

relatives. Perched precariously on my mother's back, she would carry me over large stretches of the 2 ½ mile trek to her parent's house. We were both often afraid as we were constantly running into snakes and lizards. I couldn't be looking down all the time because the blackberry, plum and grape vines would reach out and grab us. I was a heavy load for a little woman, and mother often rested on fallen trees or stumps. Sometimes she would cry and I would cry along with her.

We easily crossed many small streams on our way, but trouble usually started when we got to the bigger stream or creek named Windbank Springs. This is where my presence on Mother's back presented a big problem. She had to walk a log used to cross the creek. There was a long pole for steadying purposes, but sometimes I was so sure that she was going to fall off that I would let out a holler, fasten my hold around her neck and knock her off balance. To quiet me she would threaten that if I didn't stop choking her and crying, she would let the crap shooters, men who sometimes gathered in the woods shooting dice and swearing, get ahold of me. This usually did the trick and I would be very still. Sometimes it was too late though and we would come tumbling down with a splash. Even when it hurt and we both cried, I knew my mother loved me more than life and that she would protect me from everything.

Once over the creek, we arrived in a pasture. The cows and horses didn't scare me as long as they had their heads down grazing, but when they stopped eating and came up to me to smell and lick my legs, there was no way I was going to stay on the ground. I sprang for Mother's back and stayed there until we got to the old, creaky gate and stairs that separated the pasture from the tenant houses and Poppa Everett J. and Mamma Frances Lacy Horton's big house in Silver Hill.

Mother always had a friendly word with the families she would meet on the path and then when she would get up to the well, all of the aunts and uncles would run out to meet us. Each one would pick me up and hug and kiss me.

Poppa and Mama Horton's big house held many mysteries for a small boy. That house became a part of the rituals of my growing up. It was my habit as a toddler to inspect the whole house room by room. I am not sure whether I was looking for something in particular or if it was my way of stalling the climax of my inspection which occurred when I ascended to the attic. There amidst musky old clothes and