
Marie Annette Kelly

Notes

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b. January 11, 1903 in Selma, Grant Parish, Louisiana

d. December 10, 1959 in Ferriday, Concordia Parish, Louisiana

marr. John Wesley Tarver on May 26, 1918 in Jonesville, Catahoula Parish, La

bur. Pine Grove Cemetery, Blade (Rhinehart), LaSalle Parish, Louisiana

Marie Annette Kelly Tarver was my maternal grandmother.

Marie had bone cancer and her leg was removed a couple of years before her death. The cancer already had brought her much pain over several years before she fell from where she was riding on the back of grandpa's flatbed truck. Soon after the accident, the doctors took her leg just above the knee.

Mama, who was in the back of the truck with her mama, said her daddy was driving up near Manifest, and aunt PeeWee, who was pregnant at the time, was in the front with him. Grandma had given PeeWee the passenger seat so she could ride more comfortably. Grandpa had built wide boards on each side of the truck bed on which to haul his cross ties, or to let folks sit when riding in the back. Mama said grandma was sitting on the passenger side, facing the front of the truck, when another truck came over the hill and grandpa had to swerve to miss the truck. The sudden swerve caused grandma to fall from her perch. She lived another two years, but suffered with a great deal of pain, both before and after her leg was amputated. The doctors treated her with morphine until her death.

Written in her diary on October 19, 1956: "Friday, 1956. We quilted again today and Dad worked on the church house. My leg hurts me tonite. Dear Lord are you going to heal me? Please give me more faith."

Although I was very young when grandma died, I can recall distinctly sitting on the bed with her, in the place where her leg would have been had it not been amputated. Grandpa placed a straight back chair upside down on the bed with a pillow on the chair for her to rest against and I would sit in front of her for her to brush my hair. I recall her braiding her own long, silver hair into two braids and wrapping the braids on her head. She had an old treadle singer sewing machine in the front bedroom of the house and the largest pine cones I've ever seen were stacked on it. She hurt so badly in the months before her death that she complained even her hair hurt her. Mama said she got so bad they had to cut her long silver hair close to her head and grandma cried.

Grandma and grandpa lived behind the levee in Ferriday, Concordia Parish, Louisiana, with Lake Concordia almost in their backyard. We used to fish and swim there. We'd dig worms out back of grandpa's house and go down to the lake to catch our supper. My older sister, Elsie, would swim from one bank to the other ... she was about the best swimmer I've ever known. We also spent a great deal of time playing on the levee. We'd tear old cardboard boxes into makeshift sleds and slide from the top down to the gravel of the road behind the levee.

Marie's parents, Lizzie and John Kelly, lived further down the road from them, in a house with cherries on the kitchen wallpaper. We had many fish fries up at grandma Lizzie's with family and all the folks from the church grandpa pastored back there. The church sat almost in grandma Lizzie's front yard. Grandpa Kelly, who was about the meanest man living, would walk the short distance down to grandma Marie's to share their morning coffee on the front porch most mornings. For awhile, uncle Jay and aunt PeeWee lived in a house across the street from grandma and grandpa, and aunt Gladys and uncle Woodrow had a small trailer parked in the yard between uncle Jay's place and grandpa's.

I remember visiting once when someone brought a box of hand-me-down clothes to Patsy Joy, one of aunt Gladys' girls. Patsy and I were in the tiny trailer and Patsy was trying on the dresses. There was a full-length mirror attached to the door going from the living area to the bedroom. You had to close the door to use the mirror. Patsy had both hands on her hips, with her back to the mirror. She was turning from side to side to see how she looked from behind in the mirror. "I look like sh#, don't I?" she abruptly announced. Patsy is about my brother Adrian's age, so she couldn't have been more than six or seven at the time. She would have gotten her mouth washed out with soap if anyone other than I had heard her. We went on back to the yard where she sat with her legs spread before her and filled the skirt tail of her 'new' dress with dirt as we dug for worms.

When I was small, daddy built a house behind the levee too. My youngest brother, Byron, was born (at Pankey Clinic in Ferriday) while we lived back there. One of my earliest memories is when Daddy found work over the levee in Ferriday. I

pulled my small red wagon, with my bottle and blanket, across the levee and into town looking for him. The family was already searching for me when the local police brought me home.

So many times I've heard one or another of my aunts or uncles say they could not recall seeing Grandma Marie angry over anything. I've heard her siblings call her an angel on so many occasions. She left a diary, which currently is in the keeping of her youngest daughter, Maxine Tarver Weatherly. I have xeroxed all the pages and hope to transcribe it. A notation from October 8, 1956: "... Old man Lott shot uncle Jack's cow today. The devil sure worked for awhile. Some people sure need a lot of grace." [uncle Jack Matthews] That was how grandma took even the worst kind of news. No doubt, she had a good heart.

Grandma is buried between grandpa Johnny and her daddy, grandpa Kelly, at the Pine Grove Cemetery out at Blade (near Rhinehart) in LaSalle Parish. I've visited their graves so many times over the years. My daddy, Eleazar Cirilo, and my brother, Adrian, are now buried there near their graves. Other family members graves can be found here too. One of the men serving on the cemetery committee, Cecil Clark, is married to one of aunt Gladys's daughters, my cousin Jane Joy Clark.
