



MAUDE MILLER: "Me and Lewis, we had it pretty hard you know." (Photo courtesy of Maude Miller)

Maude Miller

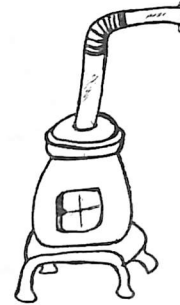
I was small when my grandparents died. I remember seeing them, but that's all. It musta' been about 1920 when we got to Lando. I was about 18 or 19 years old. I was born up above Fort Mill.

I lived in Fort Mill and Rock Hill before we moved to Lando. We didn't like it in Rock Hill so we moved to Lando, then we moved to Chester and we lived there when my oldest sister died. Then Papa, he wanted to come back to Lando. We told him we'd move back with him.

Papa worked in the napper room and then he was on the police force a long time until he got disabled and he just had one arm.

My mother was Martha Jennings before she married, but they always called her Maggie and she named the Methodist Church. We all went to the Methodist Church and she was a Sunday School teacher there. It was a wooden church when we come there and ah, we had some of the best times there. We had prayer meetings and we didn't dress up or nothin' — we just went clean, but we didn't dress fine like they all do now. Now seems like if they ain't got a new dress, they don't want to go to church. But back then we'd put on a print dress and go and we felt just as big as anybody and have the best time. And Paw Paw Garrison and Maw Maw Garrison, boy I did love to hear them — they'd get so happy. Then I felt like after they tore our old plank church down, it seem'd like it

wasn't like it was no more. They had a big old round pot-belly stove in the old church, and we'd all gather around it.



The young people didn't have no place to go until they had a moving picture show over in the old school house. Paw Paw Miller and Luke run it. Then they moved it out across to the old dry goods store. The barber shop sit right there beside it. It was in the little small house. Mostly though we just got out and walked. We didn't have no way to ride.

There was a lot of houses in Lando when we come there and they built some new ones after we moved there.

We lived in that big old house there where Charlie Thomas lives. There's where we was livin' when me and Lewis married.

We didn't have no big place for a garden where I lived, but we had it in the back yard. I went to keepin' house in two rooms up there where Joe Dawkins lives now. Then I moved from there over to that house there by the store in three rooms where that Lanier boy lives now. Then I moved down there to the Pittman house. We always called it that cause Mr. Pittman lived there when he run the store. I moved down there when Gary was one month old and lived there 'til I "broke up" (housekeeping).

Me and Lewis, we had it pretty hard you know. They had "shut down" at the mill for awhile and he was out of work.

I had all six of my children at home. Well, I had seven but one of 'em didn't live but a month after he was born. Dr. Strait delivered Fred cause Dr. Gaston broke his arm when I took sick with Fred. Then with Roy, he was gone to some of his people's funeral. Then when Patsy Lewis was born he broke his leg. He'd crawled up on a sewin' machine to put up a curtain and the machine kicked up and he fell. But he was with me when she was born. Then Lewis died when Nancy was just five months old.

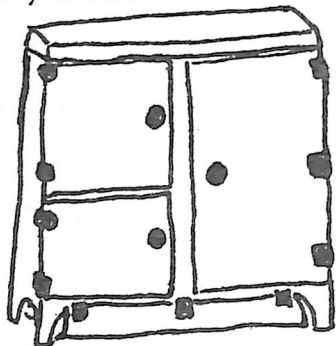
Lewis went off that Saturday morning that he died with Mr. Vernon Hough and Lynn and he told me when he left, he said, "Mama," he always called me mama, "You send and get some fish for dinner." I said, "alright." Well, I got the fish and I fried 'em and me and the children we eat and kept waiting on Lewis to come back and he never did. It kept gettin' later and later and I got worried. I just felt like somethin' had happened. Night come and he still hadn't come. Well, I knowed Lynn and Mr. Vernon had done come back. I sent down there and asked Mr. Vernon, but he wouldn't tell me nothin'. So, Mr. Mark Ramsey lived right up there in that house where Mrs. Lathan lives and I told him, I says, "Mark, there's somethin' happened." Lewis never did stay away from home at night. He said, "They said they'd put him out over there at the cow branch where the young people was havin' a weiner roast and he probably stopped there." Well, that

