

Autobiography, Photographs and Remembrances
of
Bessie Allene Buttrey Bradley

compiled by her only son
Samuel Edward Bradley, Jr.

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Chapter 1

Preface

This document is collection of memories taken from:

- hand-written notes by Bessie herself in bullet-form
- photographs taken throughout her life
- remembrances by her children and grandchildren

It is hoped that this document will help Bessie's children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren to have a better understanding and appreciation of the kind and caring individual that she was.

Chapter 2

Bessie's Memories

Mother scribbled out on a small yellow pad, pages and pages of mere thoughts that came to her as she was trying to gather her memories. She attached these yellow note pages to a March 1992 article from the **Focus on the Family** magazine that was titled *Keeping the Memories Alive*. She scribbled across the top of the article the words *I jotted down these notes when I was 59 ... meant to type them up with details but never did*. This would have been in about 1984.

She passed the collection of pages to me about a year ago for safekeeping and eventual publication. Upon reading them, I asked that she explain them, which she did, many months ago.

So as I sit here now, I will try to interpret them as best I can. I will explain any item that I can and put my words inside brackets in italics.

She started by relating her earliest memories and then branched out to any and all topics. They are given here in the same order that she recorded them by her own hand.

- 4th birthday
 - Mrs. Em
 - Ice Cream - Black Stockings
 - Birthday cakes for all & homemade ice cream
 - Cut hair - I cut my own hair [*and did a really bad job that required hiding my hair*]

- Went to church (Acorn Hill Church of Christ) wearing a toboggan
- Climbed tree, Daddy got me down
- Riding behind Roscoe on a pony to school [*Uncle Charlie Miller's pony*]
- Roscoe teaching me math
- Julian smoking when he went to get cow
- Cooking fried potatoes - getting cut on leg
- Eating green apples and getting sick
- Snake in the nest when went to gather eggs
- Boys running me home from school with dead snakes
- Nightmares (lost 9 pounds) [*from dreaming about snakes*]
- Measles - Mrs. Hutchison
- Biscuits - Country Ham - 4-5 layer cakes
- Daddy working so hard that every thread of clothing he wore was wet with sweat
- Opened gate for Roscoe when he watered horses, because he promised me a sack of candy
- Mother bringing us candy when going to grocery store
- Milking - churning - butter separator
- Washing - ice box - carrying water up hill from spring - doing dishes
- Daddy pouring a dipper of water on Mother [*when Mother got too mad*]
- Mother walking up road, leaving home when we got on her nerves
- All the company we brought home with us, especially me
- Living examples to all of us - Honesty, Hard Work, No Drinking, No Cussing
- So thankful for the way we were brought up - has influenced all of us & grandchildren

- Daddy going to see Mama and Papa Buttrey [*each week*]
 - Mama always giving us money
 - Having candy, egg custard pie
 - Letting us play on her organ
- Visiting Mama Larkins
 - Rooster flogging me
 - Sugar cookies
 - Letting us play on her piano, except when Papa Larkins was sick
- Spankings
 - Mother did most
 - Don't remember Daddy ever whipping me
- Christmas Stockings behind kitchen stove containing oranges, nuts, apples, rocking chair
- Going swimming in the summertime at both Papa Larkins' and Ms. Vallie Richardson's
- Radio - listening to the announcement regarding Pearl Harbor
- 3 bicycles left at the mailbox — ours, Miller's and Thomas' [*mailbox was at same location as school bus stop, which was about a mile from the Buttrey home; so the children rode their bicycles to the mailbox each morning and left them there to ride home in the afternoon*]
- Old hand-crank telephone — me repeating every word that Mother said
- Bathing in tub by kitchen stove - heating water on stove
- Salesman eating corn-on-the-cob while seated on bench beside house [*traveling salesman being offered food while visiting Buttrey home*]
- Calvin breaking shoulder bone
- Daddy breaking his toe when he kicked Reuben [*Granddaddy Buttrey was a very mild-mannered person. It would take some doing to get him angry enough to kick anyone, but I guess Uncle Reuben was just such a person*]

