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# The Story of My Life

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Burkett Berry



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## The Story of My Life by Burkett Berry

I was born Sept. 16, 1924 out in the country Rt 1 Shivers, Jefferson Davis County Miss. I was the fourth son born to my mother and father Minnie Burkett Berry and Henry Houston Berry. Daddy was born June 21, 1896 and mother was born Sept. 20, 1900. Their first-born son David died shortly after birth then John Gayden Berry was born Dec. 3, 1919 and Houston Burnell Berry Mar. 1922, then me. Then my three younger brothers were born. Carl Franklin Berry Feb. 1927, HH Berry Jr. (Now known as Hank) was born June 12, 1929 and Welton Bryant Berry born July 1931. So, there were 7 boys and no girls born to my parents. It's sort of funny but my parents had 7 Granddaughters born before they had a Grandson. More about that later.

All six of us boys are doing pretty good these days and we range in age from 62 to 74 years old. We four older brothers served in World War II and the two youngest both served in the occupation forces in Germany after World War II.

I can remember growing up in the thirties with five brothers. We had lots of hard times and a lot of work growing up on a farm but mostly I remember the good times and the closeness and love of my family. We had lots of family reunions and got to see a lot of our uncles and aunts and our cousins. Also I remember my Granddaddy and Grandmother Burkett and going to their house for reunions and playing with our cousins. They both passed away about a year apart. I believe it was 1935 and 1936. I do not remember my Granddaddy and Grandmother Berry because they passed away about two or three years before I was born.

There was not much money back in those days but most of the time we had plenty to eat. We grew our own vegetables and fruits and had our own chickens, milk cows and hogs. Sometime corn bread and milk might be all we had for supper, but it was good, and I still like it. After grandmother and grandfather Burkett died we would have the Family Reunion at different places like we did on the Berry side of the family. I remember going swimming in the old swimming hole in the creek that ran between us and the next farm I still remember the first fish I caught when I was about seven years old and I remember I caught it near the old swimming hole.

I remember when my youngest brother Welton was born, us older brothers were taken to one of my aunts daddy's sister to spend the night and the old country Dr. delivered Welton at our house.

In the summer of 1931, a group of family members all got on my Uncle Drewey's school bus to go to Kentwood La to a family reunion at one of my aunts – back in those days the school busses had bench type seats down each side and across the back and also a bench seat up the middle of the bus. The middle seat would be taken out and straight chairs put in the center of the bus so the ladies would be more comfortable during the trip. We enjoyed the reunion and I remember my aunt telling us kids not to go out in the yard with any red clothes on. She had some turkeys and the turkey gobbler would attack you if you had something red on.

When we left my aunts to return to our homes in Mississippi we were traveling up a narrow winding dirt road and I mean red clay dirt and it was raining, very hard and the red clay dirt was very slippery. My dad was driving my uncle's bus at this time and we started up a long hill with a curve to the left near the top of the hill. As we struggled to get up the hill my dad had to shift to double low gear to make it up the hill, but he put it in reverse because where double low in my dad's school bus was, it was reverse in my uncle's bus – my dad also owned a school bus at that time – well the mistake caused us to slide back down the narrow road into a deep ditch. I was sitting on the very back of the bus. The accident caused

the women in the chairs to all slide backwards and one of the chair rounds broke and stuck me in the forehead directly above my nose and up near my hairline. I was the only one to be injured. I can remember sitting in my mother's lap in a chair out in the road in the rain while the men were trying to get the bus out of the ditch. After some time, they got it out and we were on our way home. OK they didn't take me to a Dr., but they got the bleeding to stop and I guess used some kind of home remedy and my wound healed up. I still have the scar in the edge of my hairline.

Then in the summer of 1932 we had been to a reunion in my dad's school bus and was returning home. We were near Shivers Miss. On a narrow winding road when we rounded a sharp curve and saw a car stopped in the middle of the road. The car was trying to pull a truck up the hill. I was sitting several feet from the front door which was open to let a breeze come in to cool the bus. I guess you could call that early air conditioning. Daddy put on the brakes because he knew he could not go between the car and truck and the deep ditch with an overhanging bluff. Before we could stop we hit the car and it and the truck went back down the hill. The driver had run for safety. About the time we hit the car we also caught the overhanging bluff with the top of the bus. I was thrown out of the bus front door into the edge of the ditch. When the bus came to a complete stop the rear wheel was about to run over me. One of my daddy's cousins had jumped out after me and was right by me when the bus stopped. So we both could have been hurt bad or killed. I only had a small cut in the back of my head where a rock cut me. Many years later I was telling some friends about the accident and when I said a rock cut my head, one of my friend said now we know how you got all those rocks in your head. Ha

As I grew older I was to realize that God had protected me from being killed or seriously injured. My mother and daddy were Christians and they tried to bring us up right like the Bible says. Daddy would read the Bible a lot and pray – always thanking God for what we had and never complaining about the bad times. I was to realize in the years ahead that God was always there for us just like He says in the Bible. So many times things happened that I had no control over so I know God was looking after me. More about this later.

Our farm was a big one and the creek where we went swimming and fishing ran down one side of our farm. Daddy used to go swimming and fishing with us. Daddy would set traps in the creek to catch us some catfish, trout and perch to have to eat. Also, there was a lake or a pond on the place and I remember Daddy and the neighbors getting into the pond and muddying it up. The fish would come to the top and they would catch the fish. I remember one man would always say hallelujah every time he would catch a fish.

We normally raised cotton, corn, sugarcane and sometime rice and watermelon. We would also have lots of vegetables in our garden. Beans, cabbage, sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, peanuts, squash, peppers, cucumbers, etc. Also had a variety of fruit trees, peaches, pears and plums. So it took a lot of work to plant, work and harvest the crops each year. We had 5 mules in our barn. Some of our neighbors used some of them to work their farm.

In the Fall of 1932 (I had turned 8 years old on Sept 16) Daddy told us we had to move the next day. We had lost our farm and would be moving to another farm about 20 miles away. It was so sad to have to move but we were excited about moving and getting to see some of the State of Mississippi that we had never seen. We moved from Simpson County to Copiah County, so we had to cross Strong River and Pearl River to get to the town of Georgetown, Miss. which had a population of 335 people. Mother and daddy and the three youngest boys rode in our Model T Ford. We had lost the school bus. Gayden rode

in one of the trucks that came to move us and Burnell and I rode in the other truck. These trucks were owned by the Mercantile Co that owned the land where we were moving to. This would be called Share-Cropping. The company would furnish the house, the land and the mules to work the land. We would do the work and the expenses for seed and fertilizer would be shared 50 / 50 by the co and us and the profit or loss from the crop would be shared 50 / 50. When we arrived in Georgetown we stopped at the big store. Daddy gave us a quarter to buy some candy. They had peppermint sticks about 4 inches long and kept it in wooden barrels. They would give all they could pick up in one hand for 5 cents so we got a pretty good size bag of candy for the quarter and we really enjoyed it.

It was about 2 ½ miles from Georgetown to the farm where we were to live. When we arrived at the farm we had a nice surprise. A pretty pigeon was sitting on the highest point on the house. He stayed around for a long time and we really enjoyed him. On this farm we grew tomatoes, cabbage, green beans and English peas (called truck farming) in addition to the corn and cotton and the usual crops of sugar cane, sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, watermelon and cantaloupes and peanuts with a garden also of many vegetables, so again a lot of work to be done.

We could trade chicken or eggs and butter that we made from milk for groceries that we needed to buy such as flour, sugar, coffee and flavoring and spices that we would get from the Raleigh Co route man that would come by every few weeks. Also, we could trade this stuff at the Mercantile store. We had lost the mules when we lost the farm, but we got to keep our cows and pigs and chickens. Again we had fruit trees and sometime would have pecans, walnuts and we would pick blackberries and huckleberries to make jam and jelly. Also, we raised our own strawberries which we really enjoyed. Many times we would have a good crop but the market would be low. I remember tomatoes selling for as low as 10 cents for hundred pounds to as high as \$3.00 for a hundred pounds. Also, I remember cabbage selling for as low as \$6.00 for a ton to as high as \$100 a ton so some years we would make good and some years we may not even pay the expenses to grow the crop.

Daddy continued to read his Bible every night and would find a scripture that he knew might mean something to us boys. So he would read to us and then pray. I never heard daddy complain about losing the farm but he would always thank God for what we had. Sometimes when we needed rain he would pray for rain and sometime when it was too wet, he would pray for the rain to stop and would always thank God for what we had.

I remember us going to church some and having all day services and dinner. Everyone would bring food and there was plenty to eat and we would enjoy the food and being with other people.

I can remember us having corn ground up for corn meal and for grits and for chicken feed. We had our own syrup made from sugar cane. There would be a mill in the community for the corn and the cane. They would charge you a portion for grinding the corn and grinding the cane to get the juice and cook it to make the syrup. So we didn't have to pay money since they would take a portion of the corn or syrup. We always had syrup and biscuits or jam and jelly for breakfast and always had milk and butter and eggs. We also liked to chew the sugar cane in the Fall when it would get real sweet. The sweet cane juice was so good during cool weather in the Fall. I still grow a little cane to get to chew it for the juice.

Daddy's brother Uncle Jeff moved on the farm next door to us and we enjoyed that. He had 3 daughters and 2 sons. So we got to see them a lot and we would help each other to harvest our crops. A Mr. Cody

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and his family moved on the other side of our farm so daddy and Uncle Jeff and Mr. Cody would get together and decide when to plant the vegetables so the families could all work together to harvest.

I remember one year we would go to one farm and pick green beans, then go to the next farm and then the third farm. We picked green beans for 3 weeks straight every day from sunup to sundown except Sunday. That was God's day. Every night we would make homemade ice cream and we really looked forward to that.

Mr. Cody had 7 boys and 2 girls so all three families had quite a crowd to work together to harvest our crops – also the harvest time was from April to late Fall to harvest all the different crops – cabbage was usually the first crop and corn would normally be the last crop to be harvested. I still love to grow vegetables for my wife, and I usually have a few tomatoes, green beans, sweet corn, squash and okra in the corner in my backyard.

I remember we got our first radio when I was 10 or 11 years old. We had no electricity so the radio was run by battery. Usually the battery was a good bit larger than the radio. We could only pick up Jackson Miss and New Orleans La during the day but at night we could get a good many stations from Texas, Chicago and Nashville Tenn. We would listen to stories like The Lone Ranger, Lum and Abner Show and on Saturday night listen to Grand Ole Opra from Nashville Tenn. also Amos and Andy. I remember mother and daddy liked to listen to the Old-Fashioned Revival Hour with Dr Charles E. Fuller preaching from California. More about Dr. Fuller later. We also listened to sports on the radio.

When I was about 11 years old my mother told me to go gather the eggs. The Hen nests were about 4 ft or a little more above the ground usually built against the side of the Chicken House where the chickens were closed up at night so the wild animals could not get them. When I reached my hand over into a nest to get some eggs, I felt something that did not feel like eggs, when I pulled my hand back a big chicken snake raised up and looked me right in the eye and was only several inches from me. Boy did that scare me and I have been afraid of snakes ever since. Then chicken snakes would eat the eggs.

I remember we had a bad storm one night and while we were eating breakfast there was a knock at the door. Daddy went to the door and Mr. Matthews was standing soaking wet. He said the storm, a tornado had destroyed his house but his wife and three children were ok. Daddy and some of the neighbors went to help them move to a vacant house between us and Georgetown. The Matthews' home was completely destroyed. Only one wall was still standing and a rafter had broken and the end of it landed on one of their beds and had held that wall up. That's where Mrs. Matthews and the kids were huddled when daddy and them got there. Their house was about a mile and a half from us over toward Pearl River. Parts of their house were scattered for miles. Some of their household goods were gone or damaged but some of their stuff was ok. They got moved into the new house that day. Daddy sold the Model T Ford for \$25.00 on the credit and he said he was never paid the \$25.00.

I remember for Christmas we usually got some candy and maybe an apple and an orange which was really appreciated by us kids. I was about 11 years old when mother and daddy asked what we wanted for Christmas that year. I wanted a cap pistol and that is what they got me. Boy did I enjoy playing with it.

I think it was in 1937 we had a hail storm that damaged our crops especially our tomatoes. We had 5 acres and they were so pretty. We had stuck sticks by each plant which would take a long time and we

had started tying the tomato plants to the sticks for support when the hail storm hit. The tomatoes were full of blossoms and some had small tomatoes on them but they were completely destroyed as they were beaten down by the hail. We pulled the sticks and since it was too late in the year to set out more tomatoes, we planted corn there and also some watermelons. We had the best corn crop and watermelon crop that I can remember ever having.

We had a swimming hole about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile away in a creek that ran into Pearl River a few miles away. We would go swimming every chance we got during the summer. Another one of my dad's brother's uncle Jack lived near the swimming hole on the opposite side from us and he had four sons, so we got to see them a lot. In fact, Uncle Jack had the Grist Mill where we would get our corn ground up. One day a group of us boys were swimming in the nude when we heard some women and girls start hollering to let us know they were coming to the swimming hole. We got out real quick and put on our clothes and the women and girls went swimming in their bathing suits. After about an hour they got out and left and we took our clothes off and jumped back in. We decided we either had to get a bathing suit or cut some jeans off and make us something to swim in while the women and girls were swimming, so from that day on we would swim together at times. At times some of us boys would do a lot of walking through the woods. If we found a place in a stream that looked good for swimming we would stop and go swimming. One time I remember it was so cold we built a fire on the bank so we could get out of the cold water and get warm. At times snakes would be in the water where we would be swimming but we would get a stick and run them away. Also, I remember riding a log down a rain swollen creek. Dangerous but lots of fun.

In the Summer of 1937 just before I was 13 years old there was not much to do on the farm because of the hail storm damage so I went to town with daddy. He was working on the vegetable shed where the vegetables would be packed and loaded in the refrigerated cars on the GM&O Railroad so they could be shipped up North. They were short handed that day and daddy told them if they would set me up by him, I could help grade the tomatoes and he would help me pick up the 100 lb boxes of tomatoes. So they did and I started working my first job at 15 cents per hour. I guess that wasn't so bad because they were only paying daddy 30 cents per hour. We had to work 10 or 12 hours or more a day. But we could really use the extra money to buy clothes and things we needed. I got my social security number and started paying social security when I was 12 years old.

On Saturday night we would go to a late movie. The movies were shown in a tent. We saw John Wayne and a lot of other old cowboy shows and enjoyed it. We had to walk  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles from home to town and back. We had no car then. The movie would cost 12 cents. Daddy bought a 1934 Ford in late 1936. I believe it was for \$350.00 but we could not make the payments so we lost the car.

In the Fall after I turned 13 years of age we moved to another farm. It was hard to believe we had been on that farm for 5 years. When we moved to Georgetown I was 8 and in the third grade at Georgetown School. We had gone to a little country school called Stonewall, Miss before we moved to Georgetown, and at Georgetown my third-grade teacher was named Miss Clink Spell and she failed me in the Spring of 1933 so I was in her 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class again in the Fall of 1933 and then I passed to the 4<sup>th</sup> grade and was also in Miss Clinks room in the Fall of 1934. In the Fall of 1935, I was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and in the Fall of 1936, I was in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade at Georgetown. So I was in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade when we moved from Georgetown to Simpson County. It was only about three miles away across Pearl River, but you had to go about 8 miles by road to get there. Miss Clink's husband had a store in Georgetown and owned the place or farm we

moved out in the country in Simpson County. We went to a country school that was called Union School of Simpson County. Guess who my teacher was there in the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade in 1937-38, 1938-39 and 1939-40? Miss Clink Spell again. She was a Christian lady and had a big influence on all the people around Georgetown and also the people for miles around there that knew her. She taught Sunday school at the Georgetown Baptist Church. Recently in 1997 I was invited to her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. She has a daughter Joyce a year older than me and a son Wayne a few years younger than me. I told them at the birthday party that their mother failed me in the third grade but that was probably one of the best things that happened to me because I got to go to school under her a year longer and she taught me a lot. In the Summer of 1940 Miss Clink came out to the farm and picked us boys up to go to a revival meeting at the Georgetown Baptist Church. On the way to church she said to me I know you're a Christian but when are you going to join our church? So, I went forward and made it public that I had accepted Christ as my Savior that night.

There was a small creek that ran through a farm about ½ mile from our house. An old black man lived there. He had known my mother's family when she was a young girl and he had known my grandfather Burkett. So he let us fix a swimming hole on his place that we really enjoyed. We had to dam up the creek some so the water would be deep enough to swim in.

Also, during the Summer of 1940 my oldest brother Gayden was dating Lena Mae Martin who lived on the farm next to us. Lena Mae was working at a shirt factory at Crystal Springs Miss and was living in an apartment in Crystal Springs. One Sunday afternoon my brother Burnell, our cousin Eugene Berry that was visiting us and I rode to Crystal Springs with Gayden when he went to see Lena Mae. That night when we started to return to the farm Burnell and I started to ride in the back of Gayden's truck which was a pulp wood truck that Gayden had bought to haul pulp wood and make him some money. We decided to ride in the cab with Gayden and Eugene and we were glad we did because we were traveling on a winding gravel road. There was no street lights so it was very dark. As we saw a road turning to the right that we were to turn on Gayden put the brakes on to turn. One of the rear wheels locked and we started sliding to our left. We slid into the ditch then turned and rolled upside down. All wheels were up in the air. We stopped right near a big tree. No one was hurt bad but we did have some bruises from the wreck. We sure were glad we did not ride in the back of the truck because we would have been thrown off and possibly crushed by the truck. Some local people came by and helped us turn the truck back over and we got in and drove on home. We realized God was looking after us because we could have been hurt real bad or killed in that accident.

