

## NOT THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

By J. B. Leftwich

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.

The minister has read the familiar psalm and the verses continue running through my mind on this balmy, springlike, mid-winter day as we gather around an open grave to say goodbye to Ogeal Sanders, born July 30, 1904, died January 14, 1968.

She was a long-time resident of Rock Springs Valley, born a few miles from the little cemetery in view of the little home where she lived most of her life, with Morgan Jared, her husband, and about one mile from where I lived as a child.

She wanted not for love or respect.

He makes me lie down in green pastures.

There are miles of pastures in the panorama viewed from the hillside cemetery, but the pastures now are brown, suffering from a prolonged drought. Gwynn Lanius, a cousin, views the landscape and comments: "Isn't that a beautiful scene?"

The scene is magnificent, but its beauty was wasted on men when I lived in the community. Only in later years did the magnificence manifest itself.

He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.

A huge spring farther up the valley feeds the stream that flows gently through the bottom land below. Smaller tributaries add to the volume during normal weather. Now some of the branches are dry, and the farmers await the rain.

He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Paths are no less hazardous in Rock Springs Valley than in other locales, and people sin here – or are righteous here – just as they are in Lebanon or Nashville. Perhaps the incidence of sin is less here. Perhaps my memory is selective.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil.

I have never seen Israel, but I believe Rock Springs Valley is more beautiful than the Psalmist's Valley. This is a valley of life, of feeding cattle, of crops growing in season, of gardens and flowers, of grass and trees.

There are shadows teasing the north hillsides, and, briefly this is a Valley of the Shadow of Death.

But only briefly.

... for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

The psalm comforts two daughters, many grandchildren. Not only the rod and the staff comfort, the hills and the valley comfort. Many of the family cling to the valley. A grandson lives within sight of the family cemetery, commuting daily to his job in Murfreesboro. His cousin commutes daily to Nashville.

The farm was a land grant to an ancestor. It has remained in the family. Current Jareds and their children are just as fierce in their pride of ownership as were their grandchildparents and great-grandparents.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

After the burial, we moved to a nearby Jared household where a table was prepared in the presence of friends, and we remembered.

“Remember the time we were playing in the creek and....”

“Remember the day on the old school bus when we turned a sharp curve...”

Sadness and joy mingle. Death in sequence is not entirely sad.

### **Thou anointest my head with oil...**

An irrelevant and fleeting thought passes through my mind. I don't want anybody pouring oil on my head. I remember the brillantine I used as a youth, and how I slicked down my hair. I prefer the dry look. Did the Israelites actually pour oil on each other's heads?

... my cup overflows.

The last shovel of dirt falls, and a mound is molded. This was my mother's friend. Few are left, most of the faces in the valley are unfamiliar. Another tie is severed, the past erodes. There are fewer reasons for returning to the valley.

### **Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.**

We live in the present.

Perhaps there is a future...and we shall dwell in the house.

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This article written by J. B. Leftwich was about:

### **Ogeal (Sanders) Jared**

b. 30 July 1904, Smith Co., TN

d. 14 January 1986, Cookeville, Putnam Co., TN

Husband: Morgan Hurt Jared, md 22 December 1927

Father: Jasper Alexander Sanders (1876-1944)

Mother: Martha Ann Scudder (1880-1966)

Buried: Joseph Haywood family graveyard, on the J. H. Jared homestead on the road from Low Gap to Rock Springs, Putnam Co., TN

### **Morgan Hurt Jared**

b. 22 August 1903, Putnam Co., TN

d. 9 December 1969, Putnam Co., TN

Wife: Ogeal Sanders md 22 December 1927

Father: Joseph Haywood Jared (1861-1944)

Mother: Ina Belle McCaleb (1879-1969)

Buried: Joseph Haywood family graveyard, on the J. H. Jared homestead on the road from Low Gap to Rock Springs, Putnam Co., TN

\*Read more stories by J. B. Leftwich at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>