- Roscoe and Julian going off to work, Ila working in Dickson — buying couch with the money they earned
- Dollard family coming to visit, having country ham
- In high school following a ballgame, bringing 5 favorite friends home to spend the night [*and remember, this was a time before cell phones, so Grandmommy Buttrey probably had no warning that these 5 girls were coming*]
- Mother keeping my children when I worked [*Bessie began working outside the home on the same day that Sam Jr. started 1st grade. This was probably during this time period. Later, Ila kept the girls while Bessie worked*]
- Mother never kept us out of school [*but Bessie complained bitterly and actually seemed to carry a grudge that Grandmommy Buttrey made her miss one of her basketball games because Bessie was sick with pneumonia*]
- Daddy made us go outside and hold onto the fence posts when a bad storm came through [*apparently Granddaddy Buttrey was deathly afraid of thunderstorms and was concerned that the high winds associated with such storms would knock the old wood-frame house off its stone-pillar foundation. His solution was to have the children hold onto something driven into the ground. This also ties into my own memory of Granddaddy Buttrey listening to John McDonald give the weather forecast every day at noon on WSM AM 650 radio, and if we children were present, having to remain silent so Granddaddy could hear that forecast.*]
- When Eddie Lee was born and us going up to Mrs. Lille Johnson's house, Daddy naming her after Mother [*all the Buttrey children were born at home, so this was to get the current children out of the house so they would not have to hear or see childbirth in action*]
- Suckering tobacco, worms, hoeing corn — did very little, boys did most
- Ila made my blue evening dress for high school graduation, for graduation gifts I got enough money to live on until my first payday at First American National Bank in Nashville
- No profanity, drinking or bad jokes
- Happy family life; know now we were the luckiest family alive
- Daddy and Mother devoted their lives to us

Chapter 3

Bessie in Photos

Figure 3.1: Circa 1933 - Acorn Hill School

Standing in Doorway (left to right)

Ila Beatrice Buttrey, Rachel Thomas, Mary Elizabeth Miller

Next Row (left to right)

Mammie Myatt (Teacher), Bill Sizemore, Robert Thomas, Frank Estes, Sadie Thomas, Irene Estes

Next Row (left to right)

Una Hickerson, Gladys Sizemore, Bessie Allene Buttrey, Raiford (RL) Crumpler

Front Row (left to right)

Mabel Eva Larkins, Sammie Jean Miller, James Reuben Buttrey, Joseph Lee Duke, Jr., James Willard (Jack) Duke

Figure 3.2: Circa 1934 - Bessie Allene Buttrey

Figure 3.3: Circa 1935 - Bessie Allene Buttrey

Figure 3.4: Circa 1938 - Bessie Allene Buttrey in about the 8th grade with her first boyfriend, James Robert Thomas

Figure 3.5: Circa 1940 - Bessie as a high school freshman (back of the photo says 91 pounds and 5' 1" tall)

Figure 3.6: Circa 1941 - Benjamin Julian, Ila Beatrice and Bessie Allene Buttrey

Figure 3.7: Circa 1940 - Buttrey Family

Back Row (left to right)

William Boyd Buttrey, Eddie Lee Larkins Buttrey, David Roscoe Buttrey, Sr., Ila Beatrice Buttrey, Benjamin Julian Buttrey

Next Row (left to right)

James Reuben Buttrey, Bessie Allene Buttrey

Front (left to right)

Eddie Lee Buttrey, Harold Calvin Buttrey

Figure 3.8: Circa 1941 - Bessie as a high school sophomore

Figure 3.9: Circa 1941 - William James High School Girl's Basketball Team

Standing in Back Row

Coach

Standing in Next Row (left to right)

Mary Evelyn Hutchison, Jewell Brown, Ruth Bunn, Cathrine Ursey, Juanita Hill

Knelling in Next Row (left to right)

Hattie Ruth Ham, Mary Martin, Alice Elizbesh Howell, Rachel Thomas

Seated in Front (left to right)

Evelyn Harris, Ila Beatrice Buttrey, Bessie Allene Buttrey

Figure 3.10: Circa 1942 - Bessie in the front yard of her home

Figure 3.11: Circa 1942 - Ila and Bessie in the front yard of their home

Figure 3.12: Circa 1943 - Bessie Buttrey with her friends Maurice Stuart and Martha Harris in front of William James High School

