

## Mary Euoller Graves Powell

By Mary Ann Powell



Mary Euoller Graves Powell was born January 12, 1909 in a house that was located behind her present residence on the Bedford-Rutherford County line. The land was part of a plantation dating back to before Tennessee was a state. She is the 4th generation to live on the 100 acre farm her great grandfather, Stephen Wood purchased in 1846. Her father, Robert Neal Graves was a Primitive Baptist preacher for over 50 years. Her mother was Bessie Hyde Wood Graves. She had a brother, David Franklin Graves born July 27, 1911 and a sister, Ruby Neal Graves born July 8, 1915. Mary was named for her grandmother, Idora Euoller Toombs Graves which could explain why her older friends call her M.E.

Her early memories as a child were of taking care of the farm animals, milking cows, gathering eggs and attending church meetings with dinner on the ground. Preachers in those days were the host to visitors who attended their church, offering food and lodging in their own home. Many times so many people spent the night that straw with sheets over it was used as extra beds for the men in the barn. Her brother, David and some visiting boys decided to climb the walnut tree and shake the limbs that were hanging over the barn. It was quite a rude awakening for those who were trying to sleep in the barn. (Energy has always been

wasted on the youth!) Bessie, Ruby and M.E. were too busy cooking on a hot wood-burning stove to be very amused by the boys' antics. It was a hard job cooking for that many people.

She remembers riding to church in a horse drawn buggy trying to get over Giles County hills. (For those unfamiliar with Giles County, it's like going to the Smokey Mountains.) The dirt road was so steep that her father was walking beside the horses pulling them up the hill. Three teenagers jumped on the back of the buggy rather than walk. Her mother dressed for church complete with a hat and hatpin to hold it on decided, enough was enough. She took matters in her own hands and pulled the hatpin from her hat and used it as a weapon to dislodge one of the boys. Needless to say, a sharp prick in his rear made him jump from the back of the buggy and the others immediately followed not really sure what had happened from behind.



M.E. always had a great enthusiasm for sewing. She will tell you that she loves to sew. Her mother and sister were also accomplished seamstresses. She pieced her first quilt even before starting to school.

Her formal schooling began in Rover where she walked to school. She attended school there until the 5th grade. The school burned, and she went to Eagleville until she graduated with honors in 1929. She helped build the house she resides in that same year. She did not go to college because of the "Depression". Times were hard. Eggs were bringing .03 a dozen in trade. The price of a cow dropped to \$5.00. It was not a time to think about the future. The hopes of becoming a dress designer and college graduate turned into the need for survival. She continued to sew which made a little money. The family continued to milk the cows and eat a lot of eggs. Her father continued to preach and sometime was rewarded by a gift of a chicken for his services. Somehow they survived.

## Citizen



She met Earlie James Powell in Giles County and they were married December 24, 1937. He moved to the county line where they continued to farm and milk cows. She continued to sew not only for the neighbors but for the Natalee Company of New York. She received \$1.00 a garment. She made the bridesmaid dresses for the Dupont - Ford wedding.

Ten years after their marriage on April 27, 1947, a daughter, Mary Ann Powell was born. M.E. always wanted a girl. Her friends told her it was a good thing because she would have made a boy too "sissy" with all those fancy clothes. Her daughter proudly wore those home made clothes through college and most of her teaching career.

M.E. continued to work on the farm as well as 16 years at Model Sportswear and White Stag Garment factories.

Her husband, Earlie, died in September, 1998. They would have been married 61 years the following December.

Congestive heart failure, emphysema, arthritis and other age related problems have limited most of her activities.

She still misses her daily telephone conversations with Virginia Comstock and Louise Bennett. Mrs. Virginia Jackson, a schoolmate and lifelong friend remain close. They celebrate their January birthdays together and communicate on the phone almost daily. Myrtle Hobbs, Elaine Freeman and Alma Scott have also been good telephone buddies. Estel Beasley stays with M.E. whenever her daughter has an appointment. We certainly could not do without her.

For the last two years, outings have been limited to attending monthly Senior Citizens Day and the doctor's appointment. Old age turned into both a blessing and a curse. She credits her long life to hard work. She always believed people would rust out quicker than they would wear out. She gives praise to her cardiologist, Dr. Loyda Tacoque and her valuable staff, Madelaine and Sparkle, her daughter and principle caregiver, and the "Good Lord" for her 95 wonderful years.

