Till All Shall See

by

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I dedicate this book to my mother (Barbara Bailey). Her love for family and her enthusiasm made this book possible. Thank you mom for all you did for us. Your children love you. We will never forget the love, joy, and laughter you gave each of us.

Introduction

This is a fictional story of the life of Bessie Ross. It is an account of what her life ***MIGHT*** have been like. This fictional story adheres to the known facts for the most part, but otherwise it is completely fabricated, created from the author's imagination.

This book also shares parts of the lives of seven generations of the oldest surviving child. While it is a work of fiction, it is based on the lives of real people.

The final section of this book details what is actually known about their lives.

Seven generations of the oldest surviving child:

1. William's oldest surviving child was **Maggie**.
2. Maggie's oldest surviving child was **Bessie**.
3. Bessie's oldest surviving child was **Roy**.
4. Roy's oldest surviving child was **Barbara**.
5. Barbara's oldest surviving child was **Terri**.
6. Terri's oldest surviving child was **Michelle**.
7. Michelle's oldest surviving child was **Gabby**.

Section I

Bessie Ross

Chapter 1

Bessie was excited about turning twelve years old. She was not excited because she thought she might get birthday presents. Her mom and dad did not have money for toys or store bought clothes. No, Bessie was excited about her birthday this April because it would mean she would complete the sixth grade and be finished with school.

She did well with the math lessons, she liked math. She also liked reading, but she would be glad when she no longer had to spell words in front of the whole class.

She also knew on her birthday her mother would excuse Bessie from many of her chores that day. Her younger brothers Tom and Elmer would have to do some of her chores and her mother would do the things the boys could not do. Her brother George was only four and had no chores yet.

As the oldest child of Maggie and Joe Ross, Bessie spent more time working than playing. She was often called on to cook, clean, fetch water from the well, bring in firewood, gather eggs from the chickens, and watch her younger siblings.

Bessie was a curious young girl. Everything in nature interested her. She could sit for very long times near the creek a half a mile from their house and listen to the sound of the running water. She loved to watch the birds, squirrels, and insects. They all seemed to be busy and … happy.

One of her favorite past times when walking to school was to look at ants. Ants fascinated Bessie. They were always moving and working. They stayed busy much like she did when doing her chores at home. They never complained. They just followed their orders and worked.

Bessie wondered how they got their orders. She saw them touching their antennas together and decided that was the way they must communicate with each other.

She was also curious about her future. She thought about what it would be like to leave home and have her own family. Would her husband be kind to her and their children? Would he make her laugh like her brother Tom did when he played jokes on little Elmer? Would she find time to sit outside and watch the birds after she was married?

Bessie was taller than the other girls (and many of the boys) her age. She was intelligent, strong minded (at least her mother said so), and pretty (although she did not think so). She liked the other kids in school, but spent much more time with her brothers than she did with the girls at school. Spending so much time with her

brothers reminded her that she was the only girl in the family.

On April 17th 1900, the morning of her twelfth birthday, Bessie woke up and quickly got out of bed. The wooden floor of the small frame house they rented was cold from a late April frost on the ground outside.

Since it was Tuesday, it meant she, Tom, and Elmer would be going to school. Bessie quickly changed out of her long flannel nightgown and put on the ankle length dress she would wear to school.

It was still dark outside and she dressed quietly so as not to wake Little Joe, her youngest brother who shared the room with her. He was not even a year old yet. Her other three brothers shared a room next to hers.

Her mother and father were both up when she went to the kitchen. Her dad had just finished eating and was about to leave to go to work as a farm hand on a big farm half a mile from their house. Her mother gave Bessie a big smile as she walked into the room and told her happy birthday. It was only then that her father realized this was his daughter's birthday and grunted happy birthday to her as he went out the door.

Joe hated not being able to afford a birthday present for his only daughter. But times were hard and Bessie needed food and clothes much more than she needed presents.

Joe had an eighth grade education and could read and write (many of the other farm laborers he worked with could not), but the only job he could find was as a farm hand in their small rural community in Illinois. He sometimes thought about moving his family to Springfield. He was certain he could get a job as a store clerk or maybe even a telegraph operator, but it cost money to move and what money they had went towards basic necessities.

Joe was a short man at only 4' 11." The top of Bessie's head was already at his eyes when they stood side by side. There was no doubt Bessie got her height from Maggie who was almost a foot taller than her husband. As he walked to work on the farm on this cold April morning, Joe quietly hoped Bessie would have a wonderful birthday.

After Joe left, Maggie made Bessie scrambled eggs and bacon. Normally Bessie made her own breakfast of scrambled eggs or on some mornings pancakes. Since this was her birthday, Maggie made Bessie's breakfast and included two strips of bacon (which did not happen often). Eggs were plentiful from the two dozen chickens in the backyard, but bacon was not and it was only eaten on rare occasions.

Maggie was five months pregnant. She was desperately hoping for another girl. Boys made good farm hands and could help bring in extra money for the family, but Maggie did not care. Bessie needed a young sister and if she did not get one soon, Bessie would be

too old to enjoy having a little sister. An extra hand in the kitchen would be welcomed too.

As Bessie sat down to eat her eyes widened when Maggie reached up to the top of the cupboard and brought down the small jar of honey for Bessie to use on her biscuits. Maggie saw the look in her daughter's eyes and was glad she was able to do something special for Bessie today. She knew how much Bessie liked honey. Yes, Bessie thought, today is going to be a great day.

"Remember how I told you about your grandfather fighting in the war?" Maggie began speaking as she sat on the bench on the opposite side of the table from Bessie.

Bessie nodded, as she ate, recalling how her mom had told her and two of her brothers about some of the many battles their grandpa had fought in the Civil War with the 53rd Infantry from Ohio.

Maggie's father was only 16 when he joined the Union Army. During the Civil War young men were needed regardless of their actual age and at 16 her father was as big as most men in his unit.

"Well," Maggie continued, "when daddy got out of the Army and came back to Ohio, he began going to different churches. Momma told me at first she thought he was looking for forgiveness for some of the things he had done in the war. Killing any living creature takes a toll after a while, especially when you are killing people."

“Mom later found out the reason he began going to churches was to help him understand how preachers could say it was okay to fight and kill men from the south when it was pretty plain that the Bible said ‘Thou shalt not kill’. He learned at a young age how much suffering and death came from wars.”

Maggie knew parts of the story from hearing it directly from her father when she was seven years old.

“There were not a lot of churches in the valley where we lived in Ohio. It did not take long for Daddy to realize none of them really had a good answer. In fact one of the elders at one of the churches told Daddy he should go over the hill some Sunday and go to one of those Quaker meetings over there cause he sure was talking like one of them peace loving Quakers.”

Maggie could tell she had Bessie’s full attention now. “And that is just what he did. He had to leave before daylight to get there, but he did and he did not come back until after dark from what momma told me. I was only three when Daddy found the Quakers. We wound up moving out of the valley so we could be closer to the Quaker Meetings.

“When I turned six, I asked Daddy why I had to go to those First Day Schools (that is what the Quakers called Sunday School). Daddy told me I had to go until I turned twelve years old. And then if I wanted to stop I could.

“Well, I did stop going when I was twelve, but not because I did not like it anymore. I grew to like First Day School and even looked forward to going, but then we moved from Ohio to Illinois. There were no Quaker meetings in Illinois, so we just stopped going to any church.”

Maggie reached under her apron and brought out two books. “Bessie, you know we do not have money for any presents, but I want you to have these.” Maggie said as she laid the two books on the table.

“I know how you like to read and I want you to have these books. One of them was given to me by a sweet Quaker lady when we left Ohio. It is a collection of writings by a lady named Margaret Fell. I always liked the book just because she had the same first name as me. As I grew older there were several passages in this book that helped me at different times. Over the years her words have meant a lot to me.”

Bessie interrupted her mother, “Momma I can’t accept a book like that if it means so much to you.”

“Sweetie, that is exactly why I want you to have it. Besides, I have handwritten my favorite quotes from the book on a paper that I keep in the back of the Bible.”

Bessie stopped eating and opened the cover of the first book. Written in the inside cover were the words:

“Now turn to the Light, … and know the mysteries of God."

Bessie did not really understand the words, but her mom said the words out loud without even looking at the book. Apparently she had them memorized.

Her mom said, “You may not get much out of this book right now Bessie. But in the years to come, I hope this book brings you as much peace, comfort, and satisfaction as it has me.”

Bessie looked at the second book cover. It had a cartoon scarecrow on the cover and was titled “The Wonderful Wizard of Oz." It looked like a brand new book.

Maggie told Bessie, “I traded a chicken for it with one of those traveling wagons. The man said the book had just come out and would be a great book for kids. Don’t tell daddy I traded a chicken. I’ll tell him tonight after the kids are asleep.

Bessie loved to read. But books were scarce in rural Illinois in 1900. She wanted to start reading both of them right then, but she knew it would have to wait. She would hide them in her room under the bed to make sure her brothers would not find them.

Bessie finished her breakfast and with her face glowing from the honey and bacon she walked over to her mom and gave her a big tight hug. “Oh momma, this is already the best birthday I’ve ever had!”

The next day, Bessie sat in her family's living room, listening to her mother Maggie speak about the Quaker faith. Maggie was a devoted Quaker woman, and she often shared her beliefs with her family.

"Bessie, I want to talk to you about walking in the Light," Maggie said. "Living in peace and following the Light is at the heart of my Quaker faith, and it's something that can bring great joy and meaning to your life."

Bessie looked at her mother, curious and eager to learn more. "What do you mean, Mama? How do I walk in the Light?"

Maggie smiled and took Bessie's hand. "Walking in the Light means living a life of goodness, kindness, and truth. It means being guided by the inner voice of the Spirit, and following that voice and your conscience to do what is right."

Bessie nodded, taking in her mother's words. "And why is living in peace so important?"

"Living in peace means living without the burden of hatred, anger, and resentment," Maggie explained. "It means being able to forgive those who wrong us, and to seek reconciliation with those we have hurt. Living in peace can bring us great joy and freedom, and it can make us better people."

Bessie listened intently to her mother's words, feeling inspired and moved by the depth of her faith. "I want to

walk in the Light, Mama. I want to live a life of peace and goodness."

Maggie smiled, her eyes full of love and pride. "I know you will, my dear. You have a good heart, and the Light will guide you. Just remember to listen to your inner voice, and to always do what is right."

And with those words, Maggie and Bessie embraced, their love and faith in each other shining bright as they walked together on the path of righteousness and peace.

Chapter 2

During the next five years, Bessie grew taller than her father. In fact, she was as tall as her mother by the time of her seventeenth birthday. The only one taller in the family was her oldest brother Tom who turned fourteen in February.

Bessie tried to “walk in the Light” and often went to her mother with questions. She tried very hard to listen to the Inner Voice. With so many younger brothers it was hard to get quiet, so Bessie would slip off into the woods near the house when she had the chance. The only sounds there were the sounds of birds, squirrels, frogs, and insects. They did not distract her like the sounds from her brothers. In fact the sounds of nature helped her become still and turn her thoughts to the Light.

After Bessie’s twelfth birthday, Maggie had another son, they named William after Maggie’s father. At seventeen Bessie was called on to do more and more of the household chores, especially since Maggie was pregnant again. With Bessie old enough to marry and move away in the next couple of years, Maggie was really hoping for another girl this time.

The family moved into a larger house two years earlier, but they remained in the Williamsville, IL area. They rented the house, but thankfully it was on four acres of land which allowed them to have a large garden. Plus, the extra land meant they could grow corn and sell it for additional money.

All of the children worked in the garden. The boys fed the cows, pigs, and chickens. They also gathered the eggs and fetched water from the well. Bessie also worked in the garden, but most of her time was spent helping her mother with cooking, cleaning, sewing, and laundry.

Bessie enjoyed not going to school, but there were days when it seemed like all she did was work. She did not mind too much, especially since she knew it helped her mother, but sometimes she just wanted to get away. There were times when her mother would chase her out of the house and tell her to go take a walk or to read one of her books (Bessie bought books with any extra money she earned from making and selling cheese to some of the neighbors and doing odd sewing jobs). She had a collection of a dozen books.

Bessie loved reading. Words could take Bessie to faraway places in her imagination. Words told stories but they also shared ideas from other people (such as the Quakers). Bessie thought no matter where she went in life, she could always use words to take her to some of her favorite places.

Some of her books told stories about romance and the excitement young girls found when they began courting young men. There were few young men in the small town where they went once a month to buy and trade.

When reading the romance novels from Jane Austin, Bessie imagined herself as the girls in the book. She

wished she could find a young man that would take her away and allow her to start her own family.

Bessie day dreamed about what it might be like to be married, but she knew in her heart, that would not happen anytime soon.

She day dreamed, but she also knew if she were to meet a young man, she would never do anything without listening for guidance from the Inner Light.

Her favorite book was the “The Wizard of Oz” book her mother gave her when she turned twelve. She liked to dream about the Emerald City and imagine she was Dorthy going on an adventure in the magical land of Oz.

She also enjoyed reading the book by the Quaker, Margaret Fell. Even though her family did not go to church, they did have a family Bible that her dad liked to read in the evenings. Bessie read places in her book where Margaret Fell would quote something from the Bible and Bessie always used the family Bible to see if it said the same thing.

Maggie told Bessie some of her memories of going to a Quaker Meeting. She was quick to add if they had a Quaker Meeting in IL, she would go to it. Maggie dismissed the idea of going to any of the local churches. The last thing she wanted was to hear some preacher tell her what God said. Maggie said people could hear God for themselves if they would only listen and read the Bible. If Maggie could not go to a Quaker Meeting,

she would rather stay home and “wait on the Lord” as the Quakers would say.

Maggie was the decision maker in the family. Her husband Joe was a strong and hard working man, but his short height made him more quiet and withdrawn than other men his age. Maggie did not dominate her husband, but it did not take long being around the two of them for a person to realize Joe usually deferred to Maggie when it came to making choices about family matters.

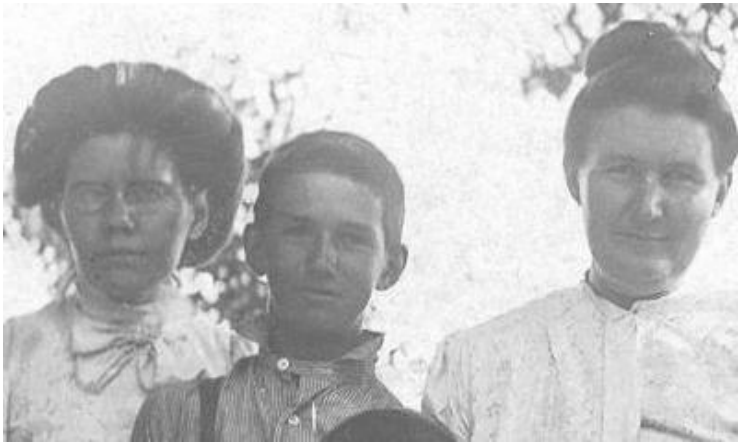
Maggie did not mind. In fact, there was something inside of her that wanted to take charge and decide what was best, especially when it came to their kids. In fact, Maggie did not tell Joe when she arranged with her sister Louise to take Bessie with them when Louise and her husband, Cornelius went to the state fair in Springfield.

Maggie knew Bessie needed to get out of the house more and she thought the state fair might be a great way to do that. The cost of admission was a dollar and fifty cents for a horse and buggy (as long as there were no more than four people in the buggy), so Maggie told Louise she would split that cost with her if Bessie could tag along.

Bessie’s face lit up with excitement when her mother told her the news. As the day approached for the trip to the state fair Bessie found it hard to concentrate on her chores. At seventeen, she thought more and more of young men. She thought she might be able to meet a

young man at the fair. Williamsville did not have many boys her age and the state fair might be the perfect place to meet that - special someone.

And who knew, Bessie thought to herself, she might even find someone she could eventually marry, allowing her to get away from doing so many chores and taking care of her younger brothers. Maybe Bessie thought, this trip was God's way of letting Bessie meet her future husband.



Bessie, brother Elmer, and her mother Maggie

When the day finally came, Bessie put on her best dress and tied a ribbon in her dark hair, soft from being washed the night before in the large wash tub used for baths in the corner of the dining room. She had two dollars for spending money and knew her aunt Lousie would be very lenient about keeping a close eye on Bessie.

As the buggy traveled the road from Williamsville to Springfield, Bessie's imagination got the best of her to the point where she barely heard the conversation between her aunt and uncle. This was not her first state fair. She had been once with her mom and dad, but that was years ago. It was her first state fair without her parents. All she could remember of the state fair was seeing so many people in one place. Williamsville had less than five hundred residents and there were ten times that many people at the fair.

The fair grounds were on the north side of Springfield which made the twelve miles from Williamsville easier since they did not have to go through the city. The road was made of hard packed clay and dirt, making the travel time faster than some of the soft sandy roads around Williamsville.

They arrived at two o'clock in the afternoon. Cornelius dropped Louise and Bessie off at the main entrance while he took the horse and buggy to the long stable nearby.

The main entrance had a huge arch in the center big enough for dozens of people to pass beneath it at one time.



People were streaming in from all around. Most of the men wore hats and ties and the ladies were in ankle length dresses. Many of the women wore beautiful hats. They were honoring military veterans at this year's fair and there were several men in uniforms passing through the entrance as the ladies waited for Cornelius to join them.

Glancing through the arch, Bessie could see another large red brick building with a huge dome for a roof. At the very top of the dome was an American flag. There was a three story red brick building that was the entrance to the dome section. In front of the brick porch were six large white columns supporting a porch balcony above the entrance. Bessie later learned this was the largest dome in the world.

Bessie could not remember a time when she had been this excited. Her mind raced with so many different thoughts. She wondered where all of the people came from

Bessie felt like she was in a dream as the three of them entered the fairgrounds. There were people everywhere. One of the first marvels of modern

technology she saw was indoor plumbing. After the long buggy ride, her uncle found the public restrooms. Bessie had always used an outhouse and seeing running water and flushing toilets was amazing.

After using the restroom they found a restaurant and had a wonderful meal. Bessie did not have to use any of her money because her uncle paid the bill. When they came out, Bessie saw a large sign advertising ice cream cones. Her uncle wanted to go and look at the livestock, so her Aunt Louise agreed to have their very first ice cream cone with Bessie while waiting for Cornelius..

Neither of them had ever seen an ice cream cone. They sat in the shade of a large oak tree eating their newly discovered treats. Bessie noticed all of the young men walking by. Some were escorting young ladies, but many were not. Since this year's state fair was honoring veterans, some of the men were in uniforms.

As she ate her first ice cream cone beneath the shade of the large tree, watching all of the people moving around her, it reminded Bessie of watching ants (one of her favorite pastimes). She was used to seeing lots of ants scurrying about, but not people!

By the time they finished the ice cream it was late in the afternoon. The sky was becoming overcast and in the distance there were dark clouds. Bessie and her aunt made their way past the huge dome building and the equally large exhibition building to a smaller building on the corner of Judy Avenue called the Woman's Building.



They went inside and once again Bessie marveled at modern technology. With the dark skies and late afternoon time of the day, the electric lights had been turned on inside the building.

Bessie had never seen an electric light before. She had heard of them and how they produced light at night without a flame, but seeing lights was far different than seeing kerosene lanterns. What she had imagined in her mind was nothing like the reality of electricity.

She was amazed at how bright everything was inside even though it was getting dark outside. They walked around the large room, admiring the dozens of exhibits featuring handcrafted items, appliances like ice boxes and sewing machines, and the latest dress designs. There were also exhibits honoring women artists and authors. Bessie felt proud of all of the things women had achieved (even though she thought it was wrong

that women were not able to vote in elections or own property).

As they exited the rear of the building Bessie saw her first drinking fountain. They indulged in a taste of running water that did not have to be drawn up from a well. All of these marvels made Bessie wonder if Williamsville might some day enjoy things like electric lights and running water.

As darkness fell electric street lights made the streets so bright it looked like daytime. Bessie was having one of the best days of her life. She felt like she was in another world and for all practical purposes, she was.

She and her Aunt Louise eventually made it to the auctions at the livestock area in between the horse barn and new cattle building. They found her uncle after several minutes of looking and began to tell him about the marvels they had seen.

Unfortunately the storm clouds were building and they could see flashes of lightning in the distance. A few minutes later the wind began blowing hard and they made their way back to the dome building where hundreds and hundreds of people had also gathered.

The rain began and the wind was blowing hard. Illinois was used to strong spring winds and frequent tornadoes. But this was the fall and people working at the fair were not expecting such strong winds. The wind was stronger than a normal rain shower and caused several parts of the fair to shut down early.

It rained hard and the wind blew stronger and stronger. Bessie felt robbed. She did not have a lot of time at the fair and this storm was stealing what little she had. It was almost two hours before it finally began to stop. Cornelius and Louise had already decided it would be best to go ahead and head back home once the rain died down. Much of the fair had shut down for the day and would open back up the next day. Since they could not see some of the exhibits, they should just go home. It would take even longer to travel muddy roads, so it was best to go ahead and head home.

Bessie was very disappointed as her uncle brought the horse and buggy around and picked them up. If not for the storm they would have stayed much later in the night making it almost dawn before she would have gotten home. Not only did she not meet a young man and potential husband, but also did not get to spend much of her money.

Obviously God did not intend for her to meet her future husband on this trip, she thought. Oh well, she would just keep helping her mom and hope something might happen where she could meet someone.

The trio began the journey back to Williamsville without much conversation. Louise knew her niece was sad, but at this point nothing could be done. At least Bessie was able to see some of the sights, including electric lights and indoor running water (even if it did have a red tint from iron - still it was better than river water Louise admitted).

Apparently the wind from the earlier storm had been even worse north of Springfield because there were many limbs and leaves on the dirt road, now sloshy from mud. They were five miles from Williamsville when Cornelius stopped the horse and buggy because of a large oak tree laying across the road completely blocking it. There was not enough room to pass with the buggy.

He jumped down from the buggy with the kerosene lantern used to light the road while they traveled and walked up and down the length of the tree. He had an ax in the back of the buggy, but it would take hours to chop the huge tree in small enough sections to move it and clear the road.

He decided to try and find a smaller tree that he could use as a lever to try and push the tree. The women could push down on the lever while he used a rope to try and drag the tree enough to the side to pass.

By the time they were finished getting everything ready to put the plan into action another buggy came up from behind them. A young man and a boy were in the wagon pulling a cow he bought at the state fair.

The moment Bessie saw the young man's face in the light from the lantern, she was smitten. How handsome she thought to herself. She allowed her mind to race back to her original thought that God did plan for her to meet Mr. Right on this trip.

George Bailey climbed down along with nine year old Richard, who was called Dick. The two men discussed Cornelius' plan and George suggested they use two levers and Dick could take their new cow to the other side and tie it to the rope to help drag the tree. The two men could use their strength on the levers while the cow pulled the tree.

George chopped down another small tree for the second lever while Dick tied up the cow to the rope. The plan worked perfectly and the huge oak tree was far enough off of the road to allow the buggies to pass.

Once they secured the cow and their tools they took a few minutes to learn more about each other. George and his son were dairy farmers in Middleton. They had gone to the state fair to buy a new cow at one of the auctions.

Bessie could see George well in the light of the lantern. She thought he was a handsome man maybe a few years older than her. She was very attracted to him. He was the most handsome man she had ever seen. Her heart skipped a beat as she thought again that maybe he was the one God wanted her to marry someday. Maybe the only reason for going to the fair was to meet George.

But when he said Dick was his son, she felt her heart drop knowing that meant George was already married. How can he be married? Oh no that just ruined the whole evening, thought Bessie.

Everyone climbed back into their buggies and resumed the journey home. George followed behind, but after a mile the road forked and he went towards Middleton while Bessie returned to Williamsville.

Bessie loved the fair, but was sad that the one man she met was married. On the ride home she remembered the Margarete Fell quote in the cover of the book her mother had given her, “now turn to the Light, … and know the mysteries of God."

There was another quote from the book, *."... beware of going from your Guide, which keepeth you low and tender”* that Bessie liked. She told herself she needed to turn to the Light and stop doubting God.

She had met a man she was very attracted to, but he was married. So she felt her “Guide” was telling her somehow everything would be alright, even though she liked this young man.

She resolved to trust God and accept that God worked in mysterious ways and that someday it would all work out. Even though things had not worked out the way she had hoped that day, she would trust and have faith in God that someday She would meet someone like George and that someone would not be married.

Chapter 3

Bessie was nervous as soon as she woke up. She had good reason to be nervous. She was getting married.

She was nervous, excited, and very happy. Her mind went back to the first time she had seen him. She thought he was so handsome and kind hearted. But then she learned he had children and her heart sank like a rock.

The next day she was so quiet and depressed that her mother noticed. Maggie gently pried and questioned Bessie until she learned what was making her daughter so sad.

Yes, with Bessie at seventeen, Maggie should have known a young man was involved. She understood the secret yearnings Bessie must be having. When Bessie told her how they had to leave the fair early before Bessie could even spend much of her money or meet any young men, Maggie's heart broke for her daughter.

And then Maggie learned of the chance encounter Bessie had on the way home with a young man named George Bailey. Maggie could immediately sense that Bessie was … smitten with this young man. She told Bessie the only advice she could offer was an old Quaker phrase - "wait upon the Lord."

"Some things are not in our own control," she told her daughter. "Change what you can, but wait for the Lord

to change the things you cannot change. And sometimes that means waiting for a very long time."

The following week, George Bailey paid a visit to Bessie's uncle's house just to learn more about Bessie and find out where she lived.

George soon showed up at Maggie Ross's front door. Bessie's heartbeat became faster when George told her mom he had three children, but the kids had no mother. His wife died two years earlier. What? Bessie thought to herself. He is not married? This gave Bessie immediate hope that maybe he might actually be her future husband.

As soon as that thought crossed her mind, Bessie chastised herself for thinking such a thing. How selfish could she be! Here was a young handsome man that was trying to raise three children without a mother. Her thoughts and emotions shifted to sympathy.

Bessie reminded herself to "Wait upon the Lord" and if it was meant for her and George to get married someday, then she would wait until that day happened.

Over the following six months George Bailey became a regular visitor to the Ross house.

George Bailey was not religious, but he was drawn to Bessie's kind heart and her dedication to her beliefs. Despite their differences, they quickly fell in love.

Bessie reminded herself to always trust God, even when it did not seem like things would work out. She hoped she would always remember how God arranged their first meeting.

For Bessie it was love at first sight. For George it was a love that grew on him as he spent more time with Bessie.

Maggie knew it was just a matter of time before there would be wedding bells. She could see the sparkle in Bessie's eyes each time she looked at George.

Bessie and George were married on February 20th, 1907 in Lincoln, IL. They lived in Middleton, but chose to be married in Lincoln so George could get a hotel room the night they were married and treat Bessie to a delicious meal at the hotel.

Maggie made no objections to them going to Lincoln to be married rather than having a wedding that nobody could afford. Maggie and Joe had done the same thing when they were married by the local Justice of the Peace instead of having a wedding.

Bessie was 18 when she was married and became an instant mom to her new step children (Dick who was 10, Myrtle was 7, and Hazel was 5). All three of the children were happy to have Bessie join their family.

