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CHAPTER VII

JOSEPH EDWARDS FERGUSON

My Grandfather, Joseph Edwards Ferguson was born 27 Nov 1855, in Chester Co., SC, near the town of Richburg. He was the fourth of six children of James Lawrence Ferguson and his second wife, Mary Ann Edwards Ferguson.

He was only 11 ½ months old when his parents began their trip to AR. I know very little about his youth. He was nine years old when his father was captured by Union soldiers at their home, so he grew to young manhood without a father present, helping his mother run the farm. He must have felt a deep responsibility as "the man of the house", more especially so from 1866 on, when his elderly aunts, Peggy Kelsey and Joannah, as well as Peggy's daughter Eleanor moved in with his mother.

Joseph joined Enon Baptist Church at Rye, AR on 23 Jul 1869, when he was 13 years old. The church minutes record the following items indicating his activities:

- May 1875- J. E. Ferguson appointed to a committee
- 11 Nov 1876 - J. E. Ferguson - Clerk
- 18 Jul 1877 - J. E. Ferguson-delegate to State Convention
- 1878 - Joseph accused of participating in plays
- August 1878 - Joseph commissioned to finish the church.
- 1880 - Joseph appointed to committee on obituaries
- 1896 - Dorcus Ophelia-Ferguson membership moved from Toledo, AR church.
- 1896 - J. E. and wife given letter of dismissal

The item about J. E. being accused of participating in plays is interesting. During that time it was considered sinful to have anything to do with the theater. I don't know what the theological basis for this was, but Delane found it was also true when her ancestor, Victor Pepin, organized his circus in Philadelphia. Many years later when I was a lad and Grandpa Joseph was living in our home, I had to "slip" out to go to the Saturday matinees at the movies because he called the movies "the house of the devil!" In some respects, perusing the movies available today, I must agree with him!

Most of his life was spent as a farmer but he also served several periods as a storekeeper and as a teacher. He also apparently was always looking for other ways to supplement his income. For example, in January 1911, he received a diploma for General Brokerage and Insurance from the National Coop Realty Co. I will relate some of his other schemes later in the chapter.

Polly Ann Ferguson, the mother of Joseph, died in August of 1893. Joseph was her only child who still lived at her home and was unmarried.

When Joseph married Dorcus Ophelia Gallion on 18 Sep 1895, he was nearly 40 years of age.

On 2 Sep 1896, Ophelia purchased a farm near New Edinburg, AR with money her father, Jonas Gallion, provided. Subsequently, Jonas moved in and lived there until his death in 1916.

Joseph and Ophelia had three children:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Birth</u>	<u>Died</u>
Fay Ivan	10 Dec 1896	8 May 1968

Dewey Griffin
Ophie Ruth

9 Jun 1898
18 Oct 1909

6 Jul 1963
16 June 1985

Ophelia Gallion Ferguson died 5 Nov 1909 of complications from the birth of Ophie Ruth. Because the property was in the name of Ophelia, Joseph had to apply to the court for guardianship of his minor children.

Some time shortly after the death of Ophelia, Nola (Nolie) Varnell, an unmarried lady and distant cousin of Joseph moved in with them to manage the home and help rear the children. She was 28 years old at the time. I knew her as "Aunt Nolie" and did not discover her correct name and identity until I began researching the family history.

Aunt Nolie remained with the family until her marriage, at the age of 34, to Baxter Mosely at Joseph's home on 17 Nov 1915.

Fay and Dewey viewed Aunt Nolie as a sister and remained close to her throughout their lives. We visited her often and I spent parts of two summers with her on the farm near New Edinburg.

Nola was the daughter of William King Varnell and Rebecca A. Ashcraft. Rebecca was the daughter of Mortan Ashcraft who was the son of Joel Ashcraft and Martha (Patsy) Ferguson. All of this makes her a 3rd cousin of Joseph. She and Baxter had two daughters whom I have always considered as cousins.

After Aunt Nolie's marriage, Ophie Ruth went to live with her Aunt "Pink", the sister of Joseph's wife, Ophelia. Her real name was Frances A. Gallion, and her family and friends called her either "Fannie" or "Pink". I've never been able to determine the origin of ""Pink".

Aunt Pink married Wiley T. Harlow, a veteran of the Civil War. He died 20 Jul 1926, and Aunt Pink applied for a widows pension on 19 Aug 1926.

