



My parents were David Harvey (1879-1956) and Mary Ann Dixon (1882-1970) Back. Dad was the son of James S. (Big Jim) and Elizabeth Roberts Back. Mom was the daughter of William (Bill) and Margaret (Peggy) Whitaker Dixon. They moved from Knott County, KY to Pulaski in 1915. They had 5 children who were born before they moved. Volina (1905-1987) Emmil (Born and Died 1907) Clarence (1909-1988), Elbert (1911-1968), Edgar 1913-1992), and Earl (1915-2010). Four more were born after they moved to Pulaski County: Virgie (1917-1943), William Burl (1920-2004), Troy (Born and Died 1922), and Coy (1924). My dad bought a farm in Pulaski County where I have lived since my birth and raised my family on the same farm.

We all went to a little one room school about a mile from our farm called Cave Hill. We walked to the school. Six of us graduated from Eubank High School. Elbert and Edgar graduated in 1932, Virgie in 1933, Earl in 1934, William Burl in 1929 and Coy in 1940.

I don't remember when any of my siblings were going to Cave Hill except Burl. The main thing I remember about when he was going to school at Cave Hill was when he and one of his friends got into trouble because they turned the girl's outhouse over. They had played tag earlier in the day and girls ran to the outhouse and they were not allowed near it. Burl and his friend decided that they would meet that night and turn the outhouse over because they were upset with the girls. The next day the teacher found out who had done it. They got a whipping from the teacher at school. When Dad found out what Burl had done, he got another whipping at home. His whipping from Dad was probably worse than the one he got at school.

When Burl was 4 or 5 he liked to pretend he was some kind of animal. One day Mom was setting on the front porch working at something. Burl was crawling around grunting like a hog. Mom wasn't paying any attention to him. Finally he said, "Are you going to scare the old sow off of the porch?" She didn't say anything for a while, then she stomped her feet and hollered. "Sooeey!" Burl was close to the edge of the porch. Mom scared him and he fell off of the porch. He didn't like that very much.

Another time Burl was at the barn with Clarence, while Clarence was doing chores. Clarence had a mare at that time. He took her to the spring to water her. Burl had a stick in each hand and went along. Burl said he was the mare's colt. When they got back to the barn, Clarence put the mare in the stable and shut the door. Burl asked, "Aren't you going to put the colt in the barn?" Clarence opened the door and Burl went in. Clarence shut the door and finished doing his chores. When Clarence got back to the house and the family was eating supper, Mom asked where Burl was at. Clarence began to laugh and told her what he had done. Clarence went back to the barn and turned Burl out of the barn. Burl was not very happy that Clarence had left him in the stable.

I remember one time the rest of my brothers were gone and just Burl and I were home. Dad told us to grub some bushes and briars in the orchard. I wasn't very old. Neither one of us wanted to work. Burl's mattock handle had a crack in it. He decided to beat it over a stump until he broke it. He made me promise not to tell anyone. After we grew up, he said it was me who broke the mattock handle.

Dad was a blacksmith as well as a farmer. One cold morning, Burl and I were around his shop and Burl told me to lick an axe head. He told me it was as sweet as honey. I was about 4 or 5 years old at that time. I let him talk me into it. Needless to say my tongue stuck to it and I jerked it loose. Part of my tongue stayed on the axe. I had a sore tongue for a while.

Mom had a certain time in the spring when she would let us take off our shoes. One year in early spring, Earl, Virgie and Burl wanted to go barefoot. Earl sent Burl to ask Mom if they could take their shoes off. The reason they did not send me was because I was too small. Mom was talking to the County Agent. The county agent had asked Mom a question just when Burl asked her and Mom said "Yes." Burl came running back to Earl and the other brothers very excited. He said, "Mom said yes." They were so excited, they immediately took them off. Mom was very upset when she found out they were not wearing their long underwear and made them immediately put it back on. They did not get into trouble because Burl thought he had permission.