Even though Bessie had helped her mother take care of the younger children most of her life, being a mother so quickly was not easy. She wished she and George

could have more privacy and wondered how their life might be with no children.

But apparently God had other plans and Bessie was resolved to trust God and to continue walking in the Light.

Bessie and George had their first child together a year after they were married. The other children welcomed a new baby brother (George Jr) on February 15th, 1908. Bessie devoted herself to raising George Jr and his older siblings in the Quaker tradition.

Despite George's lack of religious beliefs, Bessie never tried to convert him. She respected his views and believed that love and compassion were more important than religious differences. Together, they lived a life of simplicity and devotion, raising their children with love and care.

Bessie's commitment to her Christian and Quaker beliefs never wavered, and she was an active member of the community. She and George often worked together to help those in need, and they inspired others with their compassion and generosity.

Having four children meant more work for Bessie than she ever had when helping her mom, but Bessie did not mind. She loved her new family and her heart filled with joy each time she held George Jr.

She often remembered her mother’s advice when she was married to treat her step children just like they were

her own. Her mother also warned her to not show any favoritism to young George and to love all of the children.

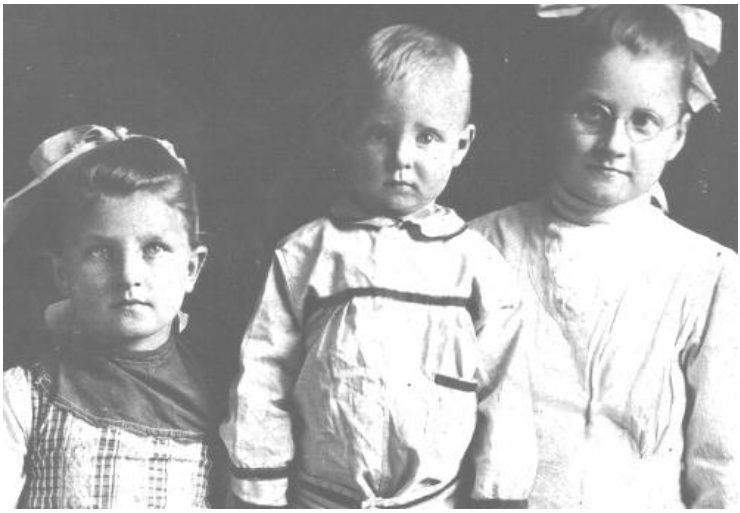
The older children were a big help. Dick was quick to fetch water and chop wood for Bessie. The two girls sometimes argued over who would help take care of the baby. They both loved to help their new mom and new brother.

Bessie thought she was the happiest woman in all of Middleton. Her heart was filled with pride when she convinced George to take them to Lincoln in 1910 to have their photograph taken.

Dick was not able to go because he had to take care of the animals. George and Bessie had their photo taken and then the three younger children posed for the photographer.



George and Bessie Bailey



Hazel, George Jr, and Myrtle Bailey

Bessie cherished the photos of her and her handsome husband along with the photograph of the three youngest children. Bessie felt she was the most blessed woman in the state.

Chapter 4

Bessie Ross and George Bailey's world was turned upside down in 1911 when their first child, George Jr., passed away suddenly. The loss was devastating for Bessie and George, and they struggled to come to terms with their loss. Despite their grief, they remained devoted to each other and their family, and Bessie tried hard to lean on her faith and their love for each other to help them through their sorrow.

But Bessie's heart was completely broken. Her baby's death devastated her and each passing day after George Jr's death shook her faith to the point where she felt completely alone.

Bessie felt deserted by God. The idea of walking in the Light became as far away from her heart as her little baby now was. Her baby was gone and the Light of life was gone.

Bessie struggled to get up in the mornings. Why should she keep on going? What point was there? She went through the motions of her day, but tears filled her eyes during the days and nights and her heart seemed to stay in constant pain and hurt.

George was hurting as well, but he knew they had to keep moving forward. He tried to comfort Bessie, but she resisted. George did not understand just how much she was hurting, she thought.

A month after George Jr died, Maggie paid a visit to her daughter. She told Bessie that she too, had lost a child. Bessie thought she was her mother's oldest child and was surprised to learn she had an older sister that died as a baby.

Maggie said "Your older sister was much younger than George Jr when she died, but it still left a hole in my heart." Bessie did not know what to think about learning she had an older sister, but she certainly knew how her mom must have felt losing her first child.

Maggie told Bessie, "When Sarah died I wanted to lay in bed and cry every day. That went on for a couple of weeks. Your dad finally came to me and told me to get up because he could not keep doing all of the work by himself. He said he was sad too, but life goes on and animals and plants don't care that we lost our baby. When an animal loses a baby, they keep going and at some point have more babies. That helped. I began to think about him doing all of the chores by himself and I thought about one of the quotes from my Margaret Fell book - "

'*Now turn to the Light, and there ye will come to see …*'

"Sometimes we just cannot see God's big plan. Remember how you fell in love with George when you first saw him and then learned how he was married? Well, God knew something that you did not. Remember how you decided to trust God and wait upon the Lord?"

“I know you already have three fine children, but Bessie, someday your heart will mend and you may have another baby. A new baby will never replace George Jr, but it will sure make him proud that his momma did not give up on life. There is a verse from the Good Book that I said to myself everyday after losing my first baby:”

‘*From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I.* Psalm 61:2’

“She handed Bessie a piece of paper with the verse written on it. Maggie said, “That verse has carried me through many hard times. I hope you will keep it with you and find the Rock that is higher than you.."

For the next two weeks Bessie tried to move forward, but it was hard. She tried to pray and ask God for strength, but her prayers seemed to go nowhere. She wondered if God was really near or even cared.

One day Bessie had the thought - who do you think you are Bessie Bailey? You are not the first one to lose a baby. Your mother lost a baby, but she did not give up. Look around you there are many people who have it worse than you. How can you not be grateful for having George Jr in your life?

Bessie did not care. It just hurt too much. If this was the result of love, then why should she ever love again? She knew she should try to keep going and she would. She had to for George and the other children. But her heart remained broken and her joy of life had vanished.

Her mother came to see her after another week. Maggie took one look at Bessie and knew immediately Bessie was still hurting deep inside. Maggie asked her daughter, “have you found the Rock that is higher than you?” Maggie paused for a moment before continuing. “You can not get through this on your own, Bessie. Let God comfort you.”

Bessie said nothing. She and her mother were sitting on the back porch steps looking out over the farm.

Bessie sighed and took a big breath and said, “Momma, I have tried to reach out to God. I pray and pray. I want peace. But no matter what I do, it seems like God is far, far away.”

Maggie said nothing. She put her arm around Bessie’s and the two women just sat there in silence.

Bessie thought life seemed so unfair, especially after baby George died. To have him three wonderful years with so many hopes and dreams for his future, only to lose him was too much for Bessie.

It was hard enough keeping food on the table, clothes on their backs, and doing all of the chores that were required to survive, but when she lost her baby there were times when she just wanted to give up. Her faith remained shattered.



Maggie

An hour later Bessie was folding clothes when Maggie handed her a small pamphlet. “I still write to some of the Quakers in Ohio. A couple of years ago a sweet Quaker woman sent this to me.” Maggie said as she handed the tract entitled ‘Silence’ to her daughter. “I want you to keep it. I’m going home tomorrow. Read this every morning, Bessie. I think it will help. Even if it does help, do not stop reading it. You will get something new from it each time you read it.”

Bessie put it in her apron pocket and read it for the first time the morning after her mother left. It was written by Martin Hope Sutton in 1901:

Silence

THIS is the only way to know God. 'Be still, and know that I am God.' 'God is in His Holy Temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him.'

A score of years ago, a friend placed in my hand a little book which became one of the turning points of my life. It was called 'True Peace.' It was an old medieval message, and it had but one thought, and it was this-that God was waiting in the depths of my being to talk to me if I would only get still enough to hear His voice.

I thought this would be a very easy matter, and so I began to get still. But I had no sooner commenced than a perfect pandemonium of voices reached my ears, a thousand clamoring notes from without and within, until I could hear nothing but their noise and din.

Some of them were my own voice, some of them were my own questions, some of them were my own cares, some of them were my very prayers. Others were the suggestions of the tempter and the voices of the world's turmoil. Never before did there seem so many things to be done, to be said, to be thought; and in every direction I was pushed and pulled, and greeted with noisy acclamations of unspeakable unrest. It seemed necessary for me to listen to some of them, and to answer some of them; but God said, 'Be still, and know that I am God.'

Then came the conflict of thoughts for the morrow, and its duties and cares; but God said, 'Be still.' And as I listened and slowly learned to obey, and shut my ears to every sound,I found after a while that when the other voices ceased, or I ceased to hear them, there was a still, small voice in the

depths of my being that began to speak with an inexpressible tenderness, power, and comfort.

As I listened, it became to me the voice of prayer, and the voice of wisdom, and the voice of duty, and I did not need to think so hard, or pray so hard, or trust so hard, but that 'still, small voice' of the Holy Spirit in my heart was God's prayer in my secret soul, was God' s answer to all my questions, was God's life and strength for soul and body, and became the substance of all knowledge, and all prayer, and all blessing; for it was the living God Himself as my life and my all.

This is our spirit's deepest need. It is thus that we learn to know God; it is thus that we receive spiritual refreshment and nutriment; it is thus that our heart is nourished and fed; it is thus that we receive the Living Bread; it is thus that our very bodies are healed, and our spirit drinks in the life of our risen Lord, and we go forth to life's conflicts and duties like the flower that has drunk in, through the shades of night, the cool and crystal drops of dew.

But, as the dew never falls on a stormy night, so the dews of His grace never come to the restless soul. We cannot go through life strong and fresh on constant express trains; but we must have quiet hours, secret places of the Most High, times of waiting upon the Lord, when we renew our strength, and learn to mount up on wings as eagles, and then come back to run and not be weary, and to walk and not faint.

Bessie read it every morning for the following week. At first she read it trying to understand what it might mean. She was angry and hurt to the point where she really was not paying attention to the words. But on the sixth morning, she stopped midway through and laid it down and … decided to actually try to be quiet. She sat in

silence.

She tried to let her mind become quiet. But she too had the same problem as the author, with so many thoughts entering her mind. She thought of all of the chores that needed to be done. She thought of where they would get the money to buy the kids shoes. She thought of her little baby that had died and the hurt and anger and pain that enveloped her.

As each of the thoughts entered her mind, Bessie relaxed in the quiet stillness and tried to let the thoughts go. She tried not to dwell on the thoughts. As a thought came into her head, she just imagined it was like a leaf on the surface of a river and let it flow past her.

Over the next few days Bessie began to find a sense of calmness and peace when she became still and let her thoughts drift away.

Bessie began to practice getting still and listening deep within.

As she became still each day, she could hear a familiar voice inside her speaking with tenderness. She had been blocking out that voice in her heart because of anger and bitterness. The voice she heard kept whispering - it will all be okay. Life is still an amazing thing.

Bessie remembered watching ants and listening to birds in the spring. She thought of all of the wonders of nature and how death was just another part of nature.

She began to sense an inner strength and hints of the joy she used to have when walking by the stream in the woods.

Life is an amazing thing, she thought. The pain from losing George Jr was still there, but the sparks of life were beginning to stir within her once again. She began to lean on the rock that was higher than her. She had been walking in the Light of God for many years and could now sense a flicker of that Light returning.

She realized how little control she had in life. She felt foolish for thinking she knew more than God. George Jr was truly a joy, even if she had to let go of him when he was only three. She recalled the last paragraph in the Silence tract - "*times of waiting upon the Lord, when we renew our strength, and learn to mount up on wings as eagles".*

Her heart grew stronger. Her faith returned. Bessie found herself looking more and more at the positive things in her life. She began seeing the many blessings in her life. She remembered how God had brought her and George Sr together and how she was still blessed with three wonderful step children. She recalled the strength and inspiration from her mother.

Bessie loved her mother and allowed the words from the pamphlet to sink deep down inside. She found an inner strength to keep going forward. Her faith in God had returned. She could once again look at the beauty of nature with gratitude and wonder. She went back to doing her normal daily routine (even though tears still filled her eyes when she thought of young George).

Sometimes she imagined her baby boy in heaven looking down on her and she wanted to make him proud of his mom.

The light of life returned and even though she did not understand death, she would trust God and that life was a wonderful thing and be thankful for all of their blessings. She allowed the spark of life to become a flame and two years after losing George Jr, Bessie and George welcomed another son, Roy Wilson Bailey born on May 7th, 1913.

Roy was a source of comfort and joy for Bessie and George, and they cherished every moment with their new son. They raised Roy with the same love and care that they had given to George Jr., and Roy grew up to be a happy and healthy young boy.

He became a shining light in Bessie's life. Bessie loved how the Quakers talked about walking in the Light and having the Light of Life. Having another baby was one of the many ways Bessie had the light of life. Her faith had been challenged, but it returned with greater strength than ever.

She began going to the Baptist church once a month (even though George did not go with her). She knew that was one of the things Jesus had promised those who followed him was - that they would have the light of life. And with Roy - she had the light of life.

Since Roy's birth, Bessie felt humbled by accepting she

had little control over events in her life, especially when it came to life and death. Realizing how little she controlled events in her life gave her a deep sense of peace. She hoped she would never stop trusting God again.

Bessie looked at Roy and nearly burst with pride and joy. He could never replace George Jr, but Bessie was very thankful for having another son. She took her mother's advice when George Jr died and tried to begin each morning to surrender to the Rock that was higher than her..

Chapter 5

Roy grew up to be a kind and respectful young man, and he inherited his mother's love of nature and her commitment to helping others. He adored his mother and there was nothing he would not do for her, but he privately questioned her ideas about “walking in the Light” and her constantly suggesting Roy put his faith and trust in Jesus.

By the time Roy was 15 he was a tall, handsome young man. His older half siblings had long left their home, often making him feel like an only child. He rose before dawn each morning to help his dad milk the cows, fetch water for the house, and chop firewood for his mom to use for cooking.

Roy was taller than both his mom and his dad. He did most of the hard chores on the dairy farm. His parents had agreed he could stop school when he was 16 after completing the tenth grade. That made him work even harder knowing he would soon be finished with school.

They lived in Delavan, a small rural town in central Illinois where the total highschool population was 23 students. Roy was great at math and reading, but once he mastered those skills he was no longer interested in school.

There was a girl his age in the same grade that he liked to pick on. In fact he was known to sit behind her and

dip her hair in the inkwell during class. Her name was Myrtle Clark.

By the time they were 16 Myrtle suddenly left Delavan to go live with her older sister in Wisconsin. Roy left school to devote all of his time to helping his mom and dad on their dairy farm. At 16 he was able to do all of the chores and still have plenty of energy for other things.

Roy loved to compete and have fun. Since he was no longer going to school, he began going into town on Saturday's to play baseball. He played first base and because of his long reach everyone called him Stretch. It was said a ball never got past first base if Stretch was playing.

Roy loved not going to school. Even though he did more work on the farm and it was harder, he did not mind. For one thing his dad was getting older and was not able to do as much. And he knew that life for his mother would be much harder if he were not helping out on the farm.

Roy was enjoying his late teenage years. His parents gave him as much free time as they could even though they knew he was gaining a reputation in town as a "hell raiser."

By the time Roy was 18 he wanted to join the Army. Money was scarce and hard to come by. George ran the dairy farm and sold some milk in town, but most of his time was spent growing their food and taking care of

the animals. Bessie made some money from mending clothes, selling cheese, and doing laundry for other people. What cash they earned was quickly spent on things like shoes and tools.

Roy thought if he joined the Army he could send his mom a regular paycheck each month to help his parents pay the bills. He was surprised when both his mom and his dad agreed. He figured his dad would support him joining the Army, but Roy was expecting a lot of resistance from his mom who always seemed very protective of her boy.

Roy knew she had lost her first child two years before Roy was born. Roy was expecting her to try and talk him out of joining the Army, but she did not. Roy speculated that she did not resist because she needed the money he could give to her. Whatever her reason, he was happy about going into the military.

What Roy did not know was that Bessie struggled mightily with Roy joining the Army. When he first mentioned it, her immediate reaction was to say - no God, I can't lose another boy. Please do not let this happen. She kept it to herself, but inwardly she pleaded with God to not let him join the Army.

The morning after the first time Roy mentioned it, Bessie was sitting in silence, quietly asking God to change Roy's path, when she heard the still small voice say "Bessie, isn't your son doing what he thinks is right and following the best path in his mind that he can? You

should be proud that he is willing to risk his life to defend freedom and the American way of life."

Bessie paused after hearing that. She was proud, she thought. Roy is a fine young man and he is doing what he thinks is right. Her prayer changed to, "Yes Lord, Roy is doing an honorable thing in his mind, but please, please, please keep him out of harm's way. Please God do not let him die."

She immediately heard a response, "So whose son should die if not yours?"

Guilt and shame rushed through Bessie's body. Yes, that was pretty selfish on her part. She would be proud of Roy and she would trust God to watch over him. She spent the day internally processing this unexpected direction and by that night Bessie was able to give Roy her blessings to join the Army.

Roy joined the Army and sent nearly all of his pay to his parents. He was taller than every man in his unit which made him popular during ball games and boxing matches.



Roy Bailey

Roy enjoyed the Army and sometimes thought he might make a career out of it, but then the stock market crashed and ushered in the Great Depression.

It was a hot summer day in the early 1930s, and Bessie and George were sitting on their porch, watching the sun set over their dairy farm. They had been through many hard times together, but the Great Depression was particularly challenging for them and their farm.

Bessie continued to walk in the Light and trust God in everything, but some days were harder than others.

Bessie sighed and said, "George, I've been thinking about our farm and how hard times have been lately. The Great Depression has hit us hard, and it seems like we can't catch a break."

George Sr. nodded in agreement. "I know, Bessie. It's been a tough time for everyone, not just us. But we've been through tough times before, and we'll make it through this too. We've got our farm and our family, and that's all that matters."

Bessie smiled at her husband's words. "You're right, George. We've been through a lot together, and we've always come out the other side. But it's hard to see the end of this tough time. Our cows aren't producing as much milk, and we're barely making enough to cover our expenses." Lately Bessie was thinking if they left the farm and moved to town, she could find more ways to earn money.

George Sr. put his arm around Bessie and said, "I know, but we've got to be strong. We've got to keep working hard and doing what we can to make ends meet. We can sell some firewood, and I'll try to find some extra work in town. We'll get through this, Bessie. We always do."

Bessie leaned into her husband's embrace and said, "You're right, George. We'll make it through this, together. We always do." Even though George was not religious, Bessie sometimes thought he had more faith than her.

And as they sat together, watching the sun set over their farm, Bessie and George took comfort in each other and their love for each other and their family. They knew that no matter what challenges lay ahead, they would face them together, and their love and determination would carry them through.

The Great Depression was in full swing and jobs and money were scarce. Having a steady check from the Army helped George and Bessie a lot during the hard times. Roy was such a blessing. Bessie relied heavily on her faith and trusted God to keep him safe from any harm.

Chapter 6

As time passed, Bessie and George continued to work hard. They lived a simple life, surrounded by their love for each other and their commitment to their family, farm, and local community. In 1933, George Sr. accepted Jesus at the small Baptist church in town.

Three months later, George died at the age of fifty-five. He had been sick, so his death was not unexpected, still it left Bessie heartbroken yet again.

Her husband's death hurt her as much as her baby's death had twenty-two years earlier. She felt the same doubts and fears creep in, but it was different this time.

Each morning she continued to begin her day sitting in silence and listening to the still small voice within. She knew she was not abandoned by God. Yes, she was alone, but she knew everything would work out, even though she did not know how.

Her husband had been a rock in her life. It hurt deep within to know she would no longer feel his arms around her or hear the soothing comfort of his words of wisdom.

She loved her husband and was proud of the life they had made together. Losing him was like losing a part of her. She was no longer the same person without her other half. She hurt mightily, but she was determined to remember how things always work out for those who put

their faith in God. She was determined to lean on the Rock that was higher than her.

Bessie Ross and George Bailey's love story was a testament to the power of love and the importance of respecting each other's beliefs. Their devotion to each other and their family remained strong throughout their lives, and they left a lasting legacy of love and kindness.

When George died, Bessie was left completely alone. She did not know what she would do without George, but she was trusting God to provide a path for her to follow.

Roy was shocked when he got the news that his dad had died. His first thoughts were for his mom. What would she do? She was completely alone in the world. At the age of twenty Roy decided it would be best to leave the Army and be with his mom.

The Army gave him an honorable discharge due to family hardships and Roy returned to Delavan to live with his mom and take care of her. Roy did not understand his mother’s faith in God. Roy wanted to know why God would take his father aways from them? Every morning during her quiet time, Bessie tried to “hold Roy in the Light” as the Quaker phrase went.

Bessie was 45 when her husband died; they had been married 26 years. A week after the funeral at the local Baptist church (the same church where George had been saved three months earlier), Roy was angry and bitter.

Roy told his mother that her prayers had not helped much since his dad died anyway. “All that praying they did at the church didn’t help dad or us one bit,” Roy sharply told his mother.

Bessie did not respond to that comment, but the next day she showed Roy the handwritten verse her mom gave her when George Jr died. She told Roy that life and death were in God’s hands and we should always try to find the “Rock that is higher than us” - especially when we are overwhelmed.

“Yea, right”, Roy mumbled under his breath. Still angry and bitter he challenged his mom, “Just where is this rock mom?” He loved his mother, but sometimes her views were too far out there for him. Roy loved and respected his father. Until his dad’s deathbed, his dad had nothing to do with churches. Roy thought his getting saved three months before his death was just his dad’s way of making his mom happy. Since George did not go to church, he did not make Roy go to church either. Roy did not share his mother’s faith.

Roy continued, ”How can you still believe? Dad was way too young to die. You are too young to have to live alone the rest of your life. How can you believe in God?”

Bessie was quiet for several minutes before answering her son, “You know I stopped believing in God after your brother died. I was angry and hurt. It was your grandmother that helped me find the still small voice

again. In time I began to trust God again and let His voice be my guide. If I had not done that, you would have never been born."

Roy gave a huff and looked at his mom with some compassion, but more questioning. Roy had a lot of respect for his grandmother Maggie (the Quaker lady - as Roy often thought of her).

"So where does that voice you are talking about come from?" he asked his mother. "How do you know it is not just your imagination?"

Bessie silently asked for guidance as she said, "What inside you tells you it is wrong to steal? Listen to that voice without needing to label or define it. Trust it. Accept that it is greater than you. It has been around since life began. It is within all people, everywhere. Being surrendered to it brings a peace that is not available from any other source."

Roy said nothing more as he went outside. He thought about what she said but dismissed his mother's comments and went his own way working what jobs he could and going into town on weekends to take his mind off things.

His mother tried to get him to go to the Baptist church with her on Sundays but Roy told her he saw no point in going plus he did not have the time. After leaving the Army, he thought he had to take his dad's place and be the "head" of the family. That meant not just doing the work his father had done, but also deciding the best

path forward for him and his mother. He had no time for church.

Roy was not at peace. He was restless and rebellious. Bessie thought of a quote from the Margaret Fell book:

."... whoever is not thus seeking, shall never receive satisfaction from the Lord God;"

She once again returned to the old Quaker phrase to 'wait upon the Lord', her mother had shared with her after she first saw George Bailey.

Perhaps her son would one day seek out the power that gives life and breath to all things and find the peace that passeth understanding and can only come from God. That became her daily prayer for her son.

There were no jobs anywhere near Delavan, so Roy took on odd jobs at different farms in the area, often being paid with tools, food, and dairy products rather than money.

Chapter 7

Six months after his dad died, Roy decided to go to a monthly dance at the farmers market auction house. It was one of the few buildings in the small town that was big enough to host the local monthly dance.

Prohibition had officially ended at the end of 1933 and Roy decided to spend a portion of what little money he still had from his Army days on some beer. While enjoying his beer and watching folks dance, he noticed a familiar face in the corner of the room. It was Myrtle Clark. He had not seen her since she was 16. They were both 20 years old now and Roy was instantly attracted to her. He thought she was even prettier now than when they were in school.

He made his way to her side of the room and began talking. He learned she had gotten married while living in Wisconsin and had two young children. When Roy heard that he was about to walk away thinking there was no sense in talking to her any longer.

But then Myrtle told him, “my husband liked to gamble and he lost what little money we had from his factory job each week and I finally got tired of it. I divorced him and got my brother-in-law to drive me and the kids back here to live with mom.”

Roy sensed an opening and he took it. “So we are both still living with our moms," he said with a smile. “Don’t

you think it is about time we got away from them?"

Myrtle and Roy began to see each other as often as possible. Neither of them had much money and Myrtle did not like leaving her kids with her mom and younger sister too long, so their visits were often short. Sometimes they would walk near a pond on the north end of town. Other times they would go to a dance or watch one of the local card games.

Roy confessed his fondness for Myrtle and within a few months of seeing her again he proposed to her. She said yes. He told her they could not get married until he could get a steady paying job plus he did not want to leave his mom all alone.

Myrtle was disappointed because she loved Roy and wanted to marry him right away. A couple of days later she had an idea. She told Roy about her idea to introduce her uncle Irwin to Roy's mom. Irwin was actually Myrtle's mother's uncle and was a widower. If the two hit it off and possibly got married, then Roy could leave his mom and they could get married.

Roy liked the idea. There was no doubt he wanted to be with Myrtle and show her there are still good men around. Yet, he would do anything for his mother and could not bear the thought of her living alone.

Bessie was introduced to Irwin White and within a month Bessie began going to the local Methodist church with Irwin. Bessie thought of herself as a Christian more than a Baptist, Methodist, Catholic, or Quaker. So going

to the Methodist church with Irwin was not a problem for Bessie.

By the spring of 1935 the prospect for marriage was looking up. A new factory was being built in Peoria, IL and they announced plans to hire lots of laborers. Roy could easily get a steady job there.

About the same time, Irwin had a frank conversation with Bessie. He told her neither of them were getting any younger. They had both been married before and knew the pain of losing their spouse. They also knew what it was like to be lonely and how much harder it was to live alone. The depression was winding down and the economy was getting better. Irwin's painting and wallpaper business was finally starting to pick up. Irwin asked Bessie to marry him. There was a chance to buy the local feed store on credit. She could move in with him and he would buy the feed store and she could run it.

Bessie was not sure what to do. She prayed about it and listened for the still small voice in the silence. She did not have a clear direction. All she knew was that George Bailey was still the love of her life.

She told Roy about the offer during supper one night. She was surprised to see his face light up so quickly.

"That is great news mom," he said as he stood up and walked around the table to bend over and give her a big hug. "Congratulations momma. I am so happy for you."

Bessie did not get a chance to tell him she did not really want to get married. Roy reacted so quickly that Bessie quietly accepted his congratulations.

Bessie had told herself to “wait upon the Lord” after Irwin proposed, but now after seeing Roy’s smiling face she began to think marrying Irwin would be for the best.

Bessie knew Roy worried about her. If she married Irwin, maybe that would let Roy move forward with his life and not worry about his mom.

She went to bed that night thinking marriage would be the best thing not only for her, but for Roy as well. It was time for him to start his own life, she thought. And with that thought she went to sleep determined to accept Irwin’s proposal the following day.