On 15 Dec 1915, Joseph, along with his sons, Fay and Dewey, enrolled at Tyler Commercial College at Tyler, TX. On 27 Jun 1916, he was awarded a diploma in Cotton Classing. For the reader who doesn't understand the term, cotton classing is the grading of cotton fibers based on the length of the fibers, color, cleanliness, etc. Fay and Dewey were awarded diplomas in Stenotypewriting and Bookkeeping.

Joseph, Fay, and Dewey returned home to New Edinburg. Fay immediately found work at I. E. Moore, General Merchant, in Rison, AR, serving as a general clerk at \$35 per month.

Jonas Gallion died 3 Nov 1916. Shortly before his death, he took Fay to the smoke house where he dug up some fruit jars full of gold coins, which he had probably hidden during the Civil War. He divided them 4 ways, with equal shares going to Fay, Dewey, Ophie, and Aunt Pink acting now as Ophie's guardian. The shares were \$700.00 each. Fay purchased Postal Savings Bonds with his share, and later used the money for the down payment on his first home.

On 11 Dec 1916, Joseph petitioned the court to sell the farm which was still in guardianship for Ophie who was still a minor. The court agreed. The 80 acre farm was sold for \$1100, and each of the three children were awarded \$366.66.

During 1917 and 1918, Joseph and Dewey farmed near Emmett, AR. Emmett is a long way from their former home in New Edinburg, and the only reason I can imagine that they went there is that Joseph's nephew, Lawrence Ferguson, son of Walter, was farming nearby close to Hope, AR.

In 1919, Joseph was in Benton, AR, 25 miles south of Little Rock on what is now I-30. What exactly he was doing there is not known, but many years later, my Mother told me that he had been seriously courting a lady there, but the relationship did not develop into marriage.

In late 1919, Joseph went to live with his sister-in-law, Aunt Pink, her husband Wiley Harlow, and Ophie, on their farm near Rison, AR.

During his years there, he raised vegetable "settings" on contract for several nursery firms, as well as helping with the regular farming.

Sometime prior to Uncle Wiley's death on 20 Jul 1926, a "Miss Rosa" also lived with them. She was a sister of Charles Hobson who had married Aunt Pink's sister, Florence. I remember her as a rather eccentric lady, (of course I was quite young, and my "memory" is probably from things I was told.) Apparently she developed dementia since I was recently told by Mrs. Frank Overstreet that they had to lock her in her room to keep her from wandering away. During her last days, women from the local church Missionary Society sat with her to relieve Aunt Pink.

On 12 Dec 1929 Aunt Pink sold the farm and she, Joseph and Ophie moved to a rent house in Rison, AR. The farm contained 188 acres and sold for \$2000.

During the depths of the Great Depression in 1932 Joseph and Aunt Pink moved to Little Rock to live with us. Mother was quite unhappy about it, but there was nothing else to do. Joseph would occasionally spend a few weeks with Dewey in Pine Bluff. Our home had only two bedrooms and one bath. Aunt Pink and Grandpa occupied one bedroom, while my sister, Martha, and I occupied the other, and Mother and Daddy slept on a "day-bed" in the dining room.

By this time, Grandpa was 77 years old and quite feeble and mostly read in his room or on the swing on the front porch. He was quite a student of the Bible. However he had not lost his dreams of money-making ventures. At one time he proposed raising mushrooms under the house where it was dark. Mother shot that idea down fast. Next he proposed growing frogs, for frog legs, under the house. The reaction to that idea just about stopped him from dreaming of fortunes.

Among his papers were advertisements for formulas for cold drinks of various flavor, an "Encyclopedia of Business Opportunities and Trade Secrets" in 3 volumes. Also found was an "Operatives Identification" card #B597 dated 9 Nov 1928, from Continental Secret Service System, along with a badge, from Waukegan, IL. The fee for membership was \$2.00 and included reports, fingerprint lessons and special instructions. It is not known how (or if) the credentials were ever used.

At some time prior to moving into our home in Little Rock in 1932, Grandpa borrowed \$100 from his nephew Jewell Brewster (son of Aunt Mollie) to buy a popcorn machine which was installed on main street of Rison. The venture failed and he had not repaid Jewell the money. Shortly before his death, Joseph asked Fay to please repay Jewell for him. Fay did so in 1938, and I was told that Jewell wept, saying he was flat broke and hadn't known where his next nickel would come from.