We had a cellar close to the back porch with a building over the top of it. One day I was in the cellar part of the building with my brother Clarence. He always liked to pull pranks on everyone. He told me to go over the hill to the end of the drain pipe and when Burl came into the cellar to holler at him through the drain. He said to holler that I had fallen through the bottom of the cellar. That was where it sounded like through the end of the pipe. Burl immediately ran down the hill where my Dad was to get him. I wasn't more than 50 feet from where they were running back up the hill. I didn't know what Dad might do to me if I let them go on. I came out from where I was hiding and stopped them.

Our parents didn't have money to buy us new clothes all of the time. We wore our overalls and if they got holes in them, Mom patched them and we still wore them. I remember once, the

soles of Burl's shoes came loose from the uppers. Burl took hog rings and fastened them back together and wore them to school a few days until they got him another pair.

We all walked to Eubank high school also. There were no school buses and if they had existed the roads were so bad they would not have been able to get to our house. I walked to Eubank the first year I went and then one of our neighbors bought a Ford half-ton truck and put a solid bed up a little above the cab. He put a tarp over that and left the back end open and put seats on both sides of the bed of the truck. I rode in the back of his truck for a year. Then my neighbor, Harvey Blevins and I rode horses. We didn't have any "snow days" when I went to school. We had school no matter what.

My brothers and sisters were either married or off working in Cincinnati when I was in high school. I had to get up at 4 AM to go to the barn. I fed the cows and horses, milked a cow and ate breakfast. Then I got ready for school. We left to go to the school at about 7 and school at Eubank started at 8.

I remember one morning in my third year of high school, it was 1 below zero. Some snow was on the ground. We rode our horses and went anyway. Icicles were hanging down from our horses noses about 6 inches long. I was dressed for the cold. I had on long johns, overalls, shirt, wool sweater, and socks which my mother had knit for me. I had a very heavy over coat, shoes and 4 buckle over shoes over them. We left our horses a little ways from the school and walked the rest of the way. My feet were so cold I couldn't tell I had any, when I got off the horse.

During my senior year my friend Harvey left his horse about ½ miles in a friend's barn, before I left mine at another barn. He would get on behind me and ride on to where I left my horse. The road was a white graveled road. One morning Harvey decided he was going to go over the top of me and get in front while we were on the horse. I begged him not to try it. He wouldn't listen and he tried it anyway. He landed on the gravel road on his hands and knees. Needless to say, he didn't try that anymore.

Burl was a good student and he wanted to go to college. Mom & Dad did not have the money to send him. His agriculture teacher, Irvine Higgins Crosby told him about Berea College. Mr. Higgins told him if he could get enough money from somewhere to go the first year and study really hard and make good grades. Mr. Higgins told him to let Berea know that he did not have enough money to go on and they would let him work his way through. Our sister, Volina was working in Cincinnati at that time. She financed Burl for his first year at Berea. He worked in the dairy. Burl and a roommate had a room in the barn. Burl got up at 3 and got on a horse to go to the pasture to get the cows. He brought them in and then helped milk them. Sometimes Burl couldn't see the cows in the dark. The horse could. Burl would just give him the reins and he would round up all the cows. That is how he worked his way through college.

Burl graduated from Berea College in May of 1941. He got a job with Farm Security in Louisa, KY. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Burl joined the Navy in January 1942.

Burl took boat training at The Great Lakes. Burl was then sent to Florida for a while. From there, he was assigned to a L.C.I. (Landing Craft Infantry.) Burl served on the Ship for the duration of the war as acting commander. To the best of my memory he started out as ensign. It wasn't too long until he had worked his way up to Lt. JG, and then to Lt. Senior Grade.

Burl was in some of the battles in the Pacific but I don't know how many. I do know that his ship was at Okinawa. They probably had several close calls. Burl told me about one close call while he was at Okinawa. A suicide plane barely missed hitting the ship. After the war ended, their ship was soon back in the states. Burl was soon discharged from the Navy.