Lena Mae's family, the Martins lived on the farm next to us. We were the only two white families living in that community. Several black families lived near us. We would help them and they would help us on the farm.

Gayden and Lena Mae got married not long after that and have been together ever since, about 54 years. My sister-in-law had a Bro named L.T. Martin. He and I would cut pulp wood when there was no work to do on the farm to make some extra money. One day in the middle of the woods it started raining hard and since we were a long way from any house or shelter we just kept cutting wood. A pretty rainbow appeared right in front of us. We could put out our hand and see the colors on our hands. It was real pretty but we did not see a Pot of Gold at the end of the rainbow.

Also in the Summer of 1940 we heard an airplane going across our farm and we could tell something was wrong because the motors were not running right, so we ran around back of our house, and when

we saw the plane we saw some people start jumping out and parachutes start opening. A total of 11 people jumped out and several landed in our field, and we found out later two landed in the Pearl River and the others on the West side of Pearl River. We talked to the ones that landed in our field. They were soldiers and they were on a training mission. The pilot and copilot landed the plane on a farm just West of Georgetown and they were o.k. One of the soldiers asked us if we could take him to McComb, Miss. We told him we did not have a car. He wanted to know if we had a horse or mule he could borrow to ride to McComb. We laughed about that because it was about 55 or 60 miles from where we were to McComb. We found out later that one of the soldiers that landed in Pearl River drowned before he could get out. He got tangled in his parachute. We made a few trips over to Georgetown to see the plane. The Air Force came in and fixed a runway, and a plane landed and brought a new motor that was installed and then the plane was able to be flown out of the field. Burnell cut down a small cedar tree and made a small airplane that looked just like the one that landed near Georgetown. He still has it.

We did not have a football team at Union School. That school only had classes through the 10<sup>th</sup> grade and the students in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade would go several miles by bus to the High School at Pinola, Miss. Burnell went to Union in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade at Pinola and decided he wanted to play football so he went to Georgetown in the Fall of 1939 when he was in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade. He would hitchhike and sometimes the football coach would let him use his car. In the Fall of 1940 Burnell was a Senior and I was a Soph. so we both went to Georgetown. Most of the time we would walk through the woods about two miles near some farms and came out at the bridge that went across Pearl River and we would walk across the bridge and catch one of the school busses that went to Georgetown High School and would ride it about 1 ½ miles to the high school. Burnell was fullback and linebacker on the football team. We only had about 20 players so most of the players played both offence and defense. I was second team and mostly played defense halfback that year when I got to play some. About midway in the season Burnell got hurt in a game and since he couldn't walk the two miles because of his leg injury daddy found out we could move to a farm right at the West side of Georgetown. So, we moved there and share cropped like we did on the two previous farms we had lived on. We were also only about ½ mile from the Georgetown Baptist Church so we finally were close enough to go to church all the time. The high school was only about a hundred and fifty yards from our front yard. In fact, the south end of the football field was only about 20 yards from our front porch. The farm was all in the back of the house. Boy were we excited at this home. We had electricity for the first time in our life. But we still had to go out back of the house near the barn to go to the bathroom or outdoor toilet as it was called. Burnell was able to play basketball in the Spring 1941 and I played some also but I fouled out real quick when I played. Burnell graduated in early April and joined the Air Force the morning after graduation. We missed him but was glad he got to go in the Air Force because that was what he wanted to do.

During the summer we worked hard on the farm as usual but about two miles away there was a good swimming hole in Copiah Creek and we got to go swimming a lot. Gayden and Lena Mae had moved in a house not far from the swimming hole so we got to see them a lot.

In the Fall of 1941 I went back to school. I was a junior and was fullback and linebacker on the football team. We won a few games and lost a few but had a lot of fun. Also in my junior year I was in the junior class play and I enjoyed that.



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I'll never forget hearing about the Jap attack on Pearl Harbor on the radio. This was a huge shock to us and also by Burnell being in the Air Force we were really concerned about him probably going into battle.

In the Spring of 1942 I played basketball and made 1<sup>st</sup> team but I still fouled out a lot usually by the half. I didn't shoot much but I would bring the ball down the court. In one game no one could get open so I shot a long shot and made it. A little later I made another long shot then I missed a shot. Later I got a foul and made the free shot. So Coach Bishop said Boy you are hot tonight. I had made 5 points out of a possible 7 points and that was my high score in basketball.

In the Fall of 1942 (my senior year) I was football team captain and still played fullback on offence and linebacker on defense. I also kicked off and did the punting. We never did try to kick a field goal or kick an extra point. I don't know how I would have done at that if we would have tried it. My best game was against Florence, Miss. when I scored three touchdowns. I remember we went to Star, Miss. to play a game. Most games in those days were played in the afternoon as most schools did not have lights at the football fields. When we got to the high school in Star, Miss someone told our bus driver to follow them to the football field. We drove a couple of miles out of town and turned into a cow pasture with a lot of trees. We came to an open space that was just big enough for a football field and there was a small creek running down one side of the field only about 30 or 40 feet from the field. Cows were eating the grass around the field and the football team of Star, Miss were on the field in their football uniforms with shovels picking up cow manure. Boy did we laugh about that. We played the game and won 24 to 0 and it rained most of the game. Boy what a mess with all the cow manure around the field. We went to New Hebron, Miss to play a game that year. It was a larger school than Georgetown and they had beaten us 20 to 0 in 1940 and 1941 but in 1942 we beat them 7 – 0 and boy were we happy. We also played Gibson, Miss that year and it was larger than Georgetown. At the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter they were leading by a score of 31 to 0. I told our quarterback to let Robert Errington who played halfback and could pass really good, start passing and see if we could score at least one touchdown. Well we passed several times and scored then held them and got the ball and passed again down to the 15-yard line where I told Billy the quarterback to give it to me through the center of the line. I went 15 yards without being touched for the score. We held them again and then passed down and scored again. We did not make the extra points but we felt good. We had come back and scored 18 points and the final score was Port Gibson 31 and Georgetown 18.

I was in the senior play that year. One of my classmates Chastine Lowery played my sister in that play and had been my sister-in-law in the junior play the year before. I still call her sis and she is still a good friend. I never had a regular girlfriend while in high school, just some good friends. We would go to the movie in groups and then meet the Rebel, the passenger train that would come through Georgetown on the GM&O railroad every night about 10pm just to have something to do. It ran from New Orleans to St Louis, Mo.

During my junior and senior years of school and during the summer in between, I would work at odd jobs when I could to make some money. I got a job cutting the grass and cleaning up inside the Georgetown Baptist Church and also at the Methodist Church. It didn't pay much but it was a job. Then I worked at the soda fountain in the drug store for quite a while and my younger brother and I would clean up the theater and get free passes to see the movies. One Sat. I went to the Methodist Church to clean up. They had a revival there that week and after I finished cleaning, I went outside and got on the

bike to go home. We only had one bike that all four of us brothers that were at home had to share. As I started to ride away from the church I saw something on the ground not far from the front steps of the church. It was a \$5.00 bill. I picked it up and when I got home, I told mother about it. She told me to keep it awhile because if someone knew they lost it they would tell me or the Pastor. After a month she told me to go ahead and spend the money. I bought myself two pairs of kaki pants with that \$5.00.

In December 1942 the US Government made it possible for high school seniors that were 18 or older to go into service and they would get credits for their basic training to get their high school diploma. So, during the Christmas break I decided I wanted to join the Air Force. Burnell really liked the Air Force and I thought that was what I wanted. I had turned 18 on Sept 16. On Jan 7<sup>th</sup> 1943 one of my classmates W.D. Rials and I went to Jackson, Miss to join the Air Force. This is when things began to happen that I could not believe, and I had no control over. I realized later that God had made it all possible for a lot of things to happen that some people would just call luck. But I did not see it that way. At the Air Force Station, we were told they had taken so many volunteers lately that they had to stop taking volunteers for a while. We didn't want to join the regular Army, Marines or Navy. So, we decided to try the Maritime Service. So many Merchant Marine Ships were being built to get the supplies overseas for the servicemen that they needed a lot of Merchant Seamen to operate them. My buddy W.D. failed the physical but I passed and I was told I would be notified soon when to report back to Jackson, Miss to be sent to the Maritime Training Station at St. Petersburg, Florida. They thought the next class for training would be real soon. So knowing I would be going very soon, I decided not to go back to school but to stay at home and help daddy on the farm. Also, mother had been sick a lot the past couple of years and I thought I would be able to help her with the house work while waiting for them to notify me to come start my training.

We didn't know what was wrong with mother. The old country doctor had treated her for what he thought it might be. But he didn't really know what her problem was (more about this Later). The month of January went by and no word from the Maritime Service. February went by and still no word and then March went by and still no word from the Maritime Service. I really got to spend a lot of time during those three months with mother and daddy. Mother continued to be sick a lot. We still didn't know what the problem was. I was glad I was there to help her.

Then on April 1<sup>st</sup> I received word to report on April 7<sup>th</sup> to Jackson to be sent to St. Petersburg, Fla for training. I went by bus to Jackson, Miss on April 7<sup>th</sup> and then by bus to Montgomery, Ala and then by train to St. Petersburg, Fla. I hated to leave home because I had never been away from home more than one night and I knew I would miss mother and daddy and my three younger brothers, but I was excited about getting to see some of the USA because I had only been out of the state of Miss one time when we went to Kentwood, La just across the state line when we had the school bus accident.

The night of April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1943 when I was on my way to St. Petersburg, Fla was also the night of Graduation Exercise at Georgetown, Miss. We would only go to school for 8 months back then. By getting out in April we could help on the farm April to August. The Principal Mr. Bishop gave my diploma to my mother and daddy even though I had not started my training to get the credits I needed and I had not been in school the past 3 months.

I was supposed to get 6 months training at St. Petersburg. I loved St. Petersburg but I was homesick after a few days. After being at the base for about 3 weeks I went to a Baptist Church one Sunday night. After church all the servicemen present were invited to a youth fellowship so they asked us to stand and

## The Story of My Life by Burkett Berry

give our name and where we were from. When it came my turn, I said Burkett Berry and I'm from Georgetown, Miss. There were two girls who started cheering and clapping with their hands. They had recently moved to Florida from Mississippi. They sure made me feel good and I enjoyed going to church there during the rest of my training in St. Petersburg.

As I said I was suppose to get 6 months training with about 3 months aboard a training ship. The ships were being built so fast they needed more men for the Merchant Marine Ships. So I only got about 10 weeks training and only 3 weeks of that time on the training ship and that three weeks was really something. The first week I worked in the kitchen or galley as it's called. The second week I worked in the ship's laundry, washing and pressing uniforms. The third week I did get to go work on the deck of the ship. I was supposed to learn how to steer the ship, but I never did get to do that. I did take a message to the wheelhouse one time, so I got to see what it looked like. The ship would leave St. Petersburg – Tampa Bay and go out into the Gulf for 5 or 6 days each week. So I got to see what the Gulf looked like anyway. My pay was \$50.00 a month during the time I was in training.

On Sunday June 6<sup>th</sup> I got off the Training Ship and on Wed. night June 9<sup>th</sup> I went to the boxing matches that were held on the Base each week. If you could box and wanted to they would match you up with someone as near your size and with the experience as close to you as possible. You would get a little money and a pass to go uptown for taking part in the boxing. I had never boxed but at the matches that night I recognized a boy boxing that was from Hazlehurst, Miss. He won and after the match I talked to him and we planned to go downtown on Sat. night. He was Truit Smith.

Note: I wrote a lot of my high school friends and classmates and they would write me back. This meant a lot to me. Also, there was a girl named Dottie Bell that had been in my class in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades at Union Miss and I wrote her and she would write back. I never dated her, but we were good friends.

On Saturday afternoon June 12<sup>th</sup> about 100 sailors including myself were told to pack our Sea Bags and get dressed to catch a train at 6pm. We were to be sent to San Francisco, Calif. Boy was I going to get to see the USA. So I didn't get to see Truit again. Our first stop was New Orleans, La. on Monday morning early on June 14<sup>th</sup>. We were told we would leave New Orleans about 3pm. I could not call home because we had no phone at home. I didn't consider a telegram because we would leave in the afternoon for Calif. We were able to look around New Orleans but had to be back at the station about 2pm. When we got back to the station we were told we would leave about 8:30pm. If I had known that we would be there until 8:30pm I could have gone home by bus or hitch-hiked home to see my folks as it is only about 165 miles from New Orleans to Georgetown, Miss. So we went back uptown and went to a movie then at 8:30pm we were aboard the train and left New Orleans.

It was a troop train with several cars of Army men, several of Navy men, some Air Force and Marines and two cars of women (WACS) and there were two cars of US Merchant Marines. In East Texas on Tuesday morning the steam engine blew up and we had to wait a while for another engine to come and get us. There was a soldier who drank some home brew whiskey and died on the train. It was quite a trip going through Houston and San Antonio. Before we got to El Paso, Tex. a man stabbed another because he had been caught cheating in a crap game. He was a member of the train crew and stabbed by another member of the crew. Some of the service men caught him cheating and made him give their money back but when the crew member asked for his money he refused and so he got stabbed. So they were taken off in El Paso.

Boy was I learning a lot and seeing a lot of the USA. I could not believe I was finally seeing some mountains and deserts in Tex., New Mexico and Ariz. When we got to Phoenix we stopped for another train to go by us going East. While we were stopped a few of the service men got off the train and ran over to a switch track and got some watermelons from a car and brought quite a few over to our cars. We finally got to Los Angeles on Thursday afternoon June 17<sup>th</sup>. We had a 2-hour layover, so we got to walk around downtown LA a little. We left later that afternoon and headed for Oakland, Calif on Friday, June 18<sup>th</sup> almost 6 days since we left St. Petersburg, Fla. We arrived in Oakland, Calif and went aboard a ferryboat to go over to San Francisco which was called the pool for maritime service.

Several hundred sailors stationed there would continue getting some training while waiting for their turn to ship out. They said we would be there a few weeks. There were 3 restaurants nearby where we could go eat our meals. We were given vouchers to do this. After eating that night, I went back to the base and wrote my family and friends to let them know where I was and what had happened on the long trip from Fla to Calif. I could have gone to downtown San Francisco but decided not to go. On Saturday morning June 19<sup>th</sup> when I returned to the base from eating breakfast, I noticed I was posted for fire watch starting at 12 noon so that meant I had to go eat lunch at 11AM so I would be ready for the fire watch at 12 noon. When I got back to the base a little before 12 noon a young officer asked are you in the Deck Dept? I said yes sir. He said are you ready to ship out and I said I got fire watch coming up at 12 noon. He said forget about that and go pack your Sea Bag and be ready in 30 minutes. I guess everyone else was gone to lunch. So about 12:30pm after I had packed my bag I was put in a van and taken downtown to the war shipping admin where I met my Captain and was signed on the ship SS James Sterling Morton. I also met an Officer that was signing on to the SS James Sterling Morton. When all the paperwork was finished the Captain told the Officer and me to be aboard the ship over in Oakland by 4pm.

Note: My basic pay was \$82.50 a month as an ordinary seaman but the U.S. Government also paid me \$100.00 a month so \$182.50 per month was not bad. There also would be some Bonus depending on whether we would be in the war area; \$5.00 per day while in War Zone.

The Officer that had signed on told me he had to make a couple stops at Hotels in San Francisco before going to the ship and if I wanted to ride with him I could see some of San Francisco and he would pay all the cab fare. So we got a cab and rode around San Francisco before we started over the San Francisco Oakland Bay Bridge which I believe is 7 miles long. So we went aboard ship just about 4pm. I was assigned to my cabin and met a good many of the crew by the time the evening meal was ready at 5pm. Some of the crew asked me if I wanted to go downtown? We would have to be back by midnight curfew. Rumors were out that we would sail for Australia the next day. So I told them I had to write my folks; since I had just written them the night before that I would be there a few weeks. I also wrote my friends and about 10pm after I finished writing my letters I went out to the gang plank. A Marine was on guard. I asked him where was the closest place I could mail my letters. He said he was going off duty at 12mid and he would mail them for me and I wouldn't have to leave the ship, so that's what he did. I couldn't believe what all had happened and how far I had travelled from Sat. night, June 12 until Sat. night, June 19<sup>th</sup>. I could not believe it had only been 2 months and 12 days since I left home.

The next day, Sunday, June 20<sup>th</sup>, we left the dock before noon and went out under the Golden Gate Bridge. I was assigned to the 4-8 shift which meant 4 to 8AM and 4 to 8PM while out at sea. We would

have 8 hours off between shifts. The other two shifts one would work 12 mid to 4AM and 12 noon until 4PM, then 8AM to 12 noon and 8PM to 12 midnight. There were 3 Deck Men and an Officer on each shift. One would steer 2 hours and then another 2 hours and one would be on lookout and the other on relief to switch from the steering to lookout and relief for coffee break and bathroom break.

Note: I had to learn to make coffee. I had never drank coffee at home but I learned to like it while making coffee while on duty.

The Officer would be on duty for the four-hour shift. At 4pm when my shift went on duty the Chief Officer asked me how much steering training I received at St. Petersburg, Fla. When I told him none, he said well it's just like steering a car. I said but sir I have never steered a car. He laughed and said we will tell you what course to steer on the compass and will be changing course often to prevent subs from firing a torpedo at us. This was scary and then I got to thinking we have lots of Army trucks and tanks and other supplies in the cargo holds and on deck so they sure would like to hit us with a torpedo if they could. The Officer said just pretend the course we tell you to steer is the center of the road and keep the ship in the center of the road. He told me to watch the Sailor that was steering for a while. We changed course about 3 times in 30 minutes. The Officer came back and asked me if I was ready to try it. I said yes sir. So I started steering the ship. You talk about on job training. I was really getting mine fast.