Joseph died in our home 29 Jun 1937. The day prior to his death he was suffering with diarrhea and called me to the bathroom to help him get his trousers and suspenders back up. At that time he said, "James, I am going to die". Needless to say, I was very upset, because I truly loved him. He was a kind and gentle man. He was 82 years old.

Joseph left no will and owned no property so there was no probate or estate sale from which we can glean information about him.

Almost immediately after his death, Aunt Pink entered the Confederate Veterans Home in the small community of Sweet Home, on the outskirts of Little Rock. She was happy there among her peers. We visited her often. She died in 1943 after I had left home.

In many respects, what I have written of my Grandfather makes him seem to be an aimless "dreamer" who never achieved his potential, and perhaps that is true. But when I review the trials of his life, losing his father at age 9, being reared by his mother and elderly aunts and the loss of his wife at an early age, he probably achieved all that we could expect of him. He lived a quiet life devoted to his family, was kind, generous, patient and God-fearing. What more is required to be remembered as a fine person?

I cannot leave this chapter without recalling some amusing stories about some of these people.

Jonas Gallion enjoyed a good drink of "white lightening". He enjoyed it so much, that when he went to town in the fall to sell his cotton, someone had to go with him for fear that he might imbibe a little too much and lose the years cotton earnings.

Once while sitting by the fireplace on a cold winter's day, he and an old crony were having a nip or two, and spending the afternoon entertaining each other with fabulous stories. Jonas reached into the fire and picked up a live ember and was rolling it around in his hand. He said to the crony, "See, I can mesmerize myself; this ember won't burn me - it doesn't hurt". Of course he had the hard, calloused hands of a farmer. The crony leaned over and clamped his hands over the one in which Jonas had the ember and shouted, "Now, by God, let's see you mesmerize yourself"! Uncle Dewey used to roar with laughter when he would tell this story about his grandfather.

While Aunt Pink lived with us, it was apparent, even to my sister, Martha, and me that she was shall we say, senile, eccentric, and nosey. She drove Mother to distraction!

One hot summer afternoon she wandered in to our next door neighbor's house. Finding no one at home, she observed that the lady had a ham baking in the oven. Aunt Pink decided that the oven temperature was not high enough to properly cook that ham, so she increased the heat. I saw her come out of the house but thought nothing of it at the time. Some time later, Mother observed smoke coming from the neighbor's house, and knowing that the lady was not home, she called the fire department. Needless to say, Mother was furious as the cause unfolded.

Aunt Pink "dipped" snuff. Often there would be a small rivulet of snuff juice running out of the corner of her mouth. One afternoon, Mother was preparing spaghetti and meat balls for supper. Aunt Pink wandered into the kitchen, and checking things out, lifted the lid off of the pot and bent over to inspect the content more closely - and you guessed it - a rivulet of snuff juice dropped into the pot. I told Martha, but we didn't tell Mother. At the supper table, Martha and I could hardly contain our mirth. Of course, we decided not to partake, and because of our unruliness, we were excused from the table without supper. Better to go to bed hungry than to eat snuff seasoned spaghetti!

At another supper experience, we were having collard greens. Aunt Pink somehow got a leaf plastered on the side of her face, and was totally oblivious to its presence. Again, Martha and I could not contain our mirth and were excused from the table.

The following paragraphs will tell something of Joseph's sisters and brother.

Little is known of his sister, Margaret Elizabeth Emily Jane. The minutes of Enon Baptist Church show that she joined the church 20 Jun 1868. She married Dan Harper from a well known, early family in the area. In fact the township just north of Hurricane Township where the Ferguson's lived is named Harper Township.

Mary Arabella Josephine Ferguson (Aunt Mollie) was born 5 Jan 1853 in SC. As previously related, she was nearly four years old when her parents began their trip to AR. She married James Garvin Brewster on 25 Nov 1869. They had nine children who survived past childhood. The reader will recall from the "Dear Sister" letter in Chapter VI, that her mother, Polly Ann, indicated that Garvin was planning to move. They moved in 1902 from Pansy, AR to the outskirts of Fordyce, AR, because the children could receive a better education in the schools of Dallas Co. The distance between their old and new homes is about 20 miles on a straight line, but somewhat further by road.