As she fell asleep she reminded herself she did not have clear guidance about marrying Irwin. A voice suggested she wait a bit and hold the decision in the Light (as her mother Maggie would have told her). But the idea just made the most sense and Bessie drifted off to sleep determined to marry Irwin so Roy could have his freedom.

Chapter 8

Bessie and Irwin were married in the summer of 1935. By October of 1935, Roy and Myrtle were married.



Myrtle and Roy Bailey

When Roy told his mother he wanted to marry Myrtle, she told him how hard it was to become an instant parent. She described what it was like to suddenly be a mother of three the day she got married.

When she married his father and inherited three children, life completely changed. Bessie told Roy she married his dad before she was even 20 years old and how hard it was to be a good parent at such a young age.

Bessie told Roy how her mother had concerns about her marrying a man with three children. Bessie told him the same thing her mother told her about marrying someone that already had kids. Maggie said the best advice she could give Bessie was to love the step children just as much as her own children. Bessie made sure Roy heard the same advice when he married Myrtle.

Myrtle had a girl, Loretta born in 1932 and a boy, Bob born in 1933. Roy took his mother's advice and treated them as though they were his own children. Roy, Myrtle, Loretta and Bob moved to Pekin just outside of Peoria and began their lives as a new family. Roy had taken a job at the Caterpillar factory in Peoria.

Irwin bought the feed mill store and continued to paint and wallpaper while Bessie ran the feed mill. Bessie felt some uneasiness getting married. George was her first love and her feelings for Irwin did not come close to what she felt for her first husband.

Seeing Roy start his own family made Bessie feel like she had done the right thing by marrying Irwin. She knew her son and knew there was no way he would have left his mom home alone. So in Bessie's mind, the only way for Roy to start his new family was for Bessie

to marry Irwin.

Irwin and Bessie settled into their new life together. Bessie worked hard running the feed mill, running a cream station in town, and taking care of their house. Her life had certainly changed from what it was just a few years earlier.

Bessie and Irwin attended the local Methodist church. Bessie always enjoyed the sermons when the pastor encouraged people to walk in the light. It made her feel closer to the Quaker connection she had with her mom. Bessie liked reading the gospels and trusted the words of Jesus and his promise of the light of life to those who followed him.

The Great Depression was winding down and Irwin's painting business was picking up more and more. He was getting jobs in Delavan as well as jobs in neighboring Peoria. Irwin's thirty year old son, Virgil worked with his dad, but they were always behind on their jobs.

By May of 1937, Roy and Myrtle had moved back to the northwest side of Delavan. Roy agreed to work for Irwin and his growing painting and wallpaper business. Myrtle stayed home and took care of Loretta and Bob. She was pregnant with her and Roy's first child. Myrtle gave birth to a baby girl on May 31, 1937. They named her Barbara Elaine Bailey.

Roy and Myrtle were happy with their new and growing family. Roy was very good at his new painting job. His

tall height gave him an advantage because he could reach places where the other workers (including his new step brother Virgil White) had to use a ladder.

Roy was a proud father, but he remembered his mother's advice to treat his step children just like his own.

He was proud of Barbara, his little girl, but Roy was quick to say he was also proud of his two step children, Lorretta and Bob.

Two days before Barbara was born, Myrtle's younger brother, Warren had a baby girl they named Judy. When the two babies were a year old the family celebrated both birthdays with a small birthday party. Roy and Warren put on little party hats and acted like big kids. Warren held both babies while Roy pushed them all in a baby stroller. Barbara and Judy were first cousins and they became great friends as they grew older.



Roy Bailey, Warren Clark, Judy Clark, and Barbara Bailey

Roy and Myrtle enjoyed life in their hometown. Delavan was a small rural town in central Illinois, which meant there was not a lot to do. Since they had a growing family, they really had very little time to do anything other than to take care of their children. Myrtle loved her new life, but sometimes missed going out and dancing or playing cards.

Just after Barbara turned a year old, Myrtle gave birth to a baby boy on June 30, 1938. They named him after Roy - Roy Wilson Bailey Jr, but all of his life he would be known as Jack Bailey.

Less than a year later Myrtle had another boy named George Daniel Bailey. He was born on June 18, 1939. He was named after Roy's father (George Ambrose Bailey) and Myrtle's father (Clarence Daniel Clark).

Both boys were born in Delavan, IL. That meant Bessie could see them more often than when they had lived in Peoria. Bessie loved her new grandchildren. She also loved seeing how happy Roy was. She still could not get him to go to church, but at least he seemed happy. Bessie and Irwin still went to the Methodist church in Delavan and she loved telling other ladies about her grandchildren.

In 1939 Bessie's mother traveled to Delavan for a visit and Bessie paid a photographer to take a photo of her, her mom, her son, and her granddaughter. After posing for the photo of four generations, Bessie had the photographer take a photo of her mom with Barbara, Jack, and George.



Maggie, Bessie, and Barbara (child)

Although Bessie was now married to Irwin, Maggie knew her daughter's true love was Bessie's first husband, George. There were times when Maggie saw the sadness in Bessie's face and immediately knew Bessie was thinking of her first husband George.

A year after George died, Bessie added a poem to her poetry collection. She showed it to her mom and that helped Maggie realize just how much Bessie still loved George.

"I never knew the half myself, until you passed away.
But Oh, to live without you, as days and months go by.
To miss your shielding guidance, the approval of your
Eye!

To listen in the silence, for a voice I hear no more,
Or the echo of a footfall upon a soundless floor!
Ah, dearest, in that better home, I hope you may not
Know

The sorrow I am feeling, which you would pity so;
But oh! That I could tell you - perhaps the angels will -
How much, how much I loved you, and how I love you
still."

A year later Myrtle gave birth to another baby. On September 30, 1940 Myrtle had another daughter, named Darlene Faye Bailey. Now the Bailey family had three girls (Lorreta, Barbara, and Darlene) and three boys (Bob, Jack, and George).

Chapter 9

Maggie died on September 18, 1940 at the age of 73, two weeks before Darlene was born. Bessie's mother had been her rock. She had consoled Bessie through the death of both her husband and her son, even though Bessie knew her mother was struggling with the deaths of four of her own children near the same time.

Bessie was no stranger to death. By 1940 three of her younger brothers had died (one at the age of 18 in WWI) along with her baby sister Martha (who died in childbirth at the young age of 19). Bessie's father, husband, and first born son had also died. But there was something about losing her mother that had a big impact on Bessie.

Maggie's father had introduced Maggie to some of the Quaker ways in Ohio just after the Civil War and Maggie used some of that influence to comfort Bessie during the hard times in life. But now it was Maggie that was gone.

Maggie's advice was often exactly what Bessie needed to hear. Maggie's silent observations were uncanny at times and Bessie suspected it was because Maggie was a devoted follower of Jesus and walking in the Light, even though Maggie seldom went to church.

More than once Maggie wrote a portion of the verse from Psalms 61:2 on a piece of paper that said ".. when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I" and hand the piece of paper to Bessie

hoping it would give Bessie strength.

Bessie thought of that verse at her mother's funeral and recalled the many times Maggie had shared it with Bessie. Everytime Maggie slipped the verse to Bessie on a piece of paper it gave Bessie strength and comfort.

Now Bessie had to lean heavily on that very verse to help her cope with losing her beloved mother. She prayed she could have faith like her mother and trust God in all things. She wanted to be as strong of a Christian as Maggie.

Bessie was 52 when her mother died. Roy was 27 and he and Myrtle now had six children. Bessie knew Roy was taking good care of his wife and his children, but she secretly prayed that Roy could somehow find the peace and comfort that can only come by letting Jesus into his heart and walking in the Light. He was doing a good job on his own, but he could do a better job if he were walking in the Light.

Maggie had been such a strong influence in Bessie's life and Bessie hoped her son knew what a great grandmother he had in Maggie. She prayed that his memories of Maggie would help him find Jesus and walk in the Light.

Bessie worked hard at the feed mill store and managed her cream station. The hard work helped keep her mind from wandering after losing her mother.

Maggie encouraged Bessie to 'walk in the Light' when

Bessie was only 12. Bessie still had the Margaret Fell book her mother had given her as well as the “Wizard of Oz” book.

She thought a lot about how that time in her life was something like a turning point. Bessie became fond of going into the woods to listen to the still small voice.

When Bessie first met George Bailey she was heartbroken to learn he was married, it was her mother who patiently told her to ‘wait upon the Lord’ and her mother had been right. And it was her mother that arranged the trip to the state fair in the first place. Had Bessie not gone to the state fair, she would not have fallen in love with George the first time she saw him.

And of course had she not met George she would not have had George Jr or Roy. And it was her mother Maggie who helped pull her back from the dark desperation and loneliness she felt when her three year old son died.

She still missed her son, but she also knew she could trust God in all things. And that certainly helped her when George Sr died. Yes, Maggie had been a huge influence and help in Bessie’s life and now Maggie was gone, but Bessie still heard her mother’s voice.

Bessie carried her mother’s sweet memory in her heart and mind. As Bessie did her daily work, she could hear her mother’s voice encouraging her and supporting her.

At this point in her life, Bessie needed some support.

She married Irwin without really loving him. She often reminded herself how she had decided to marry Irwin without having clear guidance from the still small voice.

Now, she was beginning to wonder if that had been a mistake.

When they were first married, Irwin seemed like a strong Christian. Unlike George (who did not go to church with Bessie until near the end of his life), Irwin went to every church service at the Methodist church.

But when the depression was winding down and Irwin's painting business began doing better, Irwin began spending money on alcohol.

Bessie wished Maggie were still alive and could help Bessie cope with her husband's drinking problem. Of course Bessie knew her mother would tell her to lean on the higher rock. And that is what Bessie did.

Bessie missed her mom. She gave thanks for her and her wisdom. Maggie had been such a strong and helpful presence in Bessie's life. Without a doubt at the end of Maggie's life, Bessie thought Jesus would say to Maggie - well done, my good and faithful servant. Maggie lived a long and blessed life as a committed follower of Jesus and walking in the Light.

Chapter 10

In 1944 Myrtle gave birth to her seventh and last child. He was born on January 4, 1944 and was named Richard Lee Bailey. Richard (Dick) was born in Pekin, IL, but the family lived in a house in Delavan across from the Catholic church.

As Irwin's drinking became heavier, he stopped going to the Methodist church Since he no longer went to church, Bessie decided to go to the local Catholic church. Going to a new church helped her keep her mind off of her husband's drinking problem.

Bessie considered herself a Christian more than a Baptist, Methodist, or Catholic. If she had to wear a label she liked the Quaker label her mother always used. Bessie thought Maggie was one of the strongest Christians Bessie knew, even though Maggie seldom went to church. There was something about the Quakers that made Bessie think they might be the strongest Christians.

Roy enjoyed his job painting houses with Irwin (Roy's step father), but Irwin really struggled with drinking more and more each week. His drinking problem began to cost Irwin business which meant less pay for his employees.

Roy and Myrtle had a growing family to feed. One week, after not working for three days because of Irwin's

drinking, Roy quit. He stopped working for his step father and agreed to be a tenant farmer. They sold the house across from the Catholic church and moved to Hopedale, IL to farm in 1945.

After they moved away from Delavan, Irwin's drinking became even worse. One evening Bessie had had enough. She drove their truck to Hopedale to spend the night with Roy and Myrtle.

Roy and Bessie sat up talking that night long after everyone else had gone to bed. Bessie told Roy, "Last week Irwin had so much to drink that he was sitting down for supper and the dining room chair wobbled. While I was still getting supper, he took the chair out back and used his saw to saw off one of the legs that he thought was too long. That just made it worse and next thing I know he sawed more of the legs and when I put supper on the table his chair was two inches lower than the other chairs. And ... it still wobbled."

Bessie was so frustrated with Irwin that she did not mind telling Roy how she really felt. Bessie confessed to Roy that she never really loved Irwin and only married him so Roy would not feel like he had to stay and take care of her after Geoge had died.

Roy felt a pang of guilt when he heard his mother's confession, remembering how happy he and Myrtle had been when Bessie agreed to marry Irwin.

In just seconds Roy made up his mind - his mother should come live with them. Myrtle could use the extra

help in the kitchen and with the clothes and other chores. His mom would be a big help around the house with all of the kids and chores. He was the one that pushed her to marry Irwin and he thought he should be the one to help her walk away.

"Leave him mom," Roy said to Bessie sitting at the dining room table at the farm house.

"How can I leave him son? I don't have any money to live on my own," his mother responded.

"Come live with us."

"I don't think Myrtle would like that very much," Bessie said.

"Sure she will," Roy quickly answered, but secretly feared how Myrle would react. "You don't know what Irwin might do when he is drunk. You have to leave him for your own safety."

Roy used that same argument when he told Myrtle what he had done. "Besides, it really is our fault mom married your uncle," Roy said to Myrtle that night in their bed.

Myrtle reluctantly agreed with her husband. He was right. They had arranged the first meeting between Bessie and Irwin, hoping they would get married which would then allow Roy and Myrtle to be married.

"We would have never introduced them if we had known

Uncle Irwin would have a drinking problem," said Myrtle. Myrtle's first husband liked to gamble and when he was drinking the gambling problem was even worse. Myrtle liked having a beer, especially at the dance hall, but she knew the dangers from drinking too much.

The more she thought about it the less she liked her uncle Irwin and she convinced herself she and Roy had some responsibility for Bessie getting married to Irwin. "I guess I could use the help," she admitted to Roy. "Dick is a handful to keep out of trouble and trying to do the cooking and cleaning for this bunch does take a lot out of me."

Bessie returned to her house still thinking about what Roy had said and praying about it. She never felt “led” to marry Irwin. She thought it would be the best thing for Roy (and she still thought it had been good for Roy to marry Myrtle and start his own family), but the truth was - it was not good for her.

She appreciated Roy’s offer, but hesitated as she honestly considered it. She did not want to be a burden to her son. She would be sixty years old in a couple of years. Yet, if she left Irwin, how could she support herself? Taking Roy up on his offer would really be the only way she could walk away from Irwin and his heavy drinking.

Bessie struggled inside. If only her mother were still alive, Maggie could give some wise advice. But then Bessie realized her mother’s words were still alive. Bessie began to ask herself what her mother would tell

her if she knew the situation. Bessie quickly knew her mother would tell her to be still and trust God.

And the truth was she was in this mess because she did not trust God to begin with. She did not wait upon the Lord when she married Irwin.

She would not make that mistake again. For the next few days Bessie waited. She prayed and she waited. Around the eighth day she read the verse where Jesus said he came to give people abundant life.

Bessie had to admit she was not happy and did not feel like she had the abundant life living with Irwin. By the tenth day, she was clear on the direction she would take. She would leave Irwin, move in with Roy, and completely surrender to following God's guidance the rest of her life.



Bessie and Roy

She adored her son and loved each of her grandchildren. She knew she could pitch in and help with the work and be less of a burden to him. Without a doubt if she were living with Roy and his family she would have the abundant life Jesus spoke of.

It was settled. The following week Bessie moved in with Roy, Myrtle, and the kids. Bessie was glad to leave Delavan. It had too many unpleasant memories for her.

Chapter 11

Bessie did not bring much to her new home. She had to share a room with Darlene and Dick (the two youngest children) for the time being. All Bessie took from her home with Irwin was her shoes, clothes, two quilts, her hair brush and hair pins, a winter coat, some sewing stuff, a few photos, her poetry collection (she kept them in a scrapbook), some memorabilia, and a jar of buttons.

Bessie loved the verse in the Bible where Jesus said "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesseth." She had always thought of possessions as the things she needed for a good life, not the things that were pretty and that many people bragged about owning.

Bessie sometimes thought of her trip to the State Fair and seeing all of the fine clothes, furniture, and fancy appliances that were on display. It was true, there was a part of her that imagined what it might be like to be able to afford some of those things, but she knew a good life did not depend on lots of money and … things.

The next three months was a strange time for everyone in the Bailey house. The children loved having their grandmother living with them, but they did not understand why she was not going back home. Children are quicker to accept change than adults. After a short time, the kids accepted their grandmother was just another part of their large family.

They liked having another adult, especially in the kitchen. Often they would ask their mom for something and have to wait, but with grandma Bessie living with them, she could get them a drink of water or a little piece of cheese or bread much faster than their mom.

Bessie made time each morning to read her Bible and sit in silence before beginning the chores for the day. She had always been an early riser. As a young girl she had to get up early to eat before her brothers. Plus she had to start early or there would not be enough time to get all of her chores finished.

Darlene and Barbara especially liked having grandma Bessie living with them. When they lived in Delavan Baraba remembered how special it was when Bessie had taken the two girls to the big brick Catholic church across the street from their house. Barbara had wondered what the inside of the church looked like. She saw the outside of the church every morning from her upstairs bedroom window that she shared with sisters Loretta and Darlene.

One day she told Bessie how much she would like to see the inside of that beautiful church. The following Sunday Bessie took Barbara and Darlene to the church so they could see the inside. It was nothing like Barbara had imagined, but she always remembered how grandma took them to the Catholic church.

Roy heard about an opportunity to farm in a town much further south than Hopedale. Soon the family moved to

the north side of Herrick, IL and Bessie moved with them.

Herrick was south of Springfield and far enough away from Delavan where nobody knew Bessie. She could start fresh. She had never been clear about marrying Irwin. She knew deep down George was her only love. Moving with Roy and his family to this new town was a way for Bessie to help raise her grandchildren and walk in the Light, trusting God.

Roy and Myrtle did not go to church. Roy still secretly blamed God for losing his father when he was only twenty years old. His mom and dad went to the small Baptist church in Delavan. Roy still felt the same way he did in 1933 and thought all of the prayers from the church when his dad got sick should have counted for something, but they were for nothing. His dad died anyway despite the prayers. It did not seem fair for his dad to die so young and that Roy would have to be the "man of the house" and take care of his mother. His dad should have still been doing that.

Bessie quietly prayed for her son to find peace. She knew Roy was troubled inside. He was very competitive, especially in physical sports like baseball and boxing. His passion for life was strong, but his bitterness from the hardships of the Great Depression and losing his father at an early age pushed Roy to go in his own direction. Bessie knew it was best to just love her son and pray for him rather than give him advice or try to push him to make changes.

Once Bessie moved in with Roy she had more chances to quietly suggest Roy should at least make sure the kids were in church even if he did not want to go. More than anything Bessie wanted to walk in the Light each moment of each day. She would let her life speak. That would have the greatest influence on her grandchildren and her son.

A month after being in the new house, Bessie mentioned to Roy that maybe he should think about going to the Methodist church there. She knew Roy held a strong grudge against the Baptist because of his father. Maybe he would listen to the folks in the Methodist church more. She hoped if he did not follow her suggestion, he might at least let her take the younger children to church.

Roy was a strong man. He was a wonderful father. He provided for his family and he was a fair and honest man. But Bessie knew that as strong as Roy was, he could be so much stronger if he followed Jesus.

Bessie saw living with her son as a way for her to let him see her own peace and happiness from being surrendered each day to walk in the Light. Since leaving Irwin, Bessie felt like her life was no longer her own, but that it completely belonged to her Creator.

Chapter 12

Bessie worked hard all of her life, even as a teenager. When her husband George died she opened a cream station in Delavan and then ran the feed store Irwin purchased. It was hard work, but Bessie did it. Hard work sometimes cleared her mind.

Now that she was living with her son, her pride and joy, she was determined to do all of her chores and make life as easy as possible for Roy and his family.

Unfortunately she did “too” much according to her daughter-in-law. Myrtle was glad Bessie had moved in with them and appreciated the work Bessie did, but sometimes Bessie did things much differently than Myrtle. She cooked differently, folded clothes differently, and even swept the floors backwards from the way Myrtle thought they should be swept.

Many nights Roy would come home and be pulled into his bedroom by his wife so she could vent and tell him all of the wrong things Bessie had done that day.

Life in the Bailey house was sometimes difficult with three adults. Roy wanted to remain neutral in the squabbles that erupted between Bessie and Myrtle, but now and then he was forced to take a side.

Bessie seldom argued with Myrtle. She just did things her way despite Myrtle fussing or saying she was not

doing something right.

Bessie had kept her own house since she was 18. She no longer had her own home and it was hard for her to not take charge. She often did things her way forgetting to let Myrtle run things the way she chose.

What made things even harder were the times when Myrtle openly criticized Roy. Mentally, Bessie quickly defended her son. She had lost many of the people she loved in her life. Roy was her only child and had taken her in to live with him and his family. In Bessie's eyes Roy could do no wrong. It cut Bessie deep to hear Myrtle complain about something Roy had done. Bessie often bit her tongue and had to ask the Lord for patience.

She knew her son made mistakes, but she wished Myrtle could forgive him when he did rather than scold him. Bessie often found herself praying for both Myrtle and Roy to find Jesus and the power from loving others rather than judging.

Bessie did not care what church Roy went to. The important thing was for Roy to follow Jesus and find the peace that comes from surrendering to walking in the Light. And maybe Myrtle would stop complaining so much if she became a Christian.

Roy Bailey was a proud man. After his dad's death, Roy knew it was up to him to take care of his mom and he did, at least until she married Myrtle's uncle Irwin. Once his mom was remarried, Roy felt like it was okay for him

to marry Myrtle.

Yet, Roy and Myrtle both felt a sense of guilt from their part with Bessie getting married to Irwin after they learned of his drinking problem.

Roy had allowed Myrtle to talk him into trying to get his mom married. Still, Roy knew he was just as guilty as his wife. They had acted selfishly and pushed his mom into marrying Irwin, just so they could get married sooner.

Roy was troubled by what they had done. He and Myrtle talked about it when they went to town to have a good time and get a break from the children and chores. Bessie had agreed to watch the kids so they could go to the local dance hall on Saturday night.

Myrtle and Roy were taking a break from dancing and having a beer when Roy told Myrtle, "I thought I did a good job stepping in and taking care of mom after dad died."

Myrtle was quick to remind him, "and you did sweetie. You are a good son to your mom."

Roy shook his head from side to side disagreeing. "Nope. No matter how I look at it, I messed up getting mom to marry Irwin," he said.

Myrtle chimed in, "don't forget you were not alone in that. Irwin is my uncle, you know. I had a hand in that too. I was the one who came up with the idea."

They both went silent staring at their beers and listening to the music in the other corner of the building. "I just don't know what a man is supposed to do. Try as hard as I can to do the right thing, I still managed to screw things up with mom."

"Roy," Myrtle began speaking slowly, "you know your mom has been pushing us to try out the Methodist church. Maybe we should give it a try." Myrtle too was feeling a sense of guilt, not just from what they had done to Bessie, but also from getting mixed up with her first husband, Delmer.

She dearly loved her two children from that marriage, but she also regretted getting married too young and falling for a man that did not take better care of her and their children. Maybe going to church might be a good thing for both of them, she thought to herself.

Roy was quiet for several minutes, sipping his beer and staring off into the distance. "Okay," he finally said. "We'll give it a try. I've got things to do in the morning, but maybe we can get mom to watch the kids so we can go to the evening service."

Bessie was thrilled to watch the kids while Roy and Myrtle went to church. She had a hard time believing her son when he came home and said he wanted to try out the Methodist church, but she quietly whispered a prayer of thanks as the news sunk in.

Roy could never have imagined how the decision to go

to church would change the rest of his life and his family's lives. On November 14th, 1947, Myrtle and Roy accepted Jesus and were saved that night at a small Methodist church. Both of them felt compelled to accept the forgiveness offered by the reverend if only they would surrender their hearts and lives to Jesus.

Years later Roy and Myrtle would often sing a song called "Something Got Hold Of Me," and just before singing it they would give their testimony of how they had both been transformed that night at the small Methodist church.

Chapter 13

Bessie was elated! She was so happy for her son and daughter-in-law! Bessie saved all of the money she could to buy Roy a brand new Bible on his birthday the following May.

She smiled as she watched the transformation in the Bailey household. She had a ringside seat to see how the power of God can change lives for the better.

Bessie had glimpses of the bitterness Roy had from losing his dad at such a young age, but what Bessie could not see was the guilt Roy and Myrtle carried from introducing Bessie to Irwin. Both Roy and Myrtle were able to let go of that guilt. They were like new people, smiling more and happier than they had ever been.

Life in the Bailey household began to change. Roy even joined his mother during her early morning Bible time and sitting in silence. Bessie was so happy for her son. As she continued to learn to trust God and to be fully surrendered she could now enjoy watching her son follow the same path.

Roy was like a sponge absorbing different passages in the Bible and learning all that he could. So many things, so many questions in his life were now beginning to make sense. Roy realized he had been trying on his own and working against God rather than working with God.

Bessie too was discovering an even deeper measure of inward peace than she had ever known. Her marriage to Irwin had been a mistake. As the Quakers would say, she had outrun her guide.

Bessie truly felt thankful for the … abundant life she was now enjoying.

The family continued to move every year or so. Roy and Myrtle would find a church as soon as they got moved to a new town. Bessie was a big help during their many moves. Despite the moves the Bailey household was jovial and full of fun and laughter. Everyone was happier.

But after five years, Roy's happiness began to fade a little. They had moved a couple of times because of financial problems. Money sometimes seemed even harder to come by than it had been during the Great Depression.

Around this time both Bob and Loretta joined the Army. That helped the family not only because there were two less mouths to feed, but both of them sent money home when they could. Loretta and Bob were a tremendous blessing to Roy and Myrtle.



The Bailey Family
Back row: Jack, Barbara, Bob, Loretta, George
Front row: Bessie, Roy, Dick, Myrtle, Darlene

There was not a Methodist church in their latest move and Roy and Myrtle decided to switch to the local Baptist church. They liked it well enough (as did Bessie who went to whatever church they wanted to go to - Bessie just wanted to hear the words of Jesus regardless of what church it was), but the preacher in the new church seemed to get under Roy's skin at times.

Roy had become an earnest student of the Bible. He was hungry to understand the Bible. His world view was changing and he saw life in a completely new and better way. But recently he was becoming grumpy.

Roy began to hear the call to become a preacher

himself, but he fought it with everything he had, making him grumpy. When he finally confessed the reason to Myrtle she too resisted - thinking surely God did not expect them to raise 5 more kids on a preacher's pay.

But the more they resisted the calling, the harder things got for them. Roy felt so compelled to preach the gospel, that with every bad thing that seemed to happen to them, Roy felt was God tapping him on the shoulder reminding Roy that he had been called to preach. In his heart Roy knew it would be best if he stopped resisting and surrendered to preach the Gospel.

Roy finally surrendered and accepted the call to be a preacher. In 1953 the family moved to Edinburg, Illinois for Roy to pastor his first church. Roy felt a calm and sweet peace, once he began preaching, that he had never felt. Yes, he was nervous at first, but he knew he was doing the right thing for him and his family. For the first time in his life Roy Bailey called a truce with God and surrendered. It was a more peaceful path than fighting with God.

Things began to look up for the Bailey family. In 1954 they moved to Towanda, IL to pastor another church. Roy and Myrtle had saved enough money to build their own house inTowanda. They remained in Towanda until selling the house at a nice profit and moving to Pontiac, IL in 1958 to pastor another church.

