



THE BURKETT FAMILY

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At the Reunion Registration Table - June 21, 1997

My Cousin Herman -

by Oliver Webb

Like many of our 26 first cousins, Herman was born in the Dallas Cotton Mill Village community of Huntsville, Alabama. While I don't remember the address where he was born, I don't remember him living anywhere other than 400 McKinley Avenue during his "growing up" years. The house is gone now having made way for a highway but I remember spending many hours there.

His father was G. H. "Jack" Chisholm and his mother was Ara HESSIE Burkett. He had two sisters, Loretta, now Mrs. Carlos Patterson, and Barbara Ann who died tragically at the age of 22. The grandparents on his mother's side were Almon Lee Burkett and Nancy Caldonia Bogle Burkett.

He was two years and three months older than I was but we spent a lot of time together in those early years before my mother remarried and moved from Huntsville when I was in the 5th grade.

Herman's father was not only an excellent machinist at the cotton mill but could fix almost anything mechanical including cars. And he also worked on motorcycles after hours and on weekends. (He also rode them.) The Indian motorcycle was the one Uncle Jack worked on the most and when he would take the motor out of one to work on it,

Herman Hazel Chisholm "Chiz"

***Born March 31, 1924
in
Huntsville, Alabama***

***Died May 24, 1998
in
Huntsville, Alabama***

Herman and I would push it up a small hill and then jump on and coast down — a lot of sweat for such a short ride. But we had fun. By being associated with the Indian motorcycle people, Uncle Jack was able to buy Herman an Indian bicycle which was "top of the line" in those days. Herman was pretty protective of it and didn't let everybody ride it but he did let me ride it anytime I wanted.

Herman served in the Army during World War II and, at one point, was stationed on the Ascension Islands. After he got out of the Army, I remember one time when he worked at Goodyear and I came through Huntsville and he put a set of Goodyear Double Eagle tires on my car — at 'cousin' prices.

But I think he really found his calling when he got into the jewelry business and eventually owned his own store. He was good at it and it was an occupation he really enjoyed. After retirement, he worked part time at a place called Larry's and, when I was in Huntsville for our reunions, I had to go by there on my way downtown. I always looked to see if his car was there and, if it was, I would stop and visit for a few minutes. More than once I timed it around lunch time and we would go over to Mullin's Cafe and get some extra greasy hamburgers, just like we ate when we were kids. (Extra greasy is when they soak the buns in the grease.) May not sound good to some but that's what we got when you could buy them for a nickel! Of course, a nickel back then was a whole lot more than it is today.

Herman was always on the lookout for a job to earn money which ranged from shining shoes at the barber shop to working at the post office during the Christmas rush. In his late teens, he got the nickname Chiz — and that's what he was called by most folks.

But my most memorable event with Chiz was the summer I was 16 and came over to visit from Macon, Georgia. He and Uncle J.B. Burkett decided to take me squirrel hunting just across the state line in Tennessee. We got up early in order to get up there and get into position before daylight. Uncle J.B. loaned me a single barrel shotgun and got us into a triangle pattern sitting down and leaning up against trees. Now I had been gone from Huntsville for several years and had become pretty much of a 'city boy.' And I think they forgot that because they didn't tell me this barrel had been cut off and the gun kicked like a mule. Anyway, just as it was getting daylight, I heard a squirrel bark off to my right so I slowly turned my head until I spotted him. With the squirrel off to my right, I didn't want to twist around to get the shotgun on my right shoulder because I figured the squirrel would see me so I put it on my left shoulder and put my cheek down on the stock to aim. Well, when I pulled the trigger that shotgun bucked and busted my nose and mouth and suddenly I had a mouth and face full of blood. Uncle J.B. yelled, "Get him, sonny boy." I yelled back, "I will as soon as I spit these teeth out!" My whole mouth felt numb and I really felt I had lost all my teeth. Uncle J.B. and Chiz came over to see how I was and, as they came up to me, the squirrel was still running and started to leap from one tree to another. Herman had his shotgun in his left hand and had the shotgun upright on his left shoulder. He had brought along a 22 caliber revolver which he wore in a waist holster. Catching the movement of the squirrel out of the corner of his eye, Chiz whirled around, drew that 22 revolver and fired just as the squirrel was in mid-air between the trees. Uncle J.B. and I turned to look when we realized Chiz had fired and believe me when I say all three of us were absolutely stunned to see that squirrel go limp and fall to the ground!! However, Chiz quickly recovered his composure and moved into a very dramatic spread leg position. He then slowly moved the revolver to his mouth and blew into the end of the barrel as if he was blowing the smoke out and in an exaggerated, movie star manner slowly returned the revolver to the holster and gave me and Uncle J.B. a look that seemed to say, "Did you see what I just did?" Sheer cockiness!! Now I'm standing there, still bleeding, but I said, "Chiz, just don't say one damned word or I'll reload this shotgun!" Well, with that, we all busted out laughing and went over to get the squirrel. If you think we were stunned when we saw the squirrel fall, you should have seen our faces when we picked up the squirrel and realized that Chiz had hit him squarely *in the head, in mid-air, with a 22 revolver!!* I wiped my face with a handkerchief and we stayed on and got some more squirrels but the rest of the trip was just a blur because I couldn't get over that one-in-a-million shot that Chiz had made.