So out into the Pacific we went zig-zagging back and forth. I really learned a lot about the ship and the Pacific Ocean. One night just after dark I was steering the ship and I could see lightening flashing off to our right or the starboard side of the ship. The Officer asked me if I saw the lightening and I said yes sir. He said that's the Christmas Islands over there. He said you will see lightening at sea unless there is land nearby. I forgot just how far from land he said you would be able to see the lightening. He said when you get a certain distance from land you will have wind and rain but no lightening. Another night there was a full moon shining and ahead of us was some clouds and rain. All of a sudden, the most beautiful rainbow appeared. The colors were so bright and pretty in the night sky. I saw rainbows at night two other times after that and I can still remember how beautiful it was. I remembered the song Ernest Tubb (The Texas Troubadour) had recorded a few years earlier (Rainbow at Midnight). Every time I heard that song after that I could picture in my mind the beautiful rainbow that I had seen at night. Also every night in the South Pacific there were 4 bright stars that formed a cross, and it was called the Southern Cross. The top of the cross was pointing to the North and the bottom to the South with the other two to East and the West. I wrote quite a few times to mother and daddy, my friends and my brothers while we were out at Sea the 28 days on the way to Australia so I could mail them when we arrived in port.

One night a man on watch reported that just as we changed course a torpedo went right by us just missing us a few feet. At day break we were all at our Battle Stations because we were afraid the sub would surface and shell us. I think God was looking after us because we saw nothing of the sub. We made it on to Brisbane Australia on July 18<sup>th</sup>, 1943. We had zig-zagged in the Pacific for 28 days. We had not seen land at all during that time after we left Calif. Boy was I glad to see the mountains after seeing nothing but water for 28 days. I had not realized that the Pacific Ocean was that big.

I was steering the ship when we went into port at Brisbane. The pilot would pick out a building, a bridge or a mountain peak to steer toward as we made our way into the harbor and he would tell me when to change course. Again we were in Brisbane for several days. I was downtown one day and I wanted a

cab to go back to the ship. The cab nearby was picking up an elderly couple and the driver asked if I was in a hurry. I said no so he said get in the front with me and you can see some of the Australian Mountain Country side and he would only charge me the fee from downtown to the dock. He was taking the couple to their home up in the mountains so I really enjoyed the trip. I got to ride with him about an hour before I got to the ship.

During the trip from San Francisco to Brisbane Australia there was lots of time to think and write letters when we got into port. I also got quite a few letters when we got to Brisbane Australia. Mother would write a couple of times each week and I got quite a few letters from my friends and relatives. During the trip a lot of the Sailors would talk about getting married or engaged when they got back to the states. I thought about it a lot, then I wrote a letter to Dottie Bell and told her I loved her and if she would let me I would buy her an engagement ring when I got back and we would get married later. At first she didn't think it was a good idea but I guess she realized I wanted someone to be waiting for me like the other guys on the ship. So although we had never dated she agreed to wait for me and we would become engaged when I got back to the states. I cared a lot about Dottie but I guess I didn't know much about love. So we wrote each other quite a bit. Each port we would make I would usually have a good many letters but then while at sea we would not get any mail. So I would read the last letters I received over and over.

Something happened one day that really shocked me. A man on the ship told me he wanted to show me something. He asked me to go into the bathroom with him. He closed the door and showed me some dirty pictures and then started putting his hands on me. I was shocked. I handed him the pictures and walked out. I stayed away from him. Later he made fun of me in front of the crew because I would not take a drink of liquor he had offered me. He said where he come from they made you drink liquor whether you wanted it or not. A big boy from South Carolina stood up and said to the man you quit bothering Berry and said he had more respect for me than he did anyone on that ship including the Captain. He told him if he bothered me any more he would have him to deal with. So the guy never said anything or bothered me again. That was the first time I had ever met a Homosexual and the only one that ever made a pass at me.

After we left Brisbane we went to Sydney and was there a week. Then we started back up the coast in a convoy. We were going to Townsville Australia.

Note: The people of Australia were so nice. The Australian Soldiers were real nice also.

I was steering the ship when the steering gear broke and we started spinning around and since we were in a complete blackout (no lights at all) we had to turn our lights on so the other ships could get around without hitting us. The convoy went on and left us and after a while our steering gear was repaired and we started up the coast again. The next day we caught up with the convoy and weaved ourselves back into our position in the middle of the convoy. After several days we docked at Townsville and started reloading. All of our cargo had been unloaded at Brisbane and Sydney. This time they were loading Army trucks and jeeps (Australian), small Navel boats, 55-gallon drums of fuel and ammunition. We were there about 2 weeks and then went up the coast to Cairns Australia to finish loading and was there about a week. One day someone said Gen. MacArthur was on the dock. I ran up to the top deck because I wanted to see Gen. MacArthur. He was my Hero. Just as I got to the top deck I saw a big black Cadillac leaving the dock. It had five big stars and American Flags on it and I sure was sorry I did not get to see the General.

After we finished loading all the Cargo Holds more trucks and jeeps and Army tanks and boats were put on top of the Cargo Holds and any space on deck where something could be put. There were Hand Grenades and Mortar Shells and more 55 gallons of fuel stacked all over the decks.

So we headed North to Buna, New Guinea. After several days we reached Buna on Oct 10<sup>th</sup>, 1943, and I realized I had just completed 6 months and a few days of training and active duty. Boy, so much had happened in the 6 months since I left home to go to St. Petersburg Florida. The pilot that took us into the Harbor of Buna, New Guinea told us the Japs had been bombing the 5<sup>th</sup> Air Force Base that was almost 18 miles away every night at midnight, and if they had any bombs left, they would come over the harbor on the way back to their home base in Rahul, New Brittan and drop bombs hoping to hit the ships in the harbor. There was only room for one ship at the dock and a ship was tied up and unloading so we had to drop anchor and wait for the dock to be clear before we could go in and unload.

Some of us decided to sleep out on deck, so we brought our bunk bed mattress out and found a spot big enough to make our bed. It was hot weather and more comfortable out on the deck than it would have been in our quarters.

Sure enough at midnight we heard and saw the bombs exploding at the 5<sup>th</sup> Air Force Base. It happened the same way the next two nights on Oct 11<sup>th</sup> and Oct 12<sup>th</sup>. It was real scary because we knew if they should drop some bombs in the harbor and one bomb would hit our ship it would be real bad with all the stuff we had aboard that could explode. I guess they dropped all the bombs at the air base because none were dropped in the harbor. The morning of Oct 13<sup>th</sup> about 10AM I was sitting straddle of a cargo boom chipping the rust away and painting the boom when the General Alarm went off. Thinking we were going to have a drill because the pilot had said there had not been any attacks during the day for some time, I got down off the boom and reported to my Battle Station which was a 20MM gun. We had a navel Officer and 15 Navy Men aboard to operate the guns but we Merchant Marines were assigned to the guns as loaders and to back up the Navy Men in case they were not able to operate the guns. We had several 20MM guns and several 50 caliber and a 3" gun on the bow and a 5" gun on the stern. I was the loader for the gun that I was assigned to. As soon as I got to the gun station and put on ear phones, the Navel Officer said to hold our fire unless we were directly attacked. We looked at each other in unbelief and the order came again, Do Not Fire unless we are directly attacked because we also have planes in the air. By then the sky to the East of us was filled with fighter planes, bombers, dive bombers and torpedo planes and they were all coming straight at us or so it seemed. About the time we were expecting them to start bombing we saw a large squadron of fighter planes (American) coming down right on top of the Jap planes and they started firing at the Jap planes. Boy, it was like being in the middle of a John Wayne movie with all the firing and planes going down all around us. Boy, this was scary because the real thing is quite different than seeing it in the movies. We saw 10 or 11 Jap planes go down and a few bombs were dropped before the Jap planes turned and headed back East with the 5<sup>th</sup> Air Force Planes chasing them. An American Barge a short distance from us was hit with a bomb and there was a big fire. Within a short time, the planes were all out of site. In a short time we were told to pull up anchor and head down the coast because a Jap navy fleet was headed our way. So we took off down the coast as fast as our ship would go. We traveled until late in the afternoon and then pulled into a cove and dropped anchor. Pretty soon it was dark and all night long we could see and hear explosions up at Buna toward the 5<sup>th</sup> Air Force Base. Boy, was I glad we left there before the Japs came back!

We stayed there for a few days then we got orders to return to Buna. The ship that had been at the dock was gone so we were able to go on in and tie up and start unloading. American Soldiers were unloading the ship and they worked around the clock, except at midnight, the Japs would still bomb the Air Base. During that time lights (total blackout) were turned off and the Soldiers would leave the ship and run out into the jungle area until the all-clear sound. One night after the bombing stopped at the Air Base, we heard a Jap plane coming right toward the dock, and it started dropping bombs. They were falling about 5 or 10 seconds apart it seemed and coming in a straight line toward the dock where we were tied up. There were 11 bombs dropped and the last one was close enough for the dock and ship to sway back and forth. We knew if there had been one more we would probably have been hit. Each Merchant Marine received a Bonus of \$125.00 for the bombing raid, but I had to pay \$26.00 back to the Internal Revenue Service in tax.

A few days later we finished unloading and headed back to Australia. Somehow at this time I read a story about a service man that had read Psalm 91 Verse 7 that had helped him, and this is what it said: "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee". Although I had been scared during the air battle and when the bomber dropped the bombs near the dock where we were, I realized God was telling me not to be afraid and that He was going to take care of me. God was still in charge. There are many other verses in Psalm 91 that says God is there and will protect us, but Verse 7 is what I needed at that time, and I was no longer afraid of what might happen to me because I knew God was going to take care of me.

When we got back to Brisbane Australia a war correspondent came aboard to interview us to see how the Maritime Trainees had handled the situation at Buna. He told us on Oct 13<sup>th</sup>, 1943, 53 Jap planes had been shot down in the Buna New Guinea area and that only 3 American planes had been lost. He also said the next ship that went into dock there after us had been hit by a bomb while at the dock. This made me realize even more that God had protected us while we were there. So much had happened in just over 6 months since I had left home in Georgetown Miss in April of 1943 to go to St. Petersburg Fla for training which was supposed to be 6 months. Can you believe all this had happened to me during that time?

I had quite a bit of mail when we got back to Australia but only a few letters from Dottie. I didn't realize what was going on, but mother wrote me that she heard Dottie was engaged to someone else. I answered Dottie's letters, but I didn't ask if what mother had heard was true. I figured she would write and tell me about it if she was.

Note: While in Australia, the Homosexual took his bag and left the ship. We never saw him again.

We left Australia and went to Auckland New Zealand where we loaded supplies (600 ton) to take to Pitcairn Island (The Home of Mutiny on the Bounty). Two ships each year would take the staple goods to Pitcairn for the people that lived on the island at that time. Most of whom were ancestors of the Crew of the Bounty (about 200 people on Pitcairn in 1943). While in New Zealand I only had one letter from Dottie. She still didn't say anything about marrying someone else, but I could tell her letter was different than the ones I had been receiving from her before. Mother wrote me that she heard Dottie was going to be married soon to someone else.



When we had loaded the supplies we found out that a Seventh Day Adventist Minister would go with us. Also, his wife who was expecting a baby at any time and their two-year-old child and a nurse to look after the Minister's wife when the baby was born. Also, an elderly man and his 13 year old grandson would go with us and they were taking the man's wife's ashes (and the boy's grandmother) to be buried on Pitcairn Island. She had died in a hospital in New Zealand. I believe it was around Dec 5<sup>th</sup> when we left New Zealand, and after several days at sea we got into a bad storm (Typhoon). It was really rough and since the ship only had 600 tons of cargo instead of about 9000 tons when loaded, it was tossed all over the place. We kept trying to change course but nothing seemed to make things better. The waves looked to be as high as 50 foot at times and the wind was blowing so strong. We knew we were not close to land because there was no lightening flashing, only lots of rain and strong wind. One night I was asleep. The ship was like a fast elevator going up and down. When I went to bed I was awakened by a bad jolt and then the engine was shut down. About that time one of the crew members on duty came down the hall yelling we lost our propeller because the stern of the ship had gone out of the water while the ship was going up and down. I thought we might have been hit with a torpedo, so when he said that I said is that all and I went back to sleep. I knew God would take care of us again. For several days we rode the storm out without power. During that time a loaded American Tanker came by and got a line to us but the wind and waves were so strong the line broke. So the tanker just circled around us until a Sea Going Tug Boat got out there about 4 days after we lost the propeller. The Tanker left and it was so rough the tug did not get a line to us until the next day. Finally they started towing us to Wellington New Zealand. During the storm I saw the cooks holding a big pan on the stove so they could boil some eggs. If you turned anything loose it would slide off the table so we had to hold our plates and silverware. We finally got out of the storm in a few days and we kept going toward Wellington N.Z. We got to the International Date Line on Christmas Eve Dec 24<sup>th</sup>, 1943 and the next day was Dec 26 so we missed Christmas Day in 1943. Can you believe that? We got to Wellington a few days later Dec 29<sup>th</sup>, I believe it was. The Minister's wife had her baby that night. Our Pharmacist Mate was sure glad she did not have the baby while we were out at sea as he would have had to help the nurse deliver the baby. God was still in control.

They had then right size shaft but they did not have the propeller in New Zealand to repair the ship so thought they may have to wait until one could be brought down there from the USA. Then they decided they could use a larger propeller and build up the inside of it to fit the shaft, and that's what they did. It took three weeks for them to repair the ship so we really enjoyed Wellington New Zealand. The people were real nice just like they were in Australia. Since it was Summer time down there (compared to Winter time in the USA) we got to spend some time at the beach. My buddy Chuck Johnson from the state of Washington and I would go to the movies a lot and stop by an ice cream parlor to get us something to eat or drink. He and I did not drink liquor of any kind not even beer, and I think we were the only ones on the ship that didn't. Chuck had a friend on the ship from the state of Washington named Zimmerman that liked to drink and party but every once in a while, he would ask if he could go with Chuck and me? When he did, he would drink milk shake or soft drinks with us just like us. I thought that was real nice of him and we enjoyed having him along with us.

One night we were walking down the street when we met several drunk British Sailors going the other direction. While we were passing them one of them started cursing and wanted to fight and then they all surrounded Chuck, Zimmerman and me. We asked what was the problem and they were so drunk they couldn't make us understand what was the matter. Finally they turned and all walked away and

Zimmerman started laughing. When we asked what he was laughing about he said he had punched one of the Sailors in the side with his elbow. We said why did you do that? He said he wanted to see Chuck and me fight that bunch of drunk Sailors. Chuck said why? He said he wanted to see how good we could fight. Chuck said well what about you? Zimmerman said he was just going to watch us. Boy what a buddy. We didn't receive any mail while in Wellington New Zealand.

At the ice cream parlor one night I was talking to one of the waitresses named Gloria Allen. She was friendly and told me she was engaged to an American Sailor that had been there a little while before. She and I would talk every time I went in there and we became good friends. She went to a movie with me one night and when I walked her home and I met her mother and she was real nice also. I had a lot of respect for her and since she was engaged we were just good friends and enjoyed each other a lot for the three weeks we were there. Nothing serious, just good friends.

Finally after three weeks in dry dock the ship was repaired and we were ready to go to Pitcairn Island. The minister and the man and his grandson went with us but the woman and children did not go with us. The ship would make a little better speed because of the larger propeller they had put on it. That propeller weighed 12 ton compared to 7 ton that the old one weighed. Before we were able to make about 10 to 11 miles per hour now we could make up to about 13 miles per hour. After several days we arrived at Picarian Island. It was a beautiful site to see. There was no dock for us to tie up to so we anchored off shore a little ways. We didn't receive any mail at Picarian Island.

The people of Picarian would row their boats out to the ship to get the cargo we had brought them. There were several boats and each one had a crew of about 10 men to row the boat. When they would be rowing out to us each group would sing "Let the Lower Lights be Burning". It was so pretty to hear them singing that hymn as they rowed out to us even without music. Then one day they let us go ashore and we got to tour the island. It was a real pretty place with all kinds of tropical fruit growing on the island. They gave us some bunches of bananas to take back to the ship. The people were nice and they took us to the cave where the people from the Bounty stayed when the first settled the island. Some of the boat crews came aboard the ship and they sang for us. Then they wanted us to sing a cowboy song for them. A big Navy man from Texas got his guitar and said he would sing Whoopie Ti Yi Yo if someone would help him sing the chorus. So I helped him sing the chorus. I don't know how good we sounded but they seemed to enjoy it.

Finally we left Picarian Island and headed for San Francisco Calif. We arrived in San Francisco Feb 23, 1944. I had quite a bit of mail when we got there; none from Dottie. Mother wrote that Dottie was married. I guess I realized that I really didn't love her that much, but I felt hurt that she had not written me anything about her engagement or marriage. I signed off the ship the next day on Feb 25<sup>th</sup>, 1944 and caught a train to Los Angeles and transferred to a train to New Orleans La. The guy from South Carolina that stood up for me on the ship when the Homosexual had bothered me in Australia traveled with me as far as New Orleans. Then he went on to South Carolina and I caught a train (The Rebel) to go on to Georgetown. I guess I spent so much time in Australia and New Zealand that I picked up their accent because mother and daddy could not understand what I was saying at times. I did not realize I was talking with a British accent until they asked me about it. Boy was I glad to get back to Georgetown. I had been gone from home almost 11 months. I felt like I had been around the world. I had seen so much and so many things had happened. Mother was still sick a lot and I was glad I got to be there with her and daddy and my three younger brothers. I got to see Carl and Junior (or Hank) play basketball at

Georgetown High School while I was home in March 1944. Gayden and Lena had bought them a farm out from Georgetown about 3 miles across Copiah Creek and they were expecting a baby in May. They had been married over 4 years and had wanted a baby. The Dr had told her she probably would never have children. So a miracle was about to take place.