Life was good for the Baileys. The only children still at home were George, Darlene, and Dick. Bessie continued to be a vital part of the house and their

church.

Roy was becoming one of the best known pastors in the area. Since surrendering to preach, he constantly studied the Bible. He continued to work different jobs such as painting houses so study time was often late at night or early in the mornings.

Both Bessie and Myrtle beamed with pride when they listened to Roy preach. What a change happened in his life once he surrendered. His knowledge of the Bible grew each year. He had a good memory. He would quote scripture verses during his sermons without looking them up.

Myrtle openly bragged about her husband and some of the sermons he preached. She always wrote the date in her Bible near the scripture he used in his sermons.

Myrtle too began to feel a calling from God and became the music leader in the new church. For the rest of their lives, when Roy left to pastor a new church, Myrtle would lead the music service.

Bessie was very proud of her son and his wife. She still did not consider herself a Baptist. If pressed she really thought of herself more Quaker than anything else, only because she thought they were the most Christian like people of the different groups. But she never shared that with Roy. He thought most religions outside of Baptists and maybe Methodists were way off base.

Roy always liked to begin his sermons with a humorous

story or joke. He also liked to use numbers and spoke on topics such as God's favorite numbers. He had a knack for speaking on topics in ways that held people's attention.

He was able to explain difficult passages in the Bible and used his dispensation concepts to help people reconcile conflicting statements in the Bible.

Perhaps people were drawn to his sermons because he was one of them. He had been in the Army, worked in factories, painted houses, worked on a farm milking cows and growing crops and Roy often used those experiences in his sermons. People could easily relate to the things that he said.

Roy tried to be open as he spoke, allowing his passions to rise when it seemed appropriate. He tried to be open to whatever God might lay on his heart at the moment even if it was different from the notes he prepared earlier.

Roy often spoke of his father in his sermons and how his dad was saved just three months before he died. He shared life lessons he learned from his father, especially lessons from the animals on the farm. Many times Roy spoke about how he lost his dad way too early.

In his heart Roy often recalled his anger and bitterness when his father died. Roy thought he might make a career out of the Army, but obviously God had other plans. Had George Bailey not died, then Roy would have never come home to take care of his mom,

meaning he and Myrtle may never have married and started the wonderful family they now had.

When Roy thought about these things, he was quick to thank God for his mother who not only agreed to let him join the Army, but also tried to turn Roy to God so many times. Roy often rebelled, but it was not because his mother did not try to steer him on a Godly path.

Bessie thought Roy was a good preacher, but in her heart she still felt closest to God, not in church, but in the quietness of her mind and most often when in the garden or walking in the woods or even doing chores. Bessie could frequently be seen hanging clothes on the clothes line with a smile on her face. She was known to hum while cooking, sewing, or sweeping floors.

Bessie attended all of the church services at whatever church Roy was preaching at and even taught some of the children's classes when her son asked her to, but she felt the presence of God was strongest in her daily life.

When she read her Bible each morning she became silent and grateful for the sweet gift of life. As she did her chores throughout the day she listened for the voice of Jesus in her mind and in her heart. At night when in her room she would think of the many blessings she had during the day as she let her long hair down to be brushed before bed.

Bessie enjoyed hearing her son preach, but it was in her daily life that Bessie heard God best and felt God's

presence always near her.

Bessie and Roy each grew closer to God in their own ways. And both of them, along with Myrtle became strong influences in the Bailey children's lives.

Life was good in the Bailey household. Bessie was so thankful for moving in with her son and his family. She had a ringside seat to watch her grandchildren grow.

Bessie thought Barbara favored Roy a lot. As Barbara became an adult, Bessie looked at her with great love because she knew Barbara had a wonderful heart just like Roy.



Roy and Barbara

Chapter 14

Unexpected changes happened to the Bailey family in 1958. Both Loretta and Bob had already married and in 1958 Loretta had 3 children and Bob had 4.

Barbara was also married and had two children. And Jack had one son. So Roy and Myrtle already had 10 grandchildren by 1958.



Myrtle, Terri (baby), Roy, and Bessie

The biggest change In 1958 came when Roy had a

heart attack at the age of 45. He wound up spending many months in bed that year while he recovered, leaving the entire family impacted in many ways.

Myrtle went to work to support the family. Bessie took over all of the household chores including cooking, cleaning, and washing clothes. George was 19, Darlene 18, and Dick, their youngest was 14. All of the kids were able to chip in and help in many ways. Preaching was put on hold.

By 1959 Roy began to recover and his doctor advised them to move away from the harsh Illinois winters. Loretta and her husband Buck lived in Perry, Florida and they persuaded Roy and Myrtle to move to Florida.

Roy and Myrtle struggled with why something like this would happen. They knew God must have some different plan and perhaps being in Florida was part of that plan.

Roy's health improved in the warmer climate and eventually he returned to pastor another church, the Athena Baptist church in Perry.

They remained in Perry for a few years, until 1963. Then they moved back to Illinois. They still had a lot of family still in Illinois. When a church in Heyworth, IL offered Roy a church with a nice salary, Roy agreed to become their pastor.

A big part of their decision to return to IL, was to be close to their daughter Barbara. Myrtle felt like she had

to be near Barbara during one of the hardest times in Barbara's life.

Bessie was secretly glad to return to IL. Her husband was buried there along with her mother and some of her siblings. Bessie had deep roots in Illinois. And she too wanted to be near Barbara, especially at this time in Barbara's life.

More than a decade earlier in 1951, the Baileys lived in Mason City, IL. That year they took in a houseguest named Mary Ann Gipson. Mary Ann's parents divorced when she was a toddler. She and her older sister and younger brother were raised by their grandmother in Mason City.

Mary Ann's older sister, Zettie had gotten into some trouble once she became a teenager and was sent to Missouri to live with her father Jack Gipson. Mary Ann's grandmother Mary was divorced and eventually had to move in with her sister Fanny (a single woman and a school teacher in Mason City). Fanny had a small store in the front of her house and asked Mary (Mary Ann's grandmother, also known as Mamaw) to come help run the store while Fanny was teaching school. But that meant Mary Ann had to find a place to live.

Mary Ann went to the same church as the Bailey's. When the Baileys learned Mary Ann, who was 17 at the time, was going to be homeless soon, the Bailey's offered to let her live with them.

Loretta and Bob were both in the Army, so the Bailey

family had extra more room in their house. Mary Ann Gipson moved in with the Baileys, sharing a room with 14 year old Barbara.

Maryann and Barbara became good friends that summer. They were both strong young Christians and spent much of their time together. By the end of the summer the two girls made a pact - Mary Ann would marry Barbara's brother Bob and Barbara would someday marry Mary Ann's younger brother Tommie.

Bob did not marry Mary Ann. Instead he married a girl named Shirley who already had two boys. Just before the wedding Roy took Bob to the side and gave him the same strong advice his mom had given him when he and Myrtle were married: treat your step children as your own children. Bob did just that, just like Roy had done with him, and like Bessie did with George's children.

Even though Mary Ann never married Bob, Barbara did end up marrying Mary Ann's brother, Tommie (who went by Tom). Tom and Barbara were married in August of 1956 and had their first child, Terri on July 7th, 1957 in Normal, IL.

Terri was Roy's first biological grandchild. Roy secretly had a soft spot for Terri, but tried hard not to show it. Bessie loved all of her great grandchildren, but she was not as good as Roy at not showing favoritism. Since Barbara was Bessie's oldest biological grandchild, she tended to show Barbara a little favoritism, so it was only natural for her to show favoritism to Barbara's first child.

By 1962, Tom and Barbara had three more children, all boys (Tommie 7/30/1958, Tony - 10/17/1960, and Tod - 5/27/62). Since Terri was the only girl and with 3 younger brothers she had to be tough at times.

Bessie often recalled how hard it was to be both the oldest child and the only girl with three younger brothers. Bessie naturally sympathized with Terri, since she was the only girl with three younger brothers.

In August of 1963 tragedy struck the Gipson family. Barbara had to go to work and for the first time she was not able to be home with her children during the day. Tod was 15 months old. They were living in Cheno, Illinois.

In later years, Barbara wrote these words:

"He (Tod) woke me in the wee hours of the morning so I got up to check on him. When I got to his crib he held his arms up to be picked up, which I did. Took him into the living room and sat down in the rocker with him. I must have sat there for a couple of hours rocking him until he went back to sleep. (Little did I know that was to be the last time I would actually hold him)."

"He went back to sleep and I took him in and put him in his bed in our room. I went back to bed and slept until time for Tom to come home. I woke up and got dressed as it was payday and we were going to the grocery store as soon as he got off work."

"(Mary Ann and her kids were staying with us while Dennis was at a convention so she was going to watch all the kids while Tom and I went to the store.) Anyway while waiting on Tom to get home I went in to check on Tod and see how he was."

"I must have walked into that room several times with the intention of getting him up and changed but each time I started to reach down for him it was if something or someone was holding me back and I would walk away thinking he was sleeping so peacefully I really didn't have the heart to wake him up."

"When I finally made up my mind to get him up,I got clean clothes and a diaper and laid them out on the bed and once again turned around to reach for him when I heard Tom pull into the driveway honking for me to come on so I grabbed my purse and asked Mary Ann if she would go wake Tod up and change him for me."

"Well when we came back from the store she meant us at the door and I could tell by her face something was wrong. She told me to go to Darlene's doctor's office because something was wrong with Tod and she couldn't get a hold of me (we had no cell phones) and so she called Darlene and Harry and they came and got the baby and told her they were taking him to her doctor."

"We got back in the car and headed for her doctor's office and just as we got there they were putting him in an ambulance to take him to the hospital, so I got in the ambulance and rode with them and the rest followed in

their cars.”

"He was not in there long until the doctors came out and told us he had spinal meningitis and they didn’t think he would regain consciousness.”

"He was in a room with a clear tent over him and oxygen running so all we could do was sit by his bedside. He was there for a couple of days before the Lord took him home, but before he died I was sitting by the side of his bed (in the room alone) and reached my hand through the opening to hold his hand and just as clear as day he said 'Mama'.”

"Later on as time went by and like you do you wonder 'Why God'. Well, I don’t know why but I do know that God is in control.”

"That same summer Mom and Dad had come to Illinois for a conference and they were going back to Florida and wanted to take Terri and Tommie with them for the summer and they would bring them back before school started.”

"What mother lets her 5 and 6 year old go 1000 miles away for several months, even if it was with her Mom and Dad, but I did. They even stayed over a couple of days until they got out of school so they could take them.”

"So that left me with just Tony and Tod for the summer. I believe that was God’s way of giving me even more time with him. God chose to take him home that August."

The Baileys moved back to Illinois soon after Babara lost her baby. When Tod died at 15 months old, Bessie went to stay with Barbara to help take care of the other three children.

Bessie knew what it was like to lose a child. One Saturday morning while ironing clothes she noticed Barbara writing a letter at the dining room table. Bessie was in the kitchen, but even from there she could see the tear that slipped down Barbara's cheek to the table.

Bessie put down her ironing and quietly sat down at the dining room table across from Barbara.

Bessie had lived in the same house with Barbara since Barbara was ten years old. She saw Barbara grow into a beautiful young lady. But Bessie knew her real beauty was in her heart. Barbara had one of the kindest hearts Bessie had ever known. Barbara was polite, obedient, and always smiling.

Barbara was no stranger to death. She lost her best friend Judy (her first cousin) when Judy was tragically killed in an automobile accident at the age of 18. They were the same age and had been good friends since they were babies. Barbara was devastated when Judy was suddenly killed.

And now here Barbara sat having lost her baby boy and

writing to one of her old high school friends about Tod's death. Barbara did not understand why Tod died, or why Judy died. All she wrote in the letter was that Tod was in heaven and no longer with his mom on earth.

Bessie sat silently while Barbara finished writing the letter. Bessie said nothing, but quietly whispered prayers for her granddaughter.

When Barbara finished the letter she looked up at Bessie with her eyes still moist and said, "Tod was such a special boy Grandma. He was going to do some amazing things in life."

Bessie knew her pain. She knew there was little she could say, but she decided there was one thing that had helped her when George Jr died when he was three years old and Bessie began to speak, "You know your dad had an older brother. He was my first child and my pride and joy. When he died my world became completely empty. There was nothing anyone could say to help me through those dark days."

"Momma came and stayed with me for two weeks. After the first week she came into my bedroom. I was staying in bed during the day and constantly crying," Bessie closed her eyes remembering those days as she continued.

"Momma did not say anything for the longest time. She just sat there next to my bed. After a long time of just sitting with me, she put her hands on my shoulder and said, 'Bessie, someday your heart will mend and you

may have another baby'. And I did have another baby, that was your dad. Momma gave me a verse from the Bible that helped a lot," Bessie said to Barbara.

Bessie handed Barbara a piece of paper with a verse Bessie had written on it:

"From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I." Psalm 61:2

“Momma gave me that verse and it sure did help during those dark days. It gave me strength and comfort when I needed it most."

Bessie left Barbara alone, hoping she had done the right thing by saying something.

It was the right thing. Barbara closed her eyes after reading the verse. She knew Jesus was her Rock that was higher than her. Barbara prayed for strength.

She had forgotten Bessie lost a son when he was only three. Barbara thought of her grandmother losing a child and suddenly Barbara knew she was not alone.

Others, including her grandmother had suffered the loss of their baby and found ways to move on and with the Lord’s help she would too.

Many, many years later it would be Barbara’s turn to console her oldest daughter Terri, when her baby Tia passed away.

Barbara and her oldest son, Tommie drove all night from DeFuniak Springs, FL to Charleston, SC to be with Terri when Tia became sick. By the time they arrived Tia was already gone.

Just as Bessie helped Barbara through the loss of her child, Barbara was there for Terri during one of the hardest times of her life.

After sharing the scripture with Barbara, Bessie remembered how deserted and alone she felt when George Jr died. She could not understand why he had to die. When her mother told Bessie how she too had lost a child, it brought some comfort to Bessie.

Bessie began to see a thread woven in the fabric of life where a mother (or even a grandmother) can at least let a mother who has lost a child know … she is not alone. In fact one of Barbara's favorite gospel songs was "No Never Alone".

Chapter 15

Barbara was a wonderful and devoted mother. She always gave her children as much attention as she could. She made time to play games with them and talk to them. She immersed herself in the world of her children. That and her faith began to heal the deep wounds in time.

A month after Todd died Babara told her husband she was two months pregnant. Barbara had a baby girl named Tammy on March 3, 1964. Instead of 3 boys and 1 girl, she now had 2 boys and 2 girls.

The Gipson family continued to grow. On December 14th, 1965 Barbara gave birth to another girl they named Tonja and now the girls outnumbered the boys 3 to 2.

The Gipson family moved almost as frequently as Barbara's parents did. When Roy Bailey moved back to Florida in 1966, Barbara and her family moved to Stanford, IL. In 1967 the Gipsons moved to Danvers, IL. Then in 1968 they too moved to Florida.

Roy Bailey purchased an entire block (six lots) in the town of DeFuniak Springs, FLorida with two houses on them located on 19th street. He rented one of the houses to Barbara and her family when they moved to Florida.

Roy was the pastor at Southwide Baptist church just south of DeFuniak and he, Myrtle, and Bessie lived in the pastorium just across the road from the church. Soon Barbara and her family moved to the “Drake” house just a mile down the dirt road from her parents.

The two families lived close enough for the children to walk or ride their bikes to their grandparents. Bessie loved walking along the clay road lined with tall pines to visit her granddaughter.

The house Barbara lived in had a large garden, an orange tree, a chestnut tree, and several pecan trees. When Bessie visited she loved to take the children outside to help her gather food from the earth.

Roy and Myrtle asked all of their children to come for Thanksgiving in 1969. Just a few months before, several of their children had gathered at their house along with many grandchildren to watch the television to see humans take their first steps on the surface of the moon.

That inspired Myrtle to have a huge family gathering, so she asked all of their children to come to Florida for Thanksgiving. Some of the kids lived in Illinois, some in distant places in Florida, but they all agreed to come to DeFuniak for Thanksgiving.



Back: Bob, Jack, George, Dick
Front:Loretta, Darlene, Roy, Myrle, Barbara

It was a happy time for everyone. All of the grandchildren played outside and only came in long enough to eat. With all seven children, their spouses, and the grandchildren there, the small block house was very noisy and crowded, but full of love and lots of food.

Roy and Myrtle beamed with pride seeing the huge gathering in their home. Bessie sat near a corner of the living room while everyone was eating and thinking how richly blessed she was. It was a special time that became one of Bessie's favorite memories.



Bessie with her grandchildren and their spouses.
Back: Buck, Bob, George, Harry, Dick, Jack, Tom
Front: Shirley, Belva, Loretta, Bessie, Darlene, Susie, Beverly, Barbara

Two months later, Tom Gipson was in between jobs again. He frequently changed jobs. His last job was working as a television repairman. His pay was never enough to pay all of the bills so Barbara worked as a bookkeeper for an accounting firm in town.

When Tom lost his job, they got behind on their rent and had to leave the Drake house. In 1970 they moved back into town on 11th street. Tom talked a local investor into helping him open his own TV repair shop. The house on 11th street was close enough for Tom to walk to work. It was also close enough for Barbara to walk to work if they could not afford gas for the car or if it broke down (which was often). It was close enough for the older children to walk several blocks to school.

The house had two floors and five bedrooms. It was one of the largest homes they had ever lived in. For the first time in their lives, the three oldest children had their own bedrooms. It was here that Babara gave birth to a baby girl, Tracy. Tracy Lynette was born on January 7th, 1971.



The Gipson Family
Tom, Barbara, Tracy, Tony, Terri, Tammy, Tommie, Tonja

In 1972, Tom had to close his tv repair business and the Gipsons moved back to IL. The family stayed with Barbara's sister, Darlene and her family while Tom looked for work. Tom was not able to find a job and after six weeks the family moved back to DeFuniak to one of the houses Roy owned on 19th street.

Tom struggled to find work and often had to work out of town for long periods of time. This put a strain on Tom and Barbara's marriage. A few years after they returned to Florida, Tom and Barbara were divorced.

Barbara had a house built on Walton road in DeFuniak and she and the six children continued to live there after the divorce.

A few years later Barbara moved back to the house on 19th street in DeFuniak Springs, FL. This was the same house the family lived in when they moved to DeFuniak in 1968.

After all of her children were gone and married, Barbara continued to live in the same house. It was in that house where all of her children gathered one night for their first “siblings night” in 2007.

Siblings was a time when Barbara and all of her children and their spouses gathered with no kids. Barbara dearly loved her grandchildren, but she wanted time alone with the adults to visit. They stayed up past midnight sharing old stories and memories, sometimes laughing so hard they had tears in their eyes.

Siblings night became a monthly family tradition where Barbara and her children and their spouses would meet at a local restaurant for a meal and pleasant conversation.



Back: Tonja, Tony, Tracy, Tommie
Front: Tammy, Barbara, Terri

Three of her children moved out of state, but they would often time their visits home to coincide with the third Saturday of the month to make sure they could go to that month's siblings night with their mom and siblings.

Chapter 16

In 1972, Roy Bailey left the church at Southwide Baptist Church and moved to Lincoln Avenue in Valparaiso, Florida, about an hour away from DeFuniak.



Roy and Myrtle Bailey

It was at the house on Lincoln Avenue that Bessie Arzella Ross took her last breath on April 9th, 1973.



Bessie Ross Bailey

At the time of her death, Bessie had seen decades of changes, including new inventions like cars, telephones, televisions, jet planes, household appliances (such as washing machines, refrigerators, electric stoves, …).

As a young girl Bessie and her family had no running water, no electricity, no automobiles, no super markets, no way to contact a neighbor or family other than walking or writing a letter.

If the family needed something they made it, grew it, or bartered for it. Very little was wasted and the Ross children grew up learning to fend for themselves.

Traveling 30 miles now took a few minutes rather than most of a day as it did when Bessy was a young girl. Now, Grocery stores had all of the fresh produce you could imagine (year round) as well as canned goods

and frozen foods that could last months.

Bessie learned to adapt to all of the changes. She often quietly marveled at the sharp contrast between life in her later years and her life as a little girl.

When Bessie took her last breath, she left behind a life well lived. In spite of not owning much and not having any money, she still left behind rich treasures.

Bessie was known for her gentle spirit, her hard work ethic, and her commitment to helping others. She was a quiet person and peace seemed to surround her.

Bessie loved nature. She loved being outside even when she was working. She worked hard her entire life.

She thought there was more value in doing something rather than saying something. At the end of Bessie's life - her life spoke, in the way she behaved, her priorities, and her love for others. Her life spoke much more than any words she ever spoke.

Bessie experienced a lot of death during her lifetime. She was the oldest of Maggie's seven children, yet she had lived longer than all of her siblings.

She lost the love of her life when she was only 45 and her sweet baby George Jr when he was only 3 years old. But even when death surrounded her, Bessie found a peace that can only come by faith.

She left a valuable treasure to those still living - a

memory of a woman of great faith that still gave God thanks amidst hard times, constant working, financial struggles, and even when overwhelmed by death. Bessie's mother used to tell Bessie to "let your life speak." At the end of her life, Bessie's life did speak.

Even though she had few possessions she was rich beyond measure. She was loved by all who knew her and was blessed to be part of a large loving family.

She kept a scrapbook where she pasted newspaper clippings, poems, and words of inspiration. It was one of her few possessions in life. Her scrapbook, Bible, a few photographs, clothes, quilts, and a handful of mementos were the only things Bessie took with her on the many, many moves the Bailey family made the last twenty-five years of her life.

On one of the pages in that scrapbook is a handwritten poem that says:

"*The kiss of the sun for pardon*

The song of the birds for mirth

We are nearer God's heart in a garden

Then anywhere else on Earth."

It was written by Dorothy Gurney in 1913 (the same year Roy was born). Bessie had gone to church most of her life, but she knew the best place to be near God was in nature.

Bessie completely surrendered her heart and her life to God. She knew God was love and light and she collected poems that helped her remember that.

God's Love (by Betty Davidson)

"I do not know why skies are blue
Or how clouds form in the air;
I only know God's Word is true,
And His love is everywhere.

I do not know how flowers grow
Or how they are tinted bright;
I only know God made them all
And He doeth all things right.

I do not know what the future holds,
To me it is as through a glass, dim;
I only know that God is good,
And it is plain to Him.

So I trust in Him,
He knows what is best;
And His Word I obey.
He will do the rest."

One of her great grandchildren always sat next to Bessie at every church service even when he was a young teenager. They sat on the third pew from the front on the far right side. Barbara's other children sat with Myrtle, but Tommie, (Barbara's oldest boy) always stayed near his Big Granny.



Bessie and Tommie

When the final song was called out at the end of the church service, Tommie always hoped it would be the page number for one particular song. He knew Bessie's favorite gospel song was "Have Thine Own Way." It was the only song she ever sang along with during the music portion of the service.

Tommie thinks of Bessie every time he hears that song. He has the lyrics memorized and can hear his great grandmother's voice singing the song in his memories.

Have Thine Own Way
By Adelaide A. Pollard (1906)

First Verse:

Have thine own way, Lord!
Have thine own way!
Thou art the potter,
I am the clay.
Mold me and make me
after thy will,
while I am waiting,
yielded and still.

Bessie once told Tommie how much she liked red letter editions of the Bible (Roy used one during his sermons). Bessie enjoyed all scripture, especially the Psalms and the New Testament, but she most loved reading the words directly from Jesus, especially when they were printed in red making it easier to see and read. She often shared some of her favorite things Jesus said with Tommie.

Bessie and Tommie were very close. Tommie not only sat beside her in church, but if he was not playing, he could usually be found near her at family gatherings. Bessie was a frequent babysitter for Tommie and his siblings. As he grew older, she still saw him frequently when she would come stay with Barbara.

Bessie would take Tommie for walks in the woods and show him different animal tracks (especially the deer tracks, racoons, and wild pigs). Now and then they would see a deer on their walks. She pointed out different trees and plants and taught him to be still for long periods of time to hear the different birds surrounding them.

There was one particular walk in 1968 that always remained one of Tommie's greatest memories. Years later he realized some of the things she told him during that walk must have come straight from her Quaker mother Maggie.

Bessie was gentle and kind, full of rich experiences and deep spiritual insights. One beautiful sunny day in 1968, she took Tommie for a walk in the woods near the pastorium across the street from Southwide Baptist church.

As they walked through the woods, Bessie pointed out the wonderful things they found in nature. She showed Tommie the colorful wildflowers growing along the path, the tiny birds flitting through the branches, and the squirrels scampering up the tree trunks.

The woods that Bessie and Tommie walked through in the Panhandle of FL were a sight to behold. The area was densely populated with towering pines, majestic magnolias, and ancient oaks that provided a canopy of shade and shelter for the animals that called the woods home.

As they walked deeper into the woods, Bessie pointed out the different animals that lived in the area. They saw a family of deer grazing peacefully among the trees, their white tails flicking as they moved through the underbrush. Squirrels chattered and scampered up the tree trunks and darted across the forest floor, gathering nuts and seeds.

Bessie also pointed out the smaller creatures that were often overlooked. They saw a variety of birds, from colorful woodpeckers to the melodic songs of robins and blue jays. Butterflies flitted among the wildflowers, their wings shimmering in the sunlight, while bees and other pollinators buzzed from flower to flower. They stopped to watch several different ant colonies doing their work gathering food.

As they walked further into the woods, they came across a small stream where they saw turtles basking on logs. Nearby, a pair of raccoons rummaged through the underbrush, their masked faces peering curiously at the two visitors.

The woods were alive with the sounds and sights of nature, each animal playing an important role in the delicate balance of the ecosystem. Bessie explained to Tommie how each animal was an integral part of the web of life, and how important it was to respect and care for the natural world around us.

Bessie told Tommie how everything in nature had a purpose, and how each creature had its own unique place in the world. She talked about the

interconnectedness of all things and how everything worked together in harmony.

As they walked further into the woods, the noise of the outside world began to fade away, and a quietness settled in around them. Bessie told Tommie that this was the perfect environment to hear the still small voice within. She explained how important it was to take time to be still and listen to the wisdom that comes from within.

Bessie and Tommie continued their walk, enjoying the beauty and tranquility of the woods. They talked about life, love, and the importance of connecting with nature. As they made their way back home, Tommie felt a sense of peace and calm, knowing that he had learned a valuable lesson from his wise great grandmother.

Years after Bessie's death Tommie gathered many of Bessie's favorite things Jesus said and put them in a computer file and made an audio recording of them. When reading the verses to himself or listening to them he often thought, no wonder Big Granny liked these verses. It is actually like listening to Jesus preach. You don't need someone else to explain things when you can hear it directly from Jesus.

Some of Bessie's Favorite Things Jesus Said:

(KJV Red Letter)

... I am come that they might have life, and that they might have more abundantly.

... To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

... he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

... If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

... I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; ...

... seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; ...

... behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

He that is of God heareth God's words.

Love your enemies, ... do good to them that hate you...

... a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

... as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them ...

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

If ye love me, keep my commandments

This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

... I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

Bessie was a committed follower of Jesus. She had a hard life as a child helping her parents work for the things they needed. Being a hard worker served her well the rest of her life. She never backed away from the work that needed to be done.

