

Chapter 1: The Beginning

It was a cold and rainy night in February. The freezing rain was steadily pouring; the raindrops on the tin roof were normally comforting and relaxing, but not tonight. The stars faded into the deep recesses of the universe. There was no light in the pitch-dark sky, and there was a sense of foreboding in the atmosphere. This feeling enveloped our conscience, our mood, and our restlessness.

It seemed like everyone in the house was on edge, snapping at each other. What was going on? What was about to happen?

Without warning, the baby in my womb shifted left to right, then right to left. My nerves were getting the best of me. *"What's going on in my belly? I've never experienced this erratic and forceful movement in my womb before."*

Fear was creeping in. There was no one to comfort me. I felt so alone, so isolated, so unwanted – so scared. *'God, You are all I have. Help me! Save my baby! Save me!'*

I couldn't be in labor because this baby wasn't due for another three weeks. But this baby was sending me a signal that this birth would be unlike others. It was coming on its own time and terms and not mine. What kind of child will this be?

The labor pains started and stopped. I thought maybe I would wash a load of clothes – do something to keep my mind occupied on anything but the untimely and unexpected pains. Okay, maybe washing clothes is not a good choice right now. There was no extra water in the house to use for doing laundry. There was

no one that I would dare to ask to go to the pump and bring me extra buckets of water. No way. I'll just sit here and see what happens next. All eyes followed the person who got up and walked out of the living room. When this happened, it seemed like the peaceful spell had broken. The tranquility was interrupted. *'Why did he move so abruptly? I wonder where he's going. How come we're not talking to each other? Are we in a dream?'*

This scene reminded me of watching a tennis match. No one talks, but every gaze follows the volley of the tennis ball. The players engage in mental strategies that require hand-to-eye coordination with agility and balance. The players are physically agile and alert to anticipate their opponent's next move.

Every eye in the crowd is fixated on the next serve and volley of the ball. It looks like they are in a trance. The players are focused on their strategy and have the mental capacity to block out the crowd. They're thinking, *'It's just me and my opponent.'* Tennis is a quick-playing game that demands intense focus and concentration so players can react quickly to the ball and make split-second decisions. The mental pressure of a tennis match can be intense and nerve-wracking. Players need to handle the stress and pressure of competition. Both players want to win, but there will only be one winner in the end.

Sometimes, life seems that way. We may not be volleying with a ball, but we volley with the demands in our lives. The people we deal with – and even love – can appear to be our opponents, every man and woman for themselves. Everyone in the house was on full alert, and we were all edgy and nervous – but no one knew why. It couldn't be the weather because we were used to

the cold, freezing, and gray winters. *'Is it the baby fighting to come before the due date?'* But why would this baby's birth create a disturbance in the atmosphere? Or maybe it was not a disturbance. Maybe this baby will bring peace, joy, honor, and reconciliation. As I was sitting there, dreading another labor pain, I wondered what this baby was going to bring into our lives.

'Do my parents really want me to be a single mother of six children? No! My marriage is going to survive this. There's no way I'm going to raise these children by myself.' So, I shook off the cobwebs in my head, pulled myself together, and got mentally and physically prepared for an early birth. But I was scared; I was not equipped to do this without my husband. *'Oh, why did things have to go wrong at this point in my pregnancy?'*

Other than the comfort of a home and plenty of love, there was no luxury in this old house with draughty windows and cold linoleum floors. The new curtains that I made look beautiful in my room, but the hand-made quilt was worn and tatty. Perhaps after the baby is six months old, I will start work on a new quilt. Well, maybe not! I don't plan on staying here. I'm going home to my husband. *'Oh, I miss him so much. He's annoying at times, but he's my love.'*

Every now and then, even the crickets became restless and started chirping ever so softly. Then suddenly and seemingly without prompting from anything, the crickets let out loud, nonstop chirpings. To our natural ears, the chirping has no meaning, nor is the sound comforting to hear. The chirping became louder and louder, and for no apparent reason, the chirping abruptly stopped. Nothing seemed to be operating as

normal. What was going on? The mood wasn't foreboding or threatening, but it seemed to be shifting.

One minute, everyone was jubilant and jovial, and the next, just like the crickets, everyone stopped joking and laughing. Then, almost on cue, everyone became quiet and moody again. What was going on? The atmosphere was thick with uncertainty; it was so thick that a knife could cut through it. In the midst of the uncertainty, there was a wisp of excitement mingled with uncertainty. *'Something mysterious is going on. It's neither good nor bad, but a change is coming.'*

The house had neither electricity nor indoor plumbing. There was an old piano situated in the living room, adjacent to the couch. This piano had never been tuned, but we didn't care. In fact, we wouldn't even know the difference.

At the far end of the house, we had a radio that was literally our sole source of entertainment. There were three kerosene lamps strategically stationed around the house. The lamps sat on a wooden stand in the corners of the living room. They emitted soft, incandescent lights that easily draw a person to it. However, since I was pregnant, the stench from the kerosene was making me nauseous. With everything else going on, this was a minor annoyance; I had no choice but to endure it. And there was no way I would let Mother hear me complaining.

Mother was a no-nonsense matron of the house. None of us called her 'Mom' because she was so distant and aloof. I don't remember ever seeing her relaxed and enjoying herself. Well, she did it a few times during Christmas. She drank some of the homemade wine, and that loosened her up a bit. Everything ran

on her time clock. I think her DNA has screwed her up. Her father was White, and her mother Black, and she had Native Indian blood running through her cold veins. I shouldn't think harshly about Mother, but she has never demonstrated affection – at least not to me. I felt like I was an embarrassment to her. I couldn't ever recall having a mother-daughter conversation about anything. She was not that warm-and-fuzzy parent who allowed her children or grandchildren to crawl in her lap.

She showed little affection – even to her own husband. I wonder what drew them to each other. I don't think it was love; it was more likely a financial arrangement. Dad was a shrewd businessman, and he was able to acquire property and assets, which was rare for a Colored man.

This arranged marriage – although I haven't ever heard anyone say that – was devoid of intimacy or affection. I believe that was the reason she didn't like my husband, who was a loving, kind, affectionate, and considerate man. Of course, that was when he was not drinking.

