we'd pack a lunch every Sun, and go over near Morehead & just park in the shade & just walk around for the day. We were married in June. I was 17 & he was 20. No one then could have told us we were never meant for each other. It only took time to tell us. I still say every one of us must work out our own problems, with God's help it is much easier believe me. It took years for me to learn this lesson. Oh, I believed in God's help, went to church when I could & prayed. Just couldn't have faith that God was so near, I guess.

In June of 1933 when mother died after a brief illness of one week, leaving a 6 month old baby – **Doris**, along with the other 7 at home. I just couldn't understand why? **Edd** was on his way to Calif. With a bunch of CCC boys and couldn't be reached to even tell him of our mother's death. We got **Boone Pelfrey** to call Ft. Knox. That's where they left from. But the boys were on their way by train. So we had to wait for an address. Years later **Edd** told about a dream he had after arriving there. It was so real to him, in his first letter he said if anything had happened to mom, he was coming right home.

More about **Edd's** dream: He saw our mother in this beautiful place with white stairs going up to it. Everything was so beautiful, he said and so very real.

When he enlisted in the CCC – Civilian Conservation Corps – I believe it was called, the family got \$25 of the boy's \$30 per mo. **Edd** made his payable to mom. This was during the depression so they needed the money badly. Dad brought me the letter and asked me to answer it for him. That was the hardest job I ever had to do. At first I told dad that I couldn't because I didn't have any paper – which was true. But when he looked at me and said just use a paper sack or anything, I knew I would have to write it for him. So I used a paper sack and it must have sounded convincing for **Edd** stayed his 4 mos. Then when he did come home, it was a sad time, believe me. Shortly after that, **Edd** enlisted in the army.

Dad was very sick for months, after mother died – O not in bed sick, but lost so much weight & appetite. It was heart breaking to just look at him. Many times when I would go over to visit him and the children, I could see him sitting on the front porch; before I got to the house he'd be reading the bible. His religious faith was Baptist. I know he prayed often in secret. Our uncle **Asbury**, dad's brother, was a minister at this time. He comforted me with these words: “**Ruby**, I have prayed many times for God to show me where Bud is, and I am fully convinced he's safe in heaven.”

When the brick kiln collapsed, there was 3 men inside – **Eph Garvin & Demmer Fraley** were working. **George Fouch** (husband of Pearl, d/o Steve Porter, s/o AJP), a boss, and dad was just inside the door just visiting with the men. He fell toward the door; his head struck the track just outside the door. The brick fell on him. Only him & **Demmer Fraley** required hospital care. They were carried to the old company store nearby. **Clyde** run home and got me. It was around 4 PM. We rushed back. The ambulance was there, but before they were loaded I got to speak to dad. He had brick dust still on his face, so while wiping it off I said, Papa are you hurt? He was semi-conscious but he said slowly: well no I reckon not. When **Clarence Henderson**, the ambulance driver and **Dr. McCleese** get in the ambulance, then there is no place for me but in the back – on the floor – with dad and **Demmer Fraley**. Neither of them spoke on the way to Grayson Hospital. I went in the examining room where they took dad. He was so critical no one paid any attention to me. They hurriedly gave him a shot. He rallied enough to say once, “O Lord.” His last words as he slipped into a coma. Around 5:15, he left us. I got into the ambulance with his body, as **Dr. McCleese** and **Clarence Henderson** were up front. When we went to Olive Hill, I got out and started walking toward home, still in shock. **Clarence Henderson** came after me and took me home. Neighbors were there with the children when I got there with the awful news. That night **Clyde** and **Doc** rode horseback to **Grandma Pelfrey's** and told them. Grandma was sick before this happened. She died one week later. For that reason we took dad to their house over night. Then on to Fairview for burial beside our mother.

Lillian tried her best to take care of the younger children, all 5 of them. So she didn't have much time of her own. A neighbor fellow, “**Slim Maggard**” began to show **Lillian** a little attention. He was too old for her, but he was close home and she could see him and not leave the children alone. I didn't approve of her seeing him so she never talked too much about him to me. After all these years, I can

see her side also. At the time I just didn't want to see her get hurt. I wrote dad's half sister, **Nora Jones**, in Antigo, Wisc. and asked her if **Lillian** could come and live with her. She said yes, as they lived on a farm. Before **Lillian** left I went over and got our mother's sewing machine and 2 new quilts and 2 tops to try and keep for the little girls. Things happened so fast that spring it's hard to keep facts in order. I believe **Pearl** took the 5 younger children before **Lillian** left town. **Elwood** and **Doris** went to **Edna Mundys**, **Jim** and **Warren** to Hitchens to live with **Glenna** and **Dock Gearheart**. She paid them well for keeping them. **Wilma** went to live at Erie. **Doc** sent part of his money to me to keep for him so I got a train ticket to Wisconsin with part of it. We took her to Ashland and put her on the train by herself. This left **Max** home from CCC's batching alone.

After many years and prayers I know for sure that God was watching out for the Pelfrey children. I'm also sure our parents are truly at peace. The lord has been good to me. After 25 years of a stormy married life and 3 fine sons, I started a new life. It wasn't easy but by the grace of God my later years have been so peaceful and happy. To start school for 1 year at 50 and without a high school education, I'm living proof it can be done.

Of course, I don't know what my remaining years hold, but by God's Grace I expect to live them for Him. Then I can never repay all the good things he's done for me.