

THE DESCENDENTS OF JOHN RUFUS AND ADA ANN WRIGHT VERNON

I, Evola Vernon Hawks, was born March 23, 1926, the fourth daughter of John Rufus and Ada Ann Wright Vernon, in a log house on a small thirty-nine acre farm which had been deeded to my father by his parents, Paschal and Mary Ann Turney Vernon. Originally, the farm was part of a grant given to Nehemiah Vernon in 1860 which reached from the top of Skull Camp Mountain to Beaver Dam Creek. Dad's acreage was located about half way between Beulah (called Bottom at that time) and Lowgap on highway 89. The home still stands across from Mt. Vernon Baptist Church.

When I was a baby, Dad moved us to Pine Ridge where he operated a grocery Store. My earliest memory was being cared for by a neighbor lady, Miss Nannie Robertson and her sister. They lived across the road from our house. Much of the time we lived at Pine Ridge was mother was in poor health and in the hospital in Mt. Airy. My next memory was of seeing my grandfather, Andrew Fuller Wright, walking from the store to our house. I think I loved him from that moment. He was a tall, slim, neat guy with a mustache he trimmed each Sunday morning. I have fond memories of Miss Nanny bathing us girls, putting on our long flannel gowns, which mom had made us, and walking the four of us down to the store to be rocked to sleep by Dad and Grandpa Wright or any neighbors who had gathered to pass the time. The house and store were close enough for Dad to keep an eye on us. Grandpa was a big help and a kind gentleman, but he didn't mind disciplining us when we needed it. All he had

to do was look at us, point to chair or place on the floor with his cane, and we knew to sit down immediately for as long as he wanted us to without saying a word.

Our sister, Ruth, was born at Pine Ridge January 25, 1928, making five girls in all. Mary Emma was the oldest. She was born April 4, 1919. Annie Catherine was born June 7, 1922. Nellie Faye was born February 10, 1924, and, as mentioned before, I was born March 23, 1926.

Grandpa operated a grain mill near the house which was run by an engine and long belts. It was a very noisy place, and we were not allowed inside while it was running. Grandpa also took care of the mending the farm tools and keeping the saws sharp. An accident that took place in Grandpa's shed while Hobert and Bob Linville were sharpening an axe resulted in my first ride in an automobile. Grandpa had driven a metal wedge into a spoke of the grinding wheel that they were using. For some unknown reason, I stuck out my right index finger and got it caught in the metal wedge. A neighbor with a car with canvas curtains for windows took me to the home of Dr. Allen who put my severed finger in Iodine for a long, long, long time. The tip of the finger, which was held on by a small piece of skin, was put back into place and bound tightly. Doc Allen must have known what he was doing because the finger grew back together and except for the tip of the finger being slightly crooked, you would never know that it had been injured.

My first experience with school was at Pine Ridge,

which was the one-room school house that my older sisters attended. Emma would often let me go along to school with them. As far back as I can remember, Emma was a little "Mom" to me.

When I was five years old, we moved back to the farm. Dad had used all his resources trying to keep the grocery business going, but we were in a deep depression and families had no money, even for food. As long as Dad had merchandise, he let our neighbors have what they had to have to feed their families. When everything was gone, we had no choice but to move back to the farm. We were very fortunate to have a farm to move back to and to have a mother who always seemed to find plenty to cook, and a good cook she was. I can't remember ever going hungry.

During the Depression, Dad went to work for WPA as a foreman. As a result, we weathered the Depression better than some. Dad's biggest job was helping build rock bridges and walls on the Parkway. He also helped lay out trails at the Raven Knob and Fox Hunter's Paradise roadside parks.

Life on the farm was typical of the depression years shared by all. We saw good and bad times. Neighbor helped neighbor. Because of the long distance to the store or because of the scarcity of money, neighbors would often borrow from each other-sugar, salt, meal, milk, butter or what ever was need. But I can't remember many bad times. I

have special memories of the good times we had playing in Camp Creek which ran near our house, and of building play houses in the woods. Grandpa Wright would help us build tables and benches between trees. We sectioned off rooms by tying strings from tree to tree so that each of us could have her own "room". Grandpa would also make toys for us in his blacksmith shop, which was out behind the tobacco barn. I spent many a day pumping the billows to keep the coals hot so grandpa could get the iron hot enough to mold into tools for farm work . When I wasn't busy, he would tell me to go play in a pile of sand he had put in one corner of the shop.

