

The Life of

Edna

Forehand

Bissette

&

Poems

Compiled by David P. Bissette
July 2019

Edna

Elizabeth

Forehand

Bissette

Born: 12th. Jan. 1926

Died: 11th. Nov. 2018



Complied by: David P. Bissette
July, 2019

I Remember

By Edna F. Bissette

I remember mama giving me the crust off her biscuit each morning. She soaked it in her coffee. Having a special stool to sit on that daddy had made for me. When I didn't get my way, I sure I threw a fit! I was spoiled, because I had epilepsy (although at the time they just said, "I had fits") I remember pretending I was having one and fell off the front porch and the dog barking and everyone came running.

Once we (Louvenia and I) hid in the back of the Model-T with mama's permission. When daddy got to Mr. Shorty Lovette's store, we popped up. We were told not to go into the woods, because there was a bull dog tied up out there. We later found out they were selling bootleg whiskey and he had it hide in the woods. I next time I remember riding in the Model-T., we went to town. A friend who chewed tobacco sat in the front with daddy. Mama and us kids (4) sat in the back. Jim spat tobacco juice out the window and it flew back in our faces. Pretty yukie, we got really mad. We took the car to upper Black Creek P.B. Church. We drank water out of a gourd from a spring and it was cold and good. Everyone drank from the same gourd and no one worry about germs. The men sat on one side and the women on the other side, with the Negroes in the Amen corner. We also went to Little Nahunta P.B. Church, where daddy was a member.

There were no screens on the windows so we could jumped out of the windows of the house. The walls were natural color-no paint. The kitchen wasn't sealed on the walls. So when we had chicken for lunch we fought verbally over who would get the pulley bone. Then the two of us, we'd pull it apart. Whoever got the shortest piece, would get to put it over door. The first boy who came through would be your future husband! We very seldom remember we'd put it there by the time a boy came thru the door.

When a airplane passed over head all the kids ran out to see it and shouted, "Hey John Green in your flying machine." Airplanes were a real novelty then. Once a week the fishman came by on his truck, his name was Luther Forehand, the same last name as mine. He tired to feel us up ('cause our budding figure). We kids would holler "Fish man, Fish man" run and get the dish pan. Hot dogs were also a novelty. They were all link together and were delicious. I never eaten store bought bread, until I was in high school. Also once at a shower. The soup at school always smelled so good, but eating in the lunch room was out of our price range. We had peanut butter and crackers.

This guy name Jim McCandless came to see mama after daddy died. He used to chase us and once I jumped over the heater pipe and burnt my leg. As usual I lost my temper, got a match, struck it and held it to his neck. That was the last time he chased me. I don't remember having, but a doll. One year we got a doll and a carriage for Christmas. My sister Louvenia and I had to share it.

We had no outhouse, so we went behind the barn and squatted. Sears and Roebuck, corn cobs and leaves made an excellent toilet paper. Our play house was in the edge of the woods. We cleared a space and put tobacco string around for the walls. We used broken pieces of crockery for dishes, sticks for forks, leaves were our food and jars were our glasses. Sometimes we played under the house, it had no underpinning. Under the kitchen's wooden stove was a square cat hole in the floor. No mice, because of the cat could come in and out

when she pleased. I can't remember being bother with snakes. Once someone killed one and I picked it up and chased sister Dorothy down the road. In summer we climbed trees (like boys) and threw china balls down and whoever was below us. We would 'skinned the cat' on the apple tree, across the road. Played hop scotch in the front yard and jumped rope. We also stretched the rope acrossed and tied to see who could jumped the highest. Each Saturday we had to sweep the yard. We'd made a pattern in the sand that was like waves in your hair. We would get mad if anyone walked on it. Our yard brooms were made from reed and our house brooms was made of broom straw that we cut each year from a neighbor's field. Then we tied it with tobacco twine. We made balls out of twine and made 'cat's cradle', this was a game. We had chicken and eggs, the coop were made out of tobacco sticks. A piece of tin was used as the top and a piece of tin with bricks on it weight it down. The 'setting' hens were shut up seperate and the hens nest were nailed to the side of the barn. Getting eggs was fun, stepping on chicken manure wasn't fun. You haven't live until you've squashed chicken manure between your toes. We also had geninea hens. They were more or less wild and would not lay eggs in a nest. We had to watch them and hunt for their nest.