One night a few days after I got home I went to a movie. I saw Dottie Bell's mother and father come into the theater so I figured they may be going to meet the train after the movie and Dottie may be on the train. The rebel ran from St. Louis to New Orleans in the morning and from New Orleans to St. Louis at night. Dottie's parents lived several miles away so that's why I figured they would meet her after the movie. I saw them go over to the train station and I started over that way. I saw an old friend Margaret Dickerson who was a year ahead of me in High School and I had some classes with her. She had been at the movie. I told her about Dottie and asked her if she wanted to meet the Rebel with me. So when the Rebel came in Margaret was hanging onto me like she was my girl. When Dottie got off the train, she looked at me and smiled, but Margaret and I just turned and walked away like I had not even seen Dottie. A few days later I received a letter from Dottie and she said she was hurt because I did not speak to her. I wrote her back and sent her pictures back to her and told her I was hurt also because she had gotten married and had not bothered to let me know. I told her I could understand her having someone else and marrying them but she could have let me know what she did. I never saw her again until one time several years later. We smiled and spoke to each other and that was the last time I ever saw her. One of my cousins Sarah Buckley and some of her friends were at the train station one night when the Rebel came through. Sarah introduced me to her friends. There was one girl with her that I thought was real cute. Her name was Crystal Sherman. Her nickname was "Tootsie". I saw her and talked to her a couple of other times while I was home during March of 1944. Gayden and Lena Mae had a daughter named Gay that was born in May 1944. They had started a crop on their new farm.

In late March I went to New Orleans and signed on a ship SS Steelmotor on Mar 29, 1944. We made a trip to Cuba and stopped at Havana and then made a stop at the little sea port of Cardenan, I believe it was called. It only took two weeks to make the trip from New Orleans to Cuba and back to New Orleans. While in Cuba we got to go ashore in each port for a few hours. We went to a bowling alley and walked around is about all we did while in Cuba. My Base Pay was \$100.00 from Steamship Co and \$100.00 from Government but no Bonus on this run to Cuba.

When we got back to New Orleans and I got our mail I had a letter from my brother Carl telling me that mother was real sick and was in the hospital and that the Dr said there was no hope for her. I went to the Captain and told him about mother and asked him if I could have a few days off and go home to see her. He said he did not know just how long we would be in New Orleans and could not let me off. I told him that the Rebel Train left New Orleans at 6PM and I may get myself in trouble but I would be on the train to go home and see my mother. About an hour later the 1<sup>st</sup> Officer came to me and asked me if I could be back in New Orleans by Sunday afternoon. It was Thursday and I told him yes I could be in Georgetown Miss by 10PM and I could catch the Rebel Sunday morning at 7AM and be back in New Orleans by 11AM or a little after. This would give me Fri and Sat to be with my family and go see my mother in the Hospital. The Officer told me if I needed to be back before Sunday that he would send me a telegram. We had no phone at home so he could not reach me by phone. When I arrived in Georgetown that night at 10PM a family friend told me my mother was doing better and that she had just seen my brother over at the theater. Thinking she was talking about one of my younger brothers I walked the block over to the theater. Out walked my brother Burnell. He had returned to the states

from England. A short time before he had got a leave and came home to see mother. So what a surprise to see each other at home. It had been over a year since we had seen each other before he went overseas and before I went into the Merchant Marine Service, actually it had been about a year and a half. Burnell had married a girl from Orlando Florida in 1943. I forget just what the date was. She was Louise Griner. They were expecting a baby in Sept 1944. While stationed in England Burnell was a Crew chief on a B-24 Bomber. One day while patrolling along the coast of France they were attacked by German fighter planes. They shot down 4 or 5 of the fighters but the B-24 had been shot full of holes by the fighters. The Pilot was dead on the B-24 and the Co-Pilot was injured. One other Crew Member was killed and two more injured. Burnell and two others were not injured so Burnell had to help the Co-Pilot get the plane into a bank of clouds to get away from the fighter planes. Then the Co-Pilot turned the control of the Bomber to Burnell to fly back across the channel to England. They just made it to the runway in England because they were losing altitude. The plane had 170 holes in it. So God was looking out for him also. Burnell was 22 years old in March 1944. He was 72 years old in March 1994. I believe it was Time Magazine that had a story about this plane making it back to England after the attack by the German fighter planes.

So we made our plans to go see mother on Sat after they told me she was doing better and what had happened. A young doctor just out of Medical School had checked her and diagnosed her as having Diabetes and started giving her insulin and she started improving right away. Another miracle, and God does answer prayer because family and friends had been praying for mother. Mother was so happy to see her two sons that had been away in the war and boy were we glad to see her and to see for ourselves that she was doing good. Mother was 43 at that time and by taking the insulin shots twice a day she lived to be 76 as she was with us until 1976. More about this later.

Burnell and I went to a photo shop and had a picture made together to give to mother. On Sunday I caught the Rebel and went back to New Orleans and I was so glad I had been able to see mother and spend a little time with the rest of the family. A couple of days later mother got to leave the Hospital and go home.

We left New Orleans and went back to Cuba four more times between then and June 6<sup>th</sup>. We would only be in the two ports of Cuba for several hours each trip. We took all kinds of household goods from New Orleans to Cuba and would bring back Rock Sugar. This was a small ship so did not take very long to unload and load back up. You could not buy things like electric irons and refrigerators in the states at that time, but I bought my mother and my sister-in-law Lena Mae each an electric iron in Cuba and brought them home to them.

One time while at the Bowling Alley while I was bowling I noticed several girls looking at me and smiling. I didn't know what was going on but then I noticed one of the girls ask one of my Shipmates a question and he and everyone started laughing and I asked what was going on? He said she wanted to know if I was James Cagney the movie star and he had said sure I was James Cagney. They realized he was joking and that's why they were all laughing. I felt good about them thinking I might be James Cagney and every time I went into the Bowling Alley after that they would all smile at me. I could not speak Spanish and most of them could not speak English, so mostly we just smiled at each other. The people of Cuba were nice. I remember one time I went into a store to buy some film for my camera and the store owner did not have the size film I wanted. He couldn't speak much English and he tried to tell me where I could find the film but I could not understand. So he turned to a young teen age girl that I figured was

about 13 or 14 and told her something in Spanish. So she motioned me to go outside the store with her. She pointed down the street and motioned me to walk with her. We walked about 3 blocks and went into a store and she talked to someone in the store and they had the film I needed. The girl then smiled at me and walked out of the store and went back up the street. How nice of her.

We had made 5 trips to Cuba at this time. In early June we left New Orleans and went to Mobile Ala to go into dry dock to get some repairs for the ship. My uncle Jeff that used to live on the farm near us from Georgetown Miss was living at Chickasaw, Ala just north of Mobile. So I got to visit my cousins and uncle and aunt while we were in dry dock. One weekend we had a picnic and got to go swimming not far from Mobile. We were at the dry dock for about 4 weeks to get the repairs done. Most of the Ship's Crew would spend the night in downtown Mobile but I and another Shipmate would always go back on board to sleep because we were trying to save money. I don't know just what he was saving his money for, but I wanted to save up enough to help mother and daddy at least make a down payment on a farm. Ever since we had lost our farm back in 1932 we had hoped some day we would have our own place again and not have to sharecrop to have a place to live. One night after midnight my Shipmate and I came back aboard the ship after going to a late movie. When we got onboard, we noticed smoke coming out of the Officer Quarters. We ran over there and found the Officer that was on duty and the only man on ship before we came aboard was drunk and lying in his bunk and had been smoking and the mattress was burning all around him. So we got him out of the bed and took the mattress outside and put the fire out. I don't guess the Officer ever knew who got him out because he never said anything to us about it.

After getting the ship repaired we made one more trip to Cuba and then on Aug 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1994 I signed off the ship. I had put in the required time (4 months) to get 30 days off. So I was excited about going home again. I think it had been in June that Gayden was drafted about three months after his daughter was born in March. So Lena Mae's mother and dad and Lena Mae's younger brothers and sisters moved in with Lena Mae to help with the crop that Gayden had started. They were short on money and Gayden wanted to sell his old Model A that had been converted from a coupe to a small truck. The cab just behind the front door had been cut off and a wood back installed and a little flat bed had been built on behind about 5 ft by 6 ft square so he could haul supplies for the farm like fertilizer, etc. So I gave him \$150.00 for the truck. I had never driven before that time, but daddy showed me how to drive it when I got home. During August while I was home, I dated Crystal a few times and one night my younger brother Carl dated Crystal's younger sister Virginia. The four of us got in the small cab of the converted truck and went to a movie at New Hebron Miss. After the movie we were on our way back to their home which was several miles out from Georgetown toward New Hebron. As we came up a hill on the narrow winding gravel road there was a mule standing in the middle of the road. When I put on the brakes I could not stop so I hit the mule and his front feet knocked the windshield out and the mule went over the top of the cab. None of us were hurt or so we thought but later we found out Virginia did get a little piece of glass in one eye but it was not serious. We were only about a mile from their home so we took them home and drove on to Georgetown without a windshield. One of their neighbors told us later the next morning the mule was standing up on the bluff above the road looking at the spot where we hit him. He had a big cut on his head and I heard later that the mule died. I had to get a new windshield put in the truck. I dated Crystal several more times before I had to leave home.

My brothers and I decided to go swimming, so they told some of their friends and neighbors. There was a total of 24 people who went about 3 miles on that truck to go swimming. One neighbor lady went to

look after some of the small kids, so there were 10 teenagers, myself, the lady and 12 small kids on that truck. On our way back as we got into town, I went around a curve real slow and four of the teenagers got off balance and fell off the truck but no one was hurt.

Mother was doing real good and still taking the insulin twice a day. Daddy would give her the shots every day.

After enjoying my stay at home, I went back to New Orleans and signed on another ship, SS Alfred M Lunt on Sept 5, 1944. We left New Orleans and went through the Panama Canal where we had to refuel. This was not a very big ship. Then we went to Mazatlán Mexico to refuel. Then to Long Beach Calif to refuel. Then to Honolulu Hawaii to refuel. At Honolulu I hitch-hiked with a Shipmate to the back side of the island to see his brother that was stationed there. He spent the night and I hitched-hiked back to Honolulu past a lot of pineapple farms. From there we went to Ellis Island to refuel then on to Lae, New Guinea. Here we were to unload the ship load of beer that we had brought from New Orleans. I couldn't believe we had to bring a shipload of beer to the War Zone but I guess some of the Service Men were glad to see it brought over there. At least a lot of them seemed to be happy that we brought it. I got mail and found out Burnell and Louise had a baby girl born on Sept 18<sup>th</sup>. They named her Brenda.

On this trip I was getting paid \$100.00 a month from the Steamship Co, \$100.00 a month from the Government and \$5.00 a day after we got in the War Zone area. I was sending mother and daddy \$75.00 each month to help pay their bills. I didn't spend much money the last of 1944 and until the war was over in 1945. We were either out at sea or at some small island. We did get to go ashore at some ports but mostly just to look around or maybe go to a movie at an Army Base. Then we were loaded with a lot of steel beams, etc. to build bridges and a lot of Christmas packages were loaded on top. A big convoy was supposed to go to Tacloben Leyte in the Philippines where the allied forces were already there. After we were loaded we waited for several days then we got a signal to pull up anchor and head out to sea. We noticed we were the only ship moving out and we wondered why. It was almost dark so by the time we got out of the harbor it was dark and we headed North. At daybreak the next morning we noticed a destroyer zig zagging back and forth in front of us. After a while they dropped back by us and shot a line over to us and sent us a map of Leyte Island. For the next few days the destroyer stayed near us and would alert us quite often. We were in a lot of rain squalls and cloudy weather and we finally made it to Tacloben Leyte. Boy we felt good because we had a private escort for several days.

The Japs would bomb the air base near where we were anchored quite often and a large fleet of torpedo boats were stationed near us. Every morning they would go out loaded with torpedoes and most every day late in the afternoon the torpedo boats would come back in. Most of the time when they came back, they would not have any torpedoes on them so we knew they were shooting torpedoes at something. They started to unload us and I could not believe how they did it. They would push enough of the Christmas packages aside to hook onto the bridge parts and pull them up through the Christmas packages. They were ready to invade Luzon Island and needed the bridge parts right away so they would be able to take the bridge parts ashore as soon as they had invaded Luzon. After all the bridge parts were unloaded, then the Christmas packages were unloaded. We waited at Tacloben for almost 3 weeks waiting for orders for where we would go next. We heard we were the first ship to go to the Philippians without being in a convoy but we did have the destroyer for our private escort.

Finally we went back to New Guinea. This time we loaded 300# horns to take to an island closer to the Philippines so the Bombers would not have to fly so far. This was Morotai Island. Then we took small arm ammunition to British Borneo. Troops were still going ashore there and planes were bombing Jap positions not far from us down the beach. When we got unloaded and started back to New Guinea our Captain decided to take a shorter route back to New Guinea rather than the way we were supposed to go. One day a Navy Ship contacted us and said they had tried to get in touch with us the night before. The short cut had taken us right down between some islands where a Jap Fleet was. We don't know why they did not fire on us unless they thought we were a Naval Vessel or whatever God took care of us again. Then we took a group of Jap Soldiers from New Guinea to another island North of there.

Then about the 1<sup>st</sup> of April we arrived in Manila with a shipload of Army uniforms. There were sunken ships all over parts of Manila and parts of Manila were completely destroyed. A boy on the ship had a brother that he had heard from recently and he was supposed to be in Manila, so he and I went ashore in Manila and went to the Army Headquarters. We could hear gun fire just above Manila up in the hills and mountains, so we knew the fighting was close by. When we got to the Army Headquarters I stayed outside while my Shipmate went inside to see if he could see his brother. While I was waiting outside a big black Cadillac pulled up in front of the building. There were 5 big stars on the front of the car. Gen. MacArthur got out and walked into the building within a few feet of me. I couldn't believe it. I finally got to see the General. I had also seen Admiral Halsey on one of the islands that we had been on a short time before. They told my Shipmate he could not go and see his brother but they would see if his brother could come see him. The next day his brother showed up at our ship. They gave him a 3-day pass and he stayed onboard our ship with his young brother. I was so happy for them and I felt sorry for the young brother when his brother had to leave and go back to battle. My younger brother Carl had joined the Merchant Marines in the Fall of 1944 and he was in the South Pacific somewhere. I would get a letter from him every week or so and he would get one from me pretty often also. So he had his Shipmates looking for my ship and I had my Shipmates looking for his ship. I also was getting a lot of mail from home. Crystal wrote me often and I wrote her a lot.

I think it was about the middle of April or the 1<sup>st</sup> of May we went back to New Guinea. We would get word on the war situation pretty often and our radio operator would pass it on the bulletin board so we could all read it. So we knew when the war with Germany was over. I also got word from home that my brother Gayden had been sent to Italy after he finished Basic Training and from there to Germany. He had been injured in Germany before the war was over there. He was hit by a piece of mortar shell that hit him in the back near his left shoulder blade and just missed his heart. He had laid out in the snow for a good while before he was found. He was taken to a First Aid Station and after some time to a hospital in France and then to a hospital in England. Then after quite a while he was sent on to the USA where he was in the hospital for quite some time. His personal belongings finally caught up with him when he got back to the States. The Dr. that removed the piece of shrapnel from Gayden had put it in his billfold. So Gayden got to see what had hit him. Again, I know without God's help Gayden would not have made it through the war. Gayden was 25 years old when he was injured. He turned 74 years of age on Dec 3, 1993. He was in the hospital for several months then was given a discharge.

As the Summer of 1945 was about to pass we got word about the 1<sup>st</sup> atom bomb being dropped and boy we couldn't believe the damage it had done and we could not even imagine what an atom bomb was.

In early August we went back to Manila again and we were there when the war was over. I was in the dining room eating my evening meal when a Navy Signalman came in and said I think I see your brother's ship coming in. His ship was the SS O Henry so I got up and went up topside with the Signalman and he got the binoculars and sure enough it was the SS O Henry. So the Signalman got on the blinker light and started sending a signal to them. They answered back and got my brother Carl and we carried on a conversation with these two Signalmen sending what we would say back and forth to each other. They came in about two hundred or less yards from us and anchored. By then it was dark so I didn't know if we would see each other or not. The next morning, I was still in bed and there was a knock at the door and in walked Carl. His Captain brought him by to spend the day with me. We really enjoyed being together after being so close to each other for the past few months and this is the amazing thing while Carl was aboard our ship with me. That day, we got our orders to leave the next day and come home and his ship would have to stay down there for a few more months. Call it luck that we got to see each other. I think God was still in control and made it all possible. All the things that happened to me and my family could not be just luck. I think it happened because we all believe in God and put our trust in Him. So late that afternoon Carl was picked up by his Captain, and went back to his ship and the next morning we started for the States with a stop at the Marshal Islands and then Honolulu before coming into port at Long Beach Calif. We were supposed to go all the way back to New Orleans, the ships homeport but by the time we got to Long Beach we had been on the ship 13 months. So they decided to let us sign off in Long Beach Calif since we had been out over 12 months. So a couple of days later Oct 10, 1945 I signed off the ship SS Alfred M Lunt. There had been one Shipmate on the ship from Canada. His name was Art. He knew I was planning to help my mother and dad buy a farm so before we signed off he told me if I needed his payroll I could have it to help buy the farm and could pay him back any way and any time. I wanted to. This was unbelievable because he was talking about \$2000.00. I told him thanks but I would have enough to make the down payment and I didn't want to use his money. He said he would only spend it and if I would take it he would be glad to let me have it. I thanked him again but did not take his money. I had written mother and daddy and told them a few months before to find the place they wanted and when I got home, I would make the down payment on it for them.