While the times we played together stand out in my mind, we really didn't have much time for playing. We were in the fields of corn or tobacco at sunrise usually with grandpa because Dad's work kept him away from home much of the time in those days. At exactly noon grandpa would have us quit for lunch. By 1:00 we would be back at work for another two or three hours.

Six years after Ruth was born, another girl was born. Betty Lou was born May 11, 1934. She was followed by Launith, who was born August 25, 1936, and by Willie Francis, who was born September 9, 1938. We finally got a baby brother, John Rufus, jr., who was born October 15, 1939. With so many little ones in the family at that time, it was necessary for one of us to stay at the house to help babysit. My older sister Nell usually got this job.

Our social life consisted of visiting a neighbor about once a week. Together with other children we would play hide and seek or "Tin Can". We always looked forward to Friday nights when Dad would come home from working in Elkin where he boarded with a family while he worked at

paving streets. He would bring home cubed steaks that Mom would cook until nice and brown. She always fixed plenty of gravy and creamed potatoes to go with the steak. What a treat. Sometimes Dad would take Ruth and me to town on Saturday, but we had to stay in the car while he took care of business. He would park near a fruit stand on Pine Street. Dad would always get us some bananas and sometimes he would get us a piece of candy or a drink. We loved our day out with Dad.

After we moved back to the farm, Dad built a long addition on the back and the front of the log house. Part of the back was partitioned off to make a big kitchen for Mom. It seemed like Mom was always in the kitchen. She didn't want anyone "under foot" when she was cooking. When she wasn't cooking, she was usually in her vegetable garden, which was another one of her "off limits" places for us girls. She didn't want anyone trampling her vegetables. She also took care of straining the fresh milk and churning the butter. She was very particular when it came to handling food. This may be one of the reasons our house was one of the most popular stopping off places for people travelling up Highway 89. Mom fed everyone. We girls were often asked to sing our play for our guests, which was something we rarely looked forward to. Most of the housecleaning was left up to us girls. We also were responsible for milking the cows and washing the clothes. Grandpa was a big help

here, too. He would build a fire under a huge pot which had been filled with water from the creek, and we would scrub the clothes on a wash board using homemade lye soap.

I attended Beulah School from grade one through grade twelve. I can remember taking canned goods that we had canned during the summer to trade for school lunch tickets. We could also work in the cafeteria to pay for our lunches. During my high school years, I especially enjoyed playing basketball and other sports. When I wasn't involved in sports, I would get off the school bus at the home of a sick neighbor or of a family with a newborn baby who needed help. Sometimes I would spend the night in these homes. I was usually paid a quarter a day. While staying with Hattie and Boyd Brown, who had just had a baby daughter born to them, I met my future husband Paul Hawks. He was living with Hattie and Boyd and had just started attending Beulah School. We rode the same bus. This was in 1941, about three months before the start of WWII. We kept in touch while he was in the Navy and were married in 1947. We had a beautiful baby girl in 1948, whom we named Andrea Lee, after her great-grandpa Andrew Wright. A son, Gregory Paul, was born to us December 12, 1949. A third child, Michael Wayne, was born June 7, 1954. jExcept for the loss of Greg at the age of 26, it's been a good life. We've been blessed with eight wonderful grandchildren.

My sister Emma died at the age of sevnteen from complications from a ruptured appendix. Cassie married Haywood Smith, who died in a sawmill accident in 1967. Cassie raised nine children by herself. She is presently living in Richmond, Virginia. Nell married Robert McCall

who was an Army career man. While they were stationed in Alaska, Bob found out that he had cancer. Nell left Alaska with Bob and their five children and drove to Minnesota so Bob could go by his home place. They then went on to Fort Dix, New Jersey where Bob was to receive medical treatment, but he died shortly after they arrived. Nell still lives in New Jersey. Ruth married Robert Hice, who died in . Ruth has been a resident of the Lowgap community all her life. Betty Lou married Frank Mallory of Ashland, Virginia. She and Frank have made their home in Ashland. Launith married Joe Lawson. They have always lived in Surry County, except for the short time they lived in Indiana. Frances married Leon Moseley. They lived in Mt. Airy, Salisbury, Archdale, and Morganton, where Frances passed away. Leon was pastor of the Victory Baptist church in Morganton at the time Frances died. She is buried in the church cemetery. John Rufus, jr. married Betty Dalton and moved to Galax, Virginia where he worked as supervisor over the dye plant at a textile mill. Later he was transferred to Newton, N.C. Then his family moved to Charlotte where he worked as supervisor of another dye mill until his untimely death in 1991.