I believe she was jealous of our genuine love and affection. She saw us laughing and dancing to our own music. We may have five kids now, but we never lost that spark, that loving connection. *'Oh, God! Please restore my marriage. I don't want to be away from the only man I've ever loved. And I don't want to be trapped living in the house with my parents.'*

At any rate, there was a homey aroma coming from the wood-burning stove. A large wet log was laid on top of the burning kindling. This kept the fire burning for a longer period of time. Every so often, someone poked the logs and stirred them around

to ensure an even burning process. Everyone seemed to be in a trance; they were moving about at a robotic pace. There was no eye contact between anyone; there was no idle chitchat, either. It seemed as though a word – any word – would break the solemnity of the night. *‘What does this mean?’* In the midst of this action, one could hear the melodious sound of the firewood crackling. This crackling sound was due to the wet log carefully placed on top of the fire. No one thought about adding dry kindling wood to generate more heat to spread throughout the first floor. It was as though we were all in a fog – immobile and stuck to our seats.

The fire from the wood stove emitted some heat, but only if one sat in the living room where the wood stove was. Everyone seems to be in a daze – only doing what is absolutely necessary. Something is amiss tonight, but what is it?

I was able to work some hours because the pain was abated. In our household, preparing dinner was a family event; everyone pitched in. There were twelve people living in this house, which required a coordinated effort so that no one person was responsible for preparing and cooking all of the food.

But on any given night on the weekend, we could expect Sister Sharon to show up with her five hungry children. It was so sad to see how her lifestyle of drinking cheap wine with that poor excuse of a husband wreaked havoc on her life as well as the lives of her children. She looked years older than she actually was due to the large consumption of moonshine and homemade wine. Her husband was just as bad; they were both alcoholics. They were sharecroppers and were grossly underpaid. You should see the shack the landowner allowed them to live in. It was

deplorable; they stayed there because they didn't have to pay rent.

Why did we live as second-class citizens in this country? As a race, we were accustomed to hard work with little pay. It didn't imply that we should be exploited or defrauded of the pitiful wage that was promised. The White landowners knew they couldn't read; heck, they could barely sign their names. Anyway, I was always glad to see my big sister. They came to dinner most Sundays, so there was a lot of cooking that needed to be done before their arrival.

I cut green beans, cabbage, and potatoes so that my younger sister, Tootie, could cook them later; then, I'd make about three dozen homemade biscuits. No one made biscuits like me, especially Mother, whose biscuits were always hard and lumpy. I would also make two coconut cakes and an ambrosia salad from scratch. I typically didn't make ambrosia salad other than during the Christmas season. The ambrosia salad was absolutely delicious. This was a recipe I learned from the White woman I worked for. It was made with pineapple, mandarin oranges, yogurt, marshmallows, coconut, and whipped cream. I felt celebratory, so I wanted this dinner to be a special occasion.

I'm not bragging. I'm only telling the honest-to-God truth. Cooking is my specialty, and I get great satisfaction when I hear people tell me how delicious my food is.

Shortly after dinner, the pain returned and was now centered in my lower back. I couldn't sit or stand for long. The only relief came when I laid down. My sleep last night was uneventful except for a few trips to the chamber pot. It was a new day, and

I felt optimistic. I thought, *'Maybe the baby will give me a break and settle down.'* What a wishful thinking!

Later in the afternoon, I started complaining about the increasing pain in my back, but Mother told me to keep working and *"the baby will come when it comes. This isn't the first baby you had. Stop whining and put your mind on being productive."*

I knew not to talk back or argue with Mother, so I shut up and trudged along, going slower and slower. The pain was getting sharper. It reached the point where I couldn't breathe properly due to the intensity; this was when I realized I needed some relief. *"Dad, I am in so much pain. I can't work any longer."*

He says, *"Child, go lay down. I will take care of your mother."*

What a relief this was! My Dad was the opposite of my Mother. I often wonder how he tolerated her shrewd remarks and her iciness. I rarely saw her laughing and having fun, especially not when Dad was around. My Dad, on the other hand, was a jokester. He had a dry sense of humor, but when he laughed, it seemed his whole belly laughed right along with him. Oh, and when he smoked his pipe, I think there was no one as handsome or debonair as my Dad!

At any rate, with Dad's permission, I went to my draughty, chilly bedroom to rest. The chilly breeze occasionally seeped into the room through the cracks in the walls. The spring mattress was old, lumpy, and uncomfortable, but I made the best of it. At least this was better than working in the kitchen and trying to have a civil conversation with Mother and her favorite child, my youngest sister, Tootie.

Tootie could do no wrong, and she got whatever she wanted. Even so, she didn't seem to be content or happy. Tootie always talked about me behind my back. I think she was jealous because I had a husband, and she didn't. At least I didn't have three kids by three different men; neither married her. What does that say about her?

In an attempt to keep warm, Tootie brought several homemade patch quilts and covered me with them. She also brought a heating pad to place on my back to ease the pain and discomfort. She tried to make small talk with me, but since we don't really get along well as sisters, the conversation stopped short. I was in too much pain to try to placate her.

Oh, my! The labor contractions were coming faster, stronger, and more furiously by the minute. I initially felt relief when I lay on my side, but eventually, I found that shifting positions frequently didn't bring any relief. Nothing helped. Every labor contraction seemed to be infinitely stronger than the previous one.

At some point, I felt a strong need to urinate. The chamber pot was on the other side of the room. Oh, no! Getting up and walking was difficult. As I slowly and painfully made my way to the chamber pot, I felt streams of warm urine coming down my leg. I ponder, *'Why couldn't I get to the chamber pot before peeing on myself?'* With everything going on in the house tonight, I didn't realize it, but I did not urinate on myself. My water had broken. What else was going to happen?

There was no question about it. I was now in labor. The contractions were coming. There was no getting around it; this

baby was on its way. I silently prayed, *“Lord, please let my husband arrive in time to see the arrival of our latest child. And oh, please don’t let him come here drunk.”*

There were five other kids who needed my attention. The older three kids understood what was happening, but the younger two didn’t.

My oldest daughter had always been my extra set of hands. She knew how to do the laundry, how to cook, how to bathe the younger children, and could do almost anything I needed done. Of course, I thought she took taking care of the younger children sometimes to the extreme. She wanted me to see that she could keep the children in line while I rested, but she seemed to lose her temper easily. I needed to have a chat with her. I think she was picking up some of Mother’s uncaring and strict traits.

Anyway, without hesitation, she stepped in to watch over her siblings. She told the younger siblings, *“Leave Mom alone. Can’t you see she’s not feeling well? Now go in the living room, play hide and seek, or just be quiet.”*

Of course, they obeyed her because she was quite stern. She didn’t play around too much.

