

# My Life Growing Up

By Edna Forehand Bissette

I was born in Wayne County on Jan. 12, 1926. My parents were John Edward Forehand and Ida Miranda Howell Forehand. My dad had been married before to Martha Howell, who was 20 years his senior. On her death bed mom nursed her, until she died. They were neighbors, mom's parents lived in a little two room house across the railroad tracks behind Ed and his first wife. Soon after her death mama and daddy were married. My older sister Christine was born in this house. For some unknown reason Martha's family insisted that daddy and mama move. He built a house on what is now Airport Road. It is presently owned by the Mazingo family.

My daddy wanted boys so on his third try, they named me Edna. I have two sisters older, Mary Christine and Dorothy Mae. A younger sister Ida Louvenia and Esther Faery (who died soon after being born). She was so small they put her in a shoe box and buried her.

I didn't know we were poor, because we owned the property (a small farm). There is a lot about my childhood, I can't remember. When I was real small, I started having "fits". After I was an adult, I was diagnosed as having a mild form of epilepsy. As a result of my "fits", I was spoiled rotten. I can only remember having one "fit" and that one, I faked. I fell off the front porch and that dog started barking and everyone came running. Evidently I hadn't got my way about something. As I got older, I quit having them. I still threw tantrums to get my way. Once I threw a file at Louvenia and once I threw a piece of metal at Christine. My aim was pretty good.

We had an apple trees across the road and I climbed them like a boy. We "skinned cats" on the limbs. We also climbed a china berry tree and threw china berries at Dorothy on the ground. Louvenia and I got along fine, with only 18 months difference in our age. Dorothy and I were constantly at each others throats. She was bossy and I never liked to be bossed.

We made dead fall traps in the winter and tried to catch robins. Mama would cooked them, if we were luck enough to get one. Daddy stored liquor, for Shorty Lovette, in our wardrobe and got caught. He had to mortgage the farm to keep from going to jail. He drank a little on weekends. We swept our yard each Saturday and took our weekly bath in a wash tub full of water (warmed by the sun). Everyone used the same water. We had an open well in the front yard and kept our milk cool by hanging it on a string down in the well.

We played with black children, one we called negro Effie, because we had a white Effie Snead in our neighborhood. We played hiding and seek. Once I yelled "I spy negro Effie, behind the tree".

One Christmas I got a doll and Louvenia a doll carriage, we shared. That is the only present. I remember getting other than apples and oranges at Christmas. Once daddy bought a stalk of bananas and we ate so many, we had the "runs". I remember being surprised that they were green. Daddy had a Model T, we thought we were pretty cool riding in it. Once we

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went to town and a guy named Jim McCandless rode in the front. It had isinglass curtains, which we put up in case of rain. Jim chewed tobacco. He would spit over the side and the wind, blew in back - in our faces, boy was I hot.

Mama made all our clothes and every spring. We got a new pair of shoes and a new dress. My first store bought dress was the one I got married in. Daddy died in 1936, when the depression was on. That year we got the prettiest shoes from Welfare. When daddy died, we sold the Model T and the cow.

My first grade teacher was Miss Bert Casey, also gave me my first and only spanking at school. Mr. Eugene Roberts was the principal. I have never seen anyone move, I stood up in class to watch and Miss Bert caught me. In first grade Edwin Beamon and Ralph Carraway chased me and caught me and kissed me, my first kiss! One year the Red Cross had a drive and if you brought some money to school, you got a pin. I asked mom for a penny and she didn't have it.

We had a play house in the woods, next door. We used tobacco twine as walls, strung between the trees. We cleaned out the underbrush and used broken dishes for plates, leaves and berries for food. We also played under the house. When I misbehaved, I would run and slide under the house. Eventually I came out (when it got dark), I got a spanking anyway. Christine was kinda like a second mama. She saw that my hair was clean and rolled it on rags and paper. Our high light was a Victorla with bluebirds on the sides. Mama sold cloverine salve to get it. At first we fought over, who was going to wind it up. The new soon wore off and we fussed, because we had to wind it up. The records we had were, "A Barefoot Boy with Boots on", "Red River Valley", "Two Little Children", this was about two orphans, that had no place to stay. So they went to a church seeking a shelter. It was winter and the next morning the sexton found them dead.

