

Herman & Mary Ella Clark

By Theresa Clark Hill



Herman & Mary Ella Clark

The season of spring is upon us. Along with the signs of new birth and warmer weather, there is another event that folks from this area know will be taking place once again. We are speaking of the annual Easter community sunrise service and free country ham and egg breakfast. This tradition started with the idea and hard work of this month's featured couple, Mary Ella and Herman Clark.

In the early 1970's, Herman Clark and Lanny Turner had a vision to host an Easter Sunrise Service and country ham and egg breakfast to follow. This was to be for any and all people in the surrounding communities. The first two services were actually held on the Turner hill and the third one on the Clark hill. Buses were loaded at Eagleville School which brought folks to the sunrise service. The service grew to the point that it became impractical to have the services on top of the hills, so the services were moved to the school grounds where the breakfast followed in the school cafeteria. Over the years, this event has become a dream come true for Herman and Mary Ella. It has been made possible by God's guidance and the help of many dedicated and generous people working together. Again, this year you will hear the joyous Easter songs and smell the delicious aroma of fried country ham at Eagleville School



Mary Ella & Herman at the Murfreesboro Well Office

around 6:30 am Easter Sunday morning.

Mary Ella is the daughter of Laura Bell Thomas Vaughn and Talmage Vaughn. She has one sister, Alma Vaughn Steagall.

Herman is the youngest son of Young Leslie Clark and Nannie Lou Burns Clark. He has 6 sisters and 5 brothers. Both were born in Rutherford County. Mary Ella has lived all her life except five years in Rutherford County and Herman has lived all of his life in the Rockvale/Eagleville area.

The first time Herman saw Mary Ella was at the Rockvale, Fourth of July picnic. She was about ten years old and he eleven. Mary Ella wasn't at all happy about the decision her mother had made to leave before the festivities were over. Herman said he thought to himself, "That young lady needs a spanking as much as anyone I have ever seen." And so it began.

Mary Ella and Herman were friends throughout their school days at Rockvale School but did not date until both had graduated. Not many months after Mary Ella completed her high school education Herman was helping his dad drill a well for Mary Ella's parents. Mary Ella made a caramel pie and brought it out to the rig for their lunch. Herman's dad said, "If I were you I would call that little gal and ask for a date." Herman thought that was not a bad idea and the rest is history. From then on Herman knew if Mary Ella made a caramel pie something was at stake.

Mary Ella and Herman began housekeeping in a little trailer parked in Herman's parents' yard. Shortly after, they moved into a little house near the Vaughn's on Snail Shell Cave Road. Their first child, Theresa Kaye, was born in 1952. In 1955 they built their house in Rockvale on a parcel of land that Herman had played and hunted on all his life. It adjoined his home place on Jackson Ridge Road. In 1959 Mary Ella and Herman had a daughter named Veronica that only lived 5 hours. In 1960 Joyce Loureen was born. They decided they would try for a boy and so in 1964 Herman Talmage (Tam) Clark was born.

Herman drilled wells with his brothers, Y.B. and Horace Clark, until 1957 at which time he was hired as one of the first eight employees at the new General Electric plant in Murfreesboro. He also raised beef cattle. At one time Herman aspired to show registered Polled Herefords. However, it seemed just when he got one groomed to show it would up and die for the strangest reason. Her said he guessed God didn't intend for him to take this bend in life so he gave it up and when back to just raising and selling unregistered beef cattle.

Mary Ella worked in Nashville at the State Farm Insurance Company until 1955 when State Farm opened a new branch in Murfreesboro. However, Mary Ella quit her job when she became pregnant with their second child. Even though she did not work at a public job she was a very busy lady. Mary Ella was involved in all school activities, including the P.T.A. and room mother, as well as youth group leader at the Rockvale C.P. Church over a span of 25 years. One Saturday Herman was going to a cow sale. She asked him to pick up one good jersey so they could have fresh milk and butter. Herman, always knowing a good deal when he saw it,

brought home 8 cows ready to milk that night. "They went so cheap!" he said. They had to go buy two buckets to milk in that very afternoon. Herman narrowly escaped a sudden death that day. However, Mary Ella acquired tow used milking machines and sold mild to the Ole Creamy in Murfreesboro. Theresa and Mary Ella milked the cows while Joyce and Tam played in the yard nearby and Herman worked the night shift at G.E.