It seems like time stands still when one is anticipating the arrival of a significant event or the birth of a child. As youngsters, Christmas came at the same time. Children wrote letters to Santa or gave their parents a list of the toys or items they wanted as presents. They eagerly anticipated the gifts they would receive, but it appeared that on this date, December 25th, it seemed to take a long time to come. When will Christmas arrive? We become impatient when we wait for something we look forward

to. This was how I felt with this pregnancy. When will the baby come? I'm ready for it now!

No matter the circumstances, a baby is a precious gift from God. This is a gift that we can't wrap and put under a Christmas tree. This is a gift that we receive and wrap in our hearts.

Even through pain, I knew I couldn't talk to Mother about allowing my husband to be by my side. However, I knew Dad had a soft spot in his heart for me. I think he caved into my requests because he knew I didn't get love and attention from my own mother. How sad is that? Through fits of pain, I pulled Dad aside so that Mother wouldn't see me talking to him. I implored him – well, begged is a better word, to bring my husband as well as the midwife. He agreed without hesitation.

I could hear my parents arguing. I didn't even have to guess what the argument was about. Dad usually let Mother have her way, but there were times when he put his foot down. Dad was emphatic with her, yet he was clear that it was time for him to pick up the midwife and my husband so that he could be here during the delivery.

Mother shrilly said, *"Pick up the midwife, but don't bring that husband here. I don't want him anywhere near this new baby."* No matter how loud and angry the conversation got, it was clear that Dad would do the right thing. He didn't like his son-in-law either, but he understood that a wife in labor needed her husband to be by her side. With enough said, the argument was over!

The midwife lived 15 miles away, so Dad wasn't going to waste time arguing with Mother. He needed to leave as soon as

possible. After picking up the midwife, Dad would swing by and pick up my husband on his way back to the house. Cars weren't made at a high speed at that time, so the 30-mile roundtrip took a long time. We did not have a telephone, nor did the midwife. There was no way of alerting her in advance that this baby was on its way.

In addition to praying that my husband wasn't drunk, I was also praying that the midwife was not attending to another birth and, most importantly, that she wasn't drunk or hung over either. There weren't many qualified midwives in this small county – especially if one was Colored. This particular midwife was highly qualified; her rate was low, but she had a reputation for being drunk. Many women reported that even though she showed up inebriated, she was qualified enough to perform a safe delivery.

I was secluded in a small bedroom near the kitchen with no one to comfort me. I heard muffled voices as Mother and Tootie were gossiping about someone. Probably me, as my name came up at some point. There was nothing new there. I really didn't care because I was still anxious. My husband wasn't around to comfort me. If he didn't come, this would be the first baby born without his presence and participation. He was good at distracting me when the pain became overwhelming. Sometimes, he told jokes and other times, he shared local gossip – anything to keep me calm.

How did I end up in this situation – pregnant, about to give birth without my husband, and feeling lonely?

I love my husband very much, but I didn't love his behavior when he drank too much alcohol, especially moonshine. He

sometimes became abusive. He was not physically abusive most of the time, but he could say some mean things that hurt my feelings. Verbal abuse lands a punch just as hard and damaging as a physical punch. One night, after my husband had been drinking, he came home in a foul mood. It was Friday night, and he just got paid. Just like most of the men, there was never enough money to live a good life.

I understand why he drank. Life for Colored men especially was hard. They couldn't stand up when a White person was cheating them, and they couldn't say anything when they were disrespected. I never thought about how he felt, so maybe I could give him some slack – show him some grace and overlook his tendency to drink. But he can't gamble away our meager savings. I'm going to put my foot down on that.

As his usual habit, he joined some men who were gambling and shooting dice. Sometimes, he won, but oftentimes, he lost. This time, he lost all of his money. When he came home, I said, *"I hope you didn't lose all your money gambling. You know we have another mouth to feed in a few months."*

As he has done in the past, he raised his hand and hit me while I was pregnant. This was something new. I gathered the children and walked a few miles to my parents' house to escape the physical abuse. This had become a pattern. My husband comes home drunk, hits me, and I take the children and run to my parent's house. Usually, I returned home after a few days when my husband showed up, overcome with remorse, and begged me to return home. His contrition was genuine, but maybe it was too little too late. However, this time it was different. What my husband expected based on past experience no longer worked. I

was almost nine months pregnant, and he thought it was okay to hit a pregnant woman. Really? It was hard for me to overlook this last episode. I needed some time to think this over. I didn't know whether it was because he hit me while I was pregnant or if my parents were fed up with the same song and dance. Nonetheless, when my husband arrived to retrieve the kids and me, my Dad would not allow me to leave.

There was lots of cursing and shouting, but my husband backed down because he realized he was in a losing battle with his in-laws. My father was huge compared to my husband, who had a smaller frame. Additionally, my father kept his shotgun in the house, which, by the way, he strategically kept by his side while arguing with my husband. So, my husband definitely lost this battle with my father. To be honest, I was glad. I needed some time alone without him so I could think clearly about our future.

In my days, my parents had a lot to say about what went on in the home. That was the reason why I was immensely conflicted on the night I gave birth to my daughter. I still loved my husband, and I prayed that we reconcile after the birth of our baby. I naively believed that if we worked out our marriage, I could convince my parents that we belonged together.

The time, the hour, and the opportunity now arise for this child to come into this world.

The contractions were quick, hard, and fierce. I screamed loudly because of the steady and frequent labor contractions. Although the room was cold, I was sweating profusely. Tootie sat beside me and continuously wiped my face with a cold washcloth

while simultaneously taunting me that I was stupid to get pregnant again by a drunk who couldn't even adequately take care of the five children he already had. During the weeks when he did not drink, my husband was a loving husband and father. We shared many wonderful years together and dreamed of building a larger home for our growing family. I silently prayed that my father would live up to his word and bring him here. I wanted him by my side when I gave birth to our sixth child. He was there for the previous five childbirths, and I know this separation would hurt him badly if he missed this childbirth.

As Coloreds, we faced many years when the White slaveowners separated the fathers from their families. This separation has impacted Colored men for generations. I had a good husband who wanted to be a father to his children, yet there may be a force more powerful at work that could prevent us from uniting our family.

When the midwife finally arrived, she took control of the room. I did not particularly like this midwife because I heard some negative things about how she performed the birthing ritual and delivered babies. She did not look clean and smelled like she probably had been drinking. The blessed event was almost coming to fruition, and I could not do anything about the situation but pray.

