

## **THE RALEIGH NEEDHAM STORY**

'Selections From Josephine's Journal'

By Emily Sells

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The year was 1916. The month was February, the day was the 10th. It was on this date in the home of Bertha Ova Peterman Needham and husband William Albert Needham of the Fellowship community in Overton County a son was born. He was given the name John Raleigh Needham. His parental grandparents were Nancy Narciss Hogan Needham and William Raleigh Needham. His maternal grandparents were Mary Ann Hunter Peterman and Johnny Ambrose Peterman of the Allons community.

The Needham home and farm of around 165 acres was located in the northern edge of Overton County adjoining the Clay County line. Today, the home of Truman Brown sits near the place the Needham home once stood. At the time of the birth of John Raleigh Needham, his parental grandmother was still living and shared the home of his parents in the Fellowship Community. His grandfather Needham was deceased at the time of his birth. On April 4, 1923, a daughter named Willie Ruth Needham was added to the family. The Needhams attended church at the Fellowship Baptist Church.

Raleigh referred to his Grandmother Narciss Needham as "Mammie." She was known in the community as a Granny Woman. She would often accompany Dr. Walter Sidwell and Dr. Edward Clark on sick calls, and sometimes would stay for a day or two with the families of sick patients to make sure their medications were given to them correctly. She was well versed in the use of herbs for home remedies. An example of the many things she knew was how to make and use a poultice out of garlic.

Many times when Raleigh was growing up, he would accompany Mammie on walks to country stores. They would also visit in the homes of Aunt Myrtie Grimsley, or his Uncle Bill Hogan, and other nearby neighbors. Some of the chores Raleigh had as a young boy included working in the garden and flower beds, and caring for baby chickens. Watching over and helping to protect the baby chickens was also the job of the Needham dogs named Bob and Smart. They were really good at scaring away hawks who came looking for an easy meal. Going out to the pasture to bring in the cows for milking was another job Raleigh had.

Mammie had four sisters whose names were Alice, Liz, Eva, and Jane. In the fall season when all the chores were done, the sisters would come to the Needham home for a visit. A big fire would be built in the fireplace, and after supper, the family would gather around the fireplace. Mammie smoked a pipe, and after seating herself near the fireplace and lighting her pipe, Raleigh would say, "Mammie, tell me a tale."

One of Mammie's stories was about a time when she and the sisters were growing up. They had a big, black cast iron wash kettle down by the creek with a soap box nearby. The hogs would sometimes wander down by the creek when the sisters would be there

doing the washing. On one occasion, one of the bigger hogs kept turning the soap box over. After trying unsuccessfully to run the hog off, one of the sisters picked up a big stick and swung at the hog. Even though it was unintended, the stick struck the hog in a strategic place on the head, and the hog fell over dead. The girls tried to revive him, but to no avail. When the impact of what had happened settled in, and the girls realized what kind of trouble they would be in with their father, it was decided that they would drag the hog away and dispose of the dead body in a thicket. They swore each other to secrecy, vowing to never tell what had actually happened to the pestering hog on that wash day. Their father spent two weeks hunting for the hog, and finally gave up, thinking the hog had been stolen by someone.

Another of Mammie's stories was about a time when they were walking home from a party one night when something they could only describe as being white in color and seemed to be floating along right beside the road where they were walking. They were all half scared to death before they discovered the true identity of their ghost or "haint" hovering nearby. As it turned out, it was only a white faced cow following along the fence row beside them.

Mammie also told about a time the girls decided to try to ride a big buck sheep. They were having a really hard time getting the sheep corralled, but finally got him hemmed up in the barn. One of girls got up on the ladder that went up to the loft of the barn, and then hopped on the sheep's back. Immediately she began to yell, and after a very few minutes of a painful ride, was able to grab hold of a branch of an apple tree to dismount. What was thought was going to be something fun to do didn't turn out that way. The sheep's wool was full of cockle burrs. The girls never tried that again.

When Raleigh became school age, his first years in school were at Summer Shade and Pleasant Hill. These were one teacher schools. Some of teachers at Summer Shade would board at the Needham home. When Raleigh was in school at Pleasant Hill, Miss Myrtle Marcum was the teacher. She rode horseback from Willow Grove. Raleigh was often allowed to go after school to the Nelson barn to bring Miss Marcum's horse to the school for her.