Each fall we had 'fall sores' on our legs from walking in high grass. I was allergic to fodder and grass. But I still had to help bring in in for the mule and cow. We once had a cow that would not stay shut up and after daddy died, mama sold the cow. In the first grade I got a whipping for standing up and watching. Mr. Gene Roberts moving to another school. He was principle the year, before I started. I also got my first kiss from Edwin Beamon. Him and Ralph Carraway chased me at recess and Edwin caught me and kissed me. In the lower grade I was in the Easter program. I got up on stage and recited a poem called "Easter Bunny". I still remember it at the age of 72. They also taught we to read music enough to know when to hold a note or go to higher or lower notes. We had a 'giant stride' on the play ground. It had a lot of chains hanging down from the top. You would grab a chain and swing around it. I was the one who wrapped around the others, because I was the smallest of my age. After you were wrapped everyone would run and this swang on straight out in the air. It was a wonder I didn't break my fool neck. We had big seesaw and regular swings. At the end of each year (the last day) the whole school had a picnic and graduation. Here I had my first taste of tea. Each parent brought a picnic lunch. In the second grade the teacher had each child put his head on the desk and she drew a letter on our heads. The pupils was supposed to guess what the letter was. Actually she was checking for head lice. Each year I had tonsillitis. I can't remember going a year without it, until I was grown. I also had diphtheria and almost died that time. They said, you could hear me breathing clear down to the road. Our doctor was Doctor Cooper Person.

Once I missed behaved and Christine and Dorothy chased me, they never caught me. I could out run both of them and hid under the house. Mama said, " night time is coming soon and she would come out." It was and I did. I crawled in my crib and covered up with a pillow and quits. Which mama removed and spanked my behind. Louvenia and I took turns sleeping with mama after daddy died. I'd go to on my night and warm mama's side (in the winter) and then slip over to the cold side of the bed. We only one fireplace to warm the house and kitchen stove. Water froze regularly in the kitchen. We slept on a feather bed and each spring we had to take the bed apart and wash everything and look for clinch bugs. We would pick ticks off our dog and burn them. I was real proud of warming mama's side of the bed. On hot nights we slept in the hall or on the front porch. Where there was a draft.

We picked cotton (mostly we sat on the bags) we poisoned cotton with molasses and

some kind of poison to kill the bow evils. In the spring we picked snap beans for ten cents a bushel to make our spending money. The field was where the Goldsboro Wayne Airport's runway is now. We also picked huckleberries where the Airport is now, part of that land belonged to mama and daddy. We used to walk to Mt. Caramel to put in tobacco or Uncle Steve came to get us. Aunt Beck did not feed us. Mama would get up early before day and cooked our lunch and carried it to us. There's nothing to compare with cold vegetables, when you've put in tobacco. We always had plenty to eat all home grown, hams especially if you've sneaked (swiped) a piece of new cured ham. After daddy died (I felt that he'd done it on purpose). The depression was on at the time, with Hoover carts and free shoes. I had a beauty tan pair with lacing around the back. It did not bother me that they were welfare shoes. Daddy repair our shoes while he was alive. He would nail new soles on them. Our socks were turned around with the holes on top so they would not show.

Once they had a red cross drive at school. Our teacher said, "If we'd bring a penny to school, she'd give us a 'red cross pin'". I wanted one so bad. I went home and asked mama for a penny. She said, "I would give you one, but I don't even have a penny." I was heart broken. I felt it was so unfair since everybody else would have one. That line still works today.

We sucked and top tobacco and wormed it. Instead of pulling them off with my bare hands, we would wrap them in a tobacco leaf and step on them. We tied tobacco as kids, but we were only allow to tie the trash leaves. We (Lou and I) fussed who would pack it down. We pulled dog funnels to get it in order and hung it out on damp nights to get it in order. We got up early before dawn to take it down, before the sun got up. If we step on a leaf you were in real trouble. We went with daddy as far as Farmville and Wilson to sell it. Daddy would let us sit on the piles. When the sell started, the auctioneer would say, "now lets give these little ladies a good price." He was talking to the buyers.