Finally, around 3:32 AM, my baby girl was born, weighing a little over seven pounds. Everyone rejoiced and prayed over this baby who came into the world on her terms and in her time. For reasons unbeknownst today, my parents, my aunts, and my uncles treated this baby differently. I thought everyone knew that my parents weren't going to allow me and my husband to

resume our marriage. And the saddest part of this saga was that I didn't have a voice in the matter. Okay, I had a voice, but it was not strong enough to go against my parents. Maybe this was better! I would have both of my parents to help me raise the children. Who knows?

My family tried to comfort me and exclaimed that God had blessed me with a special daughter. No one told me why they thought this child was special, but I embraced their opinions. As it turned out, I watched this daughter flourish and tackle problems or situations beyond her age. This daughter saw life from a different perspective than any of us.

She has a Pollyanna syndrome, meaning she's very optimistic no matter what happens. It wasn't long before she could put a whole sentence together. She talked and talked and, at times, debated with adults until they agreed with her. She seemed to find the positive in any situation.

She always told me not to worry about anything because she and her sisters would take care of me when they grew old enough to get jobs. How sweet! She would often say that we may not immediately see the positive in a situation, but eventually, God will work things out. Who is this child?

The Daughter

No matter how hard life gets, Mom taught me many valuable lessons and principles that I still adhere to today during any crisis. I will never forget the important life-changing advice about life. She told me to develop life skills that will help me navigate

through difficult seasons in my life. She said, *“Never forget that we will always have troubles in life, but troubles don’t have to have us. We can take dominion over difficult situations and persevere over the mountains and challenges we will face.”* She added that everyone goes through peaks and valleys; therefore, we must trust God’s direction. Sometimes, what we perceive as a negative is God’s way of guiding us in a positive direction. We didn’t have roadmaps or a benefactor who could wave a magic wand and see our challenges disappear.

What we have is our Creator God; He’s given us the directions for our lives in the Bible. We have so many paths to consider, and we often don’t know which one to take. One path can lead us to eternal life in heaven with God, and the other path can lead us to eternal life in hell with Satan. The media shows us a myriad of options to the point we may become frozen, immobile, and unable to know which path to take. The Bible is our roadmap if a person chooses. It shows us the beginning to the end. The Bible contains countless principles and wisdom that help us to navigate this world. Do you have enough faith to believe, or do you still doubt who God is?

One of the most powerful principles she taught me was about being honest. When I was younger, I used to tell little lies. I didn’t understand why I did, but today, I know it was because I wanted attention from Mom or my grandparents. Let’s face it. With six children and doing domestic work, Mom didn’t have enough energy or time in the day to shower me with her undivided attention and love. After all, she had other children that needed her attention, too. Aha! I found a way that set me apart from my siblings – a way I knew would make her pay extra attention to

me. In fact, I was doing this one thing that she loved without even realizing it. What was this 'one thing'? It was to be on the honor roll. From elementary through high school, I maintained excellent grades, so this wasn't hard for me. The county newspaper was published once a week. Our town was so small that there wasn't anything significant going on that required a daily newspaper. Who cared if a neighbor's cat got stuck up a tree? What if the local grocery store had a sale on apples? Who really cared who had a baby? We did care, however, to read the obituary column. This was big news!

At any rate, the newspaper printed the names of students on the honor roll. The newspaper listed the names of not only the White students but also the Coloreds. I got good grades because I loved to learn and expand my outlook on life.

Every time the newspaper listed the students that made the honor roll, Mom, my grandparents, and other adults gave me a reward – usually \$2.00. In addition, they encouraged me to continue my education. No one in their generation graduated from high school. To be fair, in their era, a high school diploma wouldn't have done anything for them. Most adults dropped out of school between 6th and 8th grade as they needed to work the farms.

I was born during the time when America emerged victoriously from World War II; it was a miracle like Phoenix rising from the ashes. This war changed the landscape of America and the moral and patriotic stance we still hold in our hearts today. There was so much going on during this period, which had various positive and negative effects on my family. When I came into this world, the environment and culture were layered with racial

segregation and limited job opportunities. This war was epic in proportion to the other wars America has been in. Fortunately, America was joined by powerful allies, consisting of over thirty countries around the globe. These allies became friends and supporters of the United States at such a critical time in history.

They not only supplied their military force and soldiers to fight this war, but they also provided the industrial and economic support to boost our capabilities at this crucial time in history. A military loss would have been detrimental to America and the whole world. If the allied forces had not been successful, those forces would have been submitted to the dictator. In this case, it would have been Germany. This nation was run by one of the most despicable and murderous dictators the world has ever known, Adolf Hitler.

World War II is heralded as the deadliest conflict in human history, with over 70 million fatalities. Millions died due to genocide, forced starvation, massacres, and diseases. Aircrafts played a major role in the conflict, including the use of strategic bombings of selected geographic areas. It was the only war where nuclear weapons were used, and later, they regretted and prayed never to resort to nuclear weapons again.

In December 1941, Japan launched a surprise attack on the United States and European colonies in East Asia and the Pacific. This was followed by an immediate declaration of war against Japan. The European Axis powers, Italy and Germany, also declared war on the US in solidarity with its ally, Japan.

World War II changed the political alignment and social structure of the globe. The United States is the leading nation to

foster international cooperation and prevent future conflicts. World War II posed a hardship on many families. The men went off to war. Many White women worked in the factories, while other White women remained at home to take care of their families. Even during this war, there were no factory jobs for the Coloreds.

However, our Colored men were allowed to join the military but served as the US Army's 'sacrificial' lambs. The Colored soldiers were always on the front line, taking lethal and fatal blows from the enemies' weapons. Even though our Colored men risked their lives to fight for freedom, they were still treated as second-class citizens, even in the military. Segregation wasn't only limited to the marketplace; it was also practiced in the military.

And so, I was born during the rebuilding era of America's industry and economy. I was considered a baby boomer. I didn't know what this title meant, but as I look back on this time in history, I see that many geopolitical, political, social, racial, economic, and social issues were happening. I am certain that whatever was going on during this time helped to shape me into the woman I have become today.

After the war was over, the manufacturers turned their production from wartime goods to manufacturing automobiles, televisions, radios, and other goods and household appliances to make life easier for families.