In August of 1942, Earl was drafted into the Army. Earl had Basic Training in Texas. It wasn't long after he was through Basic Training that he was sent to North Africa. From there, he went to Italy. He was in the invasion of Solano. Earl was in the 630<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft. He was a telephone operator after the fighting was over. He later worked in the kitchen serving the officers. Later he was a Military Policeman.

Earl told us many stories of his experiences in the military and his time overseas. One of his stories that I remember was when he was guarding a bridge one night to keep tanks from going on it. He saw a truck coming that had to make a turn to get onto the bridge. It was dark and they had to drive without lights. Earl ran in front of him and got him stopped just in time to keep him from going into the creek. When he got stopped he asked Earl where the guy was who was standing there. He was afraid he had ran over him. He was very relieved when he found out it was Earl he had seen standing there.

Earl told us his stories many times. When he got older we knew that the stories were not exactly right but we listened to them anyway. Earl was discharged in December 1945.

In July of 1944, Uncle Sam decided he wanted me. He sent me "Greetings from Uncle Sam." I had two weeks to get my things in order. My sister Volina and her husband John were going to stay with Mom & Dad while all of the boys were gone. They were also going to take care of the farm. I got on the bus and went to Apple Creek, Ohio and Volina came back home with me. John came a few days later.

I was inducted into the army in Louisville, KY. From there I went to Camp Attibury, Indiana for a few days. Then I was sent to Camp Fannin, Texas. Basic training lasted 16 weeks after which I came home on 2 weeks delay en route. I left home and went to Fort Ord, California. Then I was sent to Seattle, Washington and on to Hawaiian Islands. I spent my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday in Honolulu, Hawaii.

I knew that Burl was in the Pacific somewhere. I wrote him and told him where I was. He called me and we made arrangements to meet at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel on Waukeke Beach. My Sergeant did not want me to have to cancel my plans. He came into the barracks and asked me if I had ever had mumps. I told him, "yes." He said, "Get yourself out of here!" As soon as I left the barracks, he put a quarantine sign on the door. I just got to be with Burl long enough to eat a

meal. He bought me the first steak I had ever eaten. After we ate, I just barely had time to catch the bus back to camp.

From Hawaii, I was sent to the Philippines. We stayed there about 6 weeks. The Islands were secured then and we just lay around and did nothing. We went over as replacements and when we got to the Philippines we were assigned to our company. I was assigned to Company L, 32<sup>nd</sup> Regiment.

Then we got a LSM ship and headed for Okinawa. The water was really rough most of the time until we were about to make the invasion. The water became as calm as could be on the day of the invasion at Okinawa on the morning of April 1, 1945. We got on a M track. It looked like a tank with the top off of it. It had tracks just like a tank. We had been told we would meet a lot of resistance, but we didn't. The Marines had landed on the other side of the Island at the same time.

I took basic training with a man from Arkansas. We traveled all the way overseas together. They made us a BAR team. I carried the BAR and he was my ammunition bearer. He got a small wound on top of his shoulder the 2<sup>nd</sup> day we were on Okinawa. He was gone until after the 19<sup>th</sup> of April. I got wounded April 19, in my left arm. It took about half of muscle off and cut the main artery, and cut nerves too. This was about 8:00AM. They carried me back to where they put me in some kind of ambulance and took me to a Field Hospital. I was placed on a hard, narrow table until it was almost dark. My arm was hurting so badly, I couldn't stay still any longer. I raised up and saw a Captain standing nearby. He asked, "What's the matter, Soldier?" I told him my arm was hurting so badly, I couldn't stand it any longer. He cut the bandage off and shook his head. Within 5 minutes they had me asleep and were operating on my arm.

