

## ADVENTURES OF THE "BROWNS"

by

Reba Brown Miller  
(Written in 1955)

Seventy-eight years ago this February 3, 1955, a young lad of 21 from the family of Hugh Brown and wife, Elizabeth, by the name of Thomas Nathaniel and the daughter, Emma Jane, of a much beloved local Methodist preacher, Will S. Sutherland and wife, Lucy, were united in marriage by the Reverend Tame Beale. They were all residents of Marshall County, Kentucky and of the little community near Olive.

They took up residence at the home of the groom's father until their little three-room house could be built on the small 40 acre farm which he owned. Twenty acres were added a short time later which greatly increased the value of the farm. They lived on this same farm for several years. Their 6th child was born here and they had seen their three oldest children start to school from there. Rex and Reba started to Olive with Mr. Lloyd Pace as their teacher and Charles with Miss Daisy Darnell (later Mrs. Headley Heath who passed away only 2 or 3 months ago) as his first teacher.

One day Father said to Mother, "Now, we're getting a right smart family and I've been thinking I'd like to move to Calloway County to bring up the children; for I believe we could educate them better there. Let's go up to Ben's (his half-brother, Ben Taylor) and look around. Their kids seem to do well in their school work." Well, we loaded in the wagon and took off to Calloway one Friday P.M. so they could go "Real Estate" hunting on Saturday. I shall never forget that trip. It was in the Fall; and Mother had made me a little cape of eiderdown and those mean brothers and cousins of mine practically picked it clean of all the down. Another thing I remember was that they had just harvested a big crop of peanuts. Fred was just a little fellow but he took a liking to them and called them "gebbers".

The Real Estate deal was successfully terminated and we owned a new home near Old Flint School, formerly known as the Sydney Roberts Place. However, we bought it from a Mr. Rube Davis who hadn't been there very long. He wouldn't agree to move for a year and that forced us after we sold our home to Mr. Moody Boyd to have to rent a farm west of Olive near the Benton Road and live on it from March to December, the only rented home we children ever had.

This was a very regretful move as the water must have been very impure and we were all sick most of the time we were there. Mother was very seriously ill for many weeks in the early summer. Had it not been for the fine neighbors I hardly know what we would have done. Father didn't leave Mother's bedside for 6 or 8 weeks to hardly eat or sleep. The neighbors tended his crop, washed, ironed, cooked and sat up night after night there.

I was too young to know just how serious it was; but I can remember one Sunday when the old hill was covered with friends and relatives and I heard someone say, "She can't last through the day." That nearly broke my heart; and I got all of my little brothers, Charles, Ollie and Fred and my big brother Rex (but he wouldn't stay)

and my baby sister, Lola, all together in the back yard; and we sat just as still as we could and waited for Father to come and tell us over and over that Mother was going to get well. I believe he was the only one that believed she would from what the neighbors said later, but she did. I think I must have pushed Lola, our baby, in a baby carriage a million miles over that hill for when I was caring for her she was happier than being in the room crying for Mother. She was only 16 months old and much neglected while Mother was so sick. By and by Mother improved and was able to be up when both Charles and I got typhoid fever in the Fall and before we got well, Father got it. Poor fellow, he didn't have time to be bothered with it so he worked all day and looked after us so Mother could rest at night. The neighbors changed the old saying, "The patience of Job" to "The patience of Nat Brown."

He gathered his corn crop and hauled it to our new home in Calloway while he had this spell of fever. I couldn't do very much for I got very weak. I remember how Charles wouldn't let our doctor (Dr. Russell, whose grandson John Russell, Jr, is a senior at Tilghman now) catch him in bed. He could hear those old steel tires on the gravel and out he'd come. One of the most disappointing moments of my life was one night after Daddy had killed a yearling and Mother cooked a good steak. I could smell it and was so starved that I caught her out of the kitchen and crawled from my bed to the kitchen and got up on a chair and was reaching over to get a piece of steak when she caught my hand. I've heard her say lots of times that was the hardest thing she ever had to do when she couldn't let me have a bite of it. Another time, I got a notion that I wanted a banana to eat and Daddy said I asked him every ten minutes all night for a banana. He would keep saying, "Wait until the Dr. comes." Finally, he came and he told them to let me have just a little. My, how good it was; for I was starving. Until this time I was small, really small for my age; but when I did get to eat, I ate too much and got too large.

This was one year we children marked off so far as school was concerned for we didn't go one whole month. I almost forgot to mention that Dallas Johnson a cousin of mine but much elder than I came to see us while I was so sick of the fever and brought me a very pretty doll which I have today somewhere in my possessions. He gave it to me on my 8th birthday.

Well, moving day came - the 7th of December, 1907. As per usual, the neighbors, Filbecks, Watkins, Nerwoods, etc., came in to help us move. I rode up in the wagon with Uncle Ben Norwood and Fred, the baby boy, was with us. They stood the little fellow down in a barrel of popcorn. He stood far enough down that his little head was barely above the barrel and they thought that would be a good place so he could ride along and see everything with no danger of falling out. The weather was cold and of course that old popcorn wasn't hot enough to pop; and that child's little feet were nearly frozen when we took him out of there.

