

1976

① Laura Alger (allie) white meadows. 1866-1930 (Grandmother). Grandmother was the oldest child of J.K. White (James Kenyon). She had two brothers, Baines, and Freeman. ^{Sisters - gemme} Four half sisters. Two half brothers.

Grandmother was a large woman. Five feet, seven or eight inches tall. Had almost black, brown eyes. Long, thick black hair. She wore it pulled back tight in a big bun. When any of it escaped the bun, it would be in curly drake tails. ^{she had deep} Deep dimples. ^{was} Very erect, and never had any extra weight. I never thought of her as pretty, or not pretty - She was just Grandmother.

She ^{ruled} ~~ruled~~ her brood with a gentle, but iron hand. There was very little give and take about her. You were either right, or you were wrong. You could go, or you could not go. There were few maybes.

Grandfather said she either had a big heart, or lots of curiosity. She took in everybody in that came to their door, and he was never sure if she thought it might be the Lord in disguise, or she just wanted to ask them a lot of questions. But - take them in, she did. Not only, Sister, Waddy and me, but Grandpa's niece, Georgia Parter, and an orphan boy,

② Claude Oliver. Then quiet a few, who only stayed, from a meal, to a year or two.

I have completely forgotten anything she might have told me concerning her young years. (only this - she had a pet goose with only one leg. Her Pa made it a peg leg. In the mornings she would fasten the peg leg on the goose and take it off at night.) Know she was married to Joseph Sebbes Meadows in 1883. They lived in Harris County, Ga. Had eight children; Nannie, Joseph Sebbes Jr., Ada, Almedia, Emma Mae, Berry Grady and Mildred. Mildred ^{was} born in Montgomery.

In 18¹⁹⁰⁰ they moved from Harris County to Montgomery, Alabama. Grandmother was "in failing health" at that time. After Grady, her seventh child was born, she had milk leg fever and could not nurse him. Lucy, a Negro woman who lived on the plantation and had grown up with Grandmother (a daughter of Meadows' former slaves) had a small baby at that time too. So Lucy would nurse both her son Buck, and Grady. Grandmother was not able to make the grueling, ^{almost} two hundred mile trip by wagon. So she stayed behind, keeping little sickly Emma Mae with her. They came later by train.

Grandmother said the hardest thing

(3) she had ever faced, was when those three, heavily loaded wagons, pulled out of the yard, on that cold, late winter morning, with her husband, six of her children, Lucy, Little Lucy, Buck, Black Otis (tired hand) All their worldly possessions - including, 'seeds to put in' in the spring, syrup, potatoes, meat, lard. Two milk cows - tied to the backs of the wagons and two dogs. It took them twenty days to make the "journey" Aunt Lucy said, "they walked most of the way" They would camp along the way at night. Sometimes near a spring or stream. Sometimes at houses. But - make it they did! And Grandpa said, "none the less for wear".

Grandpa was an overseer in the L & N railroad yards at Montgomery for about ^{fifteen} ~~seventeen~~ years. One day he was accidentally "dragged" by a loose box car, that almost cost him his life. When he was finally "on his feet" again - we moved to Eclectic Alabama some thirty or forty miles from Montgomery. There he sank a small fortune in a farm, stock, tools and equipment. We had only lived there ~~a year or~~ ^{two or three years} two, when one night Grandmother was milking one of the cows, the cow whirled to run at a dog and knocked Grandmother

- ④ Over and ^{breaking} broke her hip. While she was still in bed, our house caught fire and burned to the ground. In getting her out of the house, ~~they~~ ^{she} broke her hip, and she was never able to walk again without the aid of a crutch. (~~at~~ a later page)

In 1918, their children had all married except Emmet Mae and Brady. Grandpa was "in failing health" and Grandmother Crippled, so they sold the farm and moved to Shawmut where they lived until their deaths. Grandpa did brick work there tho, for several years.

I never thought of Sister and me as orphans for a minute. To me Grandmother was all anyone could wish for ^{as} a mother until my own child began to grow up. Our relationship made me know then, and only then, that we had the best Grandmother in the world - but not a mother.

I was big enough to say the Lords prayer before I ever went to bed. I would go to sleep in somebodys lap every night, and was carried to bed. There were always plenty of laps; Grandmothers, Grandpas, Aunt Lucys, Em's or Maddy's. Sister too, was often carried to bed, ~~she~~ because she would go to sleep at the table. I never remember

⑤ feeling unloved, or needful of anything when we were little girls

Grandpa usually used poor ^{financial} ~~financial~~ judgement - what he didn't mis-spend, he would give away, but we never felt poor. We had as much as those around us, and more than some.

No, they didn't leave us any money, but they bequeathed to us more than a legacy. - A sense of appreciation for the true values of life. Those, they instilled in us always.

Aunt Lucy lived with, or very near us most of her life. Later Grandmother said of her. "I never thought of Lucy as black, or any color. She was just as dear a friend as any one could have - Too often I've seen Grady at one breast and Buck at the other. If one was black as soot, the other shining white, I never noticed. I just knew the boys were getting their fill and growing like weeds. Lucy was never more than an arm's length from me. All I had to do was reach out. I tried always to be the same for her."