This story has only been told maybe three times — four max — in all these years and, each time, it was told by me. I have always wondered if Chiz was afraid I would still reload

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We wish to acknowledge the contributions made by StellaB 'Nita' Jackson Jaynes in compiling the initial data about our family. Without her efforts, much of the information we have would probably never have been located.

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that shotgun if he told it !! In each persons life there are always a few things which really stand out in their memories —and this is one of mine.

Still another time, at 400 McKinley Avenue, when I was around ten years old and Herman around twelve, he had a blank pistol. Now there were cap pistols and there were blank pistols. A blank pistol actually fires a cartridge, it just doesn't have a bullet in it. And there were two sizes of blank pistols, a small and a large. Herman had the large size. The barrel was held together with a rivet about midway down the barrel. His father, my Uncle Jack, had a workshop in the garage with a lot of tools and Herman had somehow managed to take the gun apart, remove the rivet and put it back together. Don't remember how he held the barrel together but this allowed him to put small nuts and bolts — also from Uncle Jack's garage — down the barrel of that blank pistol. Now don't ask me why we were going to do this, I don't know, but we decided that Herman was going to shoot one of their chickens with this barrel full of nuts and bolts. We weren't smart enough to look ahead and figure out what his mother would do to both of us if we did shoot one of her chickens. But here is how we planned it. The yards in those days all had a fence around them so Herman was going to stand at one corner of the house and I was going to chase the chicken around the house until it came to the corner where he was standing at which time he would shoot. Now this was wintertime and I had on a new sheepskin lined coat which I now know my mother worked long and hard to pay for. So here I come running around the house chasing that old chicken and Herman standing back there waiting. There were a lot of big bushes up next to the house and as I was chasing that chicken it turned a corner and immediately darted in behind those bushes. Well, I didn't see the chicken go into the bushes so I assumed it was still in front of me and kept running and hollering. Herman, of course, is all primed to shoot the first thing that comes around the corner because it would have to be the chicken. Right? You guessed it, I turned that corner and Herman fired that gun before he had time to realize it was me and not the chicken!! Fortunately for me, the gun didn't have that much power but it did have enough to make a few holes in that coat. To this day, I cannot remember what I told my mother as to how I got those holes in that new coat but you can bet it wasn't the truth!!

Earlier, I spoke of Chiz working at Larry's which is really one of the largest gun dealers in the southeast. Larry decided to open a jewelry store in one corner of his building and Chiz worked there. This proved to be ideal for Chiz because he had gotten into skeet shooting in a big way and he could get his supplies at a discount plus there was an indoor range attached to the back of the store. We had talked often of me going with him out to the skeet range but just never got around to it — something I deeply regret.



Chiz
his
high

at
25th

*school reunion,
Rison School, Dallas Village, Huntsville, Alabama,
standing behind Principal C.V. Fain.*

On Sunday, May 24, Chiz went skeet shooting. He came home, got a book, and sat down in his chair. That was where his wife, Sitch, found him when she came home that afternoon — with the book in his lap and a peaceful look on his face.