I was then moved to Guam for a few days. Then I was sent to the Hawaiian Islands where they operated on my arm again. I think they may have done more than one operation while I was there. I don't remember how many operations I had. From Hawaii, they flew me back to Los Angeles, CA. I got to make a free phone call home. We did not have a phone at home. I placed my call to Edgar who lived in Cincinnati. I wasn't in Los Angeles but for a few days until we got on a plane and headed for Percy Jones General Hospital in Battle Creek, Michigan. There I stayed the next 18 months. I got there in June of 1945. I got to go home a lot while I was there. I would get 30 and sometimes 60 day furloughs. I went through more operations there. Once I had a cast from my waist up and over my left shoulder. My arm was doubled up over my chest. I had to wear that for six weeks. I was home 30 days during that time. My arm was very stiff. It took quite a while for me to straighten my arm out again when the cast was taken off. I got home after being discharged in December of 1947.

In 1947, Earl, Burl and I bought our sibling's share of the farm which Dad had bought in 1915. Dad had developed Parkinson's disease and was not able to take care of the farm any more. Burl partnered with us to buy the farm to pay us for taking care of Dad & Mom. In a year or two he sold us his part for nearly nothing.

The farm was in a rundown condition by this time. We had a lot of work to get it going again.

In April 1948 I started going with Juanita Ruckel. Then on September 30<sup>th</sup> we got married. Six weeks before we got married Earl & I took a crosscut saw and started cutting logs to get sawed into lumber to build us a house. We got a close friend, Lemuel Hale to build the house for us. Lemuel knew we were going to get married but not when. On the morning of the day we got married, I asked him if we could borrow his car. Of course he said yes. I drove his car because all we had was a 1 ½-ton Chevy truck. Volina and Earl were going with us to be our witnesses and we could not all ride in the truck.

When Burl got home from the Navy he soon left home and went to University of Kentucky and got a Masters Degree in Agriculture Economics. After graduating from UK, he worked with KY Agriculture Department a while. Then Burl went to Ames, Iowa and got his Doctorate Degree. From Iowa he went to Oregon for his first job. He then moved to Oklahoma and worked for a while. From Oklahoma, he moved to Washington DC and worked for US Department of Agriculture. He retired from Department of Agriculture. He then taught Economics at Georgetown University for a few years.

Burl didn't get married until he was 48 years old in 1968. He married Virginia Tompkins. They did not have any children.

In later years Burl's health started failing after he developed Parkinson's Disease. He began to have poor balance and started falling. He was in and out of the hospital and finally spent his last days in an Assisted Living facility. He passed away on May 11, 2004 at the age of 84.

In 1950 Earl left home to work. First he worked in Indiana at Chrysler. Soon he got laid off and moved to Cincinnati. One of the places he worked there was the Ohio Knife Company.

Dad passed away in July of 1956 and Earl soon came back home to help me farm and take care of Mom. He not only helped on the farm but had some other jobs also. He first worked at a Mattress Factory near home called Vaught Brothers. He either quit or was laid off from there, I don't remember. Then he got a job with the Kentucky State Highway Department. He worked in this job until the politics of the state changed in Frankfort and he was laid off.

Earl and I farmed together until he wasn't able to anymore. When he was no longer able to help, he signed his half of the farm over to my youngest son, Barry.

Earl was never married. He lived with my wife Juanita and I after my mother passed away. After Earl quit farming, he started working at a little woodshop across the road from the house. He made lots of different things such as arrow heads carved from wood. You could not tell the arrowheads were not real stone until you touched them. He made over a hundred miniature marking off plows like he had used to mark the corn rows off when we were using a one row corn planter. They looked like the real thing. He also made spoons, knives, forks, and many other small things out of wood. He loved to give the things as gifts to people he liked.

Earl lived in our home as long as he was able. My wife and I took care of him. Earl was 94 in February and was admitted to the hospital in Somerset and to a nursing home. He died in the Thompson Hood VA Nursing Home in Wilmore, KY January 21, 2010.