In 1967 Mary Ella and Herman bought the Concord Grocery for Herman's' Uncle Doc Burns. Mary Ella ran the store as well as answered the phone and kept the books for Herman who went back into the Water Well Business. The store at Concord became a great hangout for the Clark children's friends. They sold the store in 1971 and began to put all their energy into the water well business.

In the early 1970's Herman and Mary Ella bought land on the Cheatham Springs and Floyd Roads in Eagleville. After putting much thought and prayer into the decision, they decided they would build on top of a hill the looked out upon the town of Eagleville. They moved into their new house in the spring of 1974. Both Joyce and Tam graduated from Eagleville School and Theresa has taught there many years. Two of their grandchildren, Blake and Peyton, also attended all 13 years and recently graduated from Eagleville. Because Mary Ella's and Herman's children live close by they can often be seen at ballgames, concerts, and many church and school events. They have sponsored many teams and given donations to the athletic programs because they are firm believers in children and community pride.

Joyce is married to Timothy Merritt, an Eagleville graduate. They have four children; Jonathan, Kimberly, Josh, and James. They live in Cookeville. Joyce is a teacher and has recently graduated from seminary. Timothy is a marine biologist for the federal govern-



Herman and son, Tam



David Alcorn, Herman, John D. Smith & Daniel Clark

ment.

Tam lives in Mary Ella's home place which he bought some years ago. He recently started touring all over the U.S. with The Roosevelts, a band he has been in for the last several years.

Up until about six months ago Clark Water Wells was still going strong. The business was started in 1885 by Herman's grandfather, Willy Clark. Herman always said he had the only business he knew that started at the top and aimed for the bottom. Herman decided it was time to retire this past October. Several of Herman's nephews have drilled with him including Burns Jr. Clark, Terry Clark, and David Clark, all sons of Herman's well driller brother, Y.B. Clark. Tam, his son, has drilled and worked in the pump business off and on through the years and has recently served as foreman of the business. Dee Smith, a lifetime and devoted employee, set thousands of pumps for the Clark business. There have been many other loyal and appreciated people that Herman saw not only as employees but his friends. As stated by a recent employee, Paul Snook, "Leaving Herman Clark Well Drilling is like leaving my family. It really hurts."

Mary Ella and Herman have always believed in dreaming big and then turning it over to God. Even though not every dream has come true, there is one that was fulfilled this past Christmas. When Mary Ella was about six years old she asked Santa Claus for a little roll top desk. Santa did bring her a desk but it wasn't at all the one of which she dreamed. Of course, when she became a little older she understood why. But every Christmas that rolled around, she always recalled the Christmas that she didn't get that little roll top desk. It was a dream that had never come true. She even bought Herman a big oak roll top desk on Christmas. But, it somehow didn't make the disappointment of that unfulfilled wish disappear. However, this story has a very happy ending. This past Christmas Herman was able to locate an antique child's roll top desk that was made in the early thirties. Tam drove to North Carolina and found the desk to be in mint condition. Herman purchased the desk, put crayons, a coloring book and several storybooks inside. And placed a big red bow on top. After the gifts were opened this past Christmas, Herman told Mary Ella that Santa had roped off an overdue gift for her. Of course, it was the desk. After shock and tears Mary Ella said, "See, you should never give

up on your dream. It may not be when or how you planned but don't give up." This little story is one of the gift and the giver of which Mary Ella and Herman are both to many.

Both Mary Ella and Herman are worker in their business, church, community, and home, but they do find time for hobbies that add beauty to their corner of the world as well as the community.