He was a good cousin and a good friend. I will miss him. ■

Nora Lee Elrod Griffith, 92

McMinnville resident and Warren County native Nora Lee Elrod Griffith, 92, died June 2 at River Park Hospital after a short illness.

A homemaker and a member of Bybee Branch Church of Christ, she was the daughter of John (Gum) Montgomery and Lizzy Love Burkett Elrod, and was preceded in death by her husband, Johnnie Hobert Griffith, in 1987; two sisters, Lila Mae Wood and Mattie Womack; and four brothers, Jesse, Locey, Lloyd and David Elrod, Sr.

She is survived by one daughter, Julia G. Carter of McMinnville; two sons, Donald R. and Morris D. Griffith, both of McMinnville; eight grandchildren, Davy, Scott, Heath and Michael Griffith, all of McMinnville, Randy Wood of Washington D.C., Julie Jones, Michael Manning and Carla Wood, all of McMinnville; two great-grandchildren, Katrina Allen and Callie Griffith, both of McMinnville; one sister, Dorothy Elrod Foster of McMinnville; and one brother, Edward S. Elrod of New Castle, Del.

Services will be held at 10 a.m. Thursday at High's Chapel with Tony Lawrence officiating. Burial will follow at Mt. View Cemetery. Visitation will be held from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. today and 8 a.m. until time of service Thursday at High's.

High Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

Southern Standard
(McMinnville, Tenn.) June 3, 1998

Sadly, we report the loss of still another relative. Those of you attended the reunion last year will recall Julia Carter, a daughter of Nora Lee, drove down and brought Dorothy Elrod Foster, a sister of Nora Lee. ■

Pet Bears Attacked Nancy Epley -

by StellaB Jaynes

(Date of attack is unknown - probably late 1860's)

Nancy Epley, a teen age daughter of David and Delilah Epley, moved with her parents in 1865 from Tennessee to central Texas. They were living later on Browns Creek near Williams Ranch when Nancy washed clothes and linens in the creek and walked to the home of her Aunt Anne Epley Williams (Mrs. John) to borrow smoothing irons.

As she entered the yard, two black pet bears chained to a tree broke the chains and ran to Nancy severely scratching and biting her on the neck, face, head, and arms. Women relatives and visiting neighbors inside the house helped Nancy get into the house. Meanwhile, one woman jumped on a horse and rode swiftly to the cabinet maker's shop and got him to go assist Nancy and women away from the bears rampage. The cabinet maker, Ben White, happened to be the only man within the town that morning.

As soon as John Williams returned home and heard about the bears attacking his wife's niece, he hired Ben White to make cages for the bears and shipped them on the train to a buyer in Austin, Texas. The bears, originally trapped while cubs, had become unruly and uncertain; John Williams regretted he had kept them too long.

Nancy Epley a few years later married Jesse Newton Pyeatt, a brother of Adella Catherine Pyeatt Burkett (Joe's wife). Nancy and Jesse moved to Callahan County, Texas about 1899; other Burketts remained at Mullin. They visited often. I remember seeing the Pyeatts at the home of my Burkett grandparents. Aunt Nancy had scars the remainder of her life and she would not talk freely about the bears attack. She was a small person weighing maybe 75 or 80 pounds "soaking wet" regardless of her uncontrolled eating habits. We still have treasured memories of her wonderful sense of humor. ■

A Slave's Grave

In our Newsletter Volume 4 1994, I published the picture below which was taken during my visit to Texas. The picture was made in the Oakview cemetery where Joseph Lafayette Burkett and a number of other relatives are buried.

I wondered about how he came to be buried in an all-white cemetery and went on to say we would probably never know the answer. But, thanks to StellaB, we do have an answer and here is what she wrote and sent to me some time ago.

Joe Burkett's Responsibility for Burial of Negro Ex-Slave in White Folks Cemetery, Williams Ranch, Texas - by StellaB Jaynes

Joseph Lafayette Burkett in 1886 lived in the frontier town of Williams Ranch, Texas where he owned and operated a blacksmith shop, also a small farm near town. A family of negroes who had been slaves of the Chandler

family before the Civil War lived nearby.