I went to Los Angeles after getting off the ship and caught a train to New Orleans then caught the Rebel and went on home to Georgetown. I was glad to be home again, and the next morning daddy asked me if I wanted to go look at the house and 28 acres of land that they had found for sale. It was on the East side of Georgetown and one of my mother's uncles had owned it years ago. Daddy knew the man that owned it and he lived in New Hebron Miss. I told daddy if that was what they wanted I did not need to see it. I said lets go make the down payment because the man had told daddy he would hold it until I got home to see if that was what I wanted. So daddy and I drove to New Hebron. I told the man I wanted to make the down payment because that is what mother and daddy wanted. Daddy had not asked him what he wanted for it so I said by the way how much do you want for the house and 28 acres of land? He said \$3,150.00 and I could not believe it. I had saved all I could since April of 1943 which was just a little over 30 months. I had \$3,250.00 in the bank so I wrote him a check for \$3,150.00 and I had \$100.00 left in the bank plus I had some cash that I had kept out of the bank, not much but a little spending money. Would someone say I was lucky? Again, I don't think I could have saved that much money without God's help. I was so thankful I had been able to do this for my parents. They finally had their own place again. We had it put in their name so they could do what they wanted to do with it.



## The Story of My Life by Burkett Berry

I had turned 21 on Sept 16, 1945 and I had been wanting to do this since I was 8 years old. A family was renting the house and they said they would be out in 3 days.

Mother was still doing good and taking the insulin shots every day. She and daddy were so happy to have their own place again and were so anxious to move into the house. I still needed about 2 months time in the Merchant Marines to be exempt from the draft, so I planned to make another trip after my 30 days were over. I dated Crystal quite a bit while I was home that 30 days. I sold the Model A truck back to Gayden for \$100.00 about the time my 30 days were up.

I went back to New Orleans about Nov 19<sup>th</sup>. When I went to New Orleans I ran into Art the guy that offered to let me use his pay check. He was broke and about to ship out again. He said he wished I had taken his money so he would not have spent it. I told him I wish I had taken it and kept it for him. He was glad I had been able to pay cash for the house. I signed on the ship, the SS Sea Lynx on Nov 21, 1945. We went to New York and Va. Then through the Panama Canal and to Honolulu. This was my third time to be in Honolulu and I really liked it. Then after several days there we went to Hilo for several days and came back through the Panama Canal and to Phil Pa where I signed off the Sea Lynx. I had enough sea time in to not have to worry any more about being drafted. It was Feb 8, 1946 when I signed off.

I finally got to see the house that I had bought for mother and daddy. It was high ceiling and steel roof with a hallway at the front porch entrance. It had four big rooms and a kitchen and pantry and a big back porch. It had no bathroom but running water in the kitchen and electricity.

I had written a guy that would be going to Ole Miss for his Senior year of football. He was H.A. Smith a bro to Truit Smith that I saw boxing at St. Petersburg Fla during my Maritime Service Training. H.A. had been in Service and was at Ole Miss for Spring football training then would start his Senior year in the Fall of 1946. I thought I would like to go to Ole Miss and play football so that's why I wrote H.A. He wrote back and said they only had a little over a week left of Spring practice but that the coach said for me to come on up and try out. So I caught a bus and went up to Oxford. I practiced the last 5 days at fullback and at punting. Then they had the Spring Game but they would not let me play in it but told me if I would come back up later they would check me out again. They still had a scholarship left. So I went home and decided I did not want to go to school because I didn't really want to study and go to classes at that time although I would have liked to play football.

So I took it easy and stayed at home a while. Crystal and I had been seeing a lot of each other and my brother Burnell was living in Orlando and told me I could get a job where he was working if I wanted to come down there. So I asked Crystal to marry me and got her an engagement ring. I decided to go to Orlando and get the job, and she would come down in late Summer and we would get married down there. So about the 1<sup>st</sup> of April I went to Orlando and got the job and got me a room in an apartment building. Crystal seemed excited about coming down there at first, but then about July she didn't seem like she wanted to come down there. I knew something was wrong but didn't know what. Then she said she didn't think we should get married. She didn't tell me but I heard she had been dating someone else. So I decided to come back to Miss and see what really was going on. I went by her apartment to see her. She did not admit she was dating someone else but said she didn't think it would work out and gave me the ring back. A short time later I had found out she had married the guy I had heard she was dating. So I didn't know just how to take it. I really thought I had loved her and wanted to marry her. A short time later I started dating a young pretty girl named Lula Mae Knight. I had been in the same

grade with her half-sister Frankie. I knew Lula was several years younger than me but she looked so mature for a girl that was in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade at Georgetown High School. I had turned 22 on Sept 16, 1946. I found out later she would only be 16 on her next birthday on April 21, 1947.

We saw quite a bit of each other and went to the movies and sometimes just sat and talked at her house. I'll never forget the first time I kissed her. I had never felt like that before. I had kissed a few girls other than Crystal but none was so sweet and none had made me feel so good. I thought this must be like its suppose to be when you kiss someone you love. She lived on the North end of town just pass where the main street ran into the old highway running East to West; Highway 28. I would go over to the High School to any sporting event I could go to football and basketball. I would take my camera but about the only pictures I made would be when I could make one of Lula. I still have some of those old pictures.

I worked at any odd job that I could find. I worked for the highway dept some and I helped to pave the main street of Georgetown the first time it was paved. Oh yes, daddy closed in part of the long back porch and made a bathroom. Finally, we had indoor plumbing with a big bathtub and a hot water heater. You could go from one bedroom through a door to the bathroom and from two other rooms through doors to the front hallway where there was a door to the bathroom. One of the big rooms served as a living room or family room but was big enough to have a bed in there also. All three of the big rooms that was near the bathroom had fire places so we burned lots of wood during the Winter. Boy did we really enjoy that bathroom after having outdoor plumbing for so many years. I don't remember just when Carl got out of the Merchant Marines but he lacked 1 year in high school so he went back in 1946. Hank was a junior that year and Welton was a freshman. So all three were on the football team and basketball team. Carl was forward, Hank was guard and Welton was center. Carl and I went together and bought a 1941 Ford car. I forget just what we paid for it but not all that much. Carl had started going with Frankie Sue Lee, a friend of Lula's. So at times we would double date and at times Carl would have the car and sometimes I would have it.

By late Feb I decided I wanted to marry Lula and when I asked her she said yes. So we became engaged and I got her a ring. So I decided to make a trip in the Merchant Marines to make a little money to have when we decided to get married. I sold Carl my part of the car.

On March 6, 1947 I went to New Orleans and signed on the SS Steel Architect. We went to Mobile then to New York, then went across the Atlantic to Cairo Egypt. After a day there we went to Djibouti French Somaliland where we unloaded a large amount of silver coins for Ethiopia that had been minted in the USA. Soldiers from Ethiopia were there with their guns. One box of money was dropped and the money was spilled on the dock. The soldiers made sure no one got any of the money. Then we left for Karachi Pakistan for a stop then to Bombay India, then to Madras India, then to Calcutta India. We were in each port a few days. I went ashore to look around but it was sort of scary and also sad. Lots of people were sleeping and living on the streets so I usually went back to the ship before night. Lula and I wrote each other while I was gone and I was looking forward to returning so we could get married. After we left Calcutta we made a short stop at Colombo Ceylon off the coast of the Southern tip of India for a few days then we headed back to the states. I signed off the ship on July 12, 1947. So I had made quite a trip and saw a lot more of the world in a little over four months. Oh yes, I had written Gloria Allen in Wellington New Zealand a few times since I met her on Dec 1943 and Jan 1944 and she wrote me back. When I wrote her and told her I was getting married she never wrote again.

Lula and I set the wedding date for Aug 24<sup>th</sup>. She had been working in a grocery store owned by Rupert and Elise Spell in Georgetown since she got out of school. She had also been working on Saturday during the time she was in school. So they wanted her to continue working there full time and Elise helped her with the wedding plans. Before we knew it, Aug 24 was there. So Elise was Lula's Maid of honor and Carl was my Best Man. Rev Jones who had been a former Pastor at Georgetown Baptist Church married us at the Georgetown Baptist Church. After the wedding Carl and Hank drove us to Jackson, Miss. We stayed at a hotel near the Greyhound Bus Station because we would go by bus the next day to Orlando, Florida for our honeymoon. Our wedding night was great and the next day we caught the bus and headed toward New Orleans. We stopped at Lake Dixie Springs near McComb for lunch. We ate in a restaurant overlooking the lake. I can still remember how pretty I thought it was. There was no Interstate Highway back then so traveling on the old Highway 51 was slow because there were lots of small towns to go through and stops to make to pick up passengers. We made it to New Orleans late afternoon and after a little layover transferred to a bus to go on to Orlando. We rode all night on the bus. What a way to spend the second night of our honeymoon. We enjoyed the trip because we were together and looking forward to our time together in Orlando.

When we arrived at Orlando there was a hotel the Angebilt that was close to the bus station in downtown Orlando. So we went there and got a room for a week at \$7.00 per night. We really enjoyed Orlando, we got to go swimming, just walk around a lot and one night my Bro Burnell and his wife Louise (Burnell and Louise's daughter Brenda was almost 3 years old and their next daughter Cheryl was almost one year old) who lived in Orlando took us to a wrestling match. It was fun but we could tell that it was fake from the beginning. That was the only time I ever saw a wrestling match. I guess we did not know how much it cost to really enjoy ourselves and have a lot of fun because we realized we were going to run short of money so I called the bank in Georgetown and got Mr. Brock to wire me some money so we would not run out of money. After the week was up we bought tickets to travel back to Jackson, Miss by bus and then by bus to Georgetown. On our return to Georgetown Lula went to work in the Grocery Store Monday through Saturday and I got a job with a highway crew checking the foundation for a new highway from Georgetown South toward Monticello. The old Highway 27 was gravel and narrow and would turn back and forth through the countryside. My brother Hank was working on the same job. During the Fall of 1947 we worked a lot but we were together the rest of the time. We would go to ballgames at the Georgetown School. Oh yes, Rupert and Elise Spell lived in a big home and they had fixed up an apartment in part of the house and rented it to us for a small fee. So that's where we lived after we got home from our honeymoon.

The Drug Store in Georgetown where I had worked on Sat. while in High School offered me a full-time job to start on Jan 1, 1948. The owner Mr. McKnight had bought a drug store in Jackson and had moved to Jackson and the Druggist that had helped him would run the Drug Store and I would help him. He was Houston Myers. So I became a clerk in the Drug Store for \$100.00 a month. I think Lula was only making \$50.00 a month at that time. So I worked at the Drug Store 6 days a week. Back then most stores were closed on Sunday. Lula's daddy Mr. Frank Knight would let us use his pickup truck sometimes. I remember going to Jackson shopping in it some. We would always go to a restaurant to eat and would always order spaghetti and meat balls. That would be a good meal, salad, rolls, the meatballs and spaghetti, iced tea and a dessert all for 75 cents each. I still love meatballs and spaghetti. We went to the Georgetown Baptist Church regularly and one time at a revival a man sang I'd Rather Have Jesus. That's still one of my favorite songs. Carl and Frankie got married.

## The Story of My Life by Burkett Berry

In the Summer of 1948 a store in Georgetown was put up for sale. It was a small grocery with a partition between the store and a small café and had a big kitchen and a one-bedroom apartment in the same building. So we checked into it and decided we would try to buy it. I went to the bank and Mr. Brock said he would do what he could do. So he gave us a loan to buy it even if some of the Board Members did not want to give us a loan. We moved into the apartment in the building. The kitchen was used for us and the café. So Lula quit her job and started running the store and café and her mother helped her by cooking the food for the café. We called it Berry's Café. The café was pretty slow during the week but usually did pretty good on Sat. because it was next door to the theater and a lot of the teenagers would come in before and after the movie on Sat. night. So we would be open to about 11PM when the theater would have movies on. So I would help in the store and café after I got off work at the drug store. We would be closed on Sunday. We had a jukebox in the café and each song cost a nickel. A company furnished the jukebox and records and would give us a share of what we took in. So we made pretty good on the jukebox. We would have extra help for the busy times. My Bro Welton worked there some on Saturday nights. I told them at the Drug Store I would work until Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> then quit to help Lula in the store and café Jan. 1st, 1949. The Grocery Store business was slow but we did sell quite a bit when the other grocery stores would be closed. In the Café we sold Hotdogs 15 cents, hamburgers 15 cents, cheeseburgers 20 cents and all drinks were 5 cents each for each bottle, some 6 oz cokes and some soft drinks about 10 oz. I believe Double Cola, RC Cola, etc. No canned drinks then. At noon Monday through Friday we would have a luncheon special like roast beef, rice and gravy, a couple of vegetables, rolls and dessert. I think we charged 75 cents for that. We hired a black lady named Maude to help with the cooking. She would sing a lot while cooking and was a real good cook. There was a foreman for a light company crew that would always come by when they would be working anywhere around Georgetown. He would come by about 10AM and let us know how many would be there to eat and how many would want the luncheon special and what the others would want. They would be there at 12 noon. This made it easy for us. We would not come up short and would not usually overcook since we would know about how many customers to expect. We also could have their food ready when they arrived. Our hamburgers and cheeseburgers were real good and people passed the word and our café business was doing good. I told someone recently if I had known what I do now there would have been Berry Burgers all over the country before McDonalds became so popular. The grocery business was slow because there were several grocery stores in Georgetown so we decided to close the grocery part down, remove the partition and make the café larger and this we did. We had a Grand Opening for the larger café and a good many people of Georgetown came to eat there that night. We did pretty good through 1949 and part of 1950. Some of the other businesses must have thought we were doing real good because a couple of them started cafes. In fact, Rupert and Elise Spell added a café next to their store. The lady that was operating their café came to me one day and wanted to know what kind of sauce we put on our hamburgers. I thought that was funny, all we did was mix catsup and mustard together (just right) and spread on the hamburger buns. I didn't tell her how we fixed the catsup and mustard but I did tell her it was catsup and mustard.

In August 1950 Lula's dad Mr. Frank had a heart attack and died. I think he was 59 at the time. Lula's mother was two months pregnant at that time.

In late 1950 I found out I could get a job at the Green Bro. Gravel Co. that operated just South of Georgetown on Copiah Creek. They would pump sand and gravel out of the Copiah Creek and separate so they had a variety of gravel products from fine mason sand to oversize gravel. Whatever the

customers wanted. They had started in business there sometime in the nineteen thirties and were doing really good. They are still in business. There is no telling how many highways have been built from the gravel and sand from Green Brothers Gravel Co. So I started to work with them Jan. 1, 1951 at 80 cents per hour but we usually worked 12 hour days and sometimes worked 12 hours on Sat. so all over 40 hours was at \$1.20 per hour or time + one half. I would help load the gravel on train cars or gravel trucks and sometimes help the engineer switch the unloaded and loaded cars out of the plant. One time I was helping load some gravel on some train cars. I had gotten down under a track car to clean the track. Something seemed to tell me to move and I did and just as I did the car started. The train engine had started to move the car. If I had not moved the wheel would have run over both my legs as the wheel was only inches from my legs. Later I worked as a helper on one of the dredge boats. The sand and gravel were several feet deep in the creek but when we would pump into the creek bank and out into the surrounding fields sand and gravel may be thirty to forty feet deep so there was lots of it to be pumped, and as we pumped more and more banks and field would cave in and we would keep pumping where we could get the best gravel and sand. We would have to keep adding pipe to pump the gravel through to the place where it was screened for the different sizes. The pipe would be 30 or 40-foot-long and had a diameter of about 8 inches I believe it was. The pipe was joined together with a rubber boot and clamped on tight. In addition to coupling the pipe I had to keep the two diesel motors fueled up. One pumped the gravel and sand and the other operated the hoist to raise the suction boom up and down and from left to right 180 degrees in front of the dredge boat barge.

In March Lula's mother had a baby boy named Timothy Frank Knight. Three of Lula's sisters had been at home when we married, Onnie, Doris and Jeanette. Also, the brothers Daniel, Henry and Edward. Another brother had been killed in a pickup accident a few years before. They all ranged in age from 14 down to 3 when we married. Lula also had some half sisters and brothers that her daddy had by a previous marriage. All of them were several years older than Lula. I remember her Bro. Ed would go spend the night with us some when we first married and he was 3 years old and the baby at that time. So when Tim was born, Ed was 7 years old. About the time Tim was born Lula became pregnant. We had been married about 3 ½ years when she became pregnant. We had about decided we would not have any children. So our daughter Jan was born on Dec. 8<sup>th</sup> 1951 almost 9 months after Tim was born.

We had been trying to buy us a car, we had not had one since we were married. So just one week before Jan was born we bought a 1942 Dodge car. So we did have a way to get to the hospital at Hazlehurst, Miss. which was 15 miles away. We were so proud of our little girl and we spent so much time with Tim he was like a son instead of a brother or brother-in-law. In 1952 we traded the Dodge on a 1949 Mercury. This was a good car and really looked good. We were proud of it.