We finally got things straightened up and got to bed on our first night in our new home. We all felt we were in a mighty strange country and "a long way from home." We had left "Lou and Deller", "Celia and Lutie", "Uncle Ben and Aunt Emmy", "Uncle Berry and Aunt Louisa", "Uncle Lee and Aunt Josie" and a lot more back down in

Marshall County but we went back to see them pretty often.

We moved on a Thursday; so Friday A.M. we wanted to go to school and away we went to Flint, a short distance up the road. We knew our Taylor cousins and a few of their neighbor friends. Miss Lucille Grogan was our teacher.

The next week after we got there, they were having a big entertainment at Flint Church put on by the students. Uncle Ben's folks came by and stopped for us to go; but Mother was afraid we'd get whooping cough and wouldn't let us go. But alas! we already had it. In two or three days we were having a whooping good time. It nearly killed me, but I have never coughed much since. Miss Lucille taught there the next year and she had another big entertainment that year too. Ollie went to school that year and he was "Little Jackie Horner" in that one. He tickled everybody by bending double and rubbing his stomach as if he were cramping to death from eating that plum.

Things moved on very nicely from the day we moved until Christmas came. There was a big snow on the ground and we began to wonder if Santa would find us. On Xmas Eve Daddy bundled up in coats and overshoes and walked to Almo. Things began to look better. Our family consisted of 8 members counting Mother and Dad, but he brought back our Xmas in his arms and pockets. Needless to say there weren't any electric trains, bicycles or record players. All the boys had a Barlow knife, and I got a set of little dishes. I think the plates must have been a whole inch in diameter and our baby, Lola, got a little China doll 8 or 10 inches long. That was our toy list and a few apples and oranges plus a pound of stick candy finished the Browns' Christmas shopping.

When Spring came and we quit our whooping, things began to look better. Our 138 acre farm produced well our first year. We found the blackberry patches, the hickory nut trees and one big chestnut tree. We had a good apple orchard and a bountiful harvest too.

In June 1909, another little browneyed baby girl came along. We named her Linnie. Then "we were seven". In 1912 we really had a big year for we built a new house and were we proud of it! In addition to getting the house we got another little blackheaded baby girl whom we named Allie for Mrs. Allie Moss, one of our good neighbors. I was about to forget to say we found good neighbors there too-the Jones families, Mr. Edgar's, Mr. Lonnie's and Uncle Bill's, the Feek Moss family, Charles Chambers and many more. We went to Cole's Camp Ground to church also to the Flint Baptist Church. I'll never forget the Bynums, Morrisises, Jones and many others of the Methodists or the Trevathans, Shorts, Roberts, Gilberts and many others of the Baptists.

In 1915, Emma Thomas, another little blackhaired girl came to join us. She and Allie were our only black haired members and each were distinct personalities. Madeline and Kathleen came along in 1918 and '21. This completed our group but the story is not much more than begun.

We never had much money but all shared what we did have. One thing was outstanding and that was the fact that we all went to school and made decent grades. We worked at home and at school. Living near the school as we did, we could do a good amount of work

before and after school. Many were the mornings when the boys would hit the tobacco patch about daylight and come out as wet as they could be when that first bell rang. I have also had the week's washing on the line by the time the bell rang and run all the way to keep from being late.

We used to have Friday P.M. programs - spellings, ciphering matches and later basketball games. Most of us were good spellers as was Mother. We also got along well in Math, but we looked to Daddy for assistance in that. Our parents were proud of every promotion or accomplishment any of us ever made in our school work and Daddy would see that we got to go to all school activities anywhere near, especially spellings. Some of the Browns were usually on the floor as long as anybody else.

Lola was the first of the family to go to school 8 full years without missing a day and we were proud of her record. All the younger children were girls and after the boys left home, they helped Dad with his work too. He wasn't a person to give up in the face of obstacles. If the bottoms were flooded, he'd say, "When the water does down, we'll get in here and work this crop out and it will be all right". Dear old Mother! She could take the least and make the most of anybody I ever saw, in food and clothing. She never knew the word rest. She was always doing something until her health failed and she had to quit. After I was large enough to help, she made all of our school clothes-even the boys as well as Dad's work clothes and underwear. If the scraps of material weren't large enough for a garment for one of the little ones, they were put into quilts which she pieced and quilted. She made soap, canned fruits and vegetables, raised chickens and gardens and truck patches, dried fruits and then had more time to look after sick or needy neighbors than anybody else. God bless her sweet memory! I'll never be able to do as much. Her years were much too few; but she put 100 years work in her 63.