Albert Chandler, a negro, sometimes worked for Joe Burkett and other white men. One day at the Burkett farm an unruly stallion pawed Albert to death. Joe talked with other men and all agreed to bury Albert in the white folks cemetery at Williams Ranch because he was an exemplary citizen and friend of the community. As long as Joe and his sons lived in Mills County, they kept Alberts grave in good condition. The son, Edgar Lorenza Burkett, made an identifying marker with Alberts name and cause of death. The marker remains now (1994) at the grave.

(I have written previously about the descendants of Joseph Lafayette Burkett moving his grave to the Oakview Cemetery and published a picture of his relatively new marker. It



appears that at the time StellaB wrote the above, she was not aware that Alberts grave had also been moved to Oakview Cemetery along with the original marker which had been made by Edgar Lorenza Burkett and that a new marble marker had been added to the original marker. This newer marker was also probably placed by descendants of Joseph Lafayette Burkett. As was the practice by many ex-slaves when set free, they took the last name of their owner families which in this case was Chandler.) ■

A Flashback to 1886 -

What was life like back in those days? Wheat sold for \$.95 a bushel; corn went for \$.49 a bushel; a first class postage stamp was \$.02; a New York theater ticket was \$.50; and a NY Times Newspaper was \$.02. Eggs were going for about \$.21 a dozen; round steak was \$.12 a pound; pork chops were \$.11 a pound and you could get 10 pounds of potatoes for \$.16.

Grover Cleveland was the President and, while many of you may remember his name, how many of you remember the Vice President was Thomas A. Hendricks? The typewriter ribbon was patented; the Statue of Liberty was unveiled and a pharmacist 'invented' Coca-Cola May 8, 1886. ■

Henry Burkett, Sr. and

The Visiting Nurse -

As I have written many times before, several of us first cousins grew up in the Dallas Cotton Mill Village in Huntsville, Alabama. The Mill not only built, owned, and rented all of the houses, it also built Rison School, and a YMCA with an indoor basketball court (which served as a theater on Saturday nights for 'picture shows'), a bowling alley, and tennis courts. The Mill also had its own water supply and sewage plant. In short, it was a total community except for a Police department which it depended on the City of Huntsville to provide.

Another thing provided by the Mill was a Visiting Nurse program in which any resident with a health problem could ask the Nurse to come by and check. This included injuries and childbirth. The Nurses kept records of each visit in a large bound book. Some time back, Audy Majors obtained a copy of one of the books and I made a copy from that.

I thought it would be interesting to look back at just a couple of happenings which reveal a lot about life in 1933 and 1934. I will list things just as they were written and add explanatory comments in parenthesis.

Date	Name	Problem
April 1,7,11, 12, 13,14,15,17,18, 19,20,21,22,24, 27,29, 1933	Mrs. Webb	Pre Natal Del girl 4/12 (This covered the birth of my sister Joan who was called Jo-Ann.)
Dec 4, 1933	Oliver (Webb) Martha (Majors) Herbert (Majors) Nancy (Majors)	Chicken Pox Chicken Pox Chicken Pox Chicken Pox
Dec 19, 1933	Joan (Webb)	Chicken Pox (Now look what I did. I had the chicken pox on Dec 4 and then gave them to my poor little sister on Dec 19 and she was only 8 months old!!)
Feb 21, 1934	Oliver (Webb)	Measles
Mar 3, 1934	Joe Ann (Joan Webb) Herbert (Majors) Kathleen (Majors) Martha (Majors)	Measles Measles Measles Measles
Mar 15, 1934	Nancy (Majors)	Measles (Here I did it again! I caught the Measles on Feb 21 and gave them to my sister Mar 3! And 4 of our Majors cousins had the Measles at the same time so what do you think that was like for their mother?!))

Almost every birth took place at home unless there were some very serious complications. Doctors were seldom used and only if something was very serious because of the expense. Home remedies, some non-prescription medicines, and the Visiting Nurse program were used for the majority of cases. A couple of the home remedies I remember was a spoon of sugar with coal oil (kerosene) or turpentine on the sugar, and mustard poultices. (A poultice was a soft, usually heated, mass spread on a cloth and applied to sores or other

lesions.)