"Two little children, a boy and a girl  
knelt down by the old church door.  
The little girl's feet were as brown as the curls  
That fell on the dress that she wore  
The boy's coat was ragged and hatless his head  
Two tears from each little eye.  
Why don't you run home to your mama, I said  
and this was the maidens reply,  
Mama's in Heaven, they took her away  
Left Jim and I alone. We came here to stay  
at the close of the day, because we've no mama at  
home. We can't earn our bread,  
we're too little she said. Jim's five and I'm only seven.  
We've no one to love us since papa is dead  
and our darling mama's in heaven.



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The sexton came early to ring the church bell.  
And found them beneath the snow white  
The Angels made room for the orphan's to dwell.  
With mama in Heaven that night.

We never had an outhouse. We used a chamber pot at night and grumbled, because we had to empty it in the morning. In the day time we went behind the barn and squatted. Leaves, corn cobs and if available Sears Roebuck catalog pages for toilet tissue. Chicken turds were a real stepping stone, especially if got between our toes. Shoes were winter and Sunday worn only.

Marbles, jump rope, red rover, I spy and house were games we play. At night, we dared each other to run around the house and stop at each corner and say "dead man rise up and bite my toes." After daddy died we walked, where ever we went, even to Goldsboro, when we couldn't get a ride. We'd go to Woolworth and Kress and meet back at Best's store on John Street. We would bum a ride home. We walked from, where we lived to the forks of Airport Rd. & 117 to catch the bus to school. Sometimes the roads were icy and we slide as much as we walked. We wore socks turned around and shoes with pasteboard as soles and wired together.

They built highway 117 the year I was born. My grandfather took Christine to watch, while mom was in labor. We sat up at a wake one night and listened to ghost stories, told by the McCandless girls.

I only got one real whipping from daddy. I bit Louvenia, because she wouldn't let me wash my hands first. We'd been putting tobacco. He took his belt off and made a real impression on my legs. I never bit anyone else.

We put in tobacco and made 5 cents an hour each. We were so small, we stood on the end of the truck to hand. When we started getting 7 and half cents an hour, we were glad. Adults got 10 cents and field hands (croppers) got 15 cents. Mama graded it after it was cured and we tied it. Louvenia and I tied "trash grade", Christine "first grade". Louvenia and I took turns standing on the plank to press it. After it was tied and hung on grading sticks. We swapped with other farmers, when we put it in. That was so there was less money to pay out. My mom helped take out cured tobacco (before light). Mom tended a garden and cooked for the people helping put in (harvest) the tobacco. We had a wood barn, with flues around the side and a brick and mortar furnace down the middle. We never had a barn to burn down, but a lot of people did. Someone (daddy) sat up all night or slept at the barn and stoked it with wood until it cured out. Mama made a full hand, on putting in days. We never went hungry. Lots of days it was vegetables only. On Friday daddy swapped a chicken and eggs for fish. Sometimes we had hot dogs all strung together. We raised and killed our own hogs and slaughtered them. We washed chitterlings (ugh), cooked them in a wash pot. I could hardly wait for them to cool and eat out of the pot. The big ones were the best. We would cut up fat (made our own lard) and

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made cracklings. Stuffed sausage meat in chitterlings and hung it up to dry. We salted down hams and shoulders, made hash out of the livers, lights, hearts and lungs, etc. We hilled our sweet potatoes and covered them with straw and dirt. Made preserves, picked wild huckleberries, made jam and dried apples.

When I was small, airplanes were seldom seen. Those that were seen were small two seated. They flew over real low, we could see the pilot and we'd run out and yell "Hey, John Green in your flying machine." I remember going to the tobacco market with daddy. When the auctioneer came near our tobacco. Louvenia and I sat on top of the pile and the auctioneer would say, "Come on lets' give this little lady a good price". Once we even went as far as the "border belt" and to the Farmville to sell. Daddy really got riled if we stepped on a leaf and bruised it. We put "dog fennels" in between the sticks to get it "in order".

We gathered broom straw and made our house brooms. We used reeks as yard brooms and corn shucks stuck through holes in a piece wood to scrub floors with. Mom made home made soap out of old grease and lye. She cooked in the wash pot, when it cooled she cut it up in pieces and let it dry on a shelf in the smoke house. We washed clothes outside on a wash board and boiled our clothes in the wash pot to be sure all the dirt was out. Under our wood kitchen stove was a square hole in the floor. This was cat hole, the cat came in and out when it pleased, no mice.