When she moved in with her son and his family in 1947, she had few possessions. She knew real treasure is not to be found in things, but in words and ideas, especially the ideas that come from Jesus.

The last twenty years of her life were quiet and reflective as she witnessed huge changes in the world. She sometimes wondered if the new ways of doing things were better than the way she remembered from her world as a child.

She watched her great grandchildren grow and was glad they had things like indoor plumbing, electricity, cars, and super markets, but she hoped they would always remember to spend time outside and in the woods. She knew it was there that the seeds of the Inner Light within them could take root and grow. It was there that they could best hear the Still Small Voice within, calling them to a life of love and peace.

Bessie's mother, Maggie, told Bessie to "let your life speak." When she took her last breath, Bessie's life did just that - it spoke of quiet, honest, simple living and putting your faith in Jesus.

When Bessie was 12 she asked her mom what it meant to walk in the Light. Here was her mother's response:

Maggie smiled and took Bessie's hand. "Walking in the Light means living a life of goodness, kindness, and truth. It means being guided by the inner voice of the Spirit, and following that voice and your conscience to do what is right."

Bessie nodded, taking in her mother's words. "And why is living in peace so important?"

"Living in peace means living without the burden of hatred, anger, and resentment," Maggie explained. "It means being able to forgive those who wrong us, and to seek reconciliation with those we have hurt. Living in peace can bring us great joy and freedom, and it can make us better people."

Bessie learned to walk in the Light at a young age. There were times when she faltered and times when her faith slipped away, but when looking at the life of Bessie Ross it is evident her life did speak and her life was one that truly walked in the Light.

Her faith wavered when her three year old son died. It was her mother's love, patience, and support that helped Bessie regain her faith and become reconciled her with her Creator. When Bessie was 45 and lost her husband, it was her strong faith that sustained her and helped her try and comfort Roy, her 20 year old son, despite feeling like she had lost the only man she truly loved.

Perhaps her faith was put to its greatest test when she moved in with her son and his family. She had to admit she could not control what other people did and could only control her own choices and what she allowed to bother her.

From that day until her death Bessie wanted only to walk in the Light and be surrendered to whatever God and life had in store for her. And she did just that.

She never had great material possessions. She lost many of the people she loved, some when they were much younger than her. Yet, she was rich beyond measure. Bessie had a treasure that was not made from human hands.

She had the words of Jesus that she carried in her heart, allowing her to silently and faithfully walk in the Light and have the light of life. She learned to sit in silence and listen to the still small voice even amid the noise and turmoil of daily life.

End of Section 1

Section II

Terri

Chapter 1

“But Nanna, you don’t understand”, Gabby’s voice squeaked a little from her elevated emotions.

“Everything costs much more than it used to, but my paychecks are not going up enough to keep up. I don’t know how I can pay both my car payment and my cell phone payment this month”, she told her grandmother.

Gabby was not telling her grandmother about her finances, expecting money, (even though she knew if she asked her grandma would find a way to help her). Gabby just wanted someone else to know what a struggle it was to just make ends meet.

Gabrielle Brianna Mize turned twenty-two a week earlier. She worked full time as a child care worker and took college classes part time. She had hoped to get extra birthday money or earn money by working overtime at her job to help with this month’s bills, but neither happened.

“Sweetie, I know it seems like things are hard right now,” Terri responded. “Especially at your age when you are just getting started. If something doesn’t go the way you planned, you are not old enough to have a safety net."

Terri waited for a few moments and took a sip of her hot tea. Her first reaction was to tell Gabby about some of her own struggles when she was twenty-two. At least Gabby did not have any children like Terri did at that age. Terri thought better of it. She did not want Gabby to roll her eyes and tune her out. Lord knows Gabby has heard plenty of stories about me trying to raise two daughters alone, Terri thought to herself.

Terri secretly whispered a prayer for guidance on the best thing she could tell her oldest granddaughter.

The cup that held her tea was small, tan, and ceramic. It had been her grandfather's for many, many years. Each time Terri drank from it she could see her grandparents sitting at the kitchen table drinking from this same cup. Suddenly Terri knew just what she could say that might help Gabby.

Terri's grandfather, Roy Bailey was the leader of their clan. He and his wife Myrtle had seven children and thirty-three grandchildren. Every member of the family had deep respect and admiration for Roy Bailey.

While sipping from his old coffee cup, it dawned on Terri that Roy and Myrtle were married in 1935 during the great depression. Maybe instead of telling Gabby about her own struggles raising Gabby's mom as a single parent, maybe it might be better to share some of her grandfather's past.

Terri did a fast calculation in her head. Her grandfather was born in 1913. That means when he was twenty-two (Gabby's current age) it would have been 1935.

"You know Gab", Terri began, "even though prices are going nuts right now, there have been times in the past when it was even worse than today."

"In fact", Terri continued, "my grandfather lived in the middle of the Great Depression when he was your age."

Terri searched Gabby's eyes for signs to see how curious she might be. It was heard to look at Gabby's eyes and not see Terri's daughter Michelle's eyes.

There were many photos of Gabby where she looked almost identical to her mother (Michelle) when she was the same age as Gabby.

There were some people, including Terri's mother, Barbara who often said Gabby looked both like Michelle and Terri when they were Gabby's age.

Gabby rolled her eyes a little and said, "Nanny, I know things were hard in the great depression, but your grandpa did not have to pay a cell phone bill and probably rode a horse as often as he drove a car. And I would almost bet gas was not nearly as expensive then as it is today."

Terri thought Gabby made some good points. "That's true Gabby", she began. I'm not saying who had it harder. But I am saying, you are not alone in struggling

to pay your bills. My grandpa was just getting married when he was your age and the lady he married already had two small children. If I remember right, unemployment was like 25% and in the rural areas there were no jobs at all to be found."

"Imagine getting married and becoming an instant father with two young step children", Terri said.

Gabby interrupted her by saying "How could he have step kids? Did her first husband die?"

Terri answered, "No, she divorced her first husband."

Gabby said, "Wow, I thought divorces were only something people started doing in the 1960's when women's lib started getting popular."

"You are right. Back in the 1930's it was very rare to get divorced. I really do not know the whole story there. Your Uncle Tommie may know a little more. He and my mom did a lot of genealogy research."

"If you are really interested I could get him to come over sometime and tell us more."

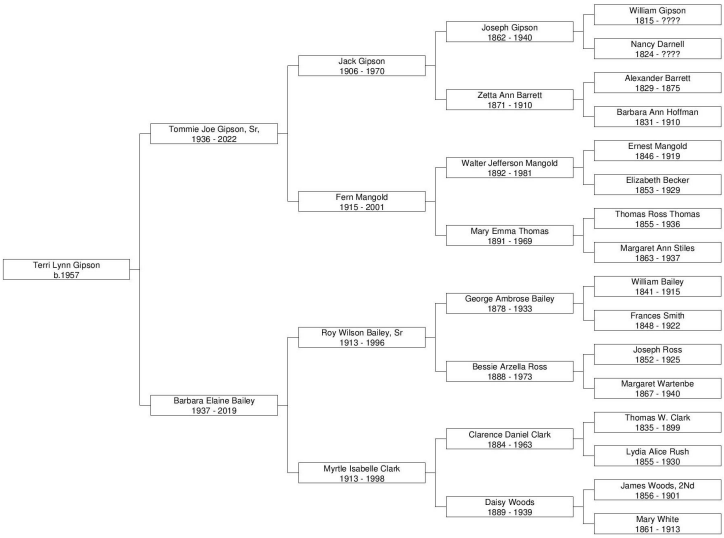
"I've always liked history", Gabby said. Maybe learning a little more about my ancestors will be a good way to help take my mind off of bills that I can't pay."

Gabby was good at saving money and sticking to her budget. But right now the budget did not predict gas prices and food prices would be so high. She knew the

Great Depression was a hard time and thought she might learn some good financial lessons by learning more about her great grandfather, Roy Bailey.

“I would like that. Maybe he can help me figure out who is who with all of the great grandparents you talk about.”

Terri used that as a cue to quickly go to her bedroom to get the family tree chart and brought it back for Gabby to see.



“Of course this is only a chart of my ancestors and does not show you or your mom on here, but I think you know that part of your family line”, Terri said flashing a grandma smile while laying the family tree chart on the table.

Terri’s brother Tommie and their mom were able to find all sixteen of Terri’s Great Great grandparents. They

used the internet and census records to fill in the gaps that Barbara had on her own great grandparents.

Gabby looked at the chart and immediately found Roy Bailey. She was impressed to see not only his parents on the chart, but also his grandparents.

Gabby took her cell phone out and asked “Is it okay if I take a picture of this?” Terri nodded her head yes as Gabby was already pointing the camera over the paper. It never dawned on Terri to take a photo of her family tree. She kept thinking she needed to take the chart to a copy machine someplace and make copies for her kids and grandkids. But why not just send them all a photo on their phones? Terri smiled at how different life was for Gabby compared to her own life at twenty-two.

Chapter 2

Terri called her brother Tommie and asked if he would share a little more about their grandfather with Gabby. Tommie quickly agreed. He would be happy to do that. After his mother died, Tommie continued to work on their genealogy and kept updating the family tree on a website he and his mother had created.

They decided to meet at Michelle's house. Michelle and her husband Michael had something like a little farm. They raised chickens, goats, and pigs. They had a huge garden and powered much of their house with solar panels. The large pond next to the house was a good fishing spot which meant Michelle seldom had to make trips to town to go to the store.

Michelle was excited to show her uncle Tommie their small farm and their way of life. She knew her mother had always been supportive of their decision to live a more sustainable lifestyle, but Michelle did not know how much Terri shared with her brother. Michelle knew her Uncle Tommie loved simple living and she was eager to show him exactly what they had accomplished.

As Terri, Tommie, and Michelle walked around the small farm, Michelle pointed out the different animals and crops they were raising. Even though Gabby no longer lived with her mother, she knew the property well and waited for them at the dining room table.

Michelle proudly showed them the vegetable garden. We grow most of our food here, and we even have a pear tree and a couple of pecan trees over there. Eventually we want to have figs, blueberries, chestnuts, and maybe some orange trees.

Terri said, “Wow, it looks great. You guys have really done a lot of work here since the last time uncle Tommie was here.”

Michelle replied, “Thanks, Mom.” Turning to her uncle she said, “We want to live off the land as much as possible, and the garden and animals help us do that.”

Michelle showed them the goats. “We milk them and I am learning to make cheese and maybe someday yogurt.”

Tommie said, “That's amazing, Michelle. Our great grandmother made cheese most of her life until the 1940’s. I'm so proud of you for doing this and she would be too. ”

“Thanks, Uncle Tommie. It's not always easy, but we believe we will be better off than most people if grocery prices and electricity keep going up.” Michelle said as she pointed to the solar panels mounted on racks near the garden.

“We installed these a few years ago. They power our whole house, so we don't have to rely on the grid as much. We also have a generator as a backup just in

case, but most of the time we are running on solar during the day and batteries at night."

Tommie was very impressed and proud of his niece.

Michelle continued "We try to be as self-sufficient as possible. It's not just good for the environment, but it's also good for our wallets," she said smiling.

Terri told her brother, "Michelle makes a lot of her own things, like soap, lotion, and cleaning stuff"

Michelle added, "We try to avoid using store-bought products as much as possible."

As they walked into the house, Tommie said, "That's impressive Michelle. You really have created a self-sustaining lifestyle here."

"Thanks, uncle Tommie. It's not perfect, but we're trying our best," Michelle responded, flashing her beautiful smile.

As they went inside, Terri couldn't help but feel proud of her daughter and the life she had built for herself and her family. She knew it wasn't easy, but she admired Michelle's commitment to living a simple, sustainable, and self-sufficient lifestyle.

They were meeting at Michelle's house because she too wanted to learn more about her great grandfather.

They each took a seat at the dining room table where Gabby was already sitting. Gabby was looking forward to hearing more about her ancestors, but was a little nervous.

Once all four were seated at the large dining room table, Terri started the conversation. “Gabby was at my house and we started talking about my Grandpa and how he and Granny were married in 1935 in the middle of the Great Depression. I gave her a copy of my family tree and she wanted to know more information, so I called you,” she said looking at her younger brother sitting next to her.

Gabby kept quiet, feeling a little out of place sitting at the table with her mom, her grandmother, and Terri’s brother, Tommie. She was used to being around family, but it was odd to only have four people here instead of a couple of dozen (which was the normal size of many family gatherings. Being the only young person at the table was another reason to keep silent.

“I have nothing but good memories of my great grandpa,” Michelle said looking at her daughter Gabby. Michelle was almost sixteen years old when her great grandfather, Roy Bailey died at the age of 83. “But I honestly do not know much about what his life was like when he married Grandma,” she said looking at her uncle.

Tommie began by saying, “if you really want to know more about Roy Bailey during the depression, it might be best to start at the beginning of his life, because by

the time he and grandma were married in 1935 a lot had happened to make it easier for them to survive when times were hard."

"Roy Bailey was born in Hopedale, IL on May 7th, 1913. Hopedale was a small, rural town in Tazewell county, near the middle of the state."

"His mother was Bessie Ross and his father was George Bailey."

Terri put her ancestor chart out in the middle of the table for Michelle and Gabby to see.

"Even though Roy was not an only child, he felt like he was because most of his life it was just him and his parents on the small dairy farm where they lived outside of town."

Tommie continued, "George Bailey's first wife died at a young age leaving George to raise their three young children."

"Four years after losing his first wife, George married a young eighteen year old girl named Bessie Ross on February 20th, 1907. Here is a picture of George and Bessie taken about the time they were married."

Tommie reached into a file from the box of genealogy documents he brought with him. He laid the photo on the table.

Terri smiled as she took the photo and looked at it. “Gabby, I can remember this lady. She used to come stay with us when we were kids and helped my mom”, Terri said. “She was my great grandmother and I remember her well. We called her Big Granny because she lived with my grandma and grandpa and she was taller than Granny. So we called her Big Granny and called our grandma Little Granny."

Tommie smiled at hearing the nicknames they once used often as children. Since working on genealogy, he often thought of his ancestors by their names, but there was a time when the only way he knew or thought of them was by the nicknames they used.

“I was going to save this for later, but since we are on the subject of Big Granny I will go ahead and share this now,” Tommie said as he reached into his box and placed a small book on the table."

“I’ve been working on writing this book about the life of Bessie Ross for a couple of years. I wanted to have it finished this month since April 2023 is the 50th anniversary of Bessie Ross’ death.” He could see the surprised look on his sister's face and smiled as he continued, “Big Granny and I always had a special bond. I sat next to her every time we went to church. My siblings would sit in different places, often next to Little Granny, but not me. I only sat next to Big Granny."

Terri still had a surprised look on her face as she picked up the book. “I had no clue you were working on a book like this! When do I get my copy?” she quickly asked.

“That one is for you”, Tommie said with a proud smile on his face. “I printed a copy for each of my siblings and had planned to mail them this month, but since you told me Gabby was interested, I decided now would be a good time to share my new book. I have a copy for Gabby, but Michelle will have to borrow one of the copies or buy her own on Amazon. There is no way I could afford to give copies to all of my nieces and nephews." Tommie had over two dozen nieces and nephews and if he added their children to the list it would be tripled that number. Michelle smiled as she looked at her uncle. She understood his logic.

Tommie returned the smile from Michelle. He knew she would be okay borrowing a copy. She had such a kind and generous heart. As a minimalist he loved knowing how self-sufficient Michelle and Michael had become. He could also never forget what a huge part Michelle played in his mother’s life, especially the last years before his mom died.

Tommie continued, “Anyway to learn more about the Great Depression, this book has some of what I will share today. In the back of the book is a section on the genealogy information we currently have. While that section has all of the facts we currently know, the section before it is based on those facts, but also includes some fiction that I made up," Tommie said.

“In fact I made up a lot of it using my imagination, but I also used some of the things Big Granny told me and some of mom’s stories.”

“I wanted to tell the story of Bessie Ross, including how she lived at a time with no electricity, no running water, no indoor toilets, no cars, phones, radios, super markets, or even paved roads. And that was before she had to survive the Great Depression after losing her husband of 26 years"

Tommie went on, “I used my imagination, but I also borrowed some of the memories from mom and our aunts and uncles. I talked to Uncle Jack, Uncle George, and Aunt Dean about it. I wanted to write not only what her life was like, but how she must have lived at different times in her life, including during the depression."

“Some of what I am about to share with you is in the book. I wrote the book so Gabby’s generation and Michelle’s for that matter could learn a little more about our ancestors”, Tommie said.

Terri was skimming through the book and said, “Oh wow, you even have some pictures in here, including this one." She reached for the picture of George and Bessie on the table. “This is so cool”, she said.

Tommie smiled. He was a little nervous about sharing his book of fiction. He was not sure how other family members would react once they read Bessie’s story knowing that some of it was made up.

He tried to be as accurate as possible with the facts and how Bessie must have lived in certain times of her life, but there were definitely parts that he made up, mainly

to make her story more interesting to the younger generation. He hoped his own children and grandchildren would be more likely to read the book if it was more like a story.

He included the facts about when people were born, married, and died, but he thought just a book with facts might bore the younger generation. Gabby was the same generation as his grandchildren, so maybe she would read it and let him know if his project would be a success.

Tommie discussed writing the book with his mother, Barbara before she died. She loved the idea, which encouraged Tommie to continue with the project. In fact, his mom read the first fifty pages and told Tommie how much she enjoyed it just before she died in 2019.

“I hope you think it is still cool after you read it”, Tommie said to Terri, Michelle, and Gabby. “Mom actually liked the idea, so I kept working on it. Since I have told you about the book, I will not repeat what is in the book other than to talk about how they all lived during the Great Depression.”

“The Roaring Twenties came to a screeching halt when the stock market crashed in October of 1929. By 1930, things were already starting to look bad. There were hardly any jobs, especially in rural America."

“We can look at the 1930 census records for Illinois and see that Bessie, George, and Roy were living together in a rented house. George is listed as a farmer. Roy is

sixteen and still in school, but he would soon drop out of school to work on the farm, near the edge of town in Delavan, IL."

Tommie opened the folder and put a copy of the census records on the table. "We have census records for George and Bessie from 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, 1940, and 1950. From the 1930 census we know George and Bessie could read and write. At some point it even shows they owned a radio."

"Unfortunately just three years later things would take a sharp turn for the worst. The Great Depression was in full swing and then George Bailey died in 1933. According to his obituary he had been ill for a couple of years."

"Roy quit school in the tenth grade. He worked on the farm and drove a milkwagon to help make enough money to help support the family. At some point, he enlisted in the Army for extra money. We have a few photos of him at one of the Army training camps, including one picture of him boxing with some of the other men."

"Roy was much taller than his dad and loved all kinds of sports, especially boxing and baseball. It was said if "Stretch Bailey" was playing first base, no balls were getting past him. From all accounts, Roy was something of a 'hell raiser' in his early years."

They continued talking for another hour about how much they struggled during the depression before Gabby announced she had to leave soon to go to work.

Gabby took her copy of her great uncle's book and hugged each of them before leaving to get in her car and drive away.

After she left, Tommie asked Terri, "Does Gabby have a new tattoo?" Terri nodded yes. Tommie said, "I guess that fits in well with her blue hair and nose ring." he said smiling, thinking he would have some fun with Terri.

His sister was quick to remind him, "she is just doing the same thing you used to do." Terri had a big smile on her face. She knew how much her brother liked to rib her, but she was tough and could not only take it, but she could dish it right back to him.

"What are you talking about sis?" Tommie quickly responded. "I never had a tattoo."

"Nope, but there might be a picture or two of you with that huge afro and that long beard that Grandma hated."

"I was just trying to prove to others that you could not judge someone based on their appearance," Tommie said. "The older generation was quick to judge us simply if we had long hair back in the 70's and I wanted to show them you can't judge a book by its cover."

“Exactly!” said Terri. “That is the exact same thing Gabby is doing!” Terri knew she had him. “Like I said. She is just doing the same thing you used to do.”

Terri and Michelle laughed as Tommie considered his sister’s words before he too joined them in laughter.

“Okay, I will leave with that before I get myself into more trouble,” he said. “I hope you enjoy the book and I hope this gave Gabby some idea about what life was like back in the depression.”

Michelle said, “I think it will help her. It sure helped me. Gabby is struggling to pay her bills right now, but at least she will know she is not alone. Her ancestors struggled and still made a good life for themselves.”

Chapter 3

Terri was Barbara's oldest daughter. They shared a special bond as mother and daughter. Barbara took more baby photographs of Terri (some with Terri's grandparents and others with her parents) than her other five children. Perhaps that was because Terri was her first baby or it could be because buying and processing film when her other children were babies became very expensive.

Barbara did not take as many photos of her other children, but she was still devoted to each and every one of them. She kept a scrapbook for all of her children, manually logging their first tooth, their first step, their weight, and page after page of special events in their lives such as birthdays and holidays. She pasted photographs in the books, locks of hair, class pictures, and report cards.

Years later after getting a computer, Barbara scanned each page of all six of the baby books and put them on flash drives and handed them out to her children as a Christmas present.

Each of Barbara's children knew they were deeply loved. When they became adults Barbara found ways to keep them close through family gatherings and always remembering birthdays and doing special things at Christmas.

When Barbara turned 70 she created what she called a monthly siblings night. She wanted to have dinner at a restaurant with any of her children that were in town on the third Saturday of every month. Her children and spouses were invited but no grandchildren or great grandchildren. She wanted a time where the adults could visit with no interuptions.

Her children loved the idea. Three of them lived in DeFuniak (the same town as Barbara) and when any of the other three siblings were in town, they knew they were expected to be at siblings night.

Siblings night became a standing tradition that was continued even after Barbara's death. It was a wonderful way to visit and reminisce about old times while catching up on each of their different clans.

A month after Tommie shared his book, Terri and Michelle were visiting and began talking about their ancestors. Michelle never knew her great, great grandmother Bessie, but she had heard a few things about her. Michelle was extremely close to her grandmother Barbara who often talked about her own parents and her grandmother Bessie.

Michelle enjoyed the book about Bessie and asked Terri if they really did have Quaker ancestors. Terri answered, "No, I don't think we did unless you go way back. I think Uncle Tommie just wrote that into the book because he is a Quaker." She chuckled.

“But there is no doubt that my mom, her dad, and her grandmother Bessie were all strong and devout Christians.”

The topic shifted to Barbara, Terri said, “You know, Mom always told me how grateful she was to have you and your kids to help her so much. I’m glad you not only did a lot of things like grocery shopping and cooking and cleaning for her, but that you were also willing to listen to her stories.”

Terri was a no nonsense kind of person. Often in her life she had to be independent and self reliant. She learned as a young adult that completely trusting other people (other than her mother) would always be a let down. At some point, even the best people fail you sometimes and the average person often fails you, or at least they do not meet your expectations..

She had failed a few times herself. She was grateful for her mothers love, forgiveness, and support. Her mother was a lighthouse throughout Terri’s life, always there even in the darkest storms.

During her teenage years, Terri watched Barbara struggle financially. Barbara had to work even when Terri was young. Women made little money and sometimes the only income for their family was the single paycheck from Barbara. Terri was determined to have enough money to pay her bills and give her children more things than she had had when younger.

Terri became a strong woman and a good mother. For a portion of her life she was a single parent raising two girls and working full time. Those were some hard days for her, but she learned a lot from the “school of hard knocks”.

When she and Chester were married in 1994 she became the mother of five daughters. Chester was a tugboat captain and was gone for weeks at time leaving Terri to manage life at home.

She managed it well. Her daughters grew up to become an even bigger part of her life along with her many grandchildren. Terri was a rock for her family, always there and ready to help each of them.

Michelle inherited some of both Terri and Barbara’s traits. There was no denying her pretty face came from her mother. Both Terri and Michelle had beautiful blonde hair, blue eyes, and perfectly proportioned faces. They were both very attractive. They could have easily entered the fashion world when they were teenagers as cover girls for makeup magazines. The same was true for Michelle’s daughter Gabby, who looked like both Terri and Michelle as a teenager.

Michelle was also a lot like her mother in her devotion to her family and doing whatever needed to be done. There was nothing within reason and her ability that Terri or Michelle would not do for their children and grandchildren.

Michelle inherited her grandmother Barbara's smile and sunny disposition. When Michelle smiled (which was often), her entire face radiated happiness. Her grandmother wore a constant smile reflecting her joy in life. That same smile could be found on Michelle's face.

Terri, Michelle, and Gabby all played a role in caring for Barbara, over the years and doing things for her, especially the last few years of her life. Terri told Michelle, "Mom sure loved talking about her childhood. I'm glad you were always willing to listen to her. She enjoyed talking about what life was like when she was growing up in the 40s and 50s. She used to tell me stories about the dances she went to and the music she listened to."

On Barbara's 80th birthday Terri and her siblings rented a community center and decorated it with a 50's sock hop theme. They even hired a DJ to play Elvis music (Barbara's favorite). All of Barbara's children, most of her grandchildren, her siblings, and friends were there. It was a surprise to Barabara and she enjoyed every moment. She even got out on the dance floor and danced with her oldest son.

"Yeah, it's always fun to hear about the old days." Michelle responded, "Of course, I was happy to help her anyway I could. Gabby pitched in too, especially after Gabby started driving and could run errands for her."

"And we both know Colin became her adopted son." Michelle laughed thinking of how hard it was to get Colin to return home after staying with Barbara sometimes. "I

remember going over there and spending a whole day just organizing her kitchen. But it was worth it to see how happy it made her. But you know mom, you did just as much for grandma, if not more"

"It was important to me to help take care of Mom when she got older." Terri said. "She did so much for me when I was growing up, and I wanted to repay her in any way I could. It wasn't just listening to the stories and running errands for her. I know Mom really appreciated the time we spent with her. She always beamed when she and I had a movie night."

Terri was thankful for all of her children. Each of them pitched in and helped Barbara as her health declined. But Michelle went above and beyond when it came to helping her grandmother.

Terri was the matriarch of her family. She provided each of her kids and grandchildren with a safety net when they fell. Like her mother, Terri was devoted to her family and she was proud of them. Terri knew she could count on her daughters and they would be there for her someday when she grew older.

Terri loved her family dearly. She loved her children and grandchildren and she also loved each of her siblings and nieces and nephews. Family gatherings were big events and often crowded, but Terri always enjoyed them.

There was no doubt that a big reason for Terri's love for family came from both her mother and her grandfather.

Roy Bailey was the leader of the clan until the day he died in 1996. As the father of seven children and thirty-three grandchildren, every member of the family, including his great grandchildren had a deep and lasting respect for him.

Barbara also had a large family. Her devotion to her family was evident to all who knew her. Nobody in Barbara's family could ever say they were not loved.

Terri and Michelle sat in silence for a moment, each lost in their own thoughts about Barbara, their family, and the importance of caring for one another. They knew that no matter what challenges lay ahead, they would face them together, just as they had always done with the same love and support that had brought them this far.

Chapter 4

Tommie came in the door and hugged both of his sisters and slapped his brother Tony on his shoulder before sitting down at the dining room table at Terri's house.

“Sorry I am a little late,” he said looking at Tony, knowing his younger brother probably had a lot to do today.