kinda reconciled me a little bit. But then he still didn't come and so Mark he come back down there and said, "I'm gonna go up there and get Vernon and he's gonna' take me over there where they put Lewis out." So he went and there is where they found him — where they had left him over there in the pasture. He'd had a heart attack. I was sittin' on the porch when Mr. Clarence Miller and Dr. Gaston come down there and told me about it. I had Nancy in my arms and Mr. Clarence Miller took her out of me arms and Dr. Gaston told me and that's all I remember there for awhile. Wasn't nobody there with me — only me and the children. I wasn't but 35 years old then and Lewis was about 10 years older than me. Lot of people say, "Aw, you'll forget it." But it's just as fresh to one at times as if it just had happened.

Mr. Heath he come and talked to me 'bout putting the children in a orphan home and I told him, "Mr. Heath, I'm gonna keep 'em all together and try it a year and then it'll be time enough. And if I see that I can't keep 'em all together and can't do nothing with 'em, then we'll see. But I don't want us all to be separated." Well, I did keep 'em all together 'till they married and moved away. We was separated from some of 'em when the war broke out and they started draftin' 'em for the army. Fred, he went first, then Roy, then Frank and then Gary. I worked all the time, but I had to have a cook to help me with 'em. She stayed over thro' the day cause the oldest one wasn't but 13 years old when his daddy died.

I washed on a ole timey rub board, boiled the clothes in a iron pot out in the yard. We was always scared for the children to draw water from the well. We was scared they'd turn loose that crank and then get hit in the head. So we'd always draw the water up and let the children carry it up. My children helped out a lot.

We burnt coal and they had to bring in coal. Then we had a wood stove and they had to bring in wood. We had cows and hogs and they had to tend to them. They'd have to carry slop from where I lived at, to plum back over there behind the school house where we kept the hogs. Back then you could cure meats at home. We'd kill our own and take it and salt it down and let it dry and then put it inside and hang it up. We didn't have no freezers and frigadaires like we do now. We did have a ole timey ice box.



Mr. Heath told me after he seen we was gonna' make it together he said, "Maude, you showed us what you meant to do more than you could put it in words." They figured by me being young like I was that I would neglect 'em and get out sportin' you know. But that wasn't in my head. My children

was in front of me. I was lookin' out for them and askin the Lord to help me to keep 'em together and to raise 'em and to make a livin' for 'em. Well, he did and I had good health 'til after they all got grown and big enough to see after theirself. And now my health has give way. But you don't know how thankful I was that the Lord spared me to take 'em and raise 'em. And not braggin, but I feel like I raised some pretty good children not to have no father to help me. I just wouldn't give up. I kept the Lord in front of me all the time and put all my trust in him. After I'd worked in the mill all day, after I got the children fed and down in bed, I'd set up 'till 11 and 12 o'clock at night sewin' to help to make a honest livin' for 'em. We didn't have finery or nothing like that. We was just naturally poor, but they had plenty to wear and eat. They'd bring their friends there to maybe go off fishin' and they'd come back and they'd say, "Mama, will you fry these or do this or do that?" I'd try to do anything to keep 'em at home. I'd try to entertain their friends and enjoy 'em with 'em. Whatever they wanted me to do with them, why we done it together. They'd fish and swim or play ball some.

Whenever night come, I mostly always knowed where they were. And I was always sittin' on the porch waitin' for 'em when they come back. They'd say, "Mama, why don't you go to bed? We can take care of ourself." But I couldn't go to bed 'til the last one'd come in and the door was shut.

Then after they had to leave and go to the Army, I just like to went crazy for 'em being away from home, and I'd set and wonder, "Well, where are they at and what are they doin'?"

My children mostly went to school at Lando. Now, Gary, he just thought the world and all of Miss Mattie Mae and whenever she married it like to broke his little ole' heart. He come to me and he cried and said, "Well, Miss Mattie Mae won't love me no more like she used to. She's done married now." Miss Mattie Mae laughed a lot about that later. ■



MAUDE MILLER: "I kept the Lord in front of me all the time and put all my trust in him."