When we had chicken, we wrung their necks or chopped their heads off. Scolded them, picked the feathers off and cooked them. We all argued over who got the pulley bone. Our house was not sealed inside, we took the pulley bone and two of us pulled it apart. The one who got the long part, put it over the door frame. The first boy, who came though was supposed to be the one you'll marry. The soft feathers were used for pillars and feather beds. In those feather beds were chinchies (these are bugs that bits). We regularly had to turn out the beds and kill all the chinchies. No screens on the windows or screen doors. We jumped out of the windows, when we pleased. We slept on a pallet on the front porch or in the hall on hot nights. When you are tired enough a pallet, on the floor in gummy tobacco clothes at lunch time sleeps good.

I remember seeing a Hoover cart. President Hover said, "he'd put a car in every garage (barn shelter). He did there was no money for gas. So some people took the body of their cars and made a Hoover cart. We rode a wagon with two horses, wherever we went or a cart (with two wheels) pulled by a mule. We did an awful lot of walking, too.

We suckered the tobacco by hand, wormed it (ugh) and topped it. When I had to worm it, I tore off a piece of leaf and caught the worm between it and dropped it on the ground and stepped on it. In the fall we took stalks of corn and stacked them for feed for the horses. We shucked the dried corn by



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hand, we did have a corn sheller the manual type. We popped may pops along the road side.

Occasionally a chicken would get run over and we'd have chicken stew. My mom cooked 3 meals a day and in the winter quilted. She made our clothes out of flour bags (50 #) and material. Sometimes we got weevils in our flour and had to sift them out, before we used the flour. Nothing was wasted.

Daddy was 20 years older than mama. He was very strick and a Primitive Baptist. We went to church at lower and upper Black Creek and little Nahunta (which is over towards Faro). That church is still standing. We drank water out of a gourd. Everyone used the same one. The water come from a spring. The men sat on one side and the women on the other. The negroes (blacks) sat behind the preacher. The only preachers, I remember hearing were Preacher Fry and Preacher Pridgeon. Once one of them gave us a stick of gum. We had to wait until after church to chew it. When we were small and had company for dinner. The children had to wait until the grown ups had eaten. I remember eating chicken feet and heads, hash and sweet taters, molasses, biscuits, fried fatback with butter and molasses or syrup in grease. We had guinea hens and had to look for their nest.

My memories are all good, until daddy died. I don't remember any deaths in our family. We had the usual childhood diseases, chicken poxes and measles, but never had the mumps until after David was born. I had to be different, so I had diphtheria . They said you could hear me breathing clear to the road. They thought I was going to die ( aren't we glad I didn't). I remember Doctor Cooper Person coming out to tend me. I'm sure as a result of this, I was even more spoiled than before. One summer I broke out with a rash on my legs a had sores on them. I had tonsillitis each year and bled a lot. I was so ignorant, when I started my periods. I didn't know what was wrong. This was at 15 year old, boy was I backwards. (20 years ago someone told me a joke about sex and it took me 6 months to get the punch line.)

I was real proud of my looks as a teen. I thought I had a terrific figure and was pretty. Paul still say I'm beautiful and he loves me.

On our wall in the room, where the open fire was, there was a picture (framed) of Jay Gould. I didn't know who he was, but figured he must have been someone important. Today September 1, 2002, I looked him up in the World Book and found he founded the Rutland & Washington Railroad. It said, "that he caused the 'Black Friday' panic and became the most hated man in America" this was Sept. 24, 1869. My grandfather Forehand owned all the land around Mt. Carmel and it extended to the Railroad on the west side, almost all of Airport Road and back to the present Goldsboro Wayne Airport on the east side. It was divided and daddy got the farm, where the Mozingo's now live. We had no electricity or water or pumping. All the

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water we used, you drew out of the well by hand. We used Kerosene lamps and went to bed with the chickens and got up with the birds or before.

We chased fireflies at night and put them in jars. We thought frogs caused warts if you handled them. My aunt Bet could "talk the warts" off. Once we killed a snake and I got him on a stick and chased Dorothy down the road. I was mean little brat. In the lower grades, I recited a poem in the Easter program. The name of it was "Easter Bunny" I still remember standing on the stage and reciting it and I remember the word to it. I made the honor roll one month in the seventh grade and won an afternoon off from school. We (the ones who won) walked to Bethena Futrell's. She had a organ and she played "Under the Double Eagle". We also won a free pass (10 cents) to the Paramount Theater in Goldsboro. I can't remember what I saw. I do remember there was a beauty shop next door and someone was getting a permanent. The curlers were hooked up to electricity.