We were good at Jacks and Marbles and fought over everything. We could take a spool and sticks and a rubber band and make it crawl. We had tops and Shirley Temple paper dolls. Mama sold 'Cloverine Salve' to buy a Victrola. It was cream color and had a blue bird on the front. At first we fought to get a turn, to crank it. I remember "Red River Valley, A Barefoot Boy with Boots on." were the records. Later we fussed, because we had to turn the crank. Later we had a battery radio. The battery was about the size of a small car battery. We listened to "Lum & Arlene, Amos & Andy, Fibber McGee & Mollie". After daddy died we walked wherever we went. Sometimes mama could catch a ride with a neighbor and we'd go to Goldsboro and look in the stores (window shopping). Then we'd go back to the Best's Store on John St. and wait until whoever we'd rode with got ready to back home. Once we walked all the way to Goldsboro. We once got a boy's haircut at Greenleaf. Once in awhile we would walk to uncle Leonard's, over what is now Perkin's road. We'd would cut thru the woods and fields instead of going by the road. We'd seat dinner and walk back. I'd complain over how tired I was and mama would say, "oh come on it won't be as long as it has been." Once daddy whipped me with his belt, because I bit Louvenia. I never bit her again.

Once he bought a whole stalk of bananas. We ate so many, we made ourselves sick. When it was cold we warmed by the open fire. We'd roasted one side and turn around and warm the other side. We were almost as many clothes inside the house as we did outside. We'd scrubbed clothes on a wash board, heated the water in a black cast iron pot. We drew water by hand out of the well winter or summer. It was in the back yard. We had a slop jar to use at night. We hated to emptying it in the morning. Arguing each time over whose turn it

was. Actually we'd arguing each time, over whose time it was to do any chore. I'm sure we made mama's life harder. Mama did Mrs. Joe Pate's washing, to bring in some extra money. Mrs. Pate had a electric machine with a ringer! The washing was still done outside and hung up to dry. We did not have electricity, but used oil lamps. We studied by the lamp and played chicken.

One summer mama's Aunt Bet spent a month with us. I remember her asking me to read the Bible to her. I thought she was real old. I knew she was real fat. I can't remember where she slept. I know we didn't mind sharing, as we loved to sleep on a pallet on the floor. She probably slept in our bed. We only had three rooms and a hall in the house. One bedroom, the front room (had a bed in it) and the kitchen. In the winter we made dead-fall traps to catch robins, who we ate our holly berries. Once I remember we got one, cleaned and cooked it. Once mama baked a possum, I remember seeing a goat (dressed) hanging on someone's front porch. It was somewhere around Patetown. I dreamed for years about that goat. In the summer when we walked to where ever we were going. You could see the heat rising up from the road. We called it "lazy dark". Everyone said only a lazy person saw them. We would swapped tobacco help, which meant no pay part of the time. We made 7 1/2 cents an hour. We would swapped with Eddie Jones, Wesley Hicks, Mr. Bert Deans, the McCandless and Lester Forehand.

My sister Louvenia and I made a hand together and stood on the end of the tobacco truck to hand, because we couldn't reach the tobacco from the ground. You haven't live until you've had a wet tobacco leaf slap you in the face. There's nothing like putting tobacco in the rain or the good smell of a barn of tobacco just before it is cured out.

Another game we played at Uncle Steve's was stepping on the large roots of his big sycamore tree. The one who could stay on the roots the longest, without touch the ground won. No prize you just won. We play hid and go seek with help- black or white. Once we had two "Effies" one was black and the other was white. The one who was it would hid her face against the tree or wall. Everyone else would hid. The one who was it counted to ten. Then they went looking for the ones who was hiding. Once I found negro Effie and I said, " I spy negro Effie behind the tree. Afterwards I was embarrassed, because we won't allowed to call the negro to there face. We called Effie's parents Mr. and Mrs. Green Reid and their mama and daddy we call aunt and uncle.