We started just keeping the café open on Friday night and Sat. If it had not been by the theater we would have closed it altogether and we finally closed it. I don't remember the date but we sold the business and apartment after we had got a good deal on a three bedroom home with living room, dining room, kitchen and bath just across the street from Rupert and Elise Spell. So we were glad we had finally got us a home. I believe it was late 1952 or early 1953. Lula started working at a shirt factory in Crystal Springs, Miss. and I was still working at the gravel co. I believe my pay was up to 90 cents per hour by this time.

In the Summer of 1953 we traded the Mercury in on a new 1953 Ford. I could not believe how much the cars had gone up in price. A few years before a new one was \$800.00 or \$900.00 dollars. Now in 1953

they wanted almost \$2,300.00 for a new one. But we were so proud of our new car. Mother and daddy would keep Jan most of the time when we were at work. Jan always loved for daddy to peel sugar cane for her so she could chew it. We were working a lot but together we made enough to pay the house and car notes and the food and clothing we needed. We never had the time or money to take a vacation.

In 1954 Lula loaned our car to a friend Maude at work and she had a wreck. She ran off the road. She was not hurt but the car had some scratches. Our insurance had it fixed up but I never felt the same about it because I knew it had been in the accident. So in the Summer of 1954 we traded it in on a 1954 Ford. The car was almost just like the 1953 model, but it cost over a hundred dollars more than the 1953 model.

Everything was going pretty good but still no vacations to go places. In 1955 Lula was sick and was put in the hospital at Hazlehurst, Miss. I spent the night at the hospital with her. My boss gave me some time off. He was real good about that. If someone from Georgetown was in the hospital and needed some blood my boss Mr. Simmons would check his list of employees to see who was due to give blood. He would go to who was next to give blood and tell them to go give blood and take the rest of the day off. We knew everyone in Georgetown so you would always give blood to someone you knew and sometime even a relative. He sent me one time to give blood to my Uncle Jack who had moved into Georgetown several years before. In fact, he lived right near us. So after I spent the night at the hospital with Lula, I went home the next morning and took a bath and changed clothes. Then I went to Lula's mothers to pick her up to take to work. She worked at the shirt factory at that time where Lula worked so she and three other women we knew would ride with Lula to work at Crystal Springs, Miss. She also would stop and pick up two more women who were sisters-in-Laws and lived only a few miles from Crystal Springs. So on that morning I picked up Lula's mother, Mama "D" as everyone called her, and also picked up the other three women. Then I stopped and picked up the other two women. So there were six women in the car with me. Mama D and one other woman were in the front with me and the other four in the back seat. We ran into a heavy rain about a mile from Crystal Springs. I was only driving about 35 to 40 and we crossed a bridge that had a dip at right where the highway contacted. When we hit the dip, the car started sliding because there was a lot of water on the bridge. I didn't put on the brakes and we made it across the bridge but then started sliding sideways and toward the left side of the road. There was a ditch about two feet deep on that side then a high bluff that we were headed toward. When the front wheel started down toward the ditch I knew if we hit the bluff that it would be bad so then I put on the brakes and when I did the rear of car slid on around and we were headed back the way we came from and then turned upside down in the ditch. One of the ladies was partly thrown out of the car and although it scared us all, no one was hurt bad and someone stopped in the rain and picked them up and they went on to work. Well God was with us. The top of the car was crushed down and windshield partly out. We did not have seatbelts so how could we be in a bad accident like that and no one hurt bad. God was still in Control. A wrecker came to get the car and took it back to the dealer where I bought it at Hazlehurst, Ms. He gave me a ride to the hospital. Our insurance paid for the repairs that the dealer did on the car and the dealer loaned us a car until our car was repaired. Lula was able to go home in a few days and after a few more days went back to work.

In early 1956 we went to Jackson, Miss. and traded the 1954 Ford in on a 1956 Mercury Monterey. Boy it was a big wonderful car but the cost was \$3,838.00. In 1956 my pay was up to \$1.10 per hour and I was still working a lot of overtime. Sometime 84 hours a week but most of the time 72 hours a week. We still didn't have time or money to go anywhere on vacation, but we were still able to make our

house payment and car payments and our daily needs. We decided we would try to sell our house and move to Calif. I had wanted to take Lula out there and we knew some people from Georgetown that lived out there so we decided to move out there. I left the job at the gravel pit at Christmas 1956. Mr. Simmons gave me a real good letter of recommendation.

In early Jan. 1957 we sold our house and we stored or sold or gave away all our household goods except what we could load in the Mercury. The trunk was packed full and the back seat was full of stuff. We had sheets, blankets and quilts on the seat which made a good bed for Jan to use on our way to Calif. She was 5 years on Dec. 8, 1956. Can you believe moving to Calif. in a car?

Daddy became real sick about the time we were ready to leave for Calif. He had to have gall bladder surgery a short time later. So we headed West and drove to Odessa, Texas where we stopped for a couple of days at Hank's. He was working in the oil fields and had married Margaret from Iowa. Her parents were both from Sweden but she was born in Iowa. They had been married several years. She was a nurse at a clinic in Odessa when they met. Hank had joined the Army after finishing high school and after training was sent to Germany with the Occupation Forces. I believe it was 1948 when he went in the Army and I think it was 1953 when he went to Odessa, Texas. Anyway, we enjoyed visiting with them.

We drove on to Calif. and we checked into a motel in Long Beach and I called Harold Beasley who was from Georgetown and was working at a refinery in Wilmington, Calif. He told us to come over the next night for supper. When we got there and had eaten, he gave me a map and a list of refineries and chemical plants and a route on the map to make a circle and stop at all the plants to put my application in for work. He said after I had made the round of the plants to go to South Gate, Calif. and stop at the General Motors Plant and they would probably put me to work and I could work there until I heard from one of the plants. So for about 2 ½ days I made the round and put in my applications. Then on Friday afternoon I was on my way to South Gate, Calif. when a big 18-wheeler came up behind me and started blowing his horn and motioned me to pull over. Thinking something was wrong with my car I pulled over and the truck pulled in behind me and stopped. He got out and came up to me real fast. He was a real big black man and said where are yall from? I said Georgetown, Miss. He said he was from McComb, Miss. and sure was glad to see someone from back home. He had noticed my Miss. license plate. After talking to him a little while I went on to the General Motors Plant and they told me to come to work on Monday on the evening shift 3PM to 11PM.

So that weekend we enjoyed Long Beach and I went to work on Monday and we found a furnished apartment in Long Beach that we moved into that weekend. This apartment was about 10 blocks from a small Baptist Church. So the next Sunday we planned to go to church there.

When I got to work on Monday they assigned me to moving the new cars that had been assembled to the parking lot. I had to be careful because some of the car brakes were not working and had to have more work done. The next day they put me on the assembly line. All I had to do was put the stars on the Pontiac cars and the names on the Buicks like Century, etc. I didn't have to put anything on the Oldsmobile cars so I had a pretty easy job. I think about 53 cars come off the line finished every hour. I started off at \$2.10 per hour which was \$1.00 per hour more than what I was getting at the gravel pit in Georgetown, Ms.

We went to the Baptist Church in Long Beach twice and the people were not very friendly so we decided to try somewhere else. Some how I found out the Old-Fashioned Revival Hour with Dr. Charles E. Fuller was being broadcast at the assembly center on the beach in Long Beach. It was only 14 blocks from our apartment so we went and this was just what we were looking for. Dr. and Mrs. Fuller were getting up in age or so I thought at that time, but they were the nicest and sweetest people we could have found. I told them my mother and daddy had been listening to them ever since we got our first radio back in the thirties. Mrs. Fuller would read letters over the air each Sunday from people that listened to them each week and then Dr. Fuller would preach. They would have a large crowd each Sunday and we felt like this was our Home Church for the next year. I think God was still in control and made this possible for us. We enjoyed being a part of the Old-Fashioned Revival Hour so much.

I worked at General Motors for about 2 months and then got a job at Union Oil Refinery at Wilmington, Calif. I knew I would have to work shift work but I could not believe how it turned out. I would work midnight until 8AM Monday through Friday and have the weekend off. Then work 4PM until midnight Monday through Friday and have the weekend off. Boy I couldn't believe this. I was working the waste water treating plant. The water had to be pure before it could be dumped back in the harbor. So my job was to make sure the water was pure enough to be dumped back into the harbor. If the PH would get high, acid would be automatically added to keep the PH at 7.0 and if the PH got low lime would be added to keep the PH at 7.0. The State of Calif. was trying to keep the environment in good shape even back then in 1957.

By having the weekend off I was able to spend a lot of time with Lula and Jan. We would go to the beach a lot and go up in the mountains to enjoy the scenery and that Fall and Winter to play in the snow. It would take about an hour to drive up to Mt. Baldy. We got to tour Hollywood and see a lot of the movie stars' homes. We also would go up to the San Fernando Valley to visit Billy and Lorene Stuart. They were from Georgetown, Miss. also and they had a little girl named Cindy about Jan's age. They had been out in Calif. for a few years. Our friend Harold Beasley and family moved back to Miss. in early Summer. He transferred to a refinery near Hattiesburg, Miss. Lula went to work at a garment factory during the Summer of 1957 and a lady that lived next door to us would keep Jan when we would both be at work. In the middle of the Summer my mother and daddy went from Georgetown, Miss. to Odessa, Texas to visit with Hank and Margaret. Also, Carl and Frankie were living in Odessa, Texas at that time. Carl and Frankie had 3 kids Sherry, Dennis and Mike. So we decided to drive down there one weekend while I was off work. I had finished up midnight shift on Friday morning and would not have to go back to work until Monday afternoon. So, we took off Friday and it took us about 24 hours to drive down there. I think it was about 1,000 miles. We got there early Saturday and really enjoyed visiting my two brothers and families and my mother and dad. Hank wanted to show dad and me where he worked out in the oil field, so Sat. afternoon we drove out N. West of Odessa and Jan wanted to go with us. On our way back to Odessa we were out in the flat countryside and we came to a highway intersection and there had just been a bad accident there. One highway had a stop sign and the other did not. A car ran the stop sign and hit another car in the intersection. There were eleven people that had been riding in the two cars. One of the cars was turned upside down and the other one a station wagon was off the road and the man that had been driving it was hanging out the door dead. An ambulance had arrived and was putting people in it. A woman was sitting on the ground with her legs broken. We helped turn the car back over on the wheels and a man was under the car with a big hole in his chest and blood was gushing out. Kids were crying and luggage was scattered all over the place. It was terrible. Jan was only



5 ½ years old and she had said earlier she wished we could see a car wreck, but when she saw this I think she wished she had not been with us. I think 5 of the 11 people died in that bad accident. I sure remember to check intersections when I drive near one after seeing what happened.

Sunday afternoon we started back to Calif. because I had to go to work 4PM Monday. Sometime after dark before we got to El Paso, we were driving pretty fast. There was no one but us headed West in the area where we were. All of a sudden, I saw a car coming up behind me and I could tell he was driving a lot faster than I was. I was driving about 70 in a 60-mile zone I believe it was. All of a sudden, some lights on the car behind me started blinking and I realized it was a State Trooper car. It really scared me. I had never been stopped before. So the Trooper came up and asked me for my driver's license. I still had my Miss. drivers license and still had my Miss. car license plate on the car. They had told me when we moved to Calif. to wait until Oct. when the license for Miss. would expire and get a Calif. plate and Calif. license at that time. The Trooper asked where are you headed Mr. Berry? I said Calif. and he asked why are you driving so fast and I said well I was sort of in a hurry. He sort of laughed and said well Mr. Berry I'm going to let you go but please slow down to the speed limit. So he got back in his car and we headed on toward El Paso. I noticed he turned and went back to the East. A few minutes later two cars went by us like we were parked. They must have been going at least 90 miles per hour. In just a minute the State Trooper that stopped me went by us and a few miles farther West he had pulled both cars over. So we went on by them, but I made sure I was driving the right speed. We made it home in plenty of time for me to go to work on Monday afternoon.

We continued to visit our friends the Stewarts up in the San Fernando Valley and they would come visit us a lot. I worked at the Union Oil Refinery until the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1958 when they had a big layoff and I was one of the employees laid off. We decide before I looked for a new job to travel back to Georgetown, Miss. for about a week to visit our families. So we drove to Odessa, Texas and stopped at Hank's for one night then drove on to Georgetown the next day. We spent a week there and really enjoyed it then we started to go back to Calif. Lula's little bro Ed decided he wanted to go with us. He was almost 13 years old so he went with us. We decided to go a different route to see some of the country we had not seen before, so when we crossed the Mississippi River at Vicksburg we turned North and went up into Ark. We turned West at Highway 82 and went through El Dorado, Ark. And on to Texarkana at the Ark. and Texas Border. Then we went Wichita Falls, Tex. and on to Amarillo. Between Amarillo, Tex. and Albuquerque, New Mex. in the middle of the night we ran into a heavy snow storm. It was snowing so hard we could hardly see the road, but we were able to keep going by staying in some tracks that some truck had made. Most of the small towns were closed for the night so when we got to Clines Corner, N.M. I knew we either had to find a gas station open or stop for the night. There was one station open and I put 16.5 gal. of gas in my Mercury. The owner's manual said the gas tank held 16 Gal. so the tank was really empty. God still looking out for us. At daybreak we arrived at Albuquerque, N.M. It had stopped snowing but there was about 1 ft. of snow everywhere. Even on top of parked cars. We got gas again and kept traveling and went on through Gallup, N.M. and on through the petrified forest in Ariz. And on to Flagstaff, Ariz. where we turned North on Highway 89 and turned left at Cameron on Highway 64 and went by the Grand Canyon. It was beautiful. Then we took Highway 180 and Highway 60 South to Williams, Ariz. Then on to Las Vegas, Nev. It was in the middle of the night when we went through Las Vegas, but people were out all over the place. We only stopped for gas and then went to Calif. We went through Barstow, Calif. on Highway 15 and on to San Bernardino then on to Long Beach.

We enrolled Ed in a school in our neighborhood. He really enjoyed the trip to Calif. from Miss. Ed got him a paper route and we helped him get himself a bicycle to deliver the papers. I started looking for a new job when we got back to Calif. The Personnel Director would call me each week and give me some tips where I might find work, but nothing seemed to work out. I think I drew 3 unemployment checks and then a guy that I worked with at the refinery told me I could get a job at a place where they made all kinds of supplies from wood like flower pots, picture frames, etc. I didn't make any more than I had been drawing from the unemployment check, but I was glad to be working. After a few weeks I got another call from the Union Oil Refinery Personnel Director. He asked if I would be interested in working at the Union Oil Chemical Plant out in Orange County at Brea, Calif. I said yes and he said can you go out there right now? He gave me the directions to get there and I made the trip in about an hour. The chemical plant was under the name of Collier Carbon and Chemical Corp. I arrived about 4PM and the ammonia plant department Manager took me into his office and we sat down and started talking. He did not ask me any questions about my abilities as a worker. He just wanted to know my life history about where I grew up and what I had done. I was 33 years old at that time. All the other people in the office left for the day and he sat there for over another hour talking to me. Finally he asked me if I could be back in a couple of days for a hearing test which they gave before you could start to work there. I said yes and came back and took the test and they put me to work in the department where the nitrate ammonia fertilizer was shipped. I started work at \$2.33 per hour I think it was. We loaded bulk trucks and hopper cars to be shipped on the railroad but mostly we bagged out 80 lb. bags of the nitrate ammonia. We would also load the bags on trucks or train cars. After I had been there almost two weeks someone said here comes the Plant Manager. He came over and introduced himself to me. After talking a minute, he said you do know how you got this job don't you? I said well I heard some rumors. He said the Personnel Manager from the Union Oil Refinery was his Father-In-Law and that when he called about me he said I'm sending you a man named Burkett Berry. So when he gets there put him to work. Could this be luck? No, I think God was still looking after me. Mama D, Jeanette and Tim came out for a visit during the Summer. Ed went back to Miss. with them.

After driving from Long Beach to Brea for about two months (it was about 25 miles) we decided to move to Brea. So we rented an apartment about 2 miles from the plant so it only took about 5 minutes to get to work. In the Fall of 1958 Jan was in 1<sup>st</sup> grade in Brea Elementary School. Brea was about 8 miles North of Disneyland. We could see the fireworks exploding in the sky at night when they were going off. In those days a lot of families would take their children to Disneyland to celebrate their Birthdays. We went to Disneyland several times and really enjoyed it. Also, we went to Knotts Berry Farm which also was about 8 miles away. Lula went to work at a factory where the Catalina Swimsuits were made. It was about 4 miles from our apartment. After a year at the plant I got a two weeks vacation so we went back to Miss. in the Summer of 1959. We started going to a Baptist Mission in Brea. We met in a rented building that was owned by the City of Brea. After about a year we built a Baptist Church on Randolph Ave. called Randolph Baptist Church. The men of the church along with the Pastor did a lot of the work in constructing the church. We enjoyed the fellowship at the Randolph Baptist Church, but we did miss the Old Fashioned Revival Hour and Bro. and Mrs. Fuller. About the time we moved from Long Beach to Brea the Old-Fashioned Revival Hour stopped being broadcast from Long Beach. Instead it was broadcast from the studio in Pasadena, Calif. We had really enjoyed going to church there. On the last service from Long Beach they gave a folder (that had a lot of old Spiritual Songs on it that was used each Sunday) to each family or single member in the Congregation that wanted one. That was in 1958. We still have ours. Such songs as; Let the Lower Light be Burning, Rock of Ages, Lord I'm Coming Home, God

## The Story of My Life by Burkett Berry

Will Take Care of You, I Need Thee Every Hour, Pass Me Not, At the Cross, Blessed Assurance, I Love to Tell The Story, Faith of Our Father, There is Power in the Blood, Shall We Gather at the River, Bringing in the Sheaves, Nothing but the Blood, Standing on the Promises, Softly and Tenderly, Rescue the Perishing, O Come All Ye Faithful, Only Trust Him, Sweet Hour of Prayer, What a Friend, He Leadeth Me, Since Jesus Came Into My Heart, The Way of the Cross Leads Home, More About Jesus, Revive Us Again, Pass Me Not, My Faith Looks Up To Thee, Meet Me There, All Hail the Power, When the Roll is Called Up Yonder, Are You Washed in the Blood and How Firm a Foundation all great hymns and sang on the Old Fashioned Revival Hour.

