

Don't miss your chance to get your family story published for free! Deadline is January 31, 2009

Sample Story:

The McArthurs of Wilcox County

As early as childhood I observed the lives of my father and his 11 siblings and concluded that indeed they honored their mother's words, "I want my family to be close." It would be very clear to anyone who knew the children of Albert Sr. and Leona McArthur that they were an extremely close, strong bonded family that was woven in love.

My grandfather, Albert James McArthur Sr. was born on June 27, 1890 in Camden, Alabama. He was the second child born to Johnny Bennett and Ella McArthur. There were five other children born to this union, and those children were: Gaston, Daisie, Sam Lee, Kizer, and DeForest. The family resided in the surrounding areas of Camden, Canton, and Miller's Ferry as early as the 1880's until the 1920's.

Grandpa's mother, Ella McArthur English was born in Wilcox County, in 1868, escaping slavery by only a few years. According to the Alabama 1870 Census records, she was the fourth of five children born to Albert and Mariah Jordan. However, through research, it is inconclusive if Albert and Mariah were parents, because of their age during Ella's birth. Albert's age was listed as 58 and Mariah's was 48. Another indication was that their surname was Jordan and not McArthur.

Grandpa didn't talk much about his father, Johnny Bennett. The family later learned that his dad had murdered his mom. This murder occurred on the Henderson's land, and it is said that the trial was held in Judge William Henderson's courtroom. Grandpa was only a young boy of 15 age when his mother met her early death.

She would leave behind children ranging from the ages of 17 to 2, to be cared for by her sister, Alice Hampton who also lived in Wilcox County. Grandpa Albert left his Aunt Alice's at an early age. He met Leona Love who was also living in Wilcox County and not very far from him. They were married in 1911 and immediately started their family.

They were the parents of 11 children: Sadie, Ethellena, James, Sam, Albert Jr., Ernest, Ella Mae, William Henry, Edward, Ora, and Mary Alice. The family resided in various towns in Wilcox County, around Canton, Camden, and Miller's Ferry.

Grandpa Albert and Grandma Leona lived their remaining years in Orrville. Grandpa Albert died at the

age of 72 on April 3, 1963 and Grandma who lived 22 more years after him died at the age of 93 on May 20, 1985. They are buried in New Live Cemetery in Selma, Alabama.

The fourth child born to Albert and Leona

was my dad, Albert James McArthur Jr.

My father was born on October 9, 1918 in Gasden, Alabama. The stay in Gasden wasn't very long and the family soon moved back to Dallas County. Dad would spend his youthful years in Orrville before joining the United States Army in 1940. He served in World War II. The soldier was honorably discharged in 1944 having earned the rank of a Staff Sergeant.

Dad was still a bachelor at the age of 37 until he met my mother, Vergie Whalin. Mother was 15 years his junior. The young woman obviously swept him off his feet and they were married on December 30, 1955. Four children were born within the next four years after that marriage and they were: Alfreda (deceased 1999), Janice, Michael (deceased 1957), and myself, Gwen.

Just like his father, Dad was a carpenter by trade and did various construction jobs. I didn't get a chance to enjoy him long because he died when I was seven years of age. He was the first of his siblings to make his transition. Mother was a widow at age 32.

For 40 years I have been blessed being born in a family that is so loving and close. Now as a mother of two children, Tiffany and Sean, and a grandmother of one, Darien, there are numerous requests and words of wisdom that I have shared with them, but one that stands out the most is what Grandma Leona passed on to my father and his siblings, what mother passed on to me and my siblings, and what I admonish my children to do, and that is to "stay close."

Submitted by: Ms. Gwendolyn McArthur-Holland, 8215 S. Sacramento, Chicago, IL 60652-3415; (312)689-1309 pager; Email: BooMack17@aol.com.