My grandparents were dead on daddy's side. Daddy was 20 years old when mama was born. His first wife (Martha Thigpen Howell) died and he married mama. Highway 117 was paved the year I was born. Christine got a whipping for refusing to say my name right. She called me Edney and still does. Our granddaddy took her to watch it being paved, when mama was having me. Daddy whipped her and Dorothy with the yard broom- whey they didn't do to suit him. We took our baths in the summer in an old tin tub on the back porch. We drew water in the morning and let it warm until the afternoon once a week. In the winter we washed in the kitchen in front of the kitchen stove. Everyone used the same water, in the summer Christine always wash my hair. She looked after us for mama. She'd roll my hair with paper curlers, Sears and Roebuck catalog really got used. She'd would pull it out by the roots (so it seem) getting the tangles out. By then I was pretty sure I was pretty and I knew that I was spoiled. We argued to see who would get to take the first bath.

Mama would get us a ride to the Belfast Holiness Church during their revival. I remember her kneeling at the altar. We'd always been to the Primitive Baptist Church after

daddy died we went wherever we could get a ride to. I don't know whether mama was saved that night or whether mama had already been saved. She might had been just praying up there. I do remember a lady coming back to our seats and asking Louvenia and I to go forward. The women would pray aloud over anyone who went to the altar, also the men. This was so different from anything I'd had ever seen. Wild horses couldn't have got me to go up there (to the altar)! Some women were shouting and running up and down the aisles. One was evening laying on the floor.

Oh yeah, we paid for our fish on Friday with a hen, eggs and whatever we had to trade. No money was exchanged. Once in awhile we'd get a piece of ice wrapped it in a tow bag and make ice cream. We canned peas, tomato soup, butter beans, corn, peaches, pears and apples. We also made pear preserves and picked peaches. We had fat back, side meat, cured hams and shoulders. We killed hogs once a year (probably more). I had to help clean the guts (chitterlings). What an odor, we made tom thumbs and stuffed sausage in the clean guts. I liked this part. Mama would let the rest of the guts soak overnight, then wash them again the next day. Then mama would cook them in a large wash pot. I could hardly wait for them to be done. So I could have some of them (delicious). She had already made lard the day before. I never wanted anything on my chitterlings cold was fine for me. Vinegar ruined the flavor. I can't remember finding any corn or anything else in them. Because they were scraped twice and throughly washed.

Daddy died when I was in the lower grades (16th. Nov. 1935). I thought he died of old age. He was 51 yrs. old and I was 9 yrs. old. I have very few memories of my daddy. I used to dream that he was alive and was always sitting in his chair like a preacher. I know daddy went to church, but I have no clue as to whether he was saved or not. He drank on the weekends and once he ran into a fence at Fremont. When he was tipsy. The fence was behind a building, it has been gone about 10 years after I was grown. I always remember him when I saw that sagging fence. They never straighten it up. Daddy had a friend Levi Snead and they'd get high together. One day Effie (white) looked her daddy in the eyes and said, "Daddy have you been drinking?" I don't remember his reply. She was an only daughter and spoiled rotten. She'd ran away to our house with her mama in hot pursuit. She had every toy (or so it seem to me) that was made. She locked Dorothy in the outhouse, before school bus came. Dorothy had to walk to school after someone let her out. That was one mad sister. The year I started to school was the first year the bus came as far as the intersection of what is now Airport Rd. and Hwy. 117. Dorothy begged to the powers to be until the let it come that far. Before the everyone who went to Belfast School walked each day. This is where we got on the bus the rest of our school days. No door to door pick up then. Some days it was so cold we'd climb up behind the Hotel Goldsboro sign and waited for the bus. It cut off a little of the cold north wind. Once in a while Mrs. Otis Pate would let us wait in her house. Once I slide on the ice, fell and skinned my knees real bad. I still went on to school. I loved school mainly, because I would miss working at home, waiting for me! I always loved to read and learn poems in high school. Reciting was no problem for me. I was probably a 'show off'. In high school I read an average of 5 books a day, my grades were average.

I never had another fit after the one I staged. Until was grown with 3 kids. This is when was diagnosed as having petitmal or a mild form of epilepsy.

Our first grade teacher had already taught mama in the first grade. She taught all four of us. Mr. Bower was our principle and one of my teachers was named Mr. Tilroe Thrist.

