

Chapter 6 - Marjorie Waugh

Marjorie Waugh was six in 1944, when she and her siblings were rescued by a social worker and taken to the Gertrude Ramey Home in Catlettsburg.

Her father, was Albert Waugh.

"Only once my father came to see me. I was married then. He spent the night with us and during the visit, he bragged about all he had, which was nothing as it turned out. I came to know he lived in an old trailer in Way Cross, Georgia. He was a stranger to me, because it was the first time I'd seen him since he abandoned our mother and us, his six children." Marjorie laughed nervously, "When he died, for reasons still unclear to me, Darlene, Ralph and Ronnie, who had never even seen him because he left our mother when she was pregnant with Ronnie, and I decided to attend his funeral in Georgia. During the service, Ronnie began to sob, I turned to comfort him, but all I could seem to do was to speak the truth, I patted his shoulder and whispered, "This man is a stranger to us."

Mother's second husband.

"I rode the city bus to school from the Ramey Home. One afternoon when I got on, I was surprised to see my mother on the bus, because I did not often see her. She introduced me to her new friend, Forest Roberts who sat beside her. "We're getting married," she said. "That was it. That was my introduction to her second husband, who would become my worst nemesis. She didn't say what her plans were for us, her children and I got off the bus at my stop and waved goodbye thinking I might never see my mother again. Perhaps it was that chance meeting on the bus, when Forest made a decision for her, that it was he who stipulated after meeting me, he wanted us girls to come to live with them.

Later his plans were made clear when she sent for us. At first, after she gathered us up, we were taken to Ashland where I stayed with my grandparents Skaggs on Donta Road, and the others lived with Mother and Forrest in his mother's house. For two years we kept with this arrangement until Forest re-enlisted and the Army stationed him at Fort Mead in Baltimore; we were all moved to Baltimore, Maryland, where I still live.

Everybody seemed to like Forrest, but he frightened me. He had guns, and he was new to me. I didn't want to leave the Ramey Home anyway, a family wanted to adopt me," Marjorie said. "After we moved to Baltimore, right away he was mean to Ronnie and to Ralph; he didn't seem to like them at all. He favored us girls, and soon we began to know he had his reasons.

His stipulation to our mother as we came to understand, she was to take us girls out of the Ramey home before he'd marry her and bring us with her. Ralph and Virginia had already run away from the Fields farm; Ronnie lived with the Walker family in the only home he'd ever known. We were strangers to Ronnie and to each other. I didn't even remember Ronnie until they brought him in and told me he was my little brother. We were six children of a family, we understood that, but our attachment was insecure, we felt tentative and we felt obligated to go along with this plan so Forest would marry our mother. All the while though, we expected to be separated again.

Our mother's new husband started with me about a year after they married, when I was nine years old. It lasted for years. He found every way he could to take advantage of me. He'd pretend to wash my hair while he fondled me. It all ended not long after I found a note in my apron pocket one day. It was in his handwriting. I thought Forrest had written a love note to our mother, so I just tucked it back into the pocket for her. She must have found it, because while he was stationed in Italy, she filed for divorce. It was too late, though, he'd had his way with me and with my sisters. I never told her what he'd done until I was leaving home to be married. I was astonished to have her accuse me for it and of course, I felt hurt because she had known after all what he had done to us.

Before we ever left for Baltimore, in Ashland, Forest reenlisted and achieved the rank of Army Sergeant. Then we moved to Baltimore, where he was stationed. He was gone a lot. But, when he came home, I took my mother's shifts at a local restaurant. I was about age 15, and I took her place so she could be with her husband. But, the pay for my work always went to her. She wouldn't let me keep any part of it. I resented that and I still do. When he was gone on duty, she ran around with other men. Mother was a bit of a drama queen. Marjorie forced a laugh, She'd fake fainting spells and take to her bed for days. Of course, I stayed home from school to take care of Ronnie and Virginia, and I missed my education because I didn't attend enough. Even, after I married and had children of my own, she brought Ronnie and Virginia to me to care for, and disappeared for weeks. Our mother had somehow managed to miss school herself, and was not respectful of education. She was not literate; barely able to count money in her work as a waitress."

Our mother, Magdalena was a comely, buxom woman, with beautiful, blue eyes and black hair. She was barely age fourteen when she took up with Albert Waugh, an old man twice her age who'd been married before with children already, but she married him anyway. He gave her six children in rapid succession, then he deserted her and us, in 1943.

I've heard our Mother resisted her own mother's pleas to stay in Westwood where her family could help with her children. Instead, she moved us into Avondale into an old storefront and took off. It was a slum. I took care of Virginia and Ronnie but I was only six or seven years old. Brother Ralph was nine. He looked in garbage cans for food for us. Mother was gone nearly all the time. When our grandparents came to visit us, somehow they did not notice we were living on our own. But, how could they miss our distressed lives? After we were taken to the Ramey home, they came to see us. They lamented our lives at the Ramey Home, but we girls were eating regular and had warm, clean beds. One day they told they saw our Mother walking along the street. When they stopped and offered to drive her to see us, she said,

"No, I am going to the movies and relax." This was hurtful. I wish they hadn't told me.