Terri offered Tommie several different flavored teas to select from, before she poured him a cup of hot tea from the tea kettle on the stove.

"I found some information I don't think any of you are going to believe", said Tommie after they finished talking about the latest family news while drinking hot tea and coffee and munching on mixed nuts that Terri put in a bowl on the center of the table.

"Too bad I did not have this information before I wrote my book on Big Granny. I would have had to have changed part of the story line in the book.”

A few months earlier Tommie gave each of his siblings a copy of a small book he had written about their great grandmother Bessie Ross.

"What are you talking about brother", asked Terri ready to hear whatever news her brother had to share.

"I was doing research to update our family tree genealogy page and I was on the Illinois marriage

license archive looking for the marriage record for our Dad's mom and dad.

"While I was there I decided to punch in Roy Bailey's name just for kicks. But when I did the search, nothing came up.

"That's odd, I thought. The archive should have all marriage record up through and including 1935 and I knew Grandma and Granddad were married in 1935."

Terri, Tony, and Tammy listened intently, not sure where this conversation might be going.

"I decided to go through some of mom's old documents to see if I could actually find a copy of the marriage license since it was not in the Illinois archives", Tommie continued. "While digging around Mom's old genealogy records, I came across a scanned image of a page from Granddad's old Bible. Inside his Bible he listed his marriage as 10/10/1936, not 10/10/1935!"

"My first reaction was Granddad just made a mistake, which I thought was kind of odd since he was pretty good with numbers."

"I double checked the dates on our family tree website that mom keyed. It confirmed they were married in 1935. I also went through the pictures from their fiftieth wedding anniversary. The dates on the photos show they were from 1985.

"I also found a letter of congratulations on their fiftieth wedding anniversary from a congressman that was dated in 1985. So, I decided Granddad just made a mistake."

Tommie paused for just a moment letting his siblings absorb the information.

"But two days later, while still looking through mom's papers I found this", he said as he laid a single piece of paper on the table.

It was an official copy of the marriage license between Roy Bailey and Myrtle Clark. It listed the marriage date as 10/10/1936, not 10/10/1935.

"Wow", said Tammy as she finished looking at it before handing it to Terri. "How could they have gotten the year wrong?" she asked incredulously.

Tony said, "That is really weird. Grandpa was too good with numbers to make a mistake like that."

Terri chimed in, "It definitely says they were married in 1936. That really is odd. I remember going to their 50th wedding anniversary at the Civic Center in 1985."

"I remember that too because Bruce and I were married two months later that same year", Tammy added.

"How could they have made such a big mistake?" Terri asked.

"Well, I don't think it was a mistake", Tommie answered.

"It had to be", said Tammy. "Are you saying they changed the year they were married on purpose?" she asked.

Tommie noticed his younger brother smiling. He expected Tony would enjoy hearing this, but felt like his sisters might be a little taken back.

Tommie said, "I know this is something of a shock to all of you. I've had a few days to absorb it and think about it," Tommie took a moment to glance around the table at each of their faces. "Here is my theory as to why I think they celebrated in 1985 and told people they were married in 1935."

"Do the math. Mom was born in May of 1937. If Grandma and Granddad were married in October of 1936 then that means Grandma was two months pregnant with mom when she got married."

"When Granddad became a preacher, I think they decided to keep that a secret and began telling everyone they were married in 1935", Tommie paused to let them think about what he just said.

Tony's face was beaming with a huge smile. "Of course that is what happened," he said. "Little Granny would have had to keep that a secret." He laughed. Tony was more like his mom than any of his siblings when he laughed (which was often just like his mom). He chuckled thinking how often his grandmother would tell

Roy to put away the playing cards if a car pulled up the drive. She did not want any of the church members to know their preacher liked playing cards.

After their mother's death, Tammy stayed in her house for months going through things and organizing stuff she knew her mom wanted others to have. She knew what Barbara wanted others to have because she left her home near Seattle to come and live with her mother and help take care of her the last year of Barara's life.

Barbara asked Tammy to make sure different ones (not just her kids, but her grandchildren and great grandchildren as well) were given certain things after Barbara's death.

Tammy was a lot like her mother. Both had a gentle spirit, always trying to help others and give encouragement.

Tammy's eyebrows suddenly raised. Tony, Terri, and Tommie noticed the change in her expression and remained silent, waiting for her to explain.

"I remember two times when mom started to tell me a secret about grandma and then stopped", Tammy shared. Her face had a look that seemed to say, so that's why.

She continued, "Of course I pushed mom for more details, especially after the second time she brought it up.

Both times it seems like she was about to share and then thought better of it. One of those times she actually said, 'well it's grandma's secret to tell, so I better not' and then she would not say another word about it. Just so you know it was after Grandma had passed in 1998 so there was no way I could ask her."

The other siblings thought about what she said. Tommie agreed with Tammy, thinking that concealing the year they were married, might very well be the secret, but Terri was more skeptical.

"If that was the secret then mom had to know they were really married in 1936, yet it was mom who organized their 50th wedding anniversary. I have a hard time believing mom would make such a big fuss over the 50th wedding anniversary in 1985 if it was only their 49th anniversary. We all know mom would do all she could to be truthful", said Terri.

Tommie chimed in, "You have a point there sis. I have a hard time believing mom intentionally put inaccurate data on our genealogy website. She was committed to having the most accurate data we could get. I tend to think mom did not know they were married in 1936, but I have to admit it sure seems like that could be the secret she almost shared."

Tony agreed. He could easily see his grandmother making their mom promise not to tell anyone her secret.

Tammy said, "I agree mom would not intentionally lie or support a lie unless, ..." she paused for a few moments

to make her point. " ... unless Grandma swore mom to secrecy. Mom would not lie on purpose, but mom would also not tell a confidential secret. Maybe mom found out about it and confronted grandma and grandma swore her to secrecy."

Tony said, “I was just thinking that exact same thing. Mom could and would keep a secret like that, especially if she had promised Little Granny”.

Terri and Tommie both nodded their heads indicating that could very well be a real possibility.

“It may even have happened after Grandpa died.” Tony said as he looked at the marriage record again. “It says here this record was requested and certified on 07/30/1996 which is after Grandpa died. That would mean, mom only found out about it then.”

Tommie took the paper from his brother’s hands. “You are absolutely right brother,” he said as Tony showed him the date. That makes a lot more sense. When mom organized the wedding anniversary in 1935 she really believed it was the 50th. And when she put the dates in the family tree she still thought that. Once she got the marriage record after Granddad died, Little Granny must have sworn her to secrecy then which would keep mom from telling Tammy the secret.”

Tony was the third oldest, behind Terri and Tommie. He joined the Army after highschool, following in his grandfather Roy’s footsteps. He later became a truck driver and one of the best mechanics in the area. He

had a soft side in spite of the gruff persona he often portrayed. Sometimes he sounded grumpy, but he had a big heart. Not only did he take after his mother in frequent laughter, he was also a follower of Jesus (like his mother) and eventually wrote a devotional book sharing the joys of trusting God each day. Barbara was very proud of Tony when he became the first published author in the family.

The siblings continued their conversation, talking about the wonderful shared memories they had of their mother before finally breaking up and going their different directions.

Terri thought about the two siblings who were not there, their sisters Tonja and Tracy. As Tommie walked out the door she asked him, “Are you going to tell Tonja and Tracy about this?”

Tommie answered, “No, I don’t like talking on the phone so the next time I see them I will tell them, but who knows when that might be. Feel free, if you want to update them.”

Terri immediately made up her mind to tell them so they would not feel left out if they happened to hear it from some other way.

Tonja lived in Atlanta and Tracy lived in Decator, AL. Both of them visited their mom as often as they could when she was living and attended special family gatherings. Both of them were very successful even though they lived far from their hometown and their

extended family. Even though they lived far away (as did Tammy), all three of them stayed in daily contact with their mother when she was living.

Although they lived in other states, Terri made it a point to stay in touch with all three of them after their mom died. Barbara instilled a love in family in all of her children and Terri took on the role of making certain each of the siblings knew they were still part of the wonderful family Barbara created.

Their mother raised all six of her children with love and instilled in each of them a love for family, treating them with respect and fairness. Even though Barbara was gone the siblings remained in close contact in spite of three of them living in different states.

Chapter 5

“I’m glad you stopped by Gabby. The last time you and I had alone time together was just after your 22nd birthday. Remember when you told me you were having a hard time because everything is costing more?” Terri said to her granddaughter.

“Because of your curiosity, I found out my brother was honoring the 50th anniversary of the death of our great grandmother Bessie Ross in April. I had no idea he was doing that.”

“I know things are still hard for you, but do you still feel like others cannot understand what you are going through?” asked Terri.

Gabby gave her grandmother her famous roll of her eyes. She knew her grandmother was a wise woman and had been through a lot. She also knew how much Terri helped her over the years. But the world had already changed so much just in Gabby’s life. It made Gabby wonder if older people could really appreciate just how fast things were changing.

“Nanna, I did learn that many of my ancestors struggled at different times in their lives, including you.” Gabby waited a moment before continuing, “And I did learn some things reading the book about Bessie Ross. I definitely appreciate all of the sacrifices they made. But my world is just so different from their world or even your world when you were my age.”

“You know, you are right. When I was your age, Gabby, things were very different. We didn't have all of the technology that you guys have today,” said Terri as she sat across from her granddaughter at the dining room table. “I had to use a typewriter to write papers for school. That seems so old-fashioned now doesn’t it?” Terri asked.

“A typewriter? What's that?” Gabby asked.

Terri laughed, “It's like a keyboard, but it's a machine that types letters onto paper. You had to use white-out if you made a mistake.”

“Wow, that sounds like it would take forever to do a paper.”

Gabby was enjoying their conversation. Just yesterday she had talked to her mother about their ancestors and both of them talked about their deep love for Terri and Barbara. When you love someone, it is good to learn more about their lives, Gabby thought.

Gabby said, “What about TV shows? Did you have any favorites?”

“When your mom was growing up, she watched shows like Full House and Saved by the Bell.” Terri answered. “I loved watching shows like The Brady Bunch and The Partridge Family. My brothers and I used to argue over watching Batman or Gilligan's Island - they both aired at the same time.”

“I've heard of some of those shows, but I've never watched any of them. What about when I was born in 2001?” Gabby asked.

“Well, when you were born in 2001, the world was still recovering from the September 11 attacks. Technology was advancing faster than you could keep up with it. You were probably too young to remember, but we didn't have smartphones back then. But we did have digital cameras. Although they were very low resolution. And that year iPods came out that could play music, but that was all they did. If I wanted to stay in touch with someone out of town, I had to write letters and then wait weeks for a response.”

Gabby said, “Wow, that's crazy! I can't imagine having to wait that long to talk to my friends.”

“When your mom was a teenager in the 90s, we had cell phones, but they were huge and expensive. I remember my first flip phone. I was so excited to get it. And we used to have pagers too. If someone needed to get in touch with you, they would page you and you had to find a phone to call them back.”

“That's so weird to think about. I can't imagine not having a phone with me all the time,” Gabby said.

“Yes, it was a different time. But we still had a lot of fun,” said Terri. “We had good music like The Beatles and The Rolling Stones. I loved listening to the radio. I would sing along with my favorite songs, especially the

Monkeys, David Cassidy, and most of the hit songs that had a good beat, in spite of the older people calling the music evil and from the devil."

"In the 1980s, we saw the rise of digital music and the birth of MTV. Music videos became a major part of popular culture. We also saw the development of new technologies like the CD and the Walkman, which made it easier for people to listen to music everywhere."

"It was much better than cassette tapes or eight tracks," Terri said. Gabby rolled her eyes not having a clue what an eight track was.

"You've seen a lot of changes in your life." Gabby told her grandmother.

Terri agreed and said, "In some ways things are much better. We have better medicines, people live longer, and with the internet, people can learn any topic they want."

"It has never been easier to stay in touch with friends and family, but I have to confess, it does seem harder than ever to get to the truth sometimes. I love our technology, but a part of me is glad I grew up before the internet and smartphones and social media."

The two women became quiet. Each of them were reflecting on the constant changes in life. Terri finally broke the silence. "You know Gabby girl" (a pet name she sometimes used), "it really is a different world in many, many ways. Still, I hope you can see a common

thread over the years when you look back at our ancestors. Yeah, life was different. In some ways it was much harder, but in other ways it was much simpler. One thing I can tell you about your mom, me, my mom, and those that went before us is, we all put our faith in Jesus and knew - love is the answer."

Like her mother, grandfather, great grandmother, and great great grandmother, Terri was a committed follower of Jesus. She was baptized in 1969 by her grandfather. She had a strong faith even though she knew it was a different flavor from some of the things her grandfather believed. But they both put their trust in Jesus and followed in his footsteps. Both of them believed deep in their heart that God is love and trusted the Bible verse that says "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God".

Terri admired and respected her grandparents. Their faith inspired Terri at different times in her past and often gave her strength and comfort.

Terri was a take charge kind of person, but mostly because she had to be that way much of her life. Some people saw her as a strong and sometimes even an aggressive person when necessary, but those who knew her well, knew she had a heart of gold and would help those in need in any way she could, especially her family.

Terri tried to follow Jesus by loving others. She failed at times, but each morning she would sip hot tea (often in the backyard listening to the birds) and give thanks for

the many blessings she enjoyed. She used her morning time to give thanks and resolve to be the best person possible that day.

“And for the record, love is more than just saying the words,” Terri continued. “You will never convince me you can love someone if you are hurting them. Sometimes real love takes effort and hard work. It is more than just saying the words. When you have real love, you have something worth far more than money.”

Terri knew the true treasures in life do not cost money. She often thought if she suddenly lost all of her material wealth, she could still be happy even if she had to live under a bridge. Terri knew it was family and loving others that made life worthwhile, not things.

Bessie Ross would echo those thoughts. She would agree with Terri that true treasure cannot be found in material things and that love truly is the answer. During the last 25 years of her life, Bessie could carry all of her material possessions in two suitcases. She did not have wealth by the world’s standards, but she had a treasure money could never buy. Bessie believed following Jesus was the best way to love others and when you follow Jesus, you will have the greatest treasure, the light of life.

After thinking about her grandmother’s last comment about the common thread found in all of her ancestors - and the idea that love is the answer, Gabby said, “One of the things I learned reading the book was my great,

great, great grandmother Bessie's favorite song was 'Have Thine Own Way'."

"I like the last verse in that song," Gabby continued "because I see a special love in my mom, and in you, and in your mom." Gabby smiled at her grandmother and looked at her with admiration and love.

"Everyone that knows each of you can see that love." Gabby continued. "That line that says, 'Till all shall see' - well, that love is evident in each of your lives. Anyone who knows you can see your love for others. That is something I hope people will someday say about my life." Terri quietly gave thanks for her granddaughter. What a true blessing Gabby was!

Terri thought, when all the world shall see that love really is the answer, it will be wonderful. It will be heaven on earth.

"Thank you for saying that Gabby," said Terri. After a couple of moments she said, "I like those words - 'till all shall see'. It really gives you something to think about. Not just about what others see in us, but what we see in ourselves, and what God sees in us."

"You are wise beyond your years Gabby girl," Terri told Gabby with a big smile as she repeated the words out loud again, "till all shall see … love in each of us. What a great goal for anyone to have in life."

End of Section 2

Section III

What is Known

of the
Oldest Surviving Children of Seven Generations

Sections I and II of this book are based on the real lives of seven generations of the oldest surviving child in each generation. Most of the names, places, and dates in the previous sections are accurate, but the story lines and many of the conversations are fictional.

This section is included for readers interested in the known "facts" about the people in this book. The following information is currently what is known based on birth and death certificates, marriage records, census records, military records, obituaries, newspaper articles, and other sources.

Each of the seven generations of the oldest surviving child is presented below with currently known information. At the end of this section is a collection of miscellaneous information to support some of the family stories (mostly from the pen of Barbara Bailey Braswell).

In some areas the evidence is conflicting such as the year Bessie is born or the year Roy and Myrtle are married. This book uses Bessie's birth year as 1888 rather than 1889 (most probable) and 1935 as the year Roy and Myrtle were married (which is not accurate, but was accepted throughout their lives).

Seven generations of the oldest surviving child:

1. William's oldest surviving child was **Maggie**.
2. Maggie's oldest surviving child was **Bessie**.
3. Bessie's oldest surviving child was **Roy**.
4. Roy's oldest surviving child was **Barbara**.
5. Barbara's oldest surviving child was **Terri**.
6. Terri's oldest surviving child was **Michelle**.
7. Michelle's oldest surviving child was **Gabby**.

William Wartenbe was born Mar 27 1848 in Ohio and died Jul 24 1925 in Waverly, Ohio. He married Martha Summers Jul 08 1866. She was born 1846 in Ohio, daughter of John Summers. He married Sarah Noland May 27 1916 in Ross, Ohio. She was born in 1858.

Children of William Wartenbe and Martha Summers:

Margaret Wartenbe (generation 1) was born Apr 20 1867 in Ohio and died Sep 18 1940 in Athens, IL

Harry Wartenbe was born about 1871 in Ohio

Louise Wartenbe was born in 1872 in Ohio and died in 1960

William Wartenbe was born in 1878 in Ohio

Grace Wartenbe was born after 1877 in Ohio

Homer Wartenbe was born after 1877 in Ohio

Frank Wartenbe was born in 1876 in Ohio

William Wartenbe has been found in these census records:

1850 OH
1860 OH
1880 IL

Born in Ohio, Moved to Middletown, Il at the age of 28 and from there to Williamsville to Oklahoma and back to Waverly, Ohio William served in 53rd Regiment, Ohio Infantry.

Obituary: William Wartenbe died at his home in Waverly, Ohio, Friday July 24, 1925 at the age of 77 years and four months. He was born in Ohio, March 27, 1848. He was a soldier in the civil war serving 18 months. On July 8, 1866 he was united in marriage to Martha Summers. To this union seven children were born. His wife and one son, Frank preceded him in death. The following survive: Maggie Ross, Middletown, Il, Harry Wartenbe, Farmingdale, Il, Louise Tuttle, Perry, Ok., William Wartenbe, California; Grace Stewart, Sherman, Il and Homer Wartenbe, Enid, Okla. Also his second wife, one sister, Mary Clewers, Tippecanoe City, Ohio, one brother, Adininnon Wartenbe, Shattuck, Okla, twenty-three grandchildren and fourteen great grandchildren. He came to Middletown, Il forty-nine years ago and from there to Williamsville, where he lived twenty-five years. From there he went to Oklahoma and

ten years ago he visited here and went on to Waverly Ohio, where he has since resided.

Civil War:
The 53rd Ohio Infantry Regiment was organized at Jackson, Ohio, beginning September 3, 1861, and mustered in February 11, 1862, for three years' service under the command of Colonel J. J. Appler.

The regiment was attached to District of Paducah, Kentucky, to March 1862. 3rd Brigade, 5th Division, Army of the Tennessee, to July 1862. 3rd Brigade, 5th Division, District of Memphis, Tennessee, to November 1862. 3rd Brigade, 5th Division, Right Wing, XIII Corps, Department of the Tennessee, November 1862. 2nd Brigade, 1st Division, District of Memphis, XIII Corps, to December 1862. 2nd Brigade, 1st Division, XVII Corps, to January 1863. 2nd Brigade, 1st Division, XVI Corps, to July 1863. 3rd Brigade, 4th Division, XV Corps, to May 1864. 2nd Brigade, 2nd Division, XV Corps, to July 1865. Department of Arkansas to August 1865.

The 53rd Ohio Infantry mustered out of service at Little Rock, Arkansas, on August 11, 1865.

Detailed service
Ordered to Paducah, Ky., February 16. Moved from Paducah to Savannah, Tenn., March 6–10, 1862. Expedition to Yellow Creek, Miss., and occupation of Pittsburg Landing, Tenn., March 14–17. Expedition toward Eastport, Miss., April 1–2. Battle of Shiloh, Tenn., April 6–7. Corinth Road, Monterey, April 8. Advance on and siege of Corinth, Miss., April 29-May 30. March to

Memphis, Tenn., via Moscow, Lafayette, Grand Junction and Holly Springs, June 1-July 21. Duty at Memphis and along Memphis & Charleston Railroad until November. Grant's Central Mississippi Campaign. Operations on the Mississippi Central Railroad to the Yockna River November 1862 to January 1863. Moved to LaGrange, Tenn., January 1863, and duty there until June. Moved to Memphis, thence to Young's Point, La., June 9–12. Siege of Vicksburg, Miss., June 12-July 4. Advance on Jackson, Miss., July 4–10. Bolton's Ferry July 4–6. Siege of Jackson July 10–17. Camp at Big Black until September 26. Moved to Memphis, thence march to Chattanooga, Tenn., September 26-November 20. Operations on Memphis & Charleston Railroad in Alabama October 20–29. Chattanooga-Ringgold Campaign November 23–27. Tunnel Hill November 23–24. Missionary Ridge November 25. March to relief of Knoxville, Tenn., November 28-December 28. Duty at Scottsboro, Ala., until March 1864. Veterans on furlough until April. Atlanta Campaign May to September. Demonstrations on Resaca May 8–13. Near Resaca May 13. Battle of Resaca May 14–15. Advance on Dallas May 18–25. Operations on line of Pumpkin Vine Creek and battles about Dallas, New Hope Church and Allatoona Hills May 25-June 5. Operations about Marietta and against Kennesaw Mountain June 10-July 2. Bush Mountain June 15. Assault on Kennesaw June 27. Nickajack Creek July 2–5. Ruff's Mills July 3–4. Chattahoochie River July 6–17. Battle of Atlanta July 22. Siege of Atlanta July 22-August 25. Ezra Chapel, Hood's 2nd sortie. July 28. Flank movement on Jonesboro August 25–30. Near Jonesboro August 30. Battle of Jonesboro August 31-September 1. Lovejoy's Station

September 2–6. Operations against Hood in northern Georgia and northern Alabama September 29-November 3. Turkeytown and Gadsden Road, Ala., October 25. March to the sea November 15-December 10. Siege of Savannah December 10–21. Fort McAllister December 13. Campaign of the Carolinas January to April 1865. Salkehatchie Swamps, S.C., February 2–5. Cannon's Bridge, South Edisto River, February 8. North Edisto River February 11–13. Columbia February 16–17. Battle of Bentonville, N.C., March 20–21. Occupation of Goldsboro March 24. Advance on Raleigh April 10–14. Occupation of Raleigh April 14. Bennett's House April 26. Surrender of Johnston and his army. March to Washington, D.C., via Richmond, Va., April 29-May 20. Grand Review of the Armies May 24. Moved to Louisville, Ky., June, thence to Little Rock, Ark., and duty there until August.

Generation 1

Margaret Wartenbe was born Apr 20 1867 in Ohio and died Sep 18 1940 in Athens, IL. She married Joseph Ross 1889. He was born Sep 15 1852 in St. Louis, MO and died Apr 11 1925 in Lincoln, Il Logan County, son of Joseph T. Ross and Mary D. Brim.

Children of Margaret Wartenbe and Joseph Ross:

Bessie Arzella Ross (generation 2) was born Apr 17 1888* in Williamsville, IL Sangamon County and died Apr 09 1973 in Valparaiso, FL

Thomas Ross was born Feb 04 1891 in Springfield, IL and died Nov 17 1918 in Miami, Florida

Elmer Ross was born 1892 in Williamsville, IL and died 1962

George Ross was born 1896

Joseph Ross was born Sep 21 1899 and died Oct 04 1939 in Athens, IL

William Ross was born Aug 17 1900 in Central, Ill and died Oct 07 1918 in France

Martha Ross was born Aug 05 1905 in Williamsville, IL and died Jun 09 1925 in Lincoln, IL

Margarete Wartenbe has been found in the following census records:

1880 IL
1900 IL
1910 IL
1920 IL

Maggie's husband Joe is not listed in the 1920 census with Maggie. The census shows Maggie (as head of the household), Joseph Jr (age 21), and Martha (age 15).

Obituary:
Athens, Sept. 19. - Mrs. Margaret Ross, 73, died Wednesday night at her home in Athens.

Mrs. Ross was born April 20, 1867.

She was the widow of Joseph Ross to whom she was married at Williamsville in 1899 [sic?].

Her husband and nine children preceded her in death.

Mrs. Ross was a member of the Christian church.

She is survived by one daughter, Mrs. Bessie White, of Delavan; two sons, Elmer and George Ross; two sisters, Mrs. Grace Stewart, of Athens and Mrs. Louise Tuttle, of Perry, Okla.; one brother, Homer Wartenbee, of Danby, Mo.

Funeral services were held at the residence.

Interment was in Irish Grove cemetery.

Daily Illinois State Journal
Friday, Sep 20, 1940
Springfield, IL
Page: 11

Marriage:
There is a record of their marriage on March 19, 1890 in Sangamon County, IL Volume 6 page 326.

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Illinois, U.S., Marriage Index, 1860-1920
Name: Maggie Warabee
Gender: Female
Marriage Date: 19 Mar 1890
Marriage Place: Sangamon, Illinois, USA
Spouse Name: Joseph Ross
Spouse Gender: Male

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Illinois, Deaths and Stillbirths Index, 1916-1947
Name: Margaret Ross
[Margaret Vartenbe]
Birth Date: 20 Apr 1867
Birth Place: Cleveland, Ohio
Death Date: 18 Sep 1940
Death Place: Athens, Menard, Illinois
Burial Date: 20 Sep 1940
Burial Place: Road Dist # 1, Menard, Ill.
Cemetery Name: Irish Grove
Death Age: 73
Occupation: Housekeeper

Race: White
Marital status: W
Gender: Female
Residence: Athens, Menard, Ill.
Father Name: William Vartenbe
Father Birth Place: Ohio
Mother Name: Martha Sommers
Mother Birth Place: Ohio
Spouse Name: Joseph Ross
FHL Film Number: 1832234
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Immediate Family Members that preceded her in death:
Joseph Ross (spouse)
1852–1925 (m. 1890)

Children:
Young infant
Before 1889

Thomas William Ross
1891–1918

Joseph Ross
1899–1939

William Ross
1900–1918

Martha Ross Benedict
1905–1925
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Generation 2

Bessie Arzella Ross was born Apr 17 1888* in Williamsville, IL Sangamon County and died Apr 09 1973 in Valparaiso, FL. She married Irvin White 1935. He was born Feb 12 1882 and died 1960 in Delavan, IL Tazewell County, son of Albert White and Ethelinda Bracy. She married George Ambrose Bailey Feb 20 1907 in Logan County IL. He was born Jun 08 1878 in Delevan, IL Tazewell County and died Aug 19 1933 in Delavan, IL Tazewell County, son of William Bailey and Frances Smith.

Children of Bessie Arzella Ross and George Ambrose Bailey:

George Bailey Jr was born Feb 15 1908 and died Nov 22 1911

Roy Wilson Bailey (generation 3) was born May 07 1913 in Hopedale, Illinois Tazewell County and died Jul 15 1996 in Defuniak Springs, FL Walton County

Bessie is found in the following census records:

1900
1910
1920
1930
1940
1950

Copies of birth certificate, marriage license, death certificate are in family records.