The kids on the bus called Christine Miss Possum, Louvenia and I were the little possums. Christine was easy to tease. They also asked us, "where were our other two hands" In the summer we looked for may pop vines and may pops grew on the ditch banks. They always grew at the ends of our tobacco rows. We would chewed sour grass in the summer and found seeds from brier berries vines. The birds had eaten the seeds and then poop them out. I don't remember what we did with the seeds. They were pretty and red. We did not eat them, we probably use them as play food. We made tooth brushes out of some kind of gum tree trigs. Aunt Bet used them for a snuff brush. We pulled the resin off of the pine trees and chew it for chewing gum. When we had a stomach ache mama feed us castor oil (warmed) straight. No frills when we had a sore, mama made a paulice out of scraped Irish potatoes and applied it to the sore and tied a clean rag around it. This drew the fever out of it and it was good for splinters it would draw the splinter out.

I started school when I was 5 yrs. and 7 mos. old. I don't taking any medicine other than castor oil and paulicies. I had measles but missed the mumps until I had 4 kids. I had chicken pox when I was small. The only shots we had was for small pox. I guess we were pretty tough and no broken bones.

I remember someone in the neighbor hood having T.B. They built a place like a gazbo it was screen in and they put a bed in it. T.B. patients was kept seperate from other places.

We had a quilt that belonged to daddy's first wife (Martha Thigpen Howell). No one was allowed to sleep under it. Neighbors said, daddy was always criticizing mama's cooking. She did not do it like Martha did. Mama was nursed maid to Martha and after she died. The next month he married mama (Ida Howell). Daddy wanted a baby boy. I guess that is why I was named Edna! Dorothy was a tom boy in the family and daddy's favorite. She was jealous of me. Someone told her that no one would love her now that there was a new baby. She and I were constantly at odds with each other. Once she came to the front door and locked is so I couldn't get in. She ranted and raved, mama made her go to the back. The best I can remember we won't suppose to track dirt in the front. As a result Dorothy ran away to Uncle Steve's house. She only got as far as the Taylor's house and sat down in the road ditch. When it got dark, she snuck into the house and went to bed. My temper got the best of me regularly or when I didn't get my way. I threw a file at Louvenia. Once I threw a piece of scrap wood (that you used to scrap ashes out of the kitchen stove) at Christine. Louvenia I hit and Christine I missed. They really should have done away with me. I was so bad or maybe sold me into slavery like they did Joseph in the Bible. I only remember a happy child hood. I didn't know we were poor (since everyone else was).

We walked the railroad tracks to Pikeville, gathered red clay rocks off the side of the railroad ditch banks. We used them like chalk and wrote with them. We used to imagination and cut out clothes out of the Sears catalog for our paper dolls. Mama made our clothes sometimes out of flour sacks. My first brought dress was the one I got married in. Mama sacrificed for us and I knew it. I didn't believe she worn any underpants, probably because she couldn't afford any. I remember her standing up and spreading her legs to the bathroom in the fields. She had 4 daughters to feed and cloth. When we were old enough to work we bought our clothes and had enough to buy a Pepsi and a Baby Ruth at the store. A nickel and a penny was really money then. I made the honor roll in the 7th. grade and earned a pass (10 cents) to the Paramount Movie Theater. There was a beauty shop next door. A woman was getting a

permanent, they were using electric curlers and small was awful (burnt hair).

Once we had a half day of from school. For good grades and we walked to Bethany Futrell's house. She played 'Under the Double Eagle' on her organ. By that time it was time to go back to school. I recently saw a machine like that one at the beauty shop! In the 7th. grade I had a crush on Pat Cooke. Something else we would also play leap frog. Everyone would squat down in a row and the one on the end would jump over the others. We also played red rover. One team threw the ball over the house and you would hollered "red rover come on over". The team on the other side caught it and through it back. They hollered, "red rover, etc." also before they threw it.

We had homemade butter & biscuits with each meal and griddle cornbread most of the time. we sopped molasses & syrup for breakfast & fatback, also a streak of fat and streaks of lean meat (bacon). We had plenty of eggs and milk (when we had a cow). Water was our main drink with lemonade as a treat once in a while. One time when we were walking to Pikeville, a train came along. Christine held on to me as head strong as I was she probably thought I would run out into the train. We always waved at the engineer. This really made our day if he waved back. It's a wonder she didn't push me under it. Maggie McCandless and Ella were older then we were they would come over for a visit. Sometimes they, Dorothy and Christine would hold me down and tickled me, until I cried. This was funny at first, when it went on too long it hurt. To this day I can't stand pressure on my sides. It was really cruel and I never figured out why mama let them do it. Once Mr. Lester Forehand took us swimming to the river after we finished putting tobacco. By this time I was real conscious of my growing bust line. I thought he was putting his hands in all the wrong places. When he was teaching us to swim.