This was a period of worldwide economic expansion as soldiers returned home and worked in factories, earning a living wage. Many White women continued working in factories,

thereby creating two-income families. As income increased, the demand for better housing and the production of goods was birthed. A new type of TV program called 'soap operas' appeared. This name was derived because the majority of sponsors for the shows were soap manufacturers, and the advertisements were geared toward stay-at-home women. Of course, they targeted White women. Ironically, Colored women were domestic workers, which included cleaning homes and raising White women's children. Colored families were blessed just to have one consistent income, no matter how small it was.

My Mom, as well as most Colored women, were domestic workers. I will never forget how little she was paid. She earned \$7 a day and had to feed six children and herself with that amount. My father did odd jobs and earned a little more. We never know how much he made because his jobs were not steady, while my mother worked steadily for two families.

Salaries were low back then, but buying power was still greater. For instance, the average wage paid annually was less than \$3,000. The average price of a new home was \$7,450. The price of a gallon of gasoline was 16 cents. The average cost of a new car went down to under \$1,425.00. A loaf of bread was 14 cents, and the price for a two-pound bag of coffee was 85 cents. The price for two cans of pork and beans was 25 cents, so we ate a lot of pork and beans. In fact, that was the menu for every Monday.

Colored women didn't have the luxury of staying home to raise their children. Nor did they have money to buy the new innovative products advertised on television. I will never forget the first time I saw an advertisement for a washing machine. I

was mesmerized. All you had to do was turn the knob, and water would fill the machine; the user added clothes and detergent. The washing machine did all of the work. Amazing! Since we had no electricity, we hand-washed our clothes on a washboard and basin. To clean our clothes, we soaked them in hot, sometimes scalding, soapy water in the tub.

We then rubbed them against the rigid surface of the washboard. This was a long and laborious process. My grandfather did a lot of farming, and his clothes were usually caked with mud and dirt. They were so ingrained in mud and dirt that his clothes had to be beaten against a rock first to loosen up the dirt particles. Then we add them to the bundle of clothes in the washing basket.

My grandmother made her own soap with lye. The lye was effective in cleaning clothes, but it was harsh on the fabric and the skin. Also, the smell was awful.

Since lye soap was harsh on the skin, whenever any one of the children cursed or sassed an adult, our parents or grandparents took a bar of lye soap and washed out our mouths. This was to teach us not to let dirty words come out of our mouths. I was punished with washing my mouth out with lye soap a few times – usually for asking too many times for explanations on why I should or should not do a chore.

I didn't view it as being sassy. During this era, children didn't have any right to question what the adults said or did. At any rate, the taste was awful. I can still taste the lye in my mouth after just mentioning it. I learned the hard way and decided I wouldn't talk back or have a smart mouth again. Well, two of my sisters

challenged Mom or my grandmother, but as soon as my grandfather came in from the field, they told him that my sisters were sassy. One day, my grandmother overheard my oldest sister cursing under her breath. Without a second thought, her mouth was washed with the lye soap. No bad deeds or bad words ever went unpunished. While I didn't like their form of punishment, I respected their right to punish us.

As I mentioned earlier, my grandfather was one of the Coloreds who had some money. He eventually had enough money to buy a 1942 Studebaker, a three-speed manual stick shift. Because we had a car, we began to have some relief. As our family's finances improved, life at home became easier. Instead of washing our clothes with the washing board, we went to the laundromat.

I always detested those days because we had to drag all those clothes and wait in line for the next available washing machine. Then, we sat and waited for the wash cycle to finish and for the clothes to dry. Most of the time, there were so many people in line that it took hours to wash and dry our clothes. The worst task was folding the clothes after they came out of the dryer.

However, we usually got our allowances that day. That was what made this task a little easier. While we waited for the clothes to wash, we bought candy with our allowances. Of course, back then, we had to enter through the back door because the White store employees wouldn't allow Colored people to come in the front door. Heck! We didn't care. We were used to it. We didn't know any other way. Years later, my grandfather saved enough money to buy a regular washing

machine. We were so excited because we didn't have to use our hands to wash our clothes or go to the laundromat.

Things available at home were used for common purposes. For instance, when we ran out of toothpaste, we used baking soda to brush our teeth. It was also used as a deodorant since it was cheap and readily available. Most importantly, even today, baking soda has been found to be effective for a myriad of uses.

Economic boom and opportunities were great for the Whites but did not impact the Colored people. Life continued as usual. In fact, it got worse in some cases as segregation was in full bloom. But our family did not experience such harshness or racial prejudice as Colored people in the South.

We knew our place in society and did not attempt to cross racial lines. Nonetheless, the Whites did not treat Coloreds badly. In fact, if a White person saw a Colored person walking, he would usually stop and offer them a ride.

We were considered fortunate because my grandfather actually owned the land on two acres where he built his home. The land had great soil, and we were able to plant and harvest many crops. Every year, we began canning vegetables for the winter. There was never a lack of food. My grandfather raised chickens, so every Sunday, you could bet your life that we were having fried chicken for dinner. There were never any substitutes for what meat we would have; chicken was either fried or baked.

There were a few times when my grandfather caught rabbits or prepared deer meat. I didn't care how hungry I got; I was never eating rabbit or deer.

There was one exception. Every Easter Sunday, we baked ham in addition to the fried chicken. My Mom made the best homemade biscuits. Unfortunately, there were times when my grandmother or my Aunt Tootie made the biscuits. Ugh! Their biscuits were lumpy and dry; Mom's biscuits were light and fluffy. We had a variety of desserts. Usually, Mom, who was a great cook, made blueberry, blackberry, and peach cobblers. Or she baked an assortment of cakes and cookies. As children, we got up early in the morning to pick blueberries and blackberries so Mom could make pies or cobblers. My uncle lived next door, and he had a small peach orchard. When the peaches became overly ripe, he gave them to us so Mom could make our desserts. To this day, I haven't tasted a coconut cake as delicious as Mom's.

My grandfather had close relationships with some of the White families. When he wanted to purchase land, he didn't have enough money to pay in full. The landowner allowed him to pay monthly. This was unheard of during those challenging days. Grandfather had a great reputation, and everyone knew he was honest and trustworthy. A few merchants even allowed him to purchase food on credit and pay later.

Other Colored families leased land from the landowners so they could build a shanty or a shack to live in. The Whites leased land to them, but they required the Colored families to use their resources to build the houses. After the houses were built, some landowners had the gall to charge the Coloreds rent. The Coloreds used their money and labor to build the houses, but they were still legally the landowners' property. These were not good times for us, but we made the best of our situation.

