

Memories of War

By Patsy Poor



I remember December 7, 1941—the day the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. We lived at Carrollton, Arkansas on a farm that had once belonged to my great-grandfather Richard Powell. Daddy heard of the bombings from a neighbor. We didn't even have a radio so we walked two miles to Hugh Morris' store to hear the news on the store radio.

Even though I was only three and a half years old, I remember entering the store; everyone was gathered around the battery radio listening attentively to the newscast. All were very excited and talking about Pearl Harbor. I knew it was something important but I had no idea how important. I remember thinking—what is a Pearl Harbor. I knew what a pearl was but not a harbor.

Our lives were changed forever that day. If the bombings had not happened, I am sure I would have lived on that farm my entire childhood. Even though my father (Willis Powell) had a wife and two small children, he volunteered and went to serve his country! Daddy sold his farm near Carrollton in preparation to leave. Mother (Hazel Powell), Richard and I moved to Denver, Arkansas, so we could live near my mother's parents—Houston and Irene Gaddy. Grandpa Gaddy owned a garage in Denver where he worked on Model A and Model T automobiles. My little brother, Clayton was born during the time Daddy was overseas and Richard and I started to school. We lived across the garden fence from Grandpa and Grandma Gaddy and Hettie Mae. Hettie Mae, mother's sister, was only two years older than me. She had everything a child in that day could want. Richard and I had nothing except the clothes on our backs. Hettie Mae would show us her toys but never let us touch them. Needless to say, we didn't like Hettie and made her life pretty miserable.



Patsy and Richard 1943-44, in front of the little house where they lived in Denver. (really almost a shack). Aunt Winnie had sent Patsy some new clothes. Not to be left out, Richard thought he should get to wear some of the pretty clothes too, and chose the sunsuit outfit with the ruffles.



Our grandparents, Houston and Irene Gaddy, taken about 1955 in front of the little country store they later owned at Ridgeway, AR.. The store was directly across Highway 65 from the Ridgeway School.



Richard, Patsy and baby Clayton Powell

One time when she did come to play, we took long briar cane and chased her home. Grandma Gaddy thought we were certainly a wild bunch.



Richard and Patsy with Mother's car. This is the only car Mother ever bought. She bought it the summer before Daddy came home in the fall. I am sure she bought the car so Daddy would have a way to find us a home.

When mother went out in it, which wasn't many times, I sat in the back seat and held Clayton. It was very slow going up the Denver hill, I prayed all the time as we climbed the hill. "Please God let us get to the top." We always did. I am sure my prayers were answered otherwise we would have ended up in Long Creek.

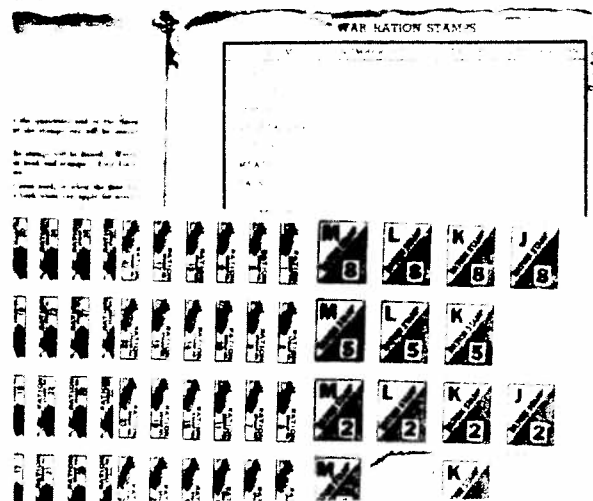
Sometimes, Mama would go down Long Creek and visit with Uncle Truman and Aunt Frances Powell. We played with cousins, Jimmy and Donnie, all day. Those were good days for all of us.

My little brother was conceived when Daddy got to come home on leave before being sent to the

Pacific. When Clayton was about to make his entrance into this world, we went to stay with Grandpa and Grandma Powell at Sunny Lane, Arkansas. We enjoyed our stay there. Grandpa Powell always had long talks with us. We felt right at home. Since we were there in September 1944, I started to school at Sunny Lane. Grandpa walked me to school the first day and blazed the trail through the Maples' place by marking the saplings with an ax. I was to find my way home by following his marked trail. Lois and Virgil Morris now own the place I crossed to get to school. At that time, it belonged to Grandma Powell's cousin, Jesse Maples.

When Mother recovered from the birth of our brother, we returned to Denver. I was enrolled in first grade at Denver. My teacher was Cleo Jackson. The Seals boys went to the same school I did. Pete was in the eighth grade and Polie was in the third grade. I was afraid of the Seals' boys because Grandma Gaddy said they were bad boys. They never bothered me but I was scared that entire year. The Darby children went to school there, too. Peck Miles' children were going there. Virgil Miles was in my class along with Jimmy Powell.