After mom died, we learned to use a crosscut saw to cut logs to use into short lengths for the wood stove. We learned to split including "light wood" for kindling. We slopped hogs, shelled and shucked corn. We totted fodder from the fields for the mules. Our was mostly a female household.

One birthday I went to Raleigh to meet Dorothy's prospected husband. She loaned me a pair of silk stockings. I put them on in front of Mac. Dorothy informed me, that you did not do this in front of a man. She let me wear her class ring and I lost it. We search the woods over, but never found it. She graduated from Goldsboro High School and had Andy Griffith for a teacher one year.

Mama died in 1942, Louvenia and I went to live with Christine and her husband Willard Deans. After the first of the year, we all moved back to our home on Airport Rd. Dorothy had gone off, to secretarial school and during the war, lived in Washington, DC. In 1943, I graduated from high school and worked in Graham, NC at Grabur Mills for 6 months. Paul and I married Nov. 21, 1943. Louvenia died from a gun shot wound in 1945 and Dorothy died, August 25, 1993, from cancer and heart failure.

In grammar grades, we had a giant stride. Since I was younger and smaller. I got to be the one who rode. Each girl took hold of a chain and went under me. As they got faster and faster running under it, swing me out into the air. It was called wrapping. We had see saws at school, also with a moderate amount of splinters. (and falling off it) We played hop scotch.

We played of the roots of a sycamore tree, at Uncle Steve's house. He lived across from Mt. Carmel Church. The object was to see if you could jump from root to root without touching the ground. We also played "red rover". One girl or team got on one side of a house and the others of the other side of the house. You would throw a soft rubber ball over the house and shout red rover come on over. The people on the other side were suppose to catch it. We played jump rope, also. We would stretched the rope out. Sometimes we



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had to tie it to a tree, for the lack of enough people to play. We argued over whose time it was to jump. I could clear the rope real high.

We played "ring around the rosie" and sang "ring around the rosie, pocket full of posies, east burg, rice burg squat." We played "blind man's bluff." We made toad frog houses.

We found doodle bugs mounds and took a straw and wiggled it around the mound. Lots of times these mounds were under the house. We would say, "doodle bug, doodle bug, come and get a cup of coffee." The doodle bug would come out and we played with them. They would tickle your hand, when you held them. If you put them down they would soon tunnel back under the ground.

We played marbles like the boys everyone had their own collection of marbles. You shot from the outside of a circle and hit the marbles in the center of the circle. When all the marbles had been knock out. The one with the most marbles won. The "steelies" came from out of a car wheel. You shot with that one or the largest one marble you had. A bag of marbles were highly prized. I think that was one of the things. We got for christmas. In case I didn't mention it. I was in the six grade, when I found out about Santa Claus. When I had my younger kids, I explained to them, that Santa might have brought the presents, but Paul paid for them.

We played "pop lash". For these ignorant kids of mine. I'll explain, you hold hands in a line and swing around and hold on for dear life. If you fell or lost hold you were out.

When we played ball at school. I was always one of the last one chosen, when sides were picked. I couldn't hit worth a cuss, so no one wanted me on their side. I could run, so sometimes I was the substitute runner for the good hitters, but slow runners. I had plenty of practice, out running Dorothy and Christine at home. When I had misbehaved and was in for a spanking (a switching rather). Mom was over weight and couldn't run so she'd sent them to catch me, they seldom did. I'd run and hide under the house (which wasn't under pinned). No termites there either. We got red bugs from playing in the woods. Our chickens roamed all over. We would had to shoo them out of the garden sometimes.

We had "road kill" chicken for dinner after people started having cars. We ate possum, barbecued. They were real fat. We ate squirrels and rabbit also. We would swiped pieces of ham from the smoke house and ate it raw. I can't remember any of these things making us sick.

We built chicken pens for the hens out of tobacco sticks. The biddies could get through, but not the hens. We save our food scrapes for the pigs. We had no spiders or bugs, because the chickens ran loose and ate the little critters. We chased lighting bugs at night (fire flies). We picked worms off of collards and turpin bugs.

After we moved in with Christine my life changed. One thing I was growing up. Christine was real timid and easy going, she was adjusting to

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marriage. Willard knew nothing about dealing with two teenage girls. I'm sure he was afraid he wasn't up to the job. I wasn't the easiest person to live with. As a result, he was harsh. He expected more than Louvenia and I could deliver. He didn't understand, that we hadn't been raised like he had. He'd holler "get those clothes off and get too work" after school. Most days I hadn't carried lunch to school and was hungry. If you carried a quart of vegetable to school, you got a free lunch for a week, I never did. Whether it was my pride or we didn't have it to carry, I can't remember.