While working in the fertilizer department a while a young man bought me a cup of coffee one night. I didn't like the smell of it so I did not take it. I asked him what he put in the coffee and he said how did you know? I said the smell is not coffee and he had put some homebrew liquor in the coffee. This young man was a real nice fellow but he would bring a jug of homebrew in to work at times. That was before the plant had guards at the gate. He knew I did not drink liquor so he was trying to pull a trick on me. A short time later he was cutting his grass with a tractor and it turned over and killed him. He was 29 years old and very well off. The story was out that his wife had got him the job to get him away from the house and her and their kids. He was the first man I ever saw ride a riding lawn mower and owned the largest house I had seen around on one of the hills South of Brea.

After working in the fertilizer dept. for several months I was transferred to the ammonia production plant. One time starting the plant up after a turn around (when repairs are done on the equipment) I was lighting the burners in the furnace where the Hydrogen Gas was separated from the CO<sub>2</sub>. I had lit every burner but one and when I applied the torch and opened the gas valve there was a roaring sound. Before I could cut the valve off a huge ball of fire came out between another operator and myself. I got the valve shut off and we found that whoever worked on that burner had failed to couple the gas line back up. God protected me again. The fire did burn my eyebrows and the edge of my hair a little but no damage to my skin. After working about a year, I was trained to work the board job. I had a real good Supervisor. He would tell me what was needed to do then go and let me operate the board. Then they switched the Supervisor from one shift to another. The Supervisor I got would then come by the board just before shift change and tell me to put a little more rates in although the temp and pressure was already at max. He wanted to increase the rates to make him look good. The oncoming shift would have to cut rates right after shift change. After he told me to raise rates a few times I decided I didn't want to do it anymore so the next time he came by and told me to increase the rates I told him I already have max temperatures and pressure and he said a little more won't hurt. I picked up the instruction book and told him you write it in the instruction book and I'll do it. He looked sort of funny and said maybe we better leave it like it is. He never told me to raise rates again. They started building a more modern plant that would make over 700 tons of ammonia per day. The old one would only make about 350 tons per day.

While living in the apartment one night while we were asleep our bed was thrown against the wall real hard. That was the first time to feel the effects of an earthquake. We rented the apartment until the Summer of 1960 so we started looking for a house to buy. Most new homes around Brea was about \$12,000 to \$15,000 for the smaller homes to \$16,000 to \$20,000 for the larger homes at that time. We just happened to look in the paper and a 3-bedroom house nearby was for sale for \$18,900 so we decided to drive by to see what it looked like. It was at 543 Peach Ave. When we drove by we decided that was what we wanted so we called to see if we could go look at it. We loved it. A huge living room,

a large family room with fire place, 3 bedrooms and two baths and a 2-car garage. Also a large patio covered with a Bar-B-Cue grill built under the roof outside the fireplace and a large sliding glass door going from the family room out to the patio. We had it appraised and it was appraised at \$17,500. So the owner told us he would cut the price \$700.00 to \$18,200 if we would increase from \$17,500 to \$18,200. So that is what we agreed on. The yard had some beautiful flower beds and a small fish pond with gold fish in it and the pond had a little waterfall that a pump would pump water from the pond to the top of the waterfall. So we bought the house and moved in it in early Sept. I believe it was. A little while later we found out Lula was pregnant. We had thought we would not have any more children. We really loved our new home. We could open the sliding glass door to the patio and a cool breeze would keep the entire house cool and comfortable. We did not have air conditioning. You didn't have to worry about the humidity in Southern Calif. It was real low most of the time like 7% to 10%. We also got about 7 inches of rain per year and that was usually just sprinkles or light showers usually from Nov. to the 1<sup>st</sup> of March. One year we only had 4 inches of rain in 12 months so we usually had to water our lawn and flower beds from March to late Nov. We got our first T.V. after we moved in and we really enjoyed it.

Lula worked until a short time before Steve was born on June 23, 1961. Jan had got her a Pekinese puppy about the time we moved into our new house. When we brought Steve home from the hospital Jan's puppy Cuddles was grown and she was jealous of Steve. So Lula picked Cuddles up and put her over in the crib with Steve. After that she would spend a lot of time with Steve. Staying near his crib and if he cried Cuddles would stand up by the crib like she wanted to help him. When we would start getting our clothes together to go on vacation Cuddles would watch and when we would open the car door she would get in the car and be ready to go. When we would get to Georgetown, Miss. when we opened the car door Cuddles would be the first one to get out and the first to get to the front door either at my mother and dad's or Mama D's (Lula's mother). She was always glad to see them just like a kid. We would usually take two vacations a year and travel back to Mississippi to visit our families. We would stay as long as we could then drive about 1860 miles back to Brea, Calif. for me to go back to work.

We traded our 1956 Mercury Monterey in on a Ford station wagon in 1962. This gave us more room when we were making the long trip to Miss. and back. In the Winter of 1963 Steve was 2 ½ years old and Jan was 12 on Dec. 8 of that year. Daddy became real sick and the same Dr. that operated on him when he had gall bladder surgery 7 years before operated on him and found out his liver had just about completely quit (liver cancer) function so they sewed dad back up and gave him 6 months to live. So I took a week off from work in Feb 1964 and flew home to be with him and mother. I sure was glad I did and even though he was real sick I enjoyed just sitting and talking to him. I flew back to Calif. and went back to work. In April we were told he would only last another day or two. So I arranged for some vacation. I was going to work the midnight shift through Fri. morning and I would be off for the weekend and take the next week off. On Thursday morning I had just got home from work and we were notified that daddy had passed away. He would have been 68 years old in June. So we took off for Miss. that afternoon and we arrived at Georgetown early Sat. morning. The funeral was at 10AM and late that afternoon I was so tired and sleepy, I just laid down on the bed and went to sleep. I had worked from midnight Wed. night until 8AM Thursday morning and I only slept 1 hour on the whole trip home, so I had only one-hour sleep in about 64 hours. After a week we had to drive back to Calif. for me to go back to work. I felt so bad about losing my dad. He was such a good man and I just didn't understand

why God had called him home. Our son Steve never really got to be around daddy to get to know him like I wish he could have. Jan got to spend the first 5 years of her life close to my mother and dad before we moved to Calif. so she always looked forward to seeing them when we would go home to Miss. But Steve just turned 3 years old a couple of months after daddy's death and he had only got to see mother and dad the few times we got to go home on vacation. So Steve did not really get to know his Granddaddy like Jan did. Jan and Steve never knew their other Granddaddy (Mr. Frank Knight) since he passed away in 1950 before Jan was born. So I know how they must feel since my Granddaddy Berry died before I was born. After dad died, I was so depressed. I didn't understand it had to happen.

So I kept working and we would take a vacation twice a year and come back to Georgetown to visit our families. We came home the week before Christmas 1965 and while there my bro Carl's Son Dennis was killed in a hunting accident and the funeral was on Christmas Eve. Dennis was 14 years old. A gun went off accidentally and hit him in the back of the head. What a sad Christmas we had that year.

Then in Nov. 1966 we were starting the new plant up and I was working long hours. I was so tired and one night I almost fell down a tall stairwell at work. I could feel a sucking sensation in my neck at times. The next day I was so weak I could not get out of bed. This was on Saturday. Sunday was even worse and Monday morning the plant nurse called me and told me Dr. Lowe would be at the plant in a little while and to come out there to see him. I drove myself the two miles out to the plant and when I walked into the office Dr. Lowe picked up the phone and called a hospital. The first hospital he called had no vacancy. The second hospital had no vacancy but a patient would be checking out in the afternoon. They only had one vacant room and he told them I would be out there. Then he told me I was as white as a sheet that my blood must be low. So in the early afternoon I arrived at the hospital. They checked and found my blood to be very low and started giving me blood. They gave me 5 pints that afternoon and night. They found out I had a peptic ulcer and I had been losing blood for quite a time. I was put on a special diet and sent home after a few days but about a week later during Thanksgiving week I got real weak again and I went back into the hospital where they gave me 4 more pints of blood and did surgery. Since the ulcer was at the outlet of my stomach they did not have to remove anything. They just put a little tuck in the bottom of my stomach. Just made it a little smaller Dr. Lowe said.

I went home in a week and thought I was doing o.k. but I kept feeling weak and on Christmas Eve my stomach ruptured in two places where the surgery was done. Dr. Lowe found I was allergic to the stitches they used. So he had to remove them. Steve would tell everyone after that about my three belly buttons. I kept getting weak and they found out I was not making any blood. So I was given Iron shots in each hip for a while and took iron tablets but when they would stop giving me the Iron, I would soon get weak again. So after I had been sick and off work for about 18 weeks, one day I was lying on a lawn chair and I prayed Lord I don't know what your plans are but it doesn't seem like the doctors are helping me so I am ready for whatever You want me to do. Three days later I had an appointment with the Blood Specialist. When I walked into his office the Dr. said, hey you have color in your cheeks. Three weeks later I went back to work after being off work 21 weeks. I have never had to have any more blood given me since that time almost 28 years ago. So again, God took care of me. Dr. Lowe and the Blood Specialist both told me they had never had a patient before that could not or was not making their own blood. Dr. Lowe also said he had never seen anyone's blood that had become so low that survived. He told me my heart was losing suction because the blood was so low when I first realized that something was wrong. I had never been seriously ill before. I had chills and fever and mumps and

measles as a kid. I had not been making my blood for some time and the ulcer kept lowering my blood level and Dr. Lowe said my body kept adjusting to a lower blood level because overall I was healthy at the time. So that is how I was able to work as long as I did.

In 1967 we bought us a new Chevelle Malibu car. I had sold the old car I had used to drive to work.

There were other times that I knew God was looking out for me. One night at work I had just come down a ladder and a few seconds a line ruptured and hot pieces of metal were blown right through the area where I had come down the ladder. Another time the control room floor started moving and the overhead lights started swinging. I walked to the door of the control room and it was like walking a deck of a rolling ship. When I looked outside the lights and pipe lines were moving a lot. It lasted about 20 or 30 seconds I guess. That was my second time to feel an earthquake. No damage was done. God was there again for me.

In 1968 I found out a new ammonia plant was being built at Donaldsonville, La. So in Oct. while we were on vacation in Miss. I drove down to Donaldsonville, La. about 165 miles. I went by and was interviewed for a job at the plant. They told me it would be about April or May of 1969 before they started hiring. I had some more vacation at Christmas time that year so we were in Georgetown, Miss. again. We decided to drive down and look the area over. So my wife Lula and mother-in-law Mama "D" drove down there. Donaldsonville is on the West side of the Miss. River not far from Baton Rouge. I was interviewed again at the plant and was told it would still be about April before they started hiring operators. We didn't really like the old town of Donaldsonville but decided we would try to get a job and move there. We would only be about 165 miles from Georgetown, Miss. instead of 1860 miles in Calif. We really loved Calif. but it was a long way from home.

My bro Burnell retired from the Air Force and moved to Calif. in early 1960 so we got to see him some. Also, Lula's bro Daniel and his family moved out there. Her bro Ed moved out there after finishing school and married Iva a girl living out there from North Miss. Also, Lula's bro Henry came out there for a while. We were really close to the Billy Stewart family that lived about 40 miles from us. Lula had been classmates of Billy and Lorene in school before we married and I had gone to school with Billy's three older sisters my last couple of high school years. Lorene's mother and dad Mr. and Mrs. LL Lowery had also moved out there from Georgetown and two of Billy's sisters so we were like family to the Stewarts. We would get together a lot at our house or at their house.

We were surprised the 1<sup>st</sup> of Feb. 1969 when we received a phone call from Donaldsonville, La. early one morning. Houston Holland who was to be the ammonia plant Manager asked me if I still wanted a job and I said yes and he asked me if I could be down there by the 17<sup>th</sup> of Feb. which was on a Monday. He said he would send me a letter and my pay would start on Feb. 15<sup>th</sup> but to report to work on Monday the 17<sup>th</sup>. I could not believe this was happening so fast. So we started trying to sell our house. A neighbor decided he would buy it. So we started making our plans to move. On Monday Feb. 10<sup>th</sup> we rented a U-Haul truck and started loading our furniture to head East early Thursday morning Feb. 14<sup>th</sup>. We also loaded our station wagon and would tow it behind the U-Haul truck. Then we also loaded up our Chevelle Malibu with stuff. Late Wed. afternoon we had the house empty. One of our neighbors Norma Wright had asked us to spend Wed. night with her so we did. Her husband had died a few years before and she had a daughter Dana that was Jan's good friend and classmate and also had a son a couple of years younger. So we enjoyed spending the night with them.

Early the next morning Steve and I headed East in the U-Haul truck towing the station wagon. Steve was almost 8 years old at that time. Lula and Jan visited with Norma and family a while then were going to catch up with us in the Chevelle Malibu. It was 200 miles to Blyth, Calif. so Steve and I arrived there about mid-morning. We stopped to get something to eat and thought they would catch up with us but we did not see them. So we crossed the Col. River and headed towards Phoenix. At the weigh station as we entered Ariz. They made me pay a \$9.00 fee to cross the state of Ariz. and also told me I would have to pay more if we were not out of Ariz. within 24 hours. I had never heard of anything like that. A short time later Lula and Jan caught up with us and we drove on to Deming, N.M. where we spent the night at a motel and Friday, Feb. 14 we drove on to Odessa, Tex. and spent the night at my bro Hank's and Sat., Feb. 15<sup>th</sup> we traveled on to Georgetown, Miss.

Sunday, Feb 16<sup>th</sup> we left the U-Haul at Mama D's house and drove down to Donaldsonville and looked for an apartment. We found one only about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile from the plant. The people we rented from, the Kelly Falcons loaned me some towels, sheets and pillow case so I could spend the night there and go to work on my new job the next morning. Lula, Jan, Steve and Mama D drove back to Georgetown so Lula could bring our household goods down there the next day. I think Cuddles enjoyed moving as much as we did. She lived to be almost 14 years old as she passed away in 1975.

So I went to work the next day and since construction was still going on in the plant we went to school a little over 3 months before we started the plant up. Jan started to school in Donaldsonville High School. She was a junior and Steve also started school in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. We started the plant up in May and set a new record for starting up a new 1,000 ton per day NH<sub>3</sub> plant (11 days I think). I had been assigned to the control board job. A month later I was asked to be a Supervisor and that's what I did until I retired in Feb. 1990 with 21 years with the company.

In the Fall of 1969 Jan was a Senior in High School and the Principal told her just before Christmas she could go to college rather than wait until the Fall of 1970. So we had to buy her a car. We planned to get her one in the Summer of 1970 after she graduated. We got her a Ford Maverick. She enrolled in college at Copiah Lincoln Jr. College at Wesson, Miss. about 24 miles from Georgetown. She stayed with Mama D in Georgetown and drove to and from college each day. In August of 1970 we bought a house in Gonzales about 12 miles across the Miss. River from Donaldsonville in Oak Terrace Subdivision where we still live. Gonzales is on the East side of the river between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. We had bought a lot and already had our house plans drawn up to build in Donaldsonville but we liked this subdivision so much and also liked Gonzales better than Donaldsonville, so we sold our lot and we have always been glad we did. It's still a good neighborhood. Also we knew people that lived here that worked with me. We had gone to the Baptist Church in Donaldsonville while living there but when we moved to Gonzales we started to First Baptist Church of Gonzales and still do. This year will be 25 years in this church (1970 to 1995 Aug.) Rev. James Riley was pastor in 1970 and was from up near Laurel, Miss. He resigned as pastor in 1977. Then we had Rev. T.J. Osburn for our pastor until 1984. Then Bro Connie Ward was our pastor until 1991. We went without a pastor for a while then got Rev. Perkins who was with us only about a year. He and his wife split up. There was a lot of friction in the church. We went over a year searching for a new pastor. We just could not seem to find one. Finally, someone told one of our Pulpit Committee about a young preacher 28 years old that was a pastor at a church up near McComb, Miss (Jim Law). Our Pulpit Committee recommended him and after we heard him we called him. He has been a blessing to our church although we had a split up and some of the previous members started a new church. We are growing again and Bro Jim is a great Minister. He just

graduated from the New Orleans Seminary a short time ago. He and his wife Gyenn are both from Lake Wales, Florida. They have a 3-year-old girl and a 4-month-old baby girl. So I feel like God helped our church find the pastor we needed. He has been here over a year now.

For a few years in the early seventies Lula and Steve went to another church. I was working shift so was only off every 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday to go to church. Jan had finished her 2 years at Copiah Lincoln Junior College and was working for the Narcotics Division for the State of Miss. She was training to be an agent in 1972 and then changed her mind about being an agent. Her and Tommy Clyburn was Married 1972. I had gone to school with Tommy's mother and dad in the thirties. Jan and Tommy moved to Gonzales and was able to buy a house just up the street from us. So on June 3, 1973 our first Granddaughter Pamela Michelle Clyburn was born and then on June 12, 1975 her little sister Kristi Clyburn was born. They went to the same church that Lula and Steve was going to. Steve was 14 years old in June 1975.