The Coloreds knew what it was like to live in poverty and be subjected to oppression by White folks. But they always found a way to persevere and overcome obstacles. Colored people are a close-knit community in a White-dominated county.

With the birth of the industrial era, many high-paying jobs were now available in the major cities. Eventually, many Coloreds moved from the South to the North to take advantage of jobs created in the manufacturing industry.

School teachers had the authority to exercise corporate punishment if a student was unruly or disobedient in school. In addition, we were required to bring a note home to our parents to notify them that we had disciplinary problems in school. There was no way of hiding this act because we were required to have our parents sign the note and return it to the teacher. There were times when we did something that caused the teachers to discipline us in school physically.

On top of that, when our parents found out, we were disciplined again for the same things. Our parents whipped us with a belt or a switch, which was worse than what the teachers did to us. Get this! Our parents made us go into the woods and bring back a sturdy tree branch to use as a switch to whip us. If we brought back a frail, thin branch, we had to go back to the woods and return with a strong, sturdy branch. Then, we got an extra beating for not returning with the appropriate switch. Unbelievable!

A few of the teachers used a large ruler to discipline us. However, the most common disciplinary punishment was for us

to write "I will not disrupt the class" or "I will not talk in class" 100 times. This form of punishment wasn't effective at all. Sometimes, the students had their siblings help them write out the punishment. They still continued to disrupt the class.

The residents in my county were predominantly Catholics, and surprisingly, we were allowed to worship together with the Whites. Of course, we had to sit in the back of the church. We were also allowed to go to the confessional booth at the same time as the Whites and to partake in Holy Communion. It seemed odd that they worshipped the same God as the Coloreds, but we were not allowed to be buried in the White cemetery. Really?

What hypocrisy was that? We serve the same God, but man decided that Whites were superior to other races, even after death.

Well, what God do they serve? It's definitely not the same God in the bible.

I wondered if they thought that in heaven, there would be a White section and a Colored section. In my county, Colored people were buried in a field hidden from the main road. The cemetery had lots of debris and overgrown grass and weeds. There weren't headstones on our graves because the families couldn't afford them. In fact, it took the whole community to raise funds to pay the funeral director. Fundraisers typically include selling fish, fried chicken dinners, bootleg liquor, having a dance and charging a fee, or playing cards in families' homes. The host of the families took a percentage of the winnings from the card games. The funds raised were spent on funeral costs. There were many families that had literally nothing, so they held

the funeral services in their living rooms as family members and the community came to offer condolences and to pay their respects.

Of course, some families could afford the funeral services at the funeral home. Family members had to wear black armbands for a week to symbolize that they were in mourning.

I always loved it when friends came to visit. There was always a lot of food and drinks, usually homemade wine or moonshine. It was entertaining to sit and watch grown folks tell lies, dance, smoke hand-rolled cigarettes and play cards.

My grandfather smoked a pipe, and I still love the sweet aroma of tobacco today. I always thought it was cool how he immediately got his pipe after dinner. Then, he sat in his big chair, smoked his pipe, and seemingly lost in his thoughts. However, I never liked to see anyone smoking cigarettes, especially my Mother. She used to ask me to light her a cigarette.

One day, she complained that I had too much spit on the filter. An idea popped into my head. Whenever she asked me to light a cigarette, I purposely put too much spit on the filter. Then she stopped asking me, which was what I wanted. I don't know why it bothered me to see her smoke.

This was before we knew the effects of cigarette smoking on the lungs. One day, I hid my mother's cigarettes. I soon learned never to hide cigarettes from a smoker. She was running around the house, looking for cigarettes. She was upset and almost manic. When she couldn't find them, she took the butts out of the ashtray, lit them, and took a puff from each one. I found her

actions disgusting. I vowed never to smoke, especially if it made someone act like that. We didn't know about cigarettes being addictive back then. I still don't know why, but I later told her I had hidden them and received a nice whipping. I never did that again.

We had no electricity in our house for years; therefore, we didn't have the benefit of a fan. During the day, the children were told to stay outside and play, get some fresh air, and, most importantly, get out of the way of women who had to prepare lunch and dinner.

We laid blankets under the large oak tree and laid down to take our naps. Bugs always landed on our faces, or worms crawled up our legs. It wasn't fun, but we made it work. The oak tree was huge, and my grandfather tied a swing from one of its high branches. We played with the swing for a while and then played with marbles. We couldn't afford to buy a set of marbles, so we used large rocks or stones. We didn't care; we knew how to improvise. We also played hopscotch, especially while we waited for the school bus.

When the weather was not too hot, we played softball, especially after the sun went down. We had no money to buy toys or sports equipment, so we improvised. Our softball was made by stuffing soft cloths on the inside of a sock. For a bat, we used a large, sturdy branch from the oak tree. We also played dodgeball and tag. When it got really dark, we took mason jars to catch fireflies.

This was fun. It was fun to look at the sky at night to see if we could find the Milky Way. Many nights, we saw shooting stars;

then, we made a wish, hoping that our wish would come true. I can't recall where it came from, but we actually had a real dodge ball. I always got thrown out of the game first because I was younger and didn't move fast enough. Afterward, I would run to Mom and cry my eyes out. She used to console me and tell me to take my time and watch for the ball. Eventually, I got the hang of it, but I still got thrown out early in the game. I remember hopscotch, a game we played while waiting for the school bus. I excelled in this game. We drew the squares on the dirt road and played until the bus arrived. It was also one of our favorite games to play when bored.

We didn't get electricity for years, but once we did, my brother bought our first television. What a treat it was! At that time, there were only about five or six stations, and they stopped airing at midnight. Nonetheless, it was a delight.

As the station played the national anthem, the broadcast ended. That was our sad signal. Growing up, we witnessed White folks living carefree lives and enjoying themselves. There were things we saw being advertised on TV that we wanted. We knew we couldn't afford it, so why waste time dreaming about them? I continued to dream about owning the latest appliances and living in a house with indoor plumbing, TVs, and other modern conveniences. I dreamed how wonderful our lives would be if we had those things. Dreams do come true!

When I became an adult, I had big dreams residing within me. I don't know where those dreams came from, but they helped me to get through the dark days that were to come.

Even though segregation was in full swing, we were allowed to attend catechism at the Catholic school in the summer. White priests and nuns taught us the basic tenets of the Catholic faith. I must admit the priests and the nuns didn't treat us badly or indifferently. The nuns seemed to go out of their way to make us feel comfortable. They gave us a daily snack and vitamins since we didn't have vitamins at home. Every year, the church took students on a retreat, which lasted about three days. I was not allowed to go because I was still wetting the bed. Oh, how badly I wanted to go. My siblings returned home and discussed how close they'd gotten to God at the retreat. By the time I stopped wetting the bed, the church had stopped offering retreats. Bummer!