The Needham family lived on the farm in the Fellowship Community until 1925. That was the year Raleigh's father rented the farm out and the family moved into Livingston. The move to Livingston was made by wagon. It took several wagon loads to get all the family possessions moved from Fellowship to their new home in Livingston. The home they moved to once stood on the northern end of Oak Street near to where the business of Progressive Engineering is located today. Raleigh was in the fifth grade when his family moved. His teacher for that grade was Miss Fern French. The first job Raleigh's father had after settling in Livingston was working for A.J. Mofield in the produce house. At that time, the raising and shipping of poultry to other states was a very big industry in Overton County.

When Raleigh was a freshman in high school, he began working on Saturdays for A.J.

Mofield and Company Produce. His job was in the dry goods department. While in high school, he played on the first team of boys' basketball. After graduating from high school, Raleigh began working full time at A.J. Mofield's on the Southeast corner of the square (now Bows, Petals' N Lace building). Carl Mofield operated the store. Other clerks employed there were Jimmy McGee, Oma Hodges, L. P. Jernigan, Jr., and W.A. Needham. In 1936, the store was moved to the new city building just off the northwest corner of the square. This business closed in 1937. It was also in 1937 that Raleigh married his high school sweetheart, Nola Mae Jernigan. That was on the 6th day of June.

Other jobs Raleigh had included working at the swimming pool at Standing Stone State Park, and working in a grocery for Willard Smith in Cookeville. In 1938, he opened a small bargain store in the former shoe repair shop known as Kuykendalls. In 1941, he moved his business on the square. It was known as Needham's Market. It was around this time that Uncle Sam came calling, and Raleigh was inducted into the army in 1944. His father and sister kept the business going while he served in the military. His days in the service included serving in the Pacific Theater in the Philippines. By this time, he and Nola Mae's family had grown to include two sons. John Raleigh Needham was born on January 27, 1940, and Bill was born August 26, 1945, during the time his father was still in service. Raleigh was honorably discharged in 1946 and returned home to his family and back to the operation of the business. However, the lease on the building he had rented for the business was lost which meant he had to close the store just before Christmas that year.

Following the closing of his store, Raleigh was then employed by Roy Smith at Smith's Department Store where he worked until 1950. It was then that Ben Baugh from Gainesboro bought the old Fleming and Myers store and opened Baugh's Department Store where Raleigh worked as manager until 1969. After serving in the military, Raleigh was appointed to serve on the Overton County Draft Board. Other members were Halsey Bowmer and J.P. Kuykendall.

In 1969, Raleigh was elected Mayor of the Town of Livingston and served two terms. After retiring, he began a custom picture frame shop in the basement of the building he owned on the square. His work there included not only making picture frames, but crafting rocking horses, doll cradles, and numerous other wood working crafts. He and Nola Mae have been long time and active members of First United Methodist Church in Livingston where Raleigh served on various boards and committees. He is a charter member of the Overton County Lions Club, and was the recipient of many awards, including Melvin Jones Award, Life Membership, and others while being involved with the Lions Club. Raleigh also served as Scout Master for many years for Troop 133, and had the privilege of working closely with Mr. Alfred Keeton, someone who devoted many years to the Boy Scouts in Livingston. The very distinguished Long Rifle Award was presented to Raleigh while serving as Scout Master. Raleigh also helped to promote and coordinate the first Annual Strawberry Festival in Livingston.

This past February, Raleigh celebrated his 91st birthday and on June 6<sup>th</sup> of this year, he and Nola Mae celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary. Those 70 years together have

been happy ones. Observing their sons grow up and pursue their chosen vocations have been especially meaningful to them. Their family includes a daughter-in-law, Carolyn (Langford), two granddaughters, Julia Leigh and Melinda Carol, and two great-grandchildren, Ryan William and Abigail Rose Ruesewald.

Both Raleigh and Nola Mae have enjoyed exceptionally good health throughout the years. Nola Mae takes no medication of any kind, while Raleigh has only one prescription he takes on a regular basis. Nola Mae has this to say about their long life together: "As Raleigh and I reach our older years, we are so aware of how richly blessed we have been. For all things, we thank God for being so good to us, and allowing us to have had a wonderful and abundant life together."



Seated in a rocking chair is Narciss Hogan Needham. Shown with her is daughter-in-law, Bertha Ova (Peterman) Needham, son William Albert Needham, and grandson, John Raleigh Needham. Raleigh has the rocking chair shown in the picture.

Picture courtesy of Emily Sells.

\*See Chapter 10 & Jernigan files at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>