Figure 3.13: Circa 1943 - David Roscoe Buttrey, Sr. and Bessie Allene Buttrey

Figure 3.14: Circa 1943 - Roscoe and Bessie during Roscoe's brief visit home from World War II, trying out a new 35mm camera that Roscoe brought home with him

Figure 3.15: Circa 1943 - Roscoe and Bessie (when I talked to Bessie about these pictures, she tried to make it out as no big deal, but I think she was thoroughly enjoying being photographed with her good looking big brother)

Figure 3.16: 18 August 1943 - Bessie shortly after graduation from high school

Figure 3.17: Circa 1944 - Bessie and Eddie Lee Buttrey showing off their girlish figures

Figure 3.18: Circa 1944 - Bessie in her favorite dress that Grandmommy Buttrey made for her

Figure 3.19: Circa Summer 1945 - Bessie in Daytona Beach, FL on vacation with her friends Jewel Brown and Liz Sellick (they rode a Greyhound Bus from White Bluff, TN to Daytona Beach, FL)

Figure 3.20: Circa Summer 1945 - Bessie with a friendly dog while on vacation to Daytona Beach, FL

Figure 3.21: Circa 1947 - Bessie sitting in her bedroom in the new home that was built after World War II for her parents by her brothers and sisters

Figure 3.22: Circa June 1949 - Bessie and Sam Jr. as a newborn

Figure 3.23: Circa 1950 - Bessie and Sam Jr. at about 9 months old (I wonder why is she wearing a coat and I am not?)

Figure 3.24: Circa Easter 1965 - Bessie, Hollye, Leesa and Jane

Figure 3.25: Circa Easter 1967 - Grandmommy Buttrey along with Bessie, Hollye, Leesa and Jane in the living room of her home

Figure 3.26: Circa July 1967 - Eddie Lee Larkins Buttrey and her daughters Ila Beatrice, Bessie Allene and Eddie Lee

Figure 3.27: Circa 1975 - Bessie, Leesa Lynn and Estle Jane Bradley

Figure 3.28: Circa November 1978 - Bessie and Anne Miller at the Buttrey-Larkins Family Reunion at the White Bluff Community Center, White Bluff, TN

Figure 3.29: Circa 1977 - Frances Hollye, Bessie, Leesa Lynn and Estle Jane Bradley

Figure 3.30: Circa June 1977 - Buttrey grandparents 60th wedding anniversary

Standing (left to right)

Harold Calvin Buttrey, Eddie Lee Buttrey King, James Reuben Buttrey, Bessie Allene Buttrey Bradley, Ila Beatrice Buttrey Martin, David Roscoe Buttrey, Sr., Benjamin Julian Buttrey

Seated (left to right)

Eddie Lee Larkins Buttrey and William Boyd Buttrey

Figure 3.31: Circa November 1978 - Buttrey Children

Standing (left to right)

Benjamin Julian Buttrey, James Reuben Buttrey, Eddie Lee Buttrey, Harold Calvin Buttrey, David Roscoe Buttrey, Sr., Bessie Allene Buttrey

Figure 3.32: Thanksgiving 1978 - Eddie Lee Buttrey and Bessie, Sam Jr. and Jennifer Bradley as a newborn

Figure 3.33: Circa Easter 1980 - Patricia Bradley, Jennifer Lee Bradley, Frances Hollye Bradley Van Dyke, Laura Beth Van Dyke, Bessie and Estle Jane Bradley

Figure 3.34: Circa March 1981 - Bessie and Granddaddy Buttrey sitting in his recliner in the corner of the living room (Note on back of photo states this is the last picture taken of Granddaddy Buttrey before he passed away on 16 April 1981)

Figure 3.35: 31 January 1982 - Bessie and Jocelyn Bess Bradley waiting in the Nashville Airport to depart for Hawaii, on the first leg of the move to Japan

Figure 3.36: 28 May 1994 - Buttrey Children

Standing (left to right)

Bessie Allene Buttrey, Ila Beatrice Buttrey, David Roscoe Buttrey, Sr., Benjamin Julian Buttrey

Seated (left to right)

Harold Calvin Buttrey, Eddie Lee Buttrey, James Reuben Buttrey

Figure 3.37: Thanksgiving 1994 - Freddie Green Buttrey, Ila Beatrice Buttrey Martin, Bessie Allene Buttrey Bradley and Harold Calvin Buttrey, Sr.