As she matured, our older sister Darlene became beautiful like mother, with the same blue eyes and dark hair. She married young too, like our mother had; it was never any good for her.

Forrest had been assigned to Germany, and we were ready to leave for Germany; Darlene didn't want to go, so she went back to Ashland to marry Charles Fairchild, just to get away from Forest. Then she left Charles Fairchild, and had another child with somebody else, then went back to Charles. When our mother became sick, Darlene took care of her though. Darlene never seemed to blame our mother for our difficult lives. She has a lighter view of her life. Mother died of emphysema in 1983. Now, Darlene is struggling with lung cancer.

Our mother grew up in a large family of thirteen children. She was third from the younger, Alberta. We called her Aunt Bert. Next was Minnie and Magdalena, then Malcolm. Our mother seemed starved for attention and often performed in some way to get it. But, so was I as a child and all of us were. We were little children who'd had to act like adults too early. We never got to be children. I was age forty-three when my mother first said, 'I love you.' I can't remember why she said it, and I felt astonished to hear her say it.

Mother just couldn't cope. It may be true our mother asked the Ramey home to come and get us, but it might have been a neighbor who reported six children virtually living alone. When authorities came for us, I felt frightened, so I pushed Virginia and Ronnie under the bed. Ralph talked us into coming out because he needed help. He was desperate. But, Miss Ramey was good to us at the Ramey Home. After the initial shock of having our hair cut to get rid of head lice, I climbed on the school bus for first grade wearing a little white bonnet, which I didn't take off until my hair grew back. I learned to play the piano, and I came to know that I loved babies. I helped take care of the babies in the nursery, and at night when my little sister, Phyllis began to cry, I'd put her in my bed to sleep. After I married a fine Irish man named Louis Hurley, I had six children of my own. I still love children.

In 1946, after mother married Forest, they came and took us away from the Ramey Home. I pulled back and wanted to stay where I felt secure. After all we had been through in our mother's care, the Ramey home was a safe place. So, when they drove us over to Donta Road, to where Grandpa Skaggs lived, I ran into my Aunt Bert's house, refused to come out and she let me stay with her while the others went to live with mother and Forest. I refused to leave Aunt Bert's until we moved to Baltimore with Forest and mother. I felt sad and confused again at this move.

Forrest had never been married before he met our mother. After he mustered out of his first tour of Army service, he'd moved to Ashland, Kentucky to work cooking in a restaurant where he met our mother, Magdalena. Forest was from Mount Sterling in Montgomery County. His mother, Catherine Plick Roberts later moved to Ashland too. We stayed with her sometimes in her big house.

Ralph is still unsettled about our mother's mistreatment of us, and even more so about his life with the Fields family. I have reconciled myself, and do not carry the heartache Ralph harbors. Ralph loved us and tried his best to protect us. Of course, he bore the worst part; the frustration as the older child, and he was only nine years old, trying to find food for his five little brothers and sisters; then later Miss Ramey sent Ralph to the Fields farm, in Greenup where he was punished in unspeakable ways, as was our little sister, Virginia who lost the sight in one of her eyes after she was taken there too.

By the time I had a home of my own, our mother had married a third time to Harold W. Jones. After Mr. Jones died, mother was in failing health with emphysema. Before she died in 1983, I asked her to come and stay with me, but she refused. Mother was not always kind. She could be cruel, but she was my mother. I wanted to honor her, and I remained respectful. She seemed absent emotionally though, from me and all of us her children. She never explained anything to us, nor had anything to do with her grandchildren. She never became acquainted with my children.

During the two years after we left the Ramey Home, and before we moved to Baltimore, 1946-1948, we lived next door to the Donta Farm for which the road is named. We bought our milk, eggs and butter from Mrs. Donta. Ronnie was four years old when we went there to play, and fell out of her barn loft, broke his leg.

We were usually without supervision except in a general way, and we were used to taking care of ourselves.

Our grandmother Angie Skaggs ran a small grocery store near the Donta farm. She was short and stocky and as we got to know her, we learned she was stern. She was the business end of the family.

Grandfather, Landon Skaggs ran a grist mill. He was tall and thin and very kind to us. As he grew older, and frail, I sat up with him to keep the fire going, and I'd comb his hair. He loved root beer soda. Behind them, on another lot, Aunt Alberta Skaggs-Akers lived with her family.

- Marjorie Waugh Hurley December 22, 2005 -

Forrest had brothers: Kenny Roberts who had a son also named Kenneth and Arnold/Ronald another elder brother. Catherine Plick Roberts is buried at Rose lawn cemetery near Ashland and the Skaggs are buried near Donta Road, but we are unable to find the Waugh grandparents.

Marjorie encouraged me to call her younger sister, Virginia.