Every thing was rationed during the war, you had stamps the government issued each family. Certain things were very hard to buy because there were a lot of shortages. To buy a rationed item you must find somewhere that had the item and have a government stamp and the money to purchase that rationed item. The things I remember that we could not get were sugar, coffee, elastics, gas and tires for a car.



People bought feed in cloth sacks in that day and mother would buy feed sacks from Rose Maddox. She and her husband lived on a farm just outside Denver, and milked a herd of cattle, hence she had an over supply of feed sack. Mother also bought milk from Rose. I can remember walking to the farm with Mama to get milk.

All our sheets, tea towels and my bloomers were made out of these sacks. Mother made my under pants. She cut old inner tubes into strips for the elastics to keep the bloomers on my skinny frame. There was not much stretch in the rubber and it was a pretty good trick to get the strip of rubber the right length. My bloomers were always either so snug that they cut into my skin or so loose they were always trying to go south while I ran and played.

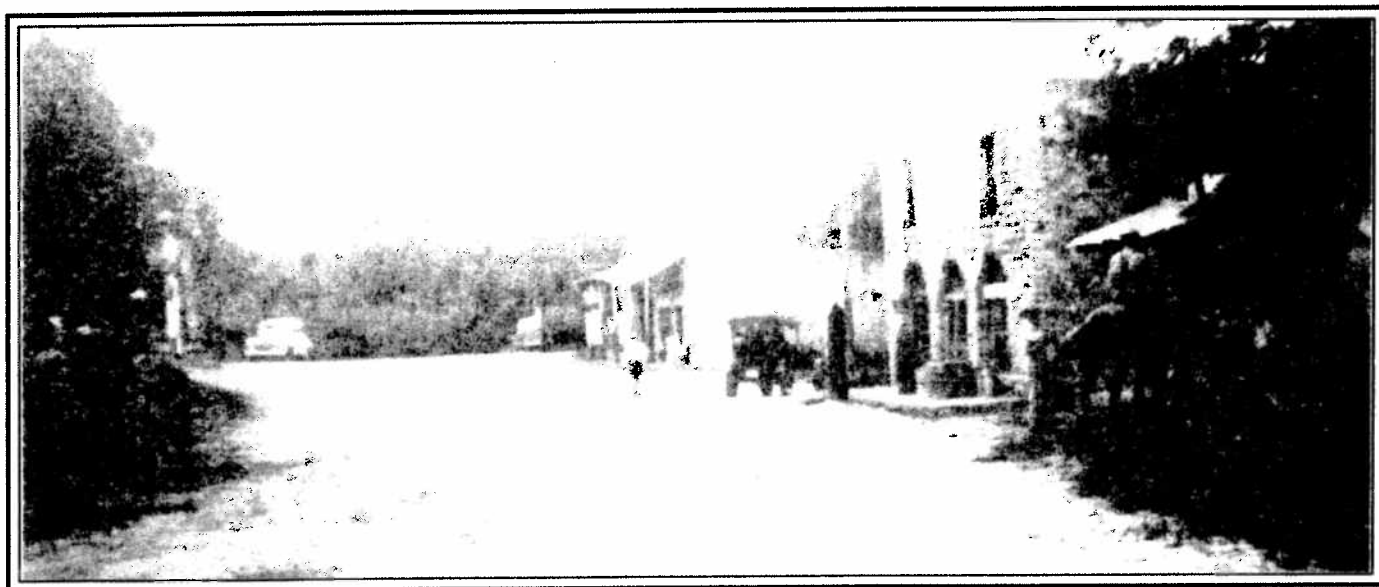
Denver was a thriving place in that day. There were three stores in the town. Mr. Beck's store was also the post office. Grandpa Gaddy said Mr. Beck got his job because he was a democrat. Grandpa belonged to Mr. Bush's political party, and he resented Mr. Beck and his job. Grandpa Gaddy sold gas, fixed flats, sold groceries and soda pop.

The other store was owned by John Dee Seals. According to local gossip, John Dee did a lot of black market buying and selling.

In the summer, we ran wild around Denver. I remember one time Mr. Beck (owner of Beck's Store and the person my mother rented her house from) killed a rooster by ringing its neck and went back in the store leaving his supper flopping on the ground.

Richard and I felt sorry for the red rooster and gave it a proper burial in the soft sand behind Beck's Store. After a while, Mr. Beck called our mother, "Hazel, your children have stolen my rooster." Mama asked us what we had done with Mr. Beck's rooster. We dug that rooster up and gave it to him. His chicken and dumplings may have had some sand in them.

In April of 1945, Daddy came home from the war and we moved to the Douglas Community of Carroll County, Arkansas. My sister, Fleta Aday, now owns this farm. We were glad to leave Denver behind and to have our father with us again.



Denver, Arkansas, a bustling community in the 1940s

