

William Randall (Bill) Bassett Remembers:

I remember a big, white, two-story house with green shutters and a black tin roof sitting on top of a tree-shaded hill. I remember tall windows on the front that you could walk through in the summertime. I remember shutters that you actually could open and close.

I remember a big front porch, a front yard that was a flower garden, enclosed by a white picket fence. I remember a concrete walkway leading through the garden to the front gate. I remember playing hopscotch and other games on the walk. I remember a circular driveway in front of the gate. I remember an oak grove beside the driveway where the grandchildren would run, climb trees, play hide-and-seek, fall and scrape their knees. I remember bee stings.

I remember the long, red clay gravel driveway from the house to the highway, with cotton fields on each side. The driveway seemed like it was at least a mile long. I remember walking to the mailbox at the end of the driveway to get the mail.

I remember riding horses with the other grandchildren from the house to the mailbox. I remember you could hardly get the horses to move on the way to the mailbox, but on the return trip you couldn't stop them until they reached the barn in back of the house.

I remember the barns and other buildings behind the house -- lined up on either side of what looked like the main street of an old western town. On either side were barns, tractor sheds, corn cribs and even an old dusty office -- filled with cobwebs. I remember the office had an old crank telephone, with a separate ear piece, which the grandchildren played with for hours.

I remember farm machinery and bright green and yellow John Deere tractors. I remember a gas pump with a glass cylinder at the top, which was filled from an underground tank, and then drained by gravity through a hose to the fuel tanks of the farm equipment.

I remember the scuppernong arbor west of the house. I remember picking scuppernong grapes and eating them from the vine. I remember they had a strong taste.

I remember the pig pen back of the barn, and the pigs always caked in mud, always grunting, always eating, and constantly wallowing in the mud.

I remember the four tall chimneys, two on either side of the house, with attached lightening rods that looked like twisted ribbons. I remember the big dining room and the tremendous round (or oval) table which must have seated twenty people. I remember light switches with little wheels you twisted to turn the lights on. I remember two separate wires that led from the light switches up the wall and across the ceiling to a drop fixture.

I remember the big, wide central hallway and the wide, ornate wooden staircase that wrapped around the back of the hallway and led to the second floor bedrooms. I remember an old muzzle loading Civil War rifle with a bayonet that was always in the second floor hallway. I remember one of the four bedrooms had a trap door in the ceiling, behind which lay "Mr. Fling Down's" bones. I never lingered long in that room.

I remember Grandmama's and Papa's room, which was next to the only bathroom in the house. When you went to the bathroom, you always

had to peek in their room. I remember the bed had a tremendous, ornate, wooden carved headboard which must have been ten feet high. I remember Papa's roll top desk always filled with important papers. I remember Papa's silver white hair, his stern face, his round, rimless glasses, his white dress shirt, his black string bow tie, and his walking cane. He commanded great respect - especially from the grandchildren.

I remember Grandmama and her comforting smile. I especially remember her at Christmastime in front of the giant Christmas tree, giving out presents to each of her grandchildren.

I remember the stories I heard from or about my uncles. Most of them I remember were about my Uncle Phillip, who was living at the house during a good portion of my childhood. One story was about how he and a friend used to stop his car on the highway, turn it over in the ditch and lie beside it pretending to be in an accident. After they attracted a crowd, they would jump up, turn the car over, jump in and drive off.

Another story involved wrestling matches between Uncle Phillip and my dad (Uncle Julian) to see who was the strongest. This story was from farmhands who originally worked at Carol Villa but later worked for my dad. As they told it, my dad always won.

Finally, I remember sweltering, hot summer days and cold, cold home made ice cream - from a hand cranked six quart freezer, cranked by the grandchildren, each taking their turn. And I remember lots and lots of grandchildren, from toddlers to teenagers, all having a wonderful time. ☺