Obituary:

Mrs. Bessie Bailey, 31 Lincoln Avenue, Valparaiso died Monday, just seven days before her 85th birthday. Mrs. Bailey was a member of the Southwide Baptist Church, DeFuniak Springs, where the services will be held Wednesday afternoon conducted by the Rev. Mason Simmons of the Northside Baptist Church, Ponce De Leon. Interment will follow on the church grounds. Survivors include one son, Rev. Roy W. Bailey, Sr., Valparaiso; daughters, Mrs. Myrtle Cooper, Tavares and Mrs. Hazel Victor, Los Angeles, Cal; and 22 grandchildren and several great-grandchildren. Clary Funeral Home of DeFuniak Springs is in charge of arrangements. Mrs. Bessie Bailey was later moved to Woodlawn Baptist Church alongside her son Rev. Roy Bailey.

*Bessie did not receive a birth certificate until July 7th, 1952. Her birth certificate lists 3 sources that state she was born in 1888 (Affidavit from Louise Tuttle, Marriage License from 2/20./1907; Family Bible record - first date entered as 1888).

However, the marriage license in the family records does not list her age or year of birth.

Based on census records Maggie had children prior to Bessie which may account for the first date in the family

Bible showing 1888 as the birth year for their first child. That record may have confused Louise (Bessie's aunt) as to the actual year of Bessie's birth when she provided the affidavit for the birth certificate.

Based on the following evidence, Bessie believed she was born in 1889, at least until the time when she applied for a birth certificate.

Bessie has a headstone next to George Bailey in Dillon Cemetery, Elm Grove Twp Illinois that shows her birth year as 1889. This tombstone was made before the birth certificate was applied for, and never had a date of death engraved because Bessie was not buried there..

Bessie is actually buried in Walton County, FL and that headstone does show her birth year as 1888, but that was after the birth certificate.

In every census record from 1900 - 1950, the age given at the time of the census always shows her birth year as 1889. All of the other family ages are accurate which indicates Bessie believed she was born in 1889 at least until the time she applied for a birth certificate in 1952.

Generation 3

Roy Wilson Bailey was born May 07 1913 in Hopedale, Illinois Tazewell County and died Jul 15 1996 in Defuniak Springs, FL Walton County. He married Myrtle Isabelle Clark Oct 10 1936 in Pekin, Illinois. She was born Nov 18 1913 in Ashton, IL Lee County and died Oct 17 1998 in Defuniak Springs, FL Walton County, daughter of Clarence Daniel Clark and Daisy Woods.

Children of Roy Wilson Bailey and Myrtle Isabelle Clark:

Barbara Elaine Bailey(generation 4) was born May 31 1937 in Delavan, IL Tazewell County and died May 12 2019 in DeFuniak Springs, FL

Roy Wilson Bailey was born Jun 30 1938 in Delevan

George Daniel Bailey was born Jun 18 1939 in Delevan

Darlene Faye Bailey was born Sep 30 1940 in Delevan

Richard Lee Bailey was born Jan 04 1944 in Pekin, Ill

Roy is found in the following census records:

1920
1930
1940
1950

Copies of birth certificate, marriage license, death certificate are in family records.

Obituary:

Roy Wilson Bailey, Sr. The Rev. Roy Wilson Bailey, Sr., age 83, of DeFuniak Springs, Fla., died Monday morning, July 15, 1996, in a Pensacola, Fla., hospital. He was born in Delavan, Ill., and had been a resident of DeFuniak Springs for the past 29 years. The Rev. Bailey retired from the Ministry. He pastored many churches including Woodland Baptist Church and Southwide Baptist Church. Survivors include his wife, Myrtle Bailey of DeFuniak Springs; daughters, Loretta Mcleod of Perry, Fla., Barbara Braswell of DeFuniak Springs, and Darlene Lund of Kings Mountain, NC;, Sons Robert Tucker of Bloomington, Il, Jack and George Bailey, both of DeFuniak Springs, And Richard Bailey of Myrtle Beach, SC; 34 Grandchildren; 74 Great-grandchildren, and seven great great grandchildren. Funeral services will be conducted at 4 PM Thursday, July 18 at Woodlawn Baptist Church with the Rev. William Wilcox officiating. Burial will follow in Woodlawn Baptist Church Cemetery. Friends may call at the funeral Home from 6 to 9 PM., Wednesday, July 17. Clary-Godwin Funeral Home, DeFuniak Springs, is in Charge of Arrangements.

**The Bailey family has long maintained that Roy and Myrtle were married 10/10/1935. They celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with all of their children, many of their grandchildren, great grandchildren, and friends

in 1985. They even had a congratulatory letter from a local congressman in 1985. Their joint tombstone at Woodlawn Baptist Church in Walton County, FL shows the date as 10/10/1035. Myrtle's obituary also lists their wedding date as 10/10/1935 as does the family genealogy website that was maintained by their daughter, Barbara Bailey.

However Roy Bailey's Bible lists their marriage as 10/10/1936. It is written in ink in Roy's handwriting. Roy was excellent with numbers and seldom made a math error.

After Roy's death a copy of their marriage record was obtained from IL and it states they were married on 10/10/1936.

One can only speculate as to why the true year of their marriage was changed, but once Roy became a pastor it may have been adjusted to prevent others from knowing Myrtle would have been two months pregnant with Barbara at the time of their marriage in 1936.

Generation 4

Barbara Elaine Bailey was born May 31 1937 in Delavan, IL Tazewell County and died May 12 2019 in DeFuniak Springs, FL. She married Tommie Joe Gipson Sep 08 1956. He was born Jan 08 1936 in Mason City, IL and died Feb 10 2022 in Destin, FL, son of Jack Gipson and Fern Mangold. They divorced Feb 1977. She married Jimmy Lee Braswell Feb 17 1978. He was born Oct 24 1951.

Children of Barbara Elaine Bailey and Tommie Joe Gipson:

Terri Lynn Gipson (generation 5) was born Jul 07 1957 in Normal, IL

Tommie Joe Gipson was born Jul 30 1958 in Normal, IL

Tony Jay Gipson was born Oct 17 1960 in Perry, FL

Tod Jason Gipson was born May 27 1962 in Pontiac, IL and died Aug 29 1963 in Cheona, IL

Tammy L Clark was born Mar 03 1964 in Normal, IL

Tonja Louise Gipson was born Dec 14 1965 in Bloomington, Illinois

Tracy Lynette Gipson was born Jan 07 1971 in DeFuniak Springs, FL

Barbara is found in the following census records:

1940
1950

Copies of birth certificate and death certificate are in family records.

Obituary:

Barbara Braswell May 31, 1937 - May 12, 2019
Barbara Elaine Braswell, age 81, passed away Sunday, May 12, 2019.

She was born May 31, 1937 in Delavan, Illinois.
Barbara was a longtime resident of Walton County.

She had a love for Jesus and that love could be seen in the way she treated others.

She was known for her smile, her kindness and her laughter. She loved people. She didn't meet a stranger. Anyone that met her received a blessing.

Above all else, her love for her family was always evident.

She was preceded in death by her parents Roy and Myrtle Bailey, her sister Loretta Mcleod and husband Buck, her brother Bob Tucker and wife Shirley, her brother in law Harry Lund, her son Tod Gipson, her

granddaughter Tinaya Cotton, and her daughter in law Kathy Gipson.

She is survived by her daughter Terri Murphy and husband Chester, her son Tommie Gipson, her son Tony Gipson and wife Kimberly, all of Defuniak Springs, her daughter Tammy Clark and former spouse Bruce of Bonney Lake, Washington, daughter Tonja Bowdoin of Atlanta, Georgia, daughter Tracy Huntington and husband Steve of Decatur, AL.

She is also survived by her brother Jack Bailey and wife Jackie, brother George Bailey and wife Susan, all of DeFuniak Springs, her sister Darlene Lund of Kings Mt, North Carolina, brother Richard Bailey and wife Martha of Silverhill, Alabama.

She is also survived by almost 100 grandchildren, great grandchildren and great-great grandchildren. All of which she loved dearly.

Celebration for life service will be held at 11:00 AM, Thursday May 16, 2019 at Clary-Glenn Funeral Home Chapel: 230 Park Avenue, DeFuniak Springs, FL 32433 followed by a reception at the DeFuniak Springs Civic Center (any food contributions can be dropped off there after 9:00 AM).

In lieu of flowers the family request donations be made to one of Barbara's favorite charities; St Jude's Hospital, 501 St Jude Place Memphis, TN 38105.

Memorialization will be by cremation.

Generation 5

Terri Lynn Gipson was born Jul 07 1957 in Normal, IL. She married Chester Murphy Jul 07 1994. He was born Apr 02 1960 in DeFuniak Springs, Fl. She married Bobby Joe Cotton. He was born Jun 21 1957 in DeFuniak Springs, Fl. They divorced.

Children of Terri Lynn Gipson and Bobby Joe Cotton:

Tinaya Marie Cotton was born Dec 01 1977 in Charleston, S.C. and died Feb 19 1978 in Charleston, SC

Sharon Michelle Cotton (generation 6) was born Aug 09 1980 in DeFuniak Springs, FL

Bobby Jo Cotton was born Nov 17 1981 in Geneva, AL

Generation 6

Sharon Michelle Cotton was born Aug 09 1980 in DeFuniak Springs, Fl. She married Christopher Ronald Mize Nov 02 2000. He was born Jul 12 1974, son of Ronald Mize and Betty Ann Smith. They divorced Sep 23 2009. She married Michael John Rediker Mar 06 2010 in DeFuniak Springs, Florida. He was born Feb 06 1981 in Fort Walton Beach, Florida, son of Bruce John Rediker and Norma Land.

Children of Sharon Michelle Cotton and Christopher Ronald Mize:

Gabrielle Brianna Mize (generation 7) was born Apr 02 2001 in Ft.Walton Beach, FL

Marissa McKenzie Mize was born Oct 02 2004 in Pensacola, FL

Colin Trey Mize was born Aug 25 2007 in Sacred Heart Hospital, Pensacola, FL

Children of Sharon Michelle Cotton and Michael John Rediker:

Camille Marie Rediker was born Jan 17 2012 in Weiden, Germany

Adopted children:

Tyler James Mize was born Apr 21 1996 in Pensacola, FL

William Michael Mize was born Oct 11 1997 in Crestview, FL

Generation 7

Gabrielle Brianna Mize was born Apr 02 2001 in Ft.Walton Beach, FL

Additional Information

My Experience
with
The Reverend and Mrs. R. W. Bailey!
(Better known as “Bottle Bailey” and “Myrtle the Turtle”)

by Bob …

In fifty years of their marriage, I have had 50,000 plus experiences with these two people:

Some glad, Some sad,
Some frightening, Some bad,
Some new, Some old,
Some timid, Some bold,
Some wild, Some tame,
Some different, Some the same, etc. etc. etc.

But, … mostly they were very happy and very EDUCATIONAL. However, I have had one experience that NO ONE else can claim!!! (eat your heart out Bro’s and Sis’s)

LIVING WITH THEM IN MORE HOMES THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE IN YOUR WILDEST, DREAMS!

Note The Following Facts:

1. Married in 1935 --- Moved into house on Court St. Pekin, IL.
2. Moved to 6th Street, same city.
3. Moved to 3 room house, same city.
4. Moved to “Beehive” house N.W. of Delavan, IL. Note: Barbara Bailey, born here -- been buzzing ever since (1937)
5. Moved to Green Valley, IL.
6. Moved to Mackinaw Valley Park, IL.
7. Moved back to Delavan, IL. to “Blackburn” house by tracks. Note: Roy W. Bailey Jr. “Jack” born here --- makes him BLACK sheep of family. (1938)
8. Moved to another house in Delavan, (across from Doc. Shaw). Note: George D Bailey “Danny Boy”, was born here --- thats why he cuts everything up. (1939)
9. Moved to “Yule house”, north of Delavan next. Note: Darlene F. Bailey was born here --- thats why she is so stuborn. (Yule is Yiddish for MULE!). (1940)
10. Next moved to “Sharp House”, outside Delavan, IL. (1941)
11. Next moved to “Clesson house”, another farm house outside of Delavan, IL. (1942).
12. Then to “Brown house”, outside of Delavan, Tennant farmed for Mr. Howard. (1942)
13. Finally, moved back into Delavan, to “Sparrow house”. (1943)
14. Next moved to house accross street from the Catholic Church … They bought this house … Note: I thought we had it made … instead, guess what? Richard L. Bailey “Dickie” was born here

--- must be why he likes fish on Fridays and wears beaded necklaces … and then … (1943 - 1944)

15. Sold house, (at a nice profit) and moved to Hopedale, IL., to farm. (1945 - 1946)
16. Moved to Hopedale, south to “Heddy house” southside of Herrick, IL.
17. Don’t like the southside --- so move to northside of Herrick to the “Pumpkin Manual” house. Note: Not what your thinking … no more children … Grandma Bessie Bailey joined us here. (1947)
18. Moved to “Sarvers” house on West side of Herrick, IL. (why not)(1948)
19. Moved back North to southside of Armington, IL. in country. (1950 fall)
20. Decided to move back to Delavan, give it another try. (1951 spring)
21. From Delavan, Moved to Mason City, IL. Note: People, I’m a patient man, but I decided enough was enough was enough! So I joined the Army. But, it did not stop them! However, from here on, the Good Lord decided he might as well take advantage of Rev. Bailey’s talents and Gypsy blood. (1951 - 1952) “Read On”
22. Moved to Edinburg, IL to Pastor a Church (1953 - 1954)
23. Called to Towanda, IL to another Church. (1954 - 1958)
24. Moved to house in Towanda that the Rev. and Mrs. Bailey built themselves.
25. Sold house, (for a nice profit) and moved to Pontiac, IL. (1958)

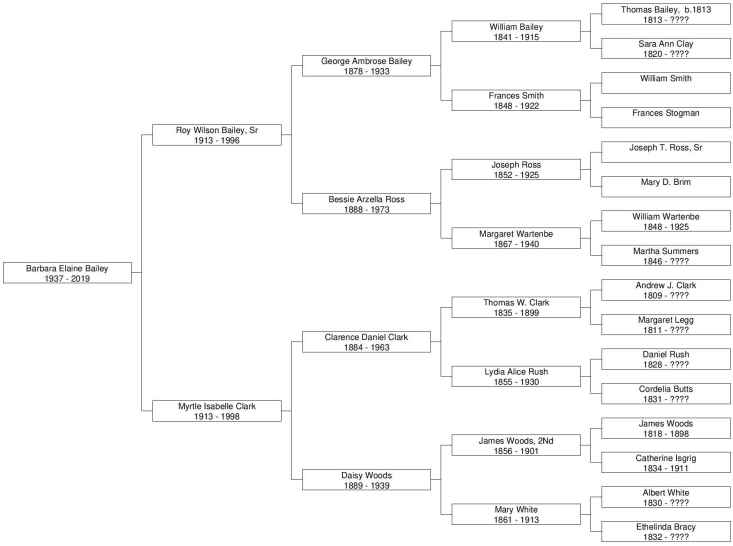
26. Decided to move south to Perry, FL., edge of town. (1959)
27. Moved to “Frances Cruse” house at Perry, FL.
28. Moved to “Athena” Church outside of Perry. (1960 - 1962)
29. From here we go back North to Heyworth, IL. (1963)
30. Next move is to country outside of Chenoa, IL. (1963)
31. Bought home in Danvers, IL. and moved there.
32. Moved to farm outside of Danvers, next.
33. Moved back to Florida to Ft. Walton, next move. (1966 - 1967)
34. Moved to DeFuniak Springs, FL. Southside Church (1967)
35. Then on to Valparaiso, FL. (1972 - 1973)
36. FINALLY moved back to DeFuniak Springs where they still live. Note: They have lived here longer than any place in their married lives. (1973)

You can say they have been true to their Family Motto:

LOOKING FORWARD --- EVER ONWARD --- EVER UPWARD.

Their Loving Son,
Robert.

Family Tree Ancestors for Barbara Bailey (generation 4):



For over twenty-five years Barbara Bailey and her son, Tommie spent many hours researching genealogy records. Together they were able to find all of Barbara's great and great, great grandparents.

Barbara realized the value of capturing and recording memories. She decided to write down some of her memories and records and gave copies to each of her children.

The next portion of this section is from the pen of Barbara Bailey:

Birth

I was born May 31, 1937 (Monday at 11:05 a.m.) Of course, you do realize I do not remember this event. as it was told to me:

Mom, Dad and Aunt Lou had decided to go on a fishing trip over the weekend, they were going to a river nearby (my guess would be the Mackinaw river, only because I do remember Mom and Dad taking us swimming and fishing there in my earlier years.)

Anyway they had to climb over a fence And cross a field to get to the river. Unknown to them there happened to be a bull in that field at the time. Well, yes he decided to chase them and as the story was told Dad ran in a different direction to lure the bull away from Mom and Aunt Lou.

When he finally got away from the bull, he went looking for them and found them both in a tree. He said he does not know how they got up there but get up there they did. The next day I was born.

Childhood

I attended 3rd and 4th grade in a one room schoolhouse. There were probably about 20 or 25 kids attending this school consisting of all 8 grades. I had a friend who lived right up the road from us, she was in a grade higher than myself, her name was Alice. She

also had a brother in a grade lower than me, Harlan, he was in Jack's grade.

They used to come down to the house all the time to play with us. There was a small stream that ran from the barnyard down through the fields, never did get real deep so we were allowed to follow it down and get wet. Did some swimming but not a lot of water in it.

Dad farmed this land, remember shucking corn with him in the middle of winter. Had a couple of horses pull the wagon and we would walk the corn fields and pull corn from the stalks and toss them in the wagon. (When we were not in school) Mom would usually go with us after breakfast and Loretta would watch Dick and I think Darlene and clean up and the rest of us would go to the field.

Course before we went to the field Bob, Jack and Dad would do the milking, Mom and Loretta would be fixing breakfast and I would feed chickens and hogs and Darlene and George would gather eggs. Tried milking one time but never did get the hang of that.

I remember one day at school, the kids were playing baseball outside and I was in the cloak room getting my jacket on when a ball came flying through the window and a piece of glass hit me in the thigh. Had a scar for a long time. Teacher pulled the glass out and wrapped the leg.

Dad's First Church

I remember that Dad accepted his first church in the summer of 1952 in Edinburgh, Illinois. I was going into

my sophomore year in high school. Loretta and Bob were both in the military so it was just Big Granny, Mom and Dad and us five kids left at home. We lived in a two story house right next To the church. There were three bedrooms upstairs, Big Granny, myself and Aunt Dean shared one, Jack, George and Dick shared and Mom and Dad had the other room. We did get the room toward the front of the house, you could see the front yard and the street and right next to the house was a big old tree. If you were facing the house, the church was to the right. We were close enough to school to walk every day. I was taller than both of my brothers and Aunt Dean and pretty much stayed that way until I graduated High School. The summer of 1953, Dad accepted a church in Towanda, Illinois. We moved that summer, but I was not there to help them. Dad let me go to Perry with Loretta for the summer. She and Buck were married and they were staying with his parents, but I got to go stay with them anyway. I stayed about 6 weeks and then took the bus home to Towanda.

Tomboy

I remember back in my younger days that I was always a tomboy. I wanted to climb trees, walk the creek bank, play in the barn, jump out of the hayloft onto bales of hay, those kinds of things.

Loretta was too busy to play with me because she was in charge of the house while mom was in the field and Darlene was too young to play with me so I just had the boys and that's what we did.

The first time my mother forced me to be a young lady was at my eighth grade graduation. Of course in those days when we went to school and church I had to wear dresses but other than that I was in blue jeans all the time. I didn't like shorts either. I wore blue jeans.

Anyway my eighth grade graduation we had to wear a white dress, the school required that and I was not a happy camper.

Bob graduated from high school the same year I graduated from the eighth grade and mother wanted a picture of us, which would have been great, but she wanted me to wear lipstick and I did not want to wear lipstick, therefore since mother won out I have red eyes in the picture. Needless to say in later years I did regret doing that to her because this is a very bad picture and the only one taken.

Through the years prior to 1950

We lived in town. Right behind us about two or three blocks down on the left was the Catholic Church, Big Granny went to. I remember going with her a couple of times and we had to wear a scarf on our head. Big Granny always wore a black hat with flowers on the front of it. We lived on the corner and down the road about two blocks was the Methodist church and us kids would walk down there to Sunday School if we wanted to go. Mom and Dad were not Christians during this time, they

both accepted the Lord in 1947, but they never stopped us from going to SS if we wanted to.

Another memory I have of living here was that going down the street in front of us was a city park on the left about 4 or 5 blocks down and every year a carnival would come to town and set up in the park. We were all given enough money that we could ride a ride. Jack and I would save our pennies prior to that time and would go down there and toss pennies onto little saucers trying to get enough extra pennies for two rides. Most of the time I don't think we were able to do that. But we had a lot of fun trying. Big Granny also had a feed store up town which was another 3 or 4 blocks from the park and we were allowed to go up there and see her sometimes and of course she would end up giving us a nickel for ice cream or candy, our choice.

Mom made some of my dresses out of feed sacks that Big Granny sold in her feed store. She would give some of them to Mom to make clothes out of.

My First Record Play (Phonograph)

I was a sophomore in high school during Bob's time in the army and he came home for Christmas that year. He asked each one of us what we would like for Christmas, knowing what the rest of them ask for) but I asked for a record player and that is what I got.

He bought my first record player. (phonograph player) I loved listening to music. We were not rich by any means. We had everything we needed but.....

Anyway he decided that all of us should have one thing we wanted for Christmas. I will never forget that player. Small in size, sat on the stand and played 78 and 45 albums. It was a light green color, plastic around the bottom and no top but I loved it.

First Dance

I know that most of you will find this hard to believe, but I was very shy in my teenage years. We moved around so much, I didn't have a lot of school friends. I would make a friend and we would move.

However when I became a junior in high school, Dad got a church in Towanda so I spent my last two years of school in one place. Jack would have had 3 years, George 4, years, etc., but I only had two.

Towanda was not a large town, not much bigger than Mossy Head. On Saturday night, when there were no school functions going on they would open up the Civic Center to the youth for dancing, games, etc.

Well, a few of us girls that hung around together would walk up there and really just hang out. I was too shy to dance (as much as I wanted to), I was not really good at it but loved it anyway, so I would watch most of the time.

Bob was in the service and one Saturday night when he was home on leave, he showed up at the center. Of course when he came over to where I was, all of my friends wanted to know who he was. I introduced him around (they were all too young for him but……they were teenagers and he was a soldier, in uniform). Well the music started and he asked me if I wanted to dance, and I told him I didn't know how. He latched a hold of me and around that gym we went. We waltzed all over the place, I couldn't dance but he sure could and therefore it appeared that I could too.

Needless to say he was a big hit for the night. Didn't stay long but made my night while he was there.

Cousin Judy

Judy was born on May 29 1937 and I was born on May 31. During the summer time she would come to the farm to spend a week or two with me and then later I would go to Peoria (to the city) to spend a week or so with her.

I remember she never liked the yolk of a soft egg so at breakfast I would cut the white away from mine and I would eat both yolks and she would eat both whites.

She went on to become a champion skater. When I would be at her house I would go to the rink with her and her group to practice. She would want me to get out there and let her teach me how to skate but foolish me I was much too shy to try in front of her and her friends.

(Which I have always regretted not doing). They were all very good.

She was killed in 1957 in an auto accident on her way home from California where she had gone to participate in a competition. (Which the group of four won first place in).

Bookkeeping

I remember my first bookkeeping job. I took bookkeeping in high school and was very good at it. In fact, in the study hall I would help some of the kids in the class with bookkeeping, but I had never worked as a bookkeeper.

My first bookkeeping job was in Defuniak with Totten & Totten. If you remember where the professional building was up town next to Fisher hardware it had a long hall in it. We were in the very back office on the right.

Mr. Totton hired me to keep books there. We had great big leger books and we had one old adding machine that had keys across it like the old cash registers.

Anyway, I went to work there. I was in the office by myself and they would come down about once a month, except during tax season then they would come 3 days a week until the end of tax season to prepare tax returns.

The first week that they came down he brought his right hand lady with him. Her name was Francis Luther and actually she's who I worked for. She taught me everything I know in the working field about bookkeeping.

She threw out the old adding machine that we had and got me a 10 key adding machine just set it on my desk and said learn how to use this.

Needless to say that when I wasn't busy during the week I learned how to use the 10 key adding machine and became very fast on it.

She also went through the ledger books with me and told me the only thing she asked of me was when I was posting books to never, never, enter any figure unless I knew why I was doing it, even if She or Mr Totten told me to enter something in the ledger. If I did not know why then to ask. When she left there she told me, if you don't know why you're posting something, then don't do it, call me I'm only a phone call away.

She also taught me to never be intimidated by the IRS. She says they're just people they can't do anything to you. If they come in here to look at any of our books you tell them they will have to go through the Fort Walton office and Mr. Totten.

I learned a lot from her and I actually became one of the best bookkeepers in DeFuniak. I am now patting myself on the back. Years later I went to work for Versie Ard at Fisher hardware and operated my first bookkeeping

machine. I'm pretty sure that's a part of how computers actually originated.

How This Began

I just thought I'd stick a note in here and let everyone know how this thing got started in the first place way, way, way back when your sister was going to college (I won't mention any names but the first letter is a T).

I was down at her place one day and she was laughing and telling me she had a double date at different times but on the same day and I started laughing too, I said yes I remember those days. I did the same thing one time and the look on her face "oh wow" mom has not always been a mom she was a teenager one time. It was priceless.

So I just got to thinking to myself you know when I'm gone these kids all know nothing about me that I haven't already told them. A lot of times different things will cross my mind when I am sitting at the house and memories will come back to me and I will have start jotting them down now this is even better I found out that I can sit here and talk to a recorder on my phone and it will put it on a document in Google and then I can put it anywhere I want to.

I REMEMBER WHEN:

I was about 6 years old and Darlene and George (Danny as he was called when we were growing up) got the chicken pox and Mom told them that if they wanted to play outside they had to stay in the yard, so Jack and I decided that if we didn't play in the yard with them and went out to the barnyard that we wouldn't catch the

chickenpox. Forget the fact that I slept with Darlene and he slept with George.

I REMEMBER WHEN:
I was in the third and fourth grade I went to a one room schoolhouse that taught all 8 grades. I was the only one in the third grade and had a girlfriend that was in the 4th grade so the teacher combined our reading and math classes. Those were the years we walked a couple of miles to school.

I REMEMBER WHEN:
I remember when we took baths in an old round wash tub sitting in front of the heating stove in the living room with a blanket hung across the room for privacy. No running water we carried it in from outside and would heat it on the stove to fill the tub. Also remember being in the same house when Dad was able to pipe the water in from the pump to a small cistern pump he put in the kitchen. It was great being able to go to the kitchen and pump out a dipper of drinking water instead of carrying in a bucket to sit on the sink.

I REMEMBER WHEN:
I remember when we used to get up a baseball game with just our family, we usually played the girls against the boys with Mom coaching one team and Dad the other. Needless to say the girls always won. ☺ Just kidding I really don't remember who won, only that we had a lot of fun.