Uncle Garvin was a good manager. In their original community of Pansy, he had owned a cotton gin and commissary, and had been the Postmaster at Pansy, as well as a farmer.

At Fordyce, they became pillars of their community. Uncle Garvin was completely organized and was known as a modern farmer, utilizing all of the latest techniques.

Joseph and Aunt Mollie remained close to each other throughout their lives. We visited the Brewsters often and I remember them as kindly, loving people. They were both of small stature, and Uncle Garvin wore a snow white goatee. Their home was of the typical rural southern "dog trot" design style. It had a large front porch with an open hallway from front to back with rooms on either side. I particularly remember the kitchen (why not? aren't small lads always hungry?) It was at the rear of the house on the right side of the center hall. It contained a marvelous, huge, round table on which was a permanently mounted "lazy susan" that was just enough smaller than the table so that the diners had plenty of room for plates, glasses, etc. No need to ask someone to pass the gravy - just turn the lazy susan and it appeared at your place! Wonderful!

I remember spending a few days with them and following behind as "Uncle" Jewell plowed with a mule. I was looking for Indian arrowheads, which he had often found while plowing. I found just one.

Jewell was full of fun and nice to be with. I remember on one visit, he gave me a green apple to eat. Mother immediately told me not to eat that green apple. "No problem", said Jewell, "Here's a better one!"

Walter Brewster, grandson of Aunt Mollie, (he called her "Mimmy") spent a number of summers with his grandparents in his youth. Aunt Mollie told him many stories about her family history, their trip to AR, and many other things. She must have inspired a deep and lasting curiosity in him, because he not only kept notes of her stories, but has continued throughout his life researching genealogy and history. Aunt Mollie died 20 Mar 1938, at the age of 85. We attended her funeral.

Walter Francis Ferguson was the first of the children of James Lawrence and Polly Ann, to be born in AR on 8 Jun 1859. He married Hattie Elizabeth Yates in 1883. They had twelve children.

I recall seeing Uncle Walter on only one occasion as a child. They lived near Bearden, AR. I really didn't know anything about his family, except his eleventh child, Waylon Christopher (Chris), who lived in Little Rock for a time while I was in high school. He had a daughter, Betty, who was about my age. I remember him giving me a battery operated railroad brakeman's signal light when I was in Scouting. He had used it for a time in S. E. AR while working for a short line rail road.

Chris and I crossed paths again in 1956 when we both lived in Dallas. At the time, Chris was the Administrator for the Dallas office of the Small Business Association. I recall on one visit that he showed me a long roll of "butcher" paper on which he had recorded the Ferguson genealogy. I was totally uninterested at the time (much to my later regret) and all I remember about it was a tale that our original immigrant ancestor was a Scot who was one of three brothers who came together to America. They each had identical gold signet rings, and were supposed to have been "Robin Hoods" in Scotland. 20 years later when I became interested, Chris had died. I tried contacting his widow, who was quite old by that time, and his daughter, to see if they had any of his old papers, but I was never able to get together with them.

I know now that the story was not accurate, but as I did research, I did find a book about three Ferguson brothers who came to America, but their arrival was much later than that of our ancestors.

Several of Uncle Walter's sons moved to Dade Co., FL about 1922 [NOTE: someone drew a line through Dade Co. Also, typed in the margin is: Webster Stanton Ferguson moved to St. Petersburg, Pinellas Co., FL. Lawrence Sumner Ferguson moved to rural Hernando/Pasco Co., FL.] I recall Grandpa Joseph corresponding with Walter while he was in FL visiting his sons and grandchildren. I have recently corresponded with Lawrence Sumner Ferguson III, who is a great grandson of Walter. Larry III lives in Jacksonville, FL [NOTE: someone drew a line through "Jacksonville" and typed above it: "Lake City, FL. He is living in Tallahassee, Leon Co., FL 2007.] Walter died 10 Oct 1935.

Ida Ferguson was born in AR in 1861. She married John C. McEllhenney, and died 10 Oct 1896. She had two daughters. Nora was born 4 Mar 1888, and died 1 Aug 1895. I have no records for the other daughter, May.

Ida C. McEllhenney is buried in Union Cemetery Rye, AR., near her mother Polly Ann Ferguson.