Tommy got a job at one of the plants in the complex where I was working. Steve was in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and played football that Fall. In 1976 we had a bad accident out at work while my shift was on duty. A steam turbine blew up and one man was killed and another seriously injured. I had just left the control room and started out to the turbine when it happened. If I had started out a minute earlier, I would have been there when it happened. Also, in Oct. that year mother became seriously ill. The Dr. said he had tried everything to stop the infection. Most of the family was in her hospital room and mother was not conscious. The Dr. said he was going to give her something but it would only make her conscious for a short time. She opened her eyes and looked around the room at everyone then became unconscious again. That night my sister-in-law Lena Mae and I stayed in the room with mother. We thought we were losing her by her heavy breathing several times. The next morning when most of the family members were in the room she opened her eyes again and looked at everyone then took a deep breath and passed away. We hated to lose her but were glad there would be no more pain. She had turned 76 Sept. 20, 1976. After the funeral my oldest brother Gayden told all us brothers he had something to say. He said just before daddy passed away in 1964 that after his death and after mother passed away the remaining 4.1 acres and old house that I had bought for them in August 1945 was to go to me since I had bought it. So I still have the 4.1 acres. The old house is gone. I rent the place to a mobile home owner. A new highway went through the property. Then Daddy sold some of it. Then my Brother Carl bought 1 acre to build a house on and one of Lula's Sisters Jeanette and her husband bought .6 of an acre to build on and that left only the 4.1 acres that I have now. There are several big pecan trees on the property and two large oaks and a magnolia tree and a few other trees on the spot where the old home was before it was torn down. Termites had gotten in it a few years after mother passed away and I sold it to a family that wanted the material in it to build a barn. Most of the lumber was still in very good condition. The people tore the house down piece by piece.

In the Spring of 1978 we got some shocking news. Steve was a Junior in High School. His girlfriend Holly Williams got pregnant. She was 1 year older than Steve and a senior in High School. They finished the school year in June 1978 and got married on May 6, 1978 and our third granddaughter Stephanie Berry was born on Oct. 29, 1978. Steve did not go back to school for his Senior year but got a job and accepted his responsibility as a Husband and a Father. They lived in a mobile home out close to Holly's father and mother until when we helped them buy a home on the street behind us in our neighborhood so now, we had three granddaughters living near us and we got to spend a lot of time with them. For the next few years we enjoyed being close to Jan and family and Steve and family.



## The Story of My Life by Burkett Berry

I had to have surgery that year for a ruptured disc in my lower back. So I was off work for a few weeks recovering from that.

In 1979 we bought a 1976 Cadillac from Lula's Brother Daniel or Donzie. It was a beautiful car and we were proud of it. We let Holly use it one day and she had Stephanie in the car with her. She started across Airline Highway and ran a stop sign and was hit by a car going North on Airline Highway. The car was damaged real bad but Holly and Stephanie was ok.

Later that year we bought a 1976 Winnebago Motor Home and we took a 4-week vacation. We drove from here to Calif. Jan, Pamela and Kristi went with us to Calif. It was the first of Oct. 1979 after visiting our friends out there Jan and them flew back and we headed North in Calif. We had always wanted to travel a lot, so we really enjoyed that trip. We got to see Sequoia National Park and then drove to Yosemite National Park then over to the coast to Monterey and Carmel. We enjoyed the big Redwood trees in Sequoia and Yosemite National Park and also enjoyed the tour of Monterey, Calif. which was a beautiful 13 mile drive I think. Then we went to San Francisco where we met my bro Burnell and his wife Jimmy. We toured China Town and went to a show at a theater (Wes Finley Jimmy's Son by a previous marriage was an actor and starred in the show, we enjoyed the show). We crossed the Golden Gate Bridge and that was quite a thrill. Then we went on to Sacramento and North to Mt Shasta and on to Klamath Falls Oregon and on to Crater Lake National Park. It was so pretty there. They had about two feet of snow there and the scenery was just unbelievable. There was quite bit of snow at Mt. Shasta but more at Crater Lake. It was so beautiful at Crater Lake. We have some beautiful pictures with snow up to our knees in the trees near the Highway. We have some beautiful snap shots that I look at a lot. This was about the 10<sup>th</sup> of Oct. We went on North to Mt. Hood and then went across the Columbia River into the State of Washington and on to Spokane, Washington and on to Coeur D'Alene, Idaho. We went North on Highway 95 to the Canadian Border where we spent the night at a campground on the American side. The next day we headed North to Banff, Canada and while there toured Lake Louise. A beautiful place. I had seen a number of pictures of Lake Louise through the years and I was so glad we got to go there. From Banff we went East to Calgary. We had to get a belt replaced on the Motor Home at Calgary. The people were so nice in Canada. We really enjoyed our tour.

After spending a night at a campground just outside of Calgary we headed South along the Eastern side of the Canadian Rockies and crossed back into the USA and stopped at a campground at Shelby, Montana. The wind was so strong that the motor home rocked back and forth that night. The next day we traveled to Great Falls and to Helena and through Butte, Montana and on to Livingston where we stopped at a campground for the night and the next day we started a tour of Yellowstone National Park. This was something I had wanted to do for a long time and we really enjoyed Yellowstone. We went down the East side of Yellowstone Lake and spent a night at a campground near Grant Village. The next day we started to Old Faithful but between Grant Village and Old Faithful several inches of snow had fallen during the night. We found out we could not go to Old Faithful. Several cars had slid of the road into a ditch and some of them had hit each other. We had to sit there for 3 hours waiting for the road to be cleared and we had to turn and go back toward Grant Village. While waiting we made some coffee and hot cocoa and invited some people from other vehicles to come into the Motor Home and have coffee and cocoa with us. It was sort of funny. A couple from Florida, a boy from the coast of Mississippi and a couple from Arkansas I believe joined us. We had all managed to stay on the road with our vehicles. The ones that had wrecked or slid in the ditch were all local Wyoming people. This was a

long wait but we enjoyed talking to the people that we had invited to come into our Motor Home. When the road was finally clear I started up a hill but could not make it. I had no chains for the Winnebago so had to pay one of the wreckers \$25.00 to tow us over the hill then we were able to come on out of Yellowstone and we made it to Jackson Hole, Wyo. where we found a campground for the night.

The next day we drove around the area. The Teton Mountains are so pretty and the lakes around them so clear that you can see the reflection of the mountain in the water. We went to a little Chapel of the ----- It was so beautiful on the Teton Mountain Range. That is still one of my favorite places in the USA. Then we headed South toward Montpelier, Idaho then over to Ogden, Utah. Then on down to Salt Lake City, Utah and to Provo, Utah then to Green River, Utah where we found a campground for the night. The next day we drove to Grand Junction, Col. And turned South on Highway 50 to Delta, Col. And then Montrose and went East on Hwy 50 to Gunnison, Col. We started on East toward Pueblo, Col. but the snow was so heavy going up the mountain toward Monarch Pass that we had to turn back because we had no chains. So we went back down to Gunnison and bought some chains for the tires then since it was getting late in the day, we found a campground and spent the night. There was some snow around the campground.

The next morning I turned on the radio and they said the temp. was 9 degrees. I had also bought a gallon of anti-freeze for the Motor Home because the motor had gotten hot going up the mountain and I had to add quite a bit of water to the radiator. I went out to check the radiator and when I put my finger down in the radiator cap it felt icy. I got a bucket and drained a gallon of the icy water out of the radiator then added the gallon of anti-freeze. So I had no trouble with the radiator. God was still looking after us.

So, we then left and headed East again. When we got into the heavy snow we stopped and put the chains on and made it over Monarch Pass and started down the other side of the mountain and then stopped and took the chains off and headed on East to Pueblo. Before we got to Canon City, we saw a sign that said Royal Gorge and world's highest suspension bridge so we turned and went to that. It was a beautiful place. The Arkansas River was so far down in the canyon that it looked only a few feet wide. We could not cross the bridge (cars could cross but not the Motor Home) in the Motor Home so we parked and walked across the bridge. It was a beautiful place. When we walked back across the bridge to the parking lot, we saw a herd of deer in the parking lot and people were feeding them. They would walk right up to you to get something so Lula and I took turns feeding an 8-point buck and we took each other's pictures feeding them. We were told the deer herd comes into the parking lot area every day looking for people to feed them. We left there and went on to Pueblo, Col. and on East to Dodge City, Kansas and visited with my bro Welton and Margarett and family. They were living there at that time. Then we went on through Tulsa, Okla. and to Fort Smith, Ark. And by Hot Springs, Ark. And on into the state of La. and home in Gonzales, La.

In Oct. of 1980 we decided to make another long trip in our Motor Home so this time we went to Dallas, Tex. and headed North through Okla. City and through Wichita, Kan. And on North in Neb. To Int. 80. I went West to North Platte, Neb. and turned North on Hwy. 83 to Valentine, Neb. and on North to Int. 90 and went West and toured the Bad Lands of S.D. and then went to Rapid City, S.D. and stopped there on a Fri. night at a campground. Then we toured Custer State Park and Mt. Rushmore and then back to Rapid City for the night. On Sunday morning when we checked out I asked if there was a Baptist Church

nearby and we were told yes there was one a short distance away on the right as we headed North. We arrived at the church in time for the morning church service so we went to church. During the service the pastor asked for the visitors to stand and give their name and where we were from. So when I said we were from Gonzales, La. the pastor was excited because he was from Baton Rouge, La. We enjoyed the service and headed on North to Lead, S.D. and on to Spearfish and Belle Fourche, S.D. and on North through Buffalo, S.D. and through Bowman, N.D. and on to Belfield, N.D. We went West on Hwy. 94 and toured part of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park then went on to Glendive, Mont. then to Miles City and on to Billings where we spent the night. Then went to Custer Battlefield. While touring the Custer Battlefield we were over looking the area where they have the Cemetery. There is a marker where each person was killed in the battle. I just happened to turn around and there was a huge American Indian Man standing near me. He was also overlooking the area where the people had been killed and there were tears in his eyes. I have wondered many times if he had some relatives that were killed in the battle against Gen. Custer and his soldiers. We went from there on down to Sheridan, Wyo. and then to Cody Wyo. We toured the Buffalo Cody Museum and then spent the night in a campground near Wapiti, Wyo. This was a beautiful place. The next day as we traveled on toward Yellowstone we saw deer walking near the Highway and then two Buffalo coming down the road toward us and they just got off on the shoulder for us to pass by. A little later there were 4 Buffalo still lying in the grass about 100 ft. from the Highway. I stopped and started out toward them and then I thought this is crazy they may attack me. So I went back to the Motor Home and got on top and made some snap shots of them. Then we went on into Yellowstone and found a campground at Lake Grant Village. This was another beautiful place. The next day we went to old Faithful and really enjoyed it because we did not make it there the year before because of the snow. Then we went down to Jackson Hole and spent the night at a campground. Then we headed South but first we went North of Jackson Hole to Moran and got on Highway 26 and 287 and went South East to Lauders, Wyo. Then we went to Rawlins, Wyo. and then on to Laramie, Wyo. and Cheyenne, Wyo. and then to Denver.

Our Daughter Jan, son-in-law Tommy and granddaughters Pamela and Kristi flew to Denver and we met them at the airport. So for the next week we toured around Denver, Col. Springs and Cripple Creek. The Pikes Peak Railway to the top of Pikes Peak and to Seven Falls. One time while traveling on the Interstate a Deer ran across the road and a car ahead of me pulled over in my lane and put on his brakes because he was about to hit the Deer. I put all my weight on the Brake of the Motor Home and I stopped just inches from hitting the car so I knew God was still there for me. Pamela and Kristi got to play around Seven Falls and also get inside the Indian Cliff Dwellings at the Garden of The Gods and the Cave of the Winds. They also got to climb some mountains. The Garden of the Gods has several different colored mountain peaks that are beautiful. Also, we stayed at a campground near Cripple Creek the last night before they were to fly back home. We were cooking outside and it started raining so we got inside the Motor Home and the rain put the fire out but our Hotdogs and Hamburgers were cooked enough to eat. We all went to bed while it was still raining. At daybreak the next morning I looked out the window and there was about 6 inches of snow on the ground. I told my wife Lula to look out and not tell Pamela and Kristi. They had been wishing they would get to see snow while they were in Col. So when they woke up and looked out, they were so excited and got to play in the snow that day. I made lots of pictures that day. Also, while we were walking down the street of Cripple Creek one day some little wild donkeys was walking down the street and one of them started following Pamela. She turned around fussing at the donkey and I got a picture of that. Pamela was 9 years old then and Kristi was 5 years old. They really enjoyed that vacation and so did we all. When they flew out of Denver we

headed on South from Denver through Colorado Springs and Pueblo and on down to Walsenburg and Trinidad, Col. and then on to Raton, N.M. and then to Taos, N.M. and on to Santa Fe, N.M. where we spent a night. While there I called my bro Hank to let them know we would be coming through Odessa, Texas the next day. He had some bad news, my brother Burnell's youngest daughter Jerry had been in an accident. She and her husband were Co-Drivers of an 18-Wheeler and they were on the shoulder of the highway and another truck hit them. She was in a hospital in Dallas and in real bad shape. So the next day we drove on to Odessa and spent the night at Hank's then we drove to Dallas and went to the hospital to see Jerry. She had been burned very bad. The truck had caught fire. She was in the bunk sleeping when it happened. It was so sad. She recognized us but she was in such bad shape. A short time later a few days after we stopped to see her she passed on.

So we have had some tragedies in our family like other people, but we still count the blessings that we have received from God. Like I have said before, my dad never complained about the problems but always Thanked God for the Many Blessings that He has given and that's the way I feel about how the Lord has blessed me and taken care of me all these years when I could not do for myself.

Then in 1984 Steve decided to sell their house and move to Florida. So I arranged to take some vacation and I drove the U-Haul truck they moved in and they rode in their car. We found them an apartment in East Orlando North of the airport a few miles. Steve was able to get some work in fact he started out with three jobs, part time luggage handler at the airport. He then went to work at night full time cleaning up the Magic Kingdom Park, then Lead Job. Later he was transferred to the Movie Studio as Lead over Custodial Group. Recently he was promoted to a Manager Position with a good raise. So he has been working at Disney World a little over 10 years now. In 1986 Steve and Holly had another girl Lindsey. She was 8 years old this past Oct. 21<sup>st</sup>. She comes up and spend the Summer with us every Summer. Stephanie also has come up every year but she is 16 years old now and she started working at the Magic Kingdom during the Christmas break so think she may work there this Summer. Holly is now employed at the Caribbean Beach Hotel at Disney.

## The Story of My Life by Burkett Berry

### History

Had 2 Seizures 1 of them on Cruise

Have visited all 50 states

### August 22, 2007

1. David died at birth
2. John Gayden died Dec. 2000
3. Houston Burnell - 85 March 2007
4. Burkett - 83 Sept. 16, 2007
5. Carl Franklin
6. Welton – Died a few months ago

### Events / Trips

1981 – West Va., Stone Mountain, Percy Quinn Park (McComb)

1982 – Lake Percy Quinn

1984 – Steve, Holly and Steph move to Fla. , Disney World – Airport, Ark., Joplin, Mo., Mich., Ohio, N.Y., Canada, Vt., N.H., N.E., Maine, Mass., R.I., Conn., and to Fla. Norma and Ed.

1986 – Lindsey Born, Plant Explosion Shipping Dept.

1990 – Mission Trip to Ariz., New Camcorder

1991 – Feb 15<sup>th</sup> Retired from Triad, Southern Baptist Senior Adult Convention Atlanta

1992 – Cruise on Oceanic, Miss. Clink 90 Birthday.

1993 – Cruise on Ecstasy, July Trip to N.M (Hanks), Everglades, Movie Studio, Kristi Track Meet, Berry Bunch together Nov., Georgetown School Reunion, Glacier Nat. Park, Bad Lands, Yellowstone

1994 – April Pam and Scotty decide to get wed in Sept., Pam and Scotty get Married Sept. 3, Las Vegas Steve and Holly, Scotty Baseball, Tyler Born, Squirrel stealing pecans, trip to New England (Ed and Iva, Doris and Harley and Mama D), Enlarged Prostrate

1995 – Tyler Born Jan. 23, Knight Reunion, Scotty and Pam Graduate, Georgetown Baptist Church Homecoming and school reunion at church, 1<sup>st</sup> Sat Nov. Maryland Trip, Prostrate and Colon Check PSA 3.1,

1996 – Maryland, June (Fla. Lula, Jan and them), Alaska June 17-28 me and Lula and Ed and Iva, Picnic, Knight Reunion, (Ann), Michael, Tape of Tyler, Stephanie has Haley April and visits us in Aug., May – Van Stops on I55, Weekend of July 4 Lake Copiah Camp Out, Seattle, Washington, Vancouver, Victoria, Spent night with Welton family, Kristi Furnitim, Sept. 15<sup>th</sup> Bad news Frankie Sue shoots herself, Prostrate check PSA 4.1 Second test 4.19

1997 – May 3 Payton Thomas Stafford born to Pam and Scotty, Trip to Hawaii, May 11 the Mother's Day at Georgetown Baptist Church, Miss Wesmoreland and Miss Church both 95.

The Story of My Life by Burkett Berry

Gayden and Lena Mae – Gay, Joy and Jolly

Burnell – Brenda, Cheryl and Jerry

Us – Jan and Steve

Carl and Frankie – Sherry 1949, Dennis 1951 and Mike

Hank and Margaret – None (Miscarriage)

Welton and Margarete – Debbie, Jane and Ann