Figure 3.38: Thanksgiving 1994 - Buttrey Children

Standing (left to right)

Benjamin Julian Buttrey, David Roscoe Buttrey, Sr., Ila Beatrice Buttrey Martin, Bessie Allene Buttrey Bradley, James Reuben Buttrey, Eddie Lee Buttrey King, Harold Calvin Buttrey,

Chapter 4

Memories of Bessie

4.1 Contributed by her sister, Eddie Lee Buttrey King

Bessie was a very rare human being. I like to remember a statement that Calvin made at her 75th Birthday Celebration that her children arranged for her. He said, *Bessie was a giver — not a taker*. I believe that was as good as any description of her could be. All of her life she thought first of others and put their needs and wants above her own, and though she had needs, she rarely had wants. It was hard to do anything for her because she would do twice as much for you as you did for her.

In every crisis in life that I have experienced, Bessie was always either there in person to help me through it, or she was on the telephone helping me to cope. Her favorite saying in every situation was, *It will be alright, God is in charge*. There were times when I had a hard time accepting that, but I knew it was right because she truly believed it.

Over the past few weeks, I have gone over and over some of the things that happened this past year, and I believe that somehow she knew she would not be with us much longer. She was constantly going through papers and possessions — trying to cull things out and pass them to me or others. She did not want to leave a burden on the children in having to go thru the accumulation of things that all of us keep.

Everyone loved Bessie — there are so many memories. I recall something Paula once said about her love for cooking. She said *I would not ever have to worry about Mama having something to eat as long as Aunt Bessie is around*. She was constantly cooking and taking food to Ila and to everyone she knew. She kept her famous carrot cakes baked and in

the freezer to take when there was sickness or a death. All of her nieces and nephews will remember her chocolate cake and brownies. My Mychael credits her for being responsible for his eating vegetables, because when he visited at her house, he could not have any chocolate cake until he ate his green vegetables. I am sure all of her nieces, nephews and grandchildren can also identify with that. She always watched to see if I would clean my plate and remind me of the importance of not being wasteful.

All of us owe a debt of gratitude to Bessie for the way she took care of Mother and Daddy. All of us did what we could — all seven of us contributed to their loving care, but it was Bessie who kept things going and carried the load. In addition to taking care of Mother and Daddy, she did a wonderful job of rearing her children and that carried on over to the care and love she had for her grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Over the past several years, Lyle and I have gardened and done a lot of freezing vegetables each summer. We made a practice of taking them to Bessie and others. She could never stop expressing her appreciation. She wrote us so many thank-you notes that I finally had to stop keeping them — they must have been in the hundreds. I do have a nice collection that I did keep. She would send me checks and I would tear them up, so then she would send money or stamps. I got to where I was afraid to open an envelope from her, just afraid of what she might send next. Her gratitude was bottomless.

I was not the only beneficiary of her love and kindness. I believe she was like this to everyone with whom she came in contact. If there was ever a person who was all kindness and love and who had no vices, I believe she was that one. I will always miss her while I am on this earth, and I know she will be in Heaven waiting for any of us who make it. She was a blessing to all who knew her.

4.2 Contributed by her son, Sam Jr.

[Figure 4.1: Circa 2005 - Bessie and Sam Jr. doing dishes \(a truly rare event for Sam\)](#)

4.2.1 Most Altruistic

My impression is that Mother not only strived to be an example of Christian charity in her daily life, but was successful in doing so. This was evident for me by the many comments, compliments and expressions of gratitude that were given by the attendees of her funeral. She apparently was known throughout Dickson County as the person most likely to help others.

However, I want to bring to light one more example. I doubt if this fact is widely known, since it happened so many years ago, and was an event spread over more than a decade.

Each of her children graduated from Dickson High School in Dickson, TN. Sam Jr. did so in 1967, Hollye in 1969, Leesa in 1971 and Jane in 1978. *In each case, Mother's children were voted by their fellow Senior Class classmates as Most Altruistic.* Giving of ourselves and caring for others was such a central part of her personality that each child picked up some quantity of that character trait without even knowing it. I see that fact as a remarkable testament to her time spent on this earth.

4.3 Contributed by her daughter, Hollye

4.4 Contributed by her daughter, Leesa

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