After I started to liking Paul, he bought me ice cream sandwiches for lunch. I worked in the library at school in my senior year. I went an extra year, because I had failed Algebra as a freshman. Our teacher told we that year, if we cheated we were only cheating ourselves. Paul visited the library more that year, than all the years he was in school. Guess why?

One day I heard Lodric and Gloria Smith in the principal's office. She had her mother with her and they were accusing Lodric of getting her pregnant. Whether she was or not I never found out.

That year Doris Britt and I were friends at school. She brought a long poem, that was surely pornography! I learned all about sex. What couples did, this was my sex education. If we had been caught with it we would have been expelled from school.

One night when Lou and I were home alone, Lester Forehand Jr., Earl Garris came over and wanted to come in and have sex with us. I told them to get lost and slammed the door in their face. When I graduated, I packed my bag and moved out. Willard once opened my mail (the only letter I ever got) and boy was I mad.

I moved in with Alberta and Jim Rose in Pikeville. The house was on the same street as the cotton warehouse. Soon I got a job in Graham at the Grabur Mills and lived with a relative of Willard's. Her husband turned out to be a real S.O.B. At first things went fine, then he tried to feel of me one night. By then Paul and I were engaged and I'd ride the greyhound bus home. One weekend Paul came up there. One night the bus got in so late, that I spent the night on Holly Street with Aunt Winnie Strickland. A soldier walked me to here house. He was a real gentleman.

Paul and I never had premarital sex. I had no intention of getting pregnant (as Willard put it) in the road ditch! In our senior year a girl was pregnant, named Pearl Hales and the boys would "get fresh" with her right in class, when the teacher wasn't looking.

Paul proposed one night, when we were dating. On highway 117 near National Welders, were Randy works. He pulled over beside the highway and asked me and I said, "yes." I had already decided I was going to marry him if he ever asked me.

I had seen how gentle he was with E.C., when he broke his shoulder. The next time I came home, Paul had me a present. I was sure it was an



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engagement ring. But it was a bracelet, I still have. I can't remember when he gave me the ring. I do remember an incident that happened afterwards.

Anyway the S.O.B., that I stayed with in Graham offer to "break me in" for Paul. That day I moved back to Pikeville. Oh, in high school Paul and I had a disagreement. He gave me a note saying, how about meeting him Sunday at a friend's house. I wrote him back "I'll change my plans if your want me, too". He misread the note and thought I said, I wouldn't. He never could read good. As a result he got mad. Well he kept the note and reread it. He borrowed his dad's car and came to see me. I was walking to a neighbors house. When he came and he drove real slow down the road. Trying to say he was sorry, of course I forgave him. He never cheated on me with other women or thrown our money away.

We broke up once and he dated Christine Crawford. I sat in her seat in one of my classes and found a note laying in the seat. She wrote "Dear Susan , I want to break up with Paul, how do I do it? Well I said if that's what she wants OK. I showed the note to Paul. So she didn't have any more problem with him. He has always, said that I wrote the note!

Paul and I were married in Dillon, SC., Bruce Mozingo and Geneva Hicks (who he later married), Ruth and Bozo Williams went with us. I had a medium blue dress to get married in. It had about a dozen buttons down the front . I wish I had kept it, but I gave it to Annie Mae. She was going to cut it up and make Lida Vesta a dress out of it. We got married about four o'clock AM. Paul had to unload a truck load of beer, before Bruce would take us. This was the 20 th. Paul said, " either I married him then or not at all". He was getting kinda of horny by then. We were married on the 21 st., instead.

Paul has been an outstanding husband. He never learned much in school, but I've never wanted for anything. I had never had much so we learned fast to do without, anything that we didn't need. Now he supplies my "wants" as well. He still says, " He loves me each day and that I'm beautiful." They say love is blind and when I look in the mirror, after 58 years of marriage I know it's true.

These are the words of another song, we used to sing.

One afternoon in summer  
two little girls so fair,  
were wading in the mill pond,  
while songs were in the air.  
They were young and cheery,  
but neither on could swim.  
They waded in deep water.  
For God had called for them.  
Only two little children,  
where taken from their home.  
To make a bloom in Heaven,

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**to decorate the throne.  
In that bright home in Heaven.  
Two little ones so sweet.  
Who waded in the mill pond.  
Now with Jesus are asleep.**