I found myself pondering over unexplained habits, like Mom's ability to quit smoking for Lent, but as soon as she'd come home from church on Easter Sunday, she lit a cigarette. I could never figure that out.

One day, I asked her, *"Mom, if you can give up smoking for 40 days during Lent, why can't you give it up forever."*

She would always say, *"I have to die from something, and she couldn't refrain from craving a cigarette after watching the cigarette advertisements."* She often sang the lingo for Winston cigarettes: *'Winston tastes good like a cigarette should.'* She always seemed happy when she had a cigarette, and I always loved seeing her with a smile and a look of contentment on her face. *"What else can I do? I'm only a kid,"* I thought.

During the season of Lent, we held devotions every night. As children, we found ways to make this enjoyable. To my grandparents' embarrassment, my cousin seemed to let out gas during this time. It seemed that he held it in until we were kneeling and praying – and everything was quiet. Then, he let out a big, loud one. Of course, as children, we laughed until our stomach hurt, but our Parents chastised and snapped at us because they thought we were disrespecting God. We went to confession every Friday, and I sometimes lied. You're probably wondering how anyone can lie while confessing their sins to the priest. Well, I've never told the whole truth to the priest. Every evil or bad thought, word, or action was a sin. I was a younger sister and often picked on. I always thought negatively about my siblings, cousins, and especially my oldest sister. She used corporate punishment to keep all of us in line. We were more afraid of her than of Mom.

However, there were many days when she showed unconditional love to us. She often shampooed and braided my hair and talked kindly to us. She fixed our lunches, and sometimes, she started dinner before Mom came home. I know Mom depended on her a lot. I wonder if she disliked being the oldest and being responsible at a young age.

Our family wasn't the poorest of the poor. In fact, by other standards, our family was more well-off than the majority. My grandfather and other family members built their house themselves with no indoor toilet or electricity. The house was considered large in contrast to other homes the Coloreds lived in.

Our house was a two-story with two bedrooms downstairs, three bedrooms upstairs, and a living room. My grandparents'

bedroom was right beside the living room. The kitchen was pretty spacious as well. We had an iron stove with a built-in oven and hot water tank. This was an upscale model for people without electricity. The washing machine was in the kitchen, as well as a refrigerator and a large kitchen table. There was a closet or pantry where the canned goods were kept, as well as large containers of sugar and flour. As stated, we did not have electricity for most of the years I grew up in this house. In the summer, the house was really comfortable downstairs but extremely hot and uncomfortable in the rooms on the upper level. In the winter, the temperature was just the opposite: cold and draughty downstairs and hot upstairs because the heat from the wood stove downstairs rose to the upper floor.

Because of the cornfield and gardens, the critters, snakes, bats, mice, and flies inhabited the barns and even our house. We kept fly papers taped to the ceiling to trap flies. We used flyswatter to kill the flies that weren't trapped by the fly paper. The flies crawled all over our bodies whenever we took naps and even entered our mouths sometimes. It was disgusting.

At night, the front and back doors were left wide open so fresh air could breeze in, but with the fresh air, bats sometimes flew in, too. Oh, what a frantic time we had to chase the bat out of the house. There was also an old tale that the bat would come back to pull out more strands of our hair to build its nest. The bat will keep returning until its nest is finished. That was hogwash, of course—one of the many myths that grandparents passed down. As children, we did not easily accept and believe what we were told. But some of their old wives' tales seemed plausible.

In the summer, family members made pallets by laying blankets and quilts on the floor to sleep on. It was uncomfortable and too hot to sleep upstairs during the summer. The winters, on the other hand, were harsh, cold, and wet. Before we went to bed, we put irons on the wood stove to heat them until they were blistering hot; then, we wrapped the irons in a towel and put them at the foot of our bed to warm them up. How good that felt. The warmth put us to sleep instantly. Since we didn't have electricity or indoor toilets, we used a chamber pot. As long as the chamber pot was covered with a lid, we couldn't smell anything. However, in the summer, the odor was horrible. There was always someone who would forget to put the lid back on. Phew!

As children, we had to empty the chamber pot several times a day. I always hated doing it because we had to empty it in the woods. As a little girl, I was always scared of the dark.

I'd often cheat and not go too far in the woods. Eventually, my grandfather built an outhouse that also reeked, especially in the summer. We could smell it sometimes all the way in our house. Even when we used the outhouse, we had to stay alert and be careful of snakes. Needless to say, there were lots of flies buzzing around the outhouse. It seemed the flies were attracted to the odor. Even today, I thank God I have four indoor bathrooms in my house. Oh, what relief and joy it is for me!

My family's land was large enough to raise horses, pigs, and chickens. The garden was always productive with cabbage, carrots, turnips, corn, collard greens, potatoes, watermelon, peas, and tomatoes. The crop was so bountiful that we had

enough to share with less fortunate families and neighbors. What a joy it was for our family at harvest time.

In the winter, my family geared up for hog-killing time. I never liked this time of the year because it was bloody and smelly. The hogs were fed throughout the year to be slaughtered in the winter. Everybody in that county knew that it was hog-killing time. Many children arrived at school with that particular odor that only came from the slaughtering of pigs. Whites and Coloreds both participated. There were parts of the pigs that Whites would not eat. So, they gave those parts to the Colored families. These parts were rather gross: pigs' feet, ears, heads, and intestines (better known as chitlings). The thought of eating these parts of the pig is disgusting, but when you are poor and hungry, you will eat almost anything to stay alive.

The pig slaughter process is messy and smelly. My grandfather used to have family members or neighbors to help during this process. He'd select a big pig for the slaughter, kill it with a shotgun, and hoist it onto a strong tree branch. Then my grandfather took the knife that he'd sharpen against a stone, slit the pig's throat and let the blood flow into a washtub below. The pig was then placed in hot water to remove the skin easily. Then, the cutting began.

A person must be skillful at cutting to know how to cut each part of the pig. I'd rather not go into the gory details about slaughtering the pigs. Suffice it to say that the smell of blood was gruesome. It was a celebratory time of the year. Our families knew they had meat for the winter months. Since there was no refrigerator, the meat was salted down for preservation and hung in the smokehouse. Some of the meat was sold to the

community so that my grandfather would have money to purchase more pigs, chickens, and grain feed. For protection from thieves, the smokehouse was always under lock and key.