Back to our schooling-there were no county high schools when we older children got ready to go to high school. We had to go to Murray, 5 miles away, which was much farther away than Paducah now seems. As a result, we didn't get to go as soon as we were ready. Daddy said he couldn't pay our board and finally I convinced him I could drive a "hoss and buggy" that 5 miles every morning by starting early. Well, he agreed and made arrangements for Rex and me to go. We both had gone to a Subscription School at Almo on the big hill with Mr. C. A. Hale and Mr. Coleman Overbey teaching for a short 3 month term. We also worked at home and Daddy asked Mr. Jimmy Jones, the principal of Murray High School if could enter as sophomores. He agreed and when the year was over he entered 9th grade credits too. This was 1916-17. Then Rex dropped out a while but I went on and did a lot of extra work during the 1917-18 term plus having a siege of measles but managed to graduate in the Spring of 1918. I was in the upper ranks all right but got no recognition because I had been there only 2 years.

We had also done pretty well financially, so in 1917 Dad bought our first car - a Chevrolet touring; but my, how that thing must have groaned when we all got in. One thing I remember so well was one Sunday A.M. when Burke Culpepper, the famous evangelist, came to Murray. We all loaded in the car, babies, dinner and all to be there

for two big services. When I got there, Alas! the newspaper on which I sat to keep the black paint from the imitation leather cushion from ruining my only white skirt, left its headlines on my "rear". I had to stay in the car and guard the lunch basket as there was no place I could go. We were parked there by Sexton's and I just watched the people come and go all day.

I almost forgot our first County Fair. All the school kids were to get in free and many teachers took loads of kids, not bus loads but wagon loads. Our Daddy and Mother never were much at putting jobs off on teachers that they could do themselves so they took us. Well, nickels weren't very plentiful so we only got two apiece, one for an ice cream cone and one for the merry-go-round. Of course, when I finally decided to take my ride and managed to mount my pony thinking Vera Taylor, my cousin and best pal, was mounting the one across from me, what to my wondering eyes should appear but a big Negro gal with Vera not near. She was too pokey and the colored girl beat her to it.

About 2 o'clock it began to thunder and Dad began to round us up to start home. It soon began to rain and I've never since seen it rain so much. We got out of town and stopped under a tree by the side of the road near the Uncle Tobe Bogard place, but it took more than a tree to protect in a rain like that. Mother took the table cloth from the lunch basket and wrapped Linnie, the baby, in it, but the rest of us took it. We looked like drowned rats when we got home that night.

After graduation in May, Daddy could hardly wait for me to take the Teachers' Exam and try for a certificate to teach. I preferred to wait until June and review a little; but he was so confident I could pass I couldn't let him down; so away he and I went to town the very next morning after I received my high school diploma on a Thursday night. I worked hard all day Friday and Saturday there in the court house at Murray. He sat around on the benches outside and waited for me; but everytime I looked out at him he seemed to be saying, "I'm pulling for you." I guess that's one reason I've been so interested in my own children's educational welfare as well as others in the family and my students in school for I had the boost of good wishes from my parents and many of the good neighbors and friends all my school career which has already reached the half century mark.

I made it - a First Class Certificate - on my first try and I was glad it was over and I didn't have to worry about the June Exam. I had 100 in Spelling, 100 in Arithmetic and 100 in Grammar. I had an average of 89+. 85 would have been sufficient.

Pretty soon one hot day in June, Mr. Milton Imes asked me to teach in the Almo School as Primary Teacher, and I accepted; but later they decided to make Almo a two-year high school and I taught the high school. I wrote the first course of study Almo High School ever had. We had a nice two year high school with Mr. Hale as principal and upper grades teacher and Miss Zula Crouch the primary teacher. We only had 3 - 10th graders, Elizabeth and Flo Imes and Darrell Phillips. We had several 9th graders. My brother Charles was one of them. Dad was sick and unable to work nearly all that year, and the little check I got was most welcome. This was during the first World War and prices

were high. It was also the year of the great Flu Epidemic and our family was the first in our community to get it. Some of us got very sick. Allie and Madeline (who was then our baby) both had pneumonia. Schools were dismissed and Almo's primary teacher, Miss Zula Crouch, died. Rhoda Outland took her place. We all had it but Dad. I guess he'd been sick enough for one year. He had a rheumatic condition and after he planted his corn in April, he was never able to go into the fields until it was gathered. Those four good boys made the crop. Dr. Keys told Daddy he had done all he knew to do but for him to drink all the water he could. Drink it like taking medicine. Pretty soon he got better and when he could barely creep, he'd try to get exercise by walking. One day he walked over to Mrs. Ludie Miller's and she saw him coming and thought he was a tramp and closed her doors. She never got through apologizing for that.

During that summer that he was sick when our Revival was on, Mother went in the daytime and I went at night. The boys and I went or started one night and they wanted to go to Kirksey to the sanctified meeting. Rex was the driver and the other three boys begged him to turn right over near our church and go on to Kirksey. He said he'd leave it up to me, but I wouldn't tell him to go or not to go. The boys won and we went to Kirksey. When we came home, we came the other way, and of course Dad heard us. As soon as we got in he asked why we were coming from that direction.

This unfinished record will be made complete  
by the contributions of the other ten children.