I REMEMBER WHEN:
I remember when we raised a lamb on a bottle because the mother had died and when it got older we use to go outside and get it to chase us and than we would jump up on the porch so he couldn't get to us. That was a lot of fun too, until one day he chased big Granny in from the out house and then -----well needless to say Dad put a stop to our fun.

I REMEMBER WHEN:
I remember playing basketball in high school but back then we played girls rules and had 6 players on a team, 3 guards and 3 forwards. I was a guard and we were only allowed to play half of the court.

I REMEMBER WHEN:
I can remember on the farm, we raised our own chickens and one day Mom and I were feeding them and found a red hen (we had white hens and red hens) with its neck caught in the fence, almost dead, well Mom was going to kill it but instead she let me take it inside and nurse it back to health. It became a pet and always had the feathers on one side of its neck laid back where it had been caught. When we left the farm I took the chicken to town with us but of course I couldn't keep it. Ended up giving it to a lady just at the edge of town that raised chickens and made her promise me that she would not kill it and eat it. Mom said that the chicken would be so tough she couldn't eat it if she wanted to.

I REMEMBER WHEN:
I remember when Jack and I told Mom we could kill her a chicken for dinner so she let us try. First he would

stand on its head and I would pull on the chicken. We had many times seen Dad kill them that way. He would hold the chicken by the foot, step on its head give it a jerk and presto…….Well it didn't quite work that way with us so when I couldn't jerk it hard enough we traded places and I would stand on its head and Jack would do the jerking. Mom said she was watching from the window, she had let us try to start with because she couldn't stand to do it herself, but she said that poor chicken's neck was stretched out so far that she felt sorry for the poor thing so she got the ax and came out and did the job herself.

I REMEMBER WHEN:
We used to make our own butter. We would skim the cream off of the top of the milk and put it in a churner, don't remember if we added anything to it or not, but churning was Big Granny's job and we would take turns helping her churn it into butter. I remember the first time Mom bought oleo from the store. It was pure white like lard or shortening and it came in a plastic bag and right in the middle of the bag was some yellow food coloring that you popped and then would knead the butter to make it yellow. Well one day Mom asked Bob or I (don't remember which) to knead the butter so he got on one side of the kitchen and I got on the other side and would toss the butter back and forth to mix the coloring in it. Until Mom got after us for throwing the butter across her food and there went another fun time.

I REMEMBER WHEN:
I remember on Saturday mornings that us girls had chores to do before we got to go out and play and we

would take turns doing the living room, which we always wanted to do because that was where the radio was and we got to listen to it while we worked. On Saturday mornings they always had a radio program called Let's Pretend, it was always fairy tale stories. So it was always fun when it was my turn to do the living room. The boys had outside chores to be done. One time when it was my turn to help Mom cook I traded places with Jack cause he liked cooking and I didn't so I took his job of helping to milk the cows. That was one job I was not any good at, never did learn to milk a cow.

I REMEMBER WHEN:
I remember when Big Granny had a feed store in town and she would save the feed sacks, which were very pretty for Mom to make our dresses for school. Mom would hand us the Sears Roebuck (as it was in those days) catalog and tell us to pick out a couple of dresses we liked. She would then take an old newspaper, measure us and cut a pattern out of newspaper and make our dresses and the boys shirts from the feed sacks that we emptied and the ones Big Granny saved.

I REMEMBER WHEN:
I remember when times were such that as young children we were allowed to walk a few blocks from home to a fair that had come to town. Had a few cents for a ride but Jack and I would take our pennies and toss them into saucers trying to win enough for more than one ride.

I REMEMBER WHEN:

I remember as a young child that we would load up and go to town on Saturday with Mom and Dad to do their shopping. They had a free movie in the park and we would toss our blanket on the ground and get to watch the movie while they bought what they needed. We usually got a nickel for an ice cream and in the bottom of the cone there would be a piece of paper with a free ice cream or just a saying. We would immediately bite the end of the cone to get the paper to see if we won a free ice cream and if we didn't we would have to hold our finger over the hole to keep the ice cream from dripping out while we ate the rest of it. If we won a free one we would see how fast we could eat it and get another one.

SCHOOLS ATTENDED
Barbara-------Illinois
1 & 2nd grade-------Delavan 43/44 44/45
3 & 4th grade--------Hopedale 45/46 46/47
5 & 6th grade-------Herrick 47/48 48/49
7th grade ----------Oconee 49/50
1/2 8th grade-------Armington 50
2nd half 8th grade------Delavan 51
Freshman-------Mason City 51/52
Sophomore -------Edinburg 52/53
Junior & Senior-----Normal 53/54 54/55

Children
Chenoa: Summer 1962 through May 1964
Terri Kindergarten---- 62 -63 1st Grade---63 – 64
Terri 2nd grade ------64 – 65
Tommie Kindergarten----63-64 1st Grade-----64-65

Stanford Summer 1965 through Summer 1966
Terri 3rd Grade---------65-66
Tommie 2nd Grade--------65-66
Tony Kindergarten 65-66

Danvers, Il 1966- 1967
Terri 4th Grade-------66-67
Tommie 3rd Grade -----66-67
Tony 1st Grade -------66-67
Moved to Florida November 1967

DeFuniak Springs, Fl
Terri 5th Grade 67-68-----Maude Saunders
Tommie 4th Grade------67-68 West DeFuniak

Tony 2nd Grade----West DeFuniak

Terri 6th Grade 68-69----Maude Saunders
Tommie 5th Grade-------68-69 West DeFuniak
Tony 3rd Grade-------West DeFuniak
Tammy Kindergarten------West DeFuniak

Terri 7th Grade 69-70-----Walton Junion High
Tommie 6th Grade 69-70---West DeFuniak
Tony 4th Grade Maude Saunders
Tammy 1st Grade West DeFuniak
Tonja Kindergarten

Terri 8th Grade 70-71------Walton Junior High
Tommie 7th Grade Walton Junior High
Tony 5th Grade Maude Saunders
Tammy 2nd Grade West DeFuniak
Tonja 1st Grade West DeFuniak

Terri 9th - 12th Walton Senior High 1971 – May 1975
Tommie 8th Grade Walton Junior High---71 – 72
Tony 6th Grade Walton Junior High
Tammy 3rd Grade West DeFuniak
Tonja 2nd Grade West DeFuniak

In February of 1971 we did go back to Illinois (Pontiac) and stayed with Aunt Dean (I think about 6 weeks) and all of you attended a one room schoolhouse in the country not too far from her house.

Tommie 9th - 12th Walton Senior High 1972 – 1976
Tony 7th Grade Walton Middle School 72 – 73
Tammy 4th Grade West DeFuniak

Tonja 3rd Grade West DeFuniak

Tony 8th Grade Walton Middle School 73 – 74
Tammy 5th Grade West DeFuniak
Tonja 4th Grade West DeFuniak

Tony 9th - 12th Walton Senior High 74 – 78
Tammy 6th Grade Walton Middle School 74 – 75
Tonja 5th Grade West DeFuniak

Tammy 7th Grade Walton Middle School 75 -76
Tonja 6th Grade Walton Middle School
Tracy Kindergarten Maude Saunders taken out mid-year and enrolled in Galilean Academy

Tammy 8th Grade Walton Middle School 76 – 77
Tonja 7th Grade Walton Middle School
Tracy 1st Grade Galilean Academy

Tammy 9 - 12th Walton High School 1978 – 1981
Tonja 8th Grade Walton Middle School 77 – 78
Tracy 2nd Grade Galilean Academy

Tonja 9th - 12th Walton High School 1979 – 1982
Tracy 3rd - 4th Galilean Academy

Tracy 5th Grade Maude Saunders 81-82
6th - 8th Walton Middle School 1982 – 1985
9th – 10 Walton High School 1985 – 1987
Graduated On Line Course

My children's 1st day of School Memories:

Terri Murphy: I remember you registering me for Kindergarten, playing in a sandbox with a girl named Patty (who was harelipped) and eating vanilla ice cream from one of those little cups with the wooden spoons while you were registering me. I DO NOT remember my first day.

Tommie Gipson: Well, I remember my first day of college like it was yesterday. I also remember my first day of high school. And going from West DeFuniak to the Middle School for the first time in sixth grade is also well recorded in my memory banks.

Some other first days of school I remember:
First day going to West DeFuniak in fourth grade after moving from Danvers (it was the middle of the school year). First day going to Danvers in second grade after moving from Stanford (it was the middle of the school year). First day going to Stanford in first grade after moving from Chenoa (it was the middle of the school year). But that's about it. I do not remember my first day of kindergarten or first grade at Chenoa. I remember going to Chenoa and riding the bus and the first "Dick and Jane" reader from first grade, but on the actual first day of school I am drawing a blank.

Tammy Clark: We lived in Florida and it was that school that had the long brick building with several classrooms - not West End - the other one. As far as 1st day - it was

Kindergarten (we were the first kindergarten class - same principal when I graduated high school - i know cause he said in his speech at graduation). I remember mom leaving the classroom and walking up a small grassy hill. My room was farthest on the left if facing the building. The chalkboard was on the right wall of the room with the alphabet across the top towards the ceiling. The rest is bits and pieces like remembering something I dreamed about - kids, toys, teacher as far as 1st day - it was Kindergarten. I remember you leaving up the small grassy hill. I remember standing in a circle and the kids all singing - what I'd later learn was the alphabet. I assume that this was my first day of school, not the first day of school for these kids. They knew this song that I did not know. I mostly remember wanting to leave with you though not sure you knew that. I was just shocked when I stayed and you left.

No Memories from:
Tony Gipson
Tonja Bowdoin
Tracy Huntington

I REMEMBER WHEN Terri was born:
I remember the morning you were born. We had gone to a movie that evening in a little sports car that had no door or windows, very low to the ground and you just stepped into it. As we came home we were laughing and talking about how funny it would be if I started into labor and we were in that car. Well in the wee hours of the morning I did start into labor but thankfully we had another car available and later that morning on July 7th, 1957 I gave birth to a beautiful baby girl. Weighing in at 7lbs 11 ½ oz. @8:42 a.m.

I REMEMBER WHEN Tommie was born:
I remember the evening I started labor with you. Went by Mom and Dad's to let them know that we were on our way to the hospital and she had some pork chops and mashed potatoes and gravy on the table and I was starving so I got me a plate and sat down to eat with Mom fussing at me the whole time that I better be going. That night on July 30, 1958, I gave birth to a beautiful baby boy. Weighing in at 7 lbs 14 oz. @7:01 p.m.

I REMEMBER WHEN Tony was born:
I remember the evening you were born, I called Loretta for a ride to the hospital and she came and got me but when we got to the hospital she went running in, leaving me in the car yelling my sister is having a baby in my car please go get her. By the time your dad got me checked in you were here and that night on October 17, 1960, I gave birth to a beautiful baby boy. Weighing in at 8 lbs. @ 8:53 p.m.

I REMEMBER WHEN Tammy was born:
I remember the evening you were born, I was watching "The Fugitive" part II. I never missed this show and they never had it in two episodes until last week and they showed part one and I had been waiting all week to see part II and about 10 minutes before it started so did you. I tried to wait but too no avail. You had made up your mind that this was the night. So on March 3, 1964 I gave birth to a beautiful baby girl. Weighing in at 7 lbs 8 ½ ozs @ 11:22 p.m.

I REMEMBER WHEN Tonja was born:
I remember the night you were born I was at Mom's and told her I needed to go to the hospital and she said if I was sure to get off her good chair and when I got up and moved over to an old chair she got really excited. You were born on the same day your cousin was and in the same hospital. When you arrived they put me and Aunt Belva in the same room. On December 14th, 1965 I gave birth to a beautiful baby girl. @6:50 p.m.

I REMEMBER WHEN Tracy was born:
I remember the morning you were born. We lived only a few blocks from the hospital and when I went to see Dr. McCormick on my office visit he was never in a white coat but he told me that when you were born I would see him in his white coat……Didn't happen you came so fast that when I saw Dr. McCormick there he was in a tee-shirt. ☺ And on the morning of January 7th, 1971 I gave birth to a beautiful baby girl. Weighing in at 10lbs 3 ozs. @3:32 a.m.

Thought I would add another memory for you……

I remember the morning Tod was born. We were living in Pontiac, Il and I woke up Sunday morning having a few pains so I called the prison where your Dad worked and left word for him to come straight home I was ready to go to the hospital, I waited and he never called back so I called Aunt Dean and Uncle Harry came over to take me to the hospital, well I wanted to give your Dad a little more time to get there but if you had known Uncle Harry you would know that he didn't take that real well, he was a little on the nervous side. ☺ Anyway after about 30 minutes of him pacing back and forth and saying come on and lets go I will go by and get Tom after I take you to the hospital. So I finally gave in and we left. When we arrived at St. James Hospital the nurses and your Dad were about ready to send a cab after me, he had been there for a while waiting on us and was getting a little anxious. The message he had gotten had told him we were on our way to meet us at the hospital. And on the morning of May 27th, 1962 I gave birth to a beautiful baby boy weighing in at 8 lbs 8ozs. @11:57 a.m.

Tod Jason, although you have went on to be with the Lord we still miss you. You will always be in our hearts. I love you, Mom

Here are the lyrics to Barbara's favorite gospel song that was often sang in church by her two oldest children:

Never Alone
Author:Anonymous

First Verse:
I've seen the lightning flashing
And heard the thunder roll,
I've felt sin's breakers dashing,
which tried to conquer my soul;
I've heard the voice of my Savior,
He bid me still fight on:
He promised never to leave me,
Never to leave me alone.

Refrain:
No, never alone,
No, never alone;
He promised never to leave me,
Never to leave me alone:
No, never alone,
No, never alone:
He promised never to leave me,
Never to leave me alone.

Second Verse:
The world's fierce winds are blowing–
Temptation's sharp and keen;
I have a peace in knowing

My Savior stands between;
He stands to shield me from danger
When all my friends are gone:
He promised never to leave me,
Never to leave me alone.

Refrain:
No, never alone,
No, never alone;
He promised never to leave me,
Never to leave me alone:
No, never alone,
No, never alone:
He promised never to leave me,
Never to leave me alone.

Here is another one of Barbara's favorite gospel songs:

Count Your Blessings
Text: Johnson Oatman Jr., 1856–1922
Music: Edwin O. Excell, 1851–1921

First Verse:
When upon life's billows you are tempest-tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings; name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

Refrain:
Count your blessings;
Name them one by one.
Count your blessings;
See what God hath done.
Count your blessings;
Name them one by one.
Count your many blessings;
See what God hath done.

Barbara followed her father and grandmother and great grandmother's footsteps by being a committed follower of Jesus.

Like her grandmother Bessie, Barbara's life spoke to all who knew her. Her life told others about love, laughter, compassion, commitment to her family, and having faith in Jesus.

At Barbara's funeral, each of her six children wrote a final letter to her that was read by her pastor. Here are excerpts from each of their letters.

Terri:

I hate that I will not hear good mornings and good nights from you.

I hate that I can't run over to your house and rock in your swing with you while I bend your ear about my latest drama or vent to you or listen to your voice.

I hate that you will no longer be bugging me about working on our Thanksgiving Menu and did I set up the time and so on..

I hate that you aren't here to make me laugh or listen to me cry.

I hate that I will no longer get to watch your beautiful smiling face interacting with my children and grandchildren.

I hate that you are gone.

I love that you taught me laughter is always a good thing and a smile changes everything.

I love that you have impacted my life so much that I'll always hear you in my head.

I love that I will never fully be without you because you are a part of me.

I love that I have always known I was loved by you, no matter what.

I love that you have, without exception, been there for me and my family.

I love that you never made me feel like you had expectations that I never met.

I love that you taught me to always look for the bright side.

I love that you loved Jesus and shared that love everywhere. You were a shining light in my darkest hours.

I love that you showed me that I am never without hope and never alone.

“She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come. She speaks with wisdom and faithful instruction is on her tongue… Her children call her blessed… Many women do noble things but you surpass them all” Psalms 31

Tommie:

I will miss how you always did something for us on the 12 days before Christmas. It began with you giving each of your grandchildren 12 small gifts to be opened on each of the 12 days before Christmas every year. No small feat when you have to wrap 12 gifts for each of your 20 grandchildren. Kathy really appreciated how much easier the kids behaved, knowing they could open a gift from grandma every day just before Christmas.

I will miss how every year since 2011 you gave each of us kids a bag with 12 sets of eyes you printed and made us guess who they belonged to on our family Facebook page.

Speaking of Christmas, I will definitely miss your Christmas cheeseballs. I gave you the recipe for the cheeseballs in 1979 from a lady I met in college. You have made them every single year since then.

I will miss our siblings nights where you and your kids would go out to eat with no grandchildren or great grandchildren allowed, giving us time to really catch up on each other's lives.

Mom, I will miss your encouragement, your unconditional love and support, and just knowing that I could always count on you to help me see the silver lining when the clouds got dark. But mom, I think most of all, I will miss hearing you laugh and seeing you smile.

Thank you for all of the wonderful memories you have given us and for being the best example anyone could ever have of what it means to love others.

Tony:

You taught me to always know that I had value, that know matter what, there were abilities that God created in me that were unique in only me, and that this was something that nobody could take away. That this uniqueness was something to be proud of, but at the same time to be humbled by. Because this difference was put there in order for me to serve my fellow man, not to gloat over people with. It was to show my love for family and friends when words just weren't enough or easily spoken.

You were also the foundation in my life. You showed me at an early age that no matter what I did , no matter how badly I failed and no matter how wrong my decision, you would always be there. This gave me the courage to go out and try new and difficult things. I could always rest assured that even if I failed I would only fall so far before I would feel your loving arms there to catch me, to lift me back up and give me the strength to try again.

Tammy:

I know I'll look around at this gathering today and see so many lives touched by your heart, your helping hands, non-judging acceptance and contagious laughter. Your

home was always open. You took in our friends, and sometimes strangers, without a second thought.

Birthdays were the best. I don't recall store bought gifts. What I remember are the treasure hunts from hand written poems you'd made, that we were allowed to choose our family dinner, we had no chores and no one was allowed to pick on the birthday child.

It was all about God and family, you never judged others and let your children live the life path God has given us. You did this in love, and patience, knowing Who is really the Gardner.

Growing up under your wings, I recall and strive to live life lessons like “if you can’t say something nice , don’t say anything at all” and “God will never put on you more than you can handle without providing a way of escape”.

You always leaned on the One that could make a better way. You always found humor in the most trying situations. In Him, I'll rest, as you taught me by example.

Tonja:

I have had the honor of growing up in a home full of love and laughter. I want to thank you Momma for the silliness in my life.

You taught me how to have fun. One of the first things that comes to mind is our Christmas eyes. It was a project that you worked on throughout the year. To the

outside a simple little game but for me and my siblings it was an opportunity to gather together on Facebook and make our guess, debate our different opinions, tease, joke and laugh and most of all it brought six children that live across a continent from each other together every day for twelve days leading up to Christmas – guessing whose eyes yes, but also telling stories, sharing lives and spending time together just like we did with every Christmas when all six of us was growing up in the same home.

You have a knack of being able to bring us together in ways that others would never consider. This last Christmas you presented us all with a beautiful video that I still can't watch without a box of Kleenex partly because of all the beautiful memories contained in it, the perfect combination of photos and music by our loved ones that speaks so much to the family you created and bonded.

Just two examples of how you dedicated your entire life to everyone around you. You served others, always putting yourself last.

As your child I have never feared failure because I knew you were there to catch me. You made me willing to take chances. That mindset has allowed me to conquer every challenge I have had through the years in business and in my personal life. Everything I am is because of you.

I am very thankful Mom, for all that you taught me; like how to live every moment to the fullest, to show

kindness in every situation, how to accept challenges without defeat, that a problem is just a situation waiting for my solution and no matter what in every breath I take to find the laughter.

You always had a way of making anyone that crossed your path feel special, accepted and loved and being your child, I was at the top of the list. I will miss you Momma. I will miss your voice, although I will hear it in every decision I make. I will miss your embrace, although I will feel your loving touch surrounding me every time life gets hard.

I will miss your smile, although I will see it every cloudless day. I will miss your laughter all though I will embrace it in every shared memory. Because you spent your life loving me unconditionally, I will continue to know that love in every breath I take.

In following your example, I promise you that I will not take one moment for granted. I will create new memories and keep you alive in the hearts of my children and grandchildren.

Tracy:

Everyone that knew you saw nothing but happiness and the love of Jesus shine through you.

I miss my morning talks with you and the surprising texts throughout the day just to say you love me. You always

found the good in every situation, and you always loved people unconditionally.

You always taught me to find the positive in every situation in my life. You taught me to live by faith.

I don't recall a time in my life when I saw you angry or mad. You are my inspiration, especially your unconditional love and how you never met a stranger.

You made the broken look beautiful. You walked with the universe on your shoulders and made it look like a pair of wings…

I will follow in your footsteps and you will live forever in my heart.

Bessie influenced many lives, including Barbara's, whose life influenced even more lives. Bessie left a legacy and witnessed many changes in the world around her during her lifetime.

By the time of Bessie's death most people no longer had to work from sunrise to sunset just to make ends meet. Meals could be prepared in minutes, clothes washed and dried in a couple of hours, and things like candles and soap could be bought rather than made.

The period from 1888 to 1973 saw rapid advancements in many areas of technology, including electricity and electronics, transportation, and communication. These innovations had a profound impact on the way people lived, worked, and communicated.

Electricity and Electronics: The invention of the dynamo by Charles Brush in 1888 marked the beginning of the electrical age and paved the way for the widespread adoption of electrical power. This led to the development of a wide range of new electrical and electronic technologies, including the telephone, the radio, and the television. The first commercially successful radio broadcast was made in 1920, and television broadcasting began in the 1930s. In 1947, Bell Labs developed the transistor, which revolutionized electronics by making it possible to create smaller and more reliable devices.

Transportation: The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw significant advancements in transportation technology, including the widespread adoption of the automobile and the introduction of commercial air travel. The Wright Brothers made the first successful powered flight in 1903, and commercial air travel became widely available in the 1930s. The introduction of the Model T by Henry Ford in 1908 marked the beginning of mass production of automobiles and made car ownership more affordable for the average person.

Communication: The widespread adoption of the telephone, the telegraph, and the postal system in the late 19th and early 20th centuries revolutionized communication and made it possible for people to communicate quickly and easily over long distances. The introduction of long-distance telephone service in 1915 allowed people to call each other across the country, and the widespread adoption of the telegraph allowed for near-instant communication between distant cities.

At the time of Bessie's death, in 1973, technology in the United States was in a state of transition. The 1960s and early 1970s saw rapid advancements in many areas of technology, including computer science, telecommunications, and electronics.

Computers: Mainframe computers were widely used in government, military, and large corporations, but were still relatively rare in homes and small businesses. The first commercially available microcomputer, the Altair 8800, was introduced in 1975.

Telecommunications: The widespread adoption of telephone networks allowed for voice communication to become an everyday tool for millions of people. The first commercially available cellular network was launched in the United States in 1983.

Television: Color television sets became widely available in the 1970s, and cable TV was starting to become popular in urban areas.

Consumer electronics: Portable consumer electronics such as transistor radios and cassette players were becoming increasingly popular. The first home video game console, the Magnavox Odyssey, was released in 1972.

Transportation: The 1970s saw a transition from muscle cars to more fuel-efficient vehicles, as gasoline prices rose due to the oil crisis. The first commercial passenger jet, the Boeing 747, was introduced in 1970, and air travel became more accessible to the general public.

While many modern technologies were still in their early stages of development in 1972, the foundation was being laid for the technological revolution that would take place in the following decades.

In fact during the fifty years following Bessie's death, the evolution of technology in the United States from 1973 to 2023 was tremendous, with rapid advancements in many areas including computing, telecommunications, entertainment, transportation, and medicine.

Computing: The personal computer revolution started in the late 1970s and early 1980s with the introduction of the Apple II and the IBM PC. Since then, computers have become smaller, more powerful, and more affordable, making them accessible to an increasing number of people. The Internet, which started as a network for government and academic researchers, has since become a global network connecting billions of people and devices. The rise of the World Wide Web in the 1990s made the Internet more accessible and user-friendly, leading to the growth of e-commerce, social media, and other online services.

Telecommunications: The widespread adoption of cellular networks has revolutionized telecommunications, allowing people to stay connected from virtually anywhere. The introduction of smartphones in the late 2000s has transformed the way people communicate and access information. The rise of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram has created new opportunities for communication and self-expression.

Entertainment: The evolution of technology has also transformed the entertainment industry, with the introduction of cable TV, home video game consoles, and the growth of the Internet leading to the rise of streaming services like Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime Video.

Transportation: Technology has also had a major impact on transportation, with the introduction of electronic fuel

injection, hybrid and electric vehicles, and the development of self-driving car technology.

Medicine: In the field of medicine, technology has revolutionized the way healthcare is delivered and has led to the development of new treatments and cures for a wide range of diseases. Advances in medical imaging, such as CT scans and MRIs, have greatly improved diagnostic capabilities, while the growth of electronic health records has improved the efficiency and accuracy of patient care.

Technology in the United States from 1973 to 2023 touched virtually every aspect of daily life. From the way people communicate and accessed information, to the way they worked, played, and received medical care, technology transformed the world in countless ways.

In the fifty years since her death, Bessie's great great grandchildren now have cell phones that can take photos, play music, talk to people across the world, look at weather information, play games, watch movies, and do many amazing things - they live in the world of the internet where instant communication and access to free and accurate knowledge is at their fingertips.

While Bessie saw tremendous advancements during her life, she would be shocked to see the world fifty years after her death. Yet, her blood still runs through the veins of Terri, Michelle, and Gabby. So in a way, a part of Bessie is still experiencing changes that have made life easier than when Bessie was a young lady..



Seven generations of the oldest surviving child in two photos.

Left photo: Sitting from left - Maggie, Bessie, Barbara (child); standing - Roy.

Right photo: Back row from left - Barbara, Terri; front row from left - Gabby, Michelle

Interesting Facts About Bessie:

- Bessie died in 1973, **23** years later Roy died in 1996, **23** years later Barbara died in 2019.
- Bessie received her birth certificate on 7/7/52 (Terri was born on 7/7/57).
- George was saved on 4/9/33. Bessie died on 4/9/73, exactly 40 years later.
- Bessie was the oldest of six children, yet she outlived all of her siblings.
- Lincoln connections: Bessie was born in the same county where Lincoln is buried. She was married in Lincoln, IL (the only town named for Lincoln while he was alive). Bessie died at her son's home on Lincoln Ave in Valparaiso, FL.

This concludes the book “Till All Shall See” about the life of Bessie Ross and seven generations of the oldest surviving child. Bessie witnessed many changes in her life, but through it all she was a committed follower of Jesus, walking in the Light, and following the path of peace and love. Her influence in the lives of her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren made each of them better and stronger.

Her faith was and is a shining light for others to see and to know that the best treasures are not to be found in the things of the world.

Rest in peace Bessie. You are greatly missed by those who knew and loved you.

Here are more lyrics from Bessie’s favorite gospel song:
Have Thine Own Way
By Adelaide A. Pollard (1906)

Last Verse:
Have thine own way, Lord!
Have thine own way!
Hold o'er my being
absolute sway.
Fill with thy Spirit
till all shall see
Christ only, always,
living in me!

The End