

MY FATHER WAS 'A TOUGH LITTLE KNOT'

By Robert "Bob" Rodgers Chaffin

'Writer's Corner'

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My father's parents passed away when he was but a boy and so my mother's parents were the only grandparents I knew. He was Edgar Monroe Maberry and she was Lola Betsey (Gentry) Maberry. They were from the Morrison's Creek area of Jackson County which is about seven miles east of the town of Gainesboro.



Edgar, Lola, and Maylean. My Grandparents with my mother.

About 1940, they had moved out of Jackson County to farm Dr. Sloan's big place in Sullivan's Bend. Then in 1946 they had gone further from home to farm Judge Hubert Turner's farm, which lies just north of the new Walmart on the Highway 25 bypass around Carthage. It was a much bigger farm in those days and was bounded by the high school football field on the south, running along the creek and up to the big oak that stood at Clyde White's house. From there it ran along the Ed Reynold's property line to the Cumberland River and probably contained considerably in excess of 500 acres.

(Pictured: Edgar Monroe Maberry his wife Lola Betsey (Gentry) Maberry and their daughter Lois Maylean (Maberry) Chaffin).

Ma Ma and Pa Maberry were an interesting couple, but I'll tell you about him first. He was smart and crafty, if uneducated. Although he was the son of a teacher, he could not so much as write his name when I first remember. I could never understand the dynamic which led to that, unless it was due to the fact that today he would undoubtedly have been diagnosed as being ADHD. He was often loud, boisterous, could not keep his mind on a single task for more than an hour, but was full of fun and loved pulling a prank on someone. He believed that hard work, not cleanliness, was next to Godliness and he filled his life with backbreaking, sweat producing, body debilitating, work and it seemed to me that he often sought out the hardest way to accomplish a task.

I remember the Sunday pair was finished and shiny like "Slippers" as he called regular dress shoes. His walk was reminiscent of Walter Brennan's look in "The Real McCoys" television program so we often called him "Grand Pappy Amos" with no disrespect intended.

He could not stand to be other than in front of the pack when doing any kind of work, so when we were chopping corn or tobacco, it was not uncommon for him to skip long

sections of a row to stay ahead of the group of us who were hoeing adjoining rows and engaging in a little light banter to break the monotony.

Pa never learned to drive, primarily because he could never keep his mind from wandering off the task at hand. While trying to learn, he would spy a cow in the field, or a particularly weedy patch of corn or tobacco and soon would be driving off the road toward the item which had captured his attention. Finally, Mama and Daddy decided that in the interest of curtesy and public safety they would stop trying to give Pa driving lessons. That suited him just fine since he could “catch a ride” from Billy or at last resort from me on the tractor. I have many times driven him to town before I reached the age of 12 with him standing on the drawbar giving me unneeded and unwanted instructions. His objective was the old City Café and a daily meeting of his coffee buddies to discuss the latest in politics – usually only country and state races were of interest to them.

He was what people used to call, “a tough little knot of a man” and he provided for his family in spite of his physical disabilities and lack of education. He always worked and always did the best he could for my mama and her two brothers. He was different, would ask you how much money you made, talk about politics and religion, and had not idea what politically correct meant. As far as he was concerned, it was being on the correct side politically – and that was, of course, his side.

I don't think a single person would think of him when thinking of patience, for he was seldom patient with the mules he was plowing, me when I was not doing something quite right, or Ma Ma Maberry when he wanted her to come help with whatever he was working on.

But he was patient in the way that all farmers are forced to be patient. No weekly paycheck, no monthly paycheck. The tobacco was started in February and the returns came just before Christmas – maybe. The calves came in the spring but didn't go to market until November. The hay that was cut in June and August, was not of any use until December and January. The corn was planted in April or May and it was weeks before the first green shoots appeared, but the harvest did not come until November. So it was the farmer's lot to be patient and wait for the early and late rain as the Bible says and Pa Maberry was no different. Although he was not patient by nature, he was patient by calling, and perhaps that is what counts.

“Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.” James 5:7. We, like Pa Maberry, are called to be patient through the excesses of this world we live in, waiting for the reward which will surely come.

Have a blessed day.

*Read more of Robert “Bob” Rodgers Chaffin stories at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>