That pretty well sums up Grandmother Race, color, creed near your station

⑥ in life, mattered not one iota to her. It was what you were that counted!

To me, she was very A. O. K.

✧ They.

They — were Grady and Emma now.

Uncle Freeman and his family, lived several miles from us. Grady had been spending a few days with them, helping Uncle Freeman cut stove wood and fire wood. He was bringing Grady home — This is the way Uncle Freeman told about the fire: "We were riding along at a fair clip and we noticed this awful black smoke up ahead. Grady said, 'Uncle Freeman that looks right in line with our house', I said, 'No, son I don't think so', but I really began to use the whip on the horse. As we rounded a curve there, I knew it was 'in line'. I said, Grady that's your papa's new barn, he used a lot of heart pine in that thing, but I was standing up in the buggy then, pouring on the whip. ^{then} ~~As~~ we came ^{forward} around that last stand of pines we ~~could~~ ^{did not} ~~see~~ ^{saw} the flames leaping a mile high out of the top of the house. There the road curved around goes out field. Grady stood up, then I ~~scraped~~ ^{scraped out} over those buggy wheels like an eagle — hit the ground running, without

⑦ even bending his knees. Sailed over ^a that barbed wire fence like it was laying on the ground, and as long as there's life in my body I will hear ~~the~~ his almost inhuman scream, "Mama I'm coming". Grady was bout seventeen, but all legs. When I got there he was coming out of the house with his mama in his arms - Poor little Emma Mae had pulled and tugged - (Allie was bigger than Emma Mae and Grady put together), but she'd got her mama on a chair and was trying to pull her out when Grady got there. The roof would have got them both if Grady hadn't got there when he did." P.S. That's ^{the} the only time I ever remember being slapped. We were at ^{the} school house, about a half a mile away, but there were thick woods between our house and the school house. When someone noticed the smoke and flames, they ~~shouted~~ ^{shouted} - "Mr. Meadows's house is on fire". We were all running toward the door - Miss Singletree grabbed me, but told the big boys to run run run! I was tugging, pulling, leaping and screaming - "My Grandmacker, my Grandmacker - she's burning up - she can't get out - oh she's burning up. Miss Singletree slapped me hard across the face - then covered me up in her arms where I couldn't see, and rocking

⑧ back and forth, she kept cooing - "No no no. She's alright - your Grandmother is alright. She's alright."

In case you are wondering - Grandpa had gone to town - to buy Christmas goodies. It was the 19th day of December.

A few recollections, of Aunt Lucy's journey.

Sometimes I would find Aunt Lucy sitting by her fire, mending. I would be so glad - then she would have time to tell me things. And especially about the "journey". I never tired of that. Then she would tell how, after the boys milked the cows, she would strain the milk into one of the Churns. The next night the milk would clabber and the next morning she would put a lid on it, tie it down tight with a cloth. Set it "tween", ^{skinner} in one of the wagons. As they traveled during the day, the rocking, bumping movements of the wagon would churn the ~~clabber~~ milk. And that night she would gather a big bowl of butter from the milk.

If they ^{got} traveled late, she would only cook bread. Spread the soft butter on it and ^{they would} eat it with syrup. Other times she

⑨ would fry big "rashers" of ham and have red eye gravy. "Heap o days de dogs jump a rabbit. One ~~de~~ de boys ~~er~~ er Mist Joe jerk a gun out de wagon and go after rim. Sometimes two three, sometimes fo a day. Dat night we cooked late - gittem done."

"Tell me how you would sleep" I'd say.

"Well, two wagons had kivers on em, wuz it raining, we'd all sleep in dem two wagons - all ~~de~~ de gals in one, all de mens in one, we'd utrop i selfs up good in kivers an fo you knowed it, hit ~~de~~ done he moanin" Were you afraid? I'd ask.

"Oo what? "Bears" - "Wont no bears"

"Oo buggerbears". "Wont no buggerbears".

"Tell me about Black Otis and Uncle Berry fighting." Day de meaner boys, day Allus fightin. One night day keep jawin an hitin an walrin. Day roll too close to de far - Mist Joe say - 'Lucy I wish youd Thresh de far out dem boys I hat em whoped all over fo day knowed what hat em". She must have told me that fifty times and it always tickled me to pieces, cause ol Black Otis and Uncle Berry got a whipping. Oo

⑩ Course they were full grown when I knew them, and to me they had always been full grown - maybe that's why it tickled me so.

Later, Grady and Buck fought too. Who ever was closest, Aunt Lucy or Grandmother, did the "threshing". I remember once, Grady and Buck were in the back yard, down on the ground fighting. Aunt Lucy appeared out of the blue and "hat em" whooped all over so they knowe what hat em". I remember Aunt Lucy mumbling about "messin up day close", but as the boys passed by me, Grady said, "Buck, don't cry a lick". Buck said, "I aint. Don't you neither".

Another thing I remember about the journey when they came to a long steep hill. Grandpa and the boys would unhitch the mules from one wagon, leave it. Hitch four mules to the wagon going up first. Or if it was necessary they would hitch six mules to one wagon. Go up, come back, hitch to the next, until they were all at the top.

They too, were pioneers. They didn't reach the moon, but they were on their way.