The Van Hoys from Goldsboro came out to buy fresh vegetables. They lived in a big house. The one on the corner of William and Ash Street. They also would dump their garbage in the woods. We found some valuable (in our eyes) bottles & stuff to play with. We played in the woods and never got lost. We'd cut thru the woods to our neighbor's house. We didn't think twice about walking a long ways, we play all evening and walk back.

Our neighbor Mrs. Ellen McCandless died. They had a 'setting up' (a wake) for her. By then we were old enough to stay up all night. They would put the corp in the front room. We sat around in straight back chairs and the older ones told ghost stories. We were scared of our own shadows afterwards. One of the things we would do was dare the others to run around the house on a dark night. They had to stop at each corner of the house and holler, "dead man rise up and bite my toes". I can't remember anyone actually doing it.

Uncle Antie told us the ways to get rid of warts, was to throw a penny over your left shoulder and not look back. Our warts went away. Someone in the neighbor hood could talk fire out a burn and talk warts a way. This also work, too. Uncle Antie had a stepson who was deaf and dumb. I was scared of him. Uncle Steven had 5 boys and not much else. When they came to see us they tore our toys up and were a pain in the neck. Uncle Leonard and Aunt Bradie were our favorite relatives. We saw more of them, than the rest. We all loved Uncle Antie, but didn't see much of him. Mama parents died when I was really small. We visited Aunt Winnie and Uncle Dorsey Strickland. I think they were really great aunt and uncle. Dorothy graduated from High School and went off to business school in Raleigh. She was the only ambition one in the family. She eventually worked in Washington, D.C. and met her future husband there (Mac Mclean).

In 1939, Christine married and moved away. We were doing ok mama, Louvenia and I.

I was in high school in Pikeville and everything was ok. Then mama got sick and went to the hospital. She had pneumonia, she never came home. I thought she was old (all of 43 yrs). She died in Rex Hospital in Raleigh and my life change. We went to see her in the hospital. Some one had said that the pneumonia had affected her mind and she'd would never be able to come home, again. She wanted me to go closer to her so she would be able to touch me. I was afraid and wouldn't go. I was afraid of her. I told her I was sorry. After this we went to live with Christine and Willard and I grew up. They lived on Mr. Thad Pate's place outside of Pikeville. The first year Louvenia and I slept on a mattress on the floor. We walked all the way to Pikeville for ice and whatever we wanted.

They had a tent show about once a year on the corner. Where the car wash is now. The ones who ran the show put on a live play. All the boys went ga ga over the daughter of the one of the player. We were so country and she was big city. I guess many couples broke up that summer over that girl. Including me and G.R. Faulk.

After that fall we all moved back to where we were born. Our best friends were Vivian Combs and Maggie Deans. We used to buy a pack of cigarettes and set out on Hwy. 117 and flirted with anyone (boys) who came by including truck drivers. There was four or five us. We'd probably run if one of them had stopped. We really thought we were tough smoking cigarettes. About that time Paul, Ed Huffman and Z.B. Lancaster started to hanging around us. We'd meet with them over at Vivian's house and talk. Paul asked Louvenia out first and once had a wreck when he was looking at Dorothy's legs. She had came home for a visit. I dated Z.B. (Bee) once, that was enough. All I remember about it was we all pile in his truck and rode to Goldsboro. He had been drinking (so I wasn't interested). Eventually Paul and I became a item and Willard decided we were to young to date. From then on we slipped around. Paul bought me ice cream at lunch time each day. I spent more time talking to him than I did studying. I hated missing a day of school, I lived for recess.

Meanwhile the war had started and there was many air men around. I never dated any, but I did like one of them. His name was Walter Lewis Pennington. I met him at the Taylor's. When they had some service men out for Sunday dinner. I wrote to him after he was transferred for a while. Eventually I lost touch with him and couldn't remember where he was from. After I graduated from high school. I moved to Pikeville and then to Graham, N.C. and worked at the silk mill. That fall Paul and I got married.