Getting a Wife

One day I got to wondering how my mother and dad come to get married. Of course I no the boys and girls was very much acquainted because they all lived nabor to each other. They got to see each other whin they walk those three to seven mile to school together. In good weather they cut across the fields. In bad weather they went around on the roads.

They had an even better oppitunity to get closer to each other at the parties, especial during those days whin there was a party each week and the famleys would go together from house to house. There was all way sodie pop, ice tea, lemonade and for the grown up folks, beer, wine and whiskey. There was all way food too—bolonie, sandwich, fried chicken, potato salad and plenty cookies and cakes. And music. There was all way music. Uncle Devil Horse, my dad-dad, and grandmother brother, could really play the gitar and banjo. He would play for all the parties in and around the community, both black and white.

At those parties there was all way somebody there or came by to play the gitar or banjo, piano, or just beat on a pan or bucket. Those parties were not only an oppitunity for the boys and girls to get together but men and women who may not no each other might drop by for a good time. There was never no problum knowing whin the party was or where, especial when Uncle Devil Horse were going to be playing.

Kids, unless I share these stories with you, you would never know how much of a part Uncle Devil Horse and my father play in the history of this community. I feel my dad was a great asset to the community and could have been better if the chance or times was right.

Another way the boys got to see the girls was they would drop by the field where the girls would be chopping or picking
cotton. The courting some time would get plenty serious in the cotton patch or corn patch. Once the boys and girls could figger out how to get away from there parent, they would say, Dad or Mom, I'm going to the other end and chop or pick my way back.

Whin I ask my mom how or why she marrie dad, she said, My and his famley were picking cotton and Eddie, your father, came through the cotton field one day. He seen me and talk to me and the others. And he was a good look man. He told me he was going to marrie me. He went and ask my father and mother for me and we got married.

Like most men in those days he went directly to the source. That was the mother and father. If they saw a girl they want, they chase until they got her or went to the mother and father. They ask and they got.

My dad did not talk much, but he was a handsome man and he had his own cotton crop. My dad was six when his dad died at an early age and his mother move to town. My dad refuse to move with his famley but moved in with his mother brother, Uncle Ronney. He work the fields follering in the footsteps of his grandparents, Andy Drake and Mose Stimpson. He learn all he could about farm animals, and planting of seed. In other word, dad was a rare type of young man. He learn about how many eggs a chickin layed before she would set and how long it take a stalk of corn to bear a ear of corn to eat. So he must've been doing something pleasing to Ray Haggard because at the age of twelve, he heard Mr. Ray say, Do you think you can handle a crop of cotton?

Yes, Sir.

Well, you are twelve and I am going to give you twelve acres of cotton on halves.

Thank you, Sir. You won't be sorrowful about it.

It stand to reason that dad was looked up to because he become a share cropper at age twelve and then stuck with it.
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He was well known as the only black share cropper, young or old, at that time. The rest was day laborers.

So at nineteen he was a good look man and well thought of by white and black. My mother say, It had been very hot in the cotton field, dragging that sack, and this man came by and I no him because we were all nabors. I was a little shy but I think I was glad. And whin he told me he was going to marrie me, it did both scare me and kinder made me feel good. First thing I thought about, I would be able to leave home like all girl wish. And I would be able to get out of the cotton patch. Well, I was able to leave home, but I never got out of the cotton patch.

At the time dad married my mom there was four girls at her home, Mother being not the oldest but the largest of the four. Dad pick her. Times were hard. There were no money and mom father was glad to get rid of a girl especial to some one who had a job and was a worker.

As I recall the wedding of my Aunt Senie, my mother sister, was on a Sunday morning right after church service. The announcement was made that there's a wedding on this morning. My aunt and my uncle were to walk down the isle together. My grandmother, the bride mother, was seated on the front row. I guess she was there for a reason because my grandmother Birks did not go to church that much. After the preacher, Sister Riddle, finish, the bride and groom walk back down the isle together out the door. There were people line up outside and some type of seeds were thrown at the cuple. It could’ve been wheat seed or beans, maby a little rice. As they walk to the car some man held the door open. The bride and groom got in, drove off while a bunch of us kids was running behind trying to catch up to the cans tied behind the car, as the cans went banging, jumping and bumping down the little road to highway 289. The cuple drove to her husband famley home
as was usual with newly weds. This give strength to the young famley.

Aunt Senie’s the only wedding I can recall. But I think it was customary for cuples to get a license. I no my mom and dad had one. And I no this too. Marriages back then had closer ties and last longer.