Despite their financial and racial challenges, Colored people led normal and jovial lives. The women had their own social club where they held annual dances to raise money. Many men made moonshine because they couldn't afford to buy alcohol from stores. I found this fun fact about whiskey. During prohibition, there were two main ways to get whiskey: prescription or illegal purchase. Doctors were allowed to prescribe up to a pint every ten days. The doctors made millions selling these prescriptions to people who were legitimately sick. Today, doctors write prescriptions for pain medicines, and they make millions of dollars annually. Same scam as today: doctors earn lots of money by giving prescriptions for pain relief while the patients spend what little money they have to become numb or block out their pain. Then, they become addicted, and their lives start spiraling out of control.

Moonshine was always flowing during Christmas and at parties. Most families got together weekly to play cards. There are small bands that play at events or at someone's home. We even had a piano. None of us had lessons, but we learned to play by ear. We played mostly Christmas carols and some songs that were familiar to our culture.

The moonshine was considered deadly and could cause blindness. The alcohol levels were high and often caused people to get drunk and act mad. They sometimes got into fights and arguments after the men got drunk and started acting crazy.

To tell the truth, some women also got drunk and acted absurdly like men. They did this while singing and dancing or playing cards. Before you knew it, someone would say something nasty or insulting to others, and a fight ensued. It was not unusual to hear someone make a crack that got the fight or argument started.

"At least I don't have babies by three different women."

"Well, your daddy was trying to holler at my mother, so who's the cheater?"

Then, my grandfather had to put everyone out. *"I don't know where you are going, but you are going out of here. Get out of my house with all of this foolishness."* It's time for everyone to leave. After all the cussing and fussing, these people were back to being friends again in a few days.

There were some perks to my Mom working as a maid. She frequently brought home used clothes and shoes, but most importantly, she brought home all types of books. Even though some of the books had missing pages or writings on them, I treated these books as though they were made of gold. I treasured every storyline and gleaned tidbits that I knew helped me to see life from a different perspective. I read any and all kinds of books as a way of escape. I often found myself daydreaming and imagining that life could be better for me, too.

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As an old saying goes, *"Every man has a right to a Saturday bath."* This was true for us.

During the week, we used a basin to wash up, but on Saturdays, we had the luxury of getting into a hot bath. The bathtub was made of aluminum, large enough for only one person to sit in – just like the bathtubs on Western TV shows.

The youngest child bathed first and then the next older until the oldest bathed. By that time, the water had to be refilled several times. The bathtub was placed by the hot wood stove near the comfort of heat. So, in the winter, it was a peaceful and serene experience, and all of us looked forward to our time in the tub. Sometimes, the water was too hot, and we had to add cold water to lower the temperature in the tub. These are the memories one remembers for the rest of their lives. Each person's heart has a special space for childhood memories. As we get older, we become increasingly sentimental about our youth, which is the finest time in our lives.

A child is unencumbered by the unpleasant and filthy cacophony of worldly life because, in their youth, they don't have to care, worry, or labor about anything. We draw happiness from our childhood memories since it is our most carefree and enjoyable time. I can honestly say that I loved my childhood. Even without modern conveniences, I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world.

My mother was my rock, but I also had a loving father. Although I didn't grow up with him in the house, I saw him regularly. My Dad had a heart for helping others; I know that's where I got my gift of helping others. I remember his brother's wife was crying because her husband left her. She had no money nor a place to live.

Dad didn't make much money, but he negotiated a deal with a White landlord to allow his sister-in-law to live rent-free. She, in turn, did domestic chores for his family. My Dad bought her food and often stopped by to check on her. Years went by, and no one heard from my uncle. Dad presumed he was deceased, and no one ever talked about it since. Dad took it upon himself to pay for a burial policy for his brother's wife. I don't refer to her as my aunt because I don't know her like that. When I saw her, she was usually intoxicated and begging for money. No matter what was going on, Dad made sure his children had their basic needs met, and on occasion, he bought us things that we wanted. Every Christmas morning, I could depend on waking up with my Dad cooking breakfast for us. He had a heart of gold. And he loved God. He kept his rosary beads over his bed and prayed morning and night. His faith kept him going, especially during the days of segregation.

I remember one day, he was taking me to a store to buy shoes. As we were walking, a White man was approaching. My Dad immediately and intentionally put his head down so that he would not have direct eye contact with the White man. I know that this was a practice Colored people did, but I was furious. *"Why do you bow your head to these White folks? They're not better than we are."*

He said very quietly and with meekness and humility. *"You just don't understand our history. If I look the White man in the eye, he will think I'm challenging him. Then, I can be beaten or jailed. It's safer for me."*

I was young, bullish, and insensitive. I couldn't see life from my Dad's perspective. I wouldn't let the topic go. Then I saw the

hurt in his eyes as he looked at me – his youngest daughter. *“Baby, I’m praying that you won’t go through what we’ve gone through for years. You won’t have to live like we do.”*

I felt bad, and even today, I’m sad I never asked Dad to forgive me for making him feel inferior. I learned a lot about life from my Dad, too. Even though he didn’t finish high school, he had a knack for making wise financial decisions. He taught all of us to save money. He said, *“Don’t spend money on things that don’t increase your life. Learn from my mistakes. For years, I gambled, always looking for a quick way to make money. It doesn’t work. Save something of your earnings because one day you will need it.”*

His advice has followed me all my life, even though there were times when I wasn’t a good steward of my money. The biggest surprise I got upon Dad’s death was seeing how much money he had in his bank account. I was blown away. There were thousands of dollars in his bank account from his meager salaries earned as a day laborer. I couldn’t believe he had saved that much money! I was working, too, making a lot of money, but his savings were larger than mine. He also had two insurance policies, and he had already paid in full for his funeral expenses before he died. Wow! He prepared for his final exit from this world and had the foresight not to burden his children with his funeral expenses. He was a humble, honest, and loving father!

As it turns out, my Dad was well respected in the community – especially with the White people. When my Dad passed away, many White people came to his funeral service. Even today, people still say, *“We miss Woo.”* His nickname was ‘Woo’. We never knew why he was called ‘Woo,’ but in my county, it seems

IT'S TYME!

every Colored person had a nickname – but me! I always wanted a nickname and didn't understand why I didn't have one. Oh, well!