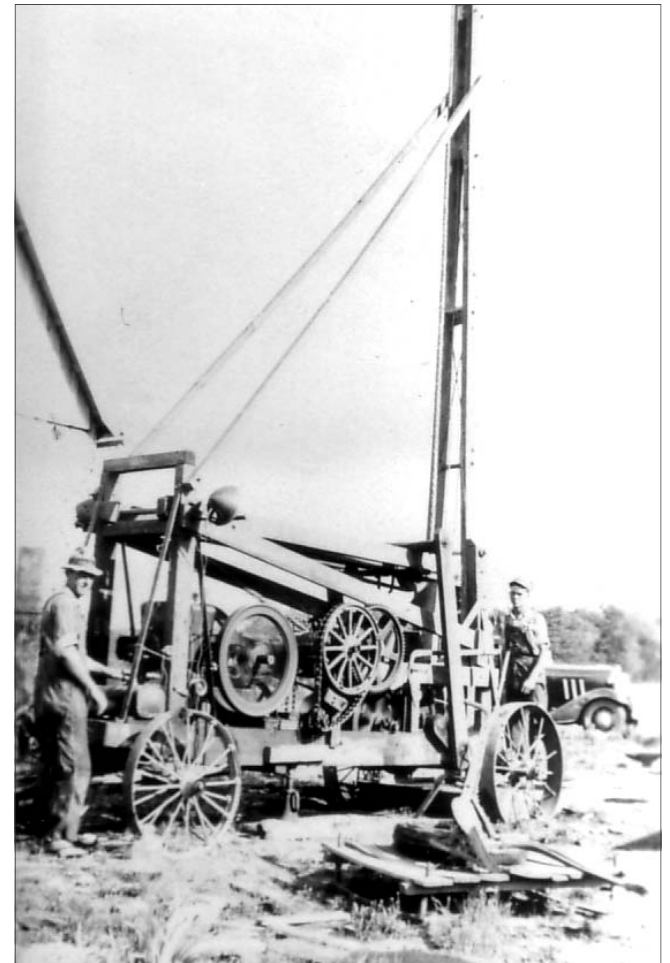
Mary Ella has a green thumb in the flower garden, roses being her specialty. Not only does she derive pleasure from growing them but her biggest joy is arranging and giving bouquets to be used in churches, hospitals rooms, school events, or just sharing with a friend. When asked had she ever thought about opening a business to sell her roses she replied, "I wouldn't want

to do that. It would become work and do it for the joy not the money."

One of Herman's hobbies is rockwork. He has a special knack for putting together unusual rock shapes and colors to make interesting and unique displays. Many of the rocks he has used in his designs are rocks he has picked up where he was drilling a well or on his farm as he walked through the fields to check on his cattle. Throughout the Rockvale and Eagleville community you can see his craft in churches and houses. Just take a drive up Cheatham Springs Road in Eagleville and you will enjoy seeing the rock fences and fountain he built just a few years ago. When asked what his secret is to getting his on-of-a kind effect he said, "patience and a good eye for rocks".

Mary Ella and Herman do not have to tell people they are Christians. Their lives are living proof of their faith. Herman and Mary Ella have always put God first, family second, and the rest of life just seems to fall into place. They have been through hard times, lean times, and sad times as most people have. But there have been many happy, wonderful, blessed times for which they give God all the credit. Herman and Mary Ella are members of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. They have given their time and talents as youth advisors, Sunday School teachers, elders, missions directors, superintendent, and children's ministry just to mention a few of the church roles they have served over the many years.

After 54 years of marriage, Herman and Mary Ella would tell you neither has changed much. Mary Ella says Herman is still stubborn and too good for his own good and Herman thinks Mary Ella probably still needs a spanking but he reckons he'll just let it slide.



Herman's dad, in 1941, with his well machine.



Herman & Mary Ella in 1950