For vitamin C purposes, although I don't think we thought of it as vitamin C at the time, we drank *cod liver oil*. For those who have never heard of it, be thankful. It was the most foul tasting, foul smelling stuff I can remember!! And there were salves, ointments, aspirin and alcohol in most everybody's medicine chest.

But with all of that, we learned to be thankful because we had a lot better care than most people who lived 'in the country.' We have records showing where relatives died from things like blood poisoning due to lack of medical assistance. Even when Doctors were available, they lacked training, instruments, and medicines.

These records are very voluminous and contain a lot about our family which I have yet to get into in detail but I will publish more in the next issue of our Newsletter because they do reveal a lot about the difficulties of life before the days when shots and inoculations came about. ■

Solved - the Mystery of Jeremiah Burkett !

(researched and solved by Gina Burkett Hyche)

When we obtained copies of the Final Settlement of the Will of Henry Burkett, Sr. and analyzed it, we had discovered what appeared to be another child of Henry and Mary 'Polly' Burkett. Listed as an heir eligible for a full share was Jeremiah M. Burkett. Only children or, if they had died, then their children, were eligible for a full share. But here we had a listing and distribution of funds for Jeremiah just as though he was a son of Henry and Mary.

This had perplexed many of us but nobody could come up with the answer. The documents showed that Jacob, Henry, Jr., and John had died and seemed to identify all of their heirs. But missing was any reference of payments to Andrew J. or his son who had been listed by StellaB as also being named Andrew J. This only served to add to our confusion because the Andrew J. which StellaB listed as the son of Andrew J. was still living when the Settlement was made. So we were confused.

Until Gina got into the archives in Nashville and discovered that Jeremiah M. Burkett was a son of Andrew J. Burkett and further that Jeremiah also had a brother John H. Burkett. She discovered this by locating a document dated October 3, 1865 appointing a Jeremiah Bush as Guardian of Jeremiah Burkett and John H. Burkett, minor heirs at law of A.J. Burkett deceased, a copy of which is shown on the next page.

However, this single document did not *positively* resolve the question since it referred to A.J. Burkett and not Andrew J. Burkett. Even if it had, we have still encountered situations where folks had the same name. Plus, if Jeremiah had a brother, John H. Burkett, why was he not also listed as an heir along with Jeremiah? Gina uncovered other documents which supported our conclusions. See next page.

GUARDIANSHIP OF JOHN H. BURKETT & JEREMIAH BURKETT

State of Tennessee)

Cannon County)

Know all men by these presents that we Jeremiah Bush Jeremiah Derebery and Hiram Todd all of Cannon County and State of Tennessee are held and firmly bound unto the State in the penalty of Six hundred Dollars to be paid to the State as aforesaid for the benefit of the children hereafter named committed to the t...tion of the said Jeremiah Bush to which payment well and truly to be made. We bind ourselves and each of us, each and everyone of heirs, Executors and Administrators, jointly and severally firmly by these presents sealed with our seal and date this 3rd day of October 1865.

The condition of this obligation is such that whereas the above bounded Jeremiah Bush is constituted and appointed Guardian of John H. Burkett and Jeremiah Burkett minor heirs at law of A.J. Burkett deceased.

Now if the said Jeremiah Bush shall faithfully execute his guardianship by securing and improving all of the Estate of the Said minors that shall come into his possession for the benefit of the Said minors until they shall arrive at full age or be sooner thereto required and then under a plain and true account of his guardianship on oath to the justice of our said court and deliver up pay to or possess the Said minors of all such Estate or Estates as they ought to be possessed of or to such other persons as shall be lawfully empowered or Authorized to receive the same and the proffits arising therefrom then this obligation to be void otherwise to remain in full force and virtue.

Jeremiah Bush (seal)
Jeremiah Derebery (seal)
Hiram x Todd (seal)

↑ his mark

Acknowledged and approved in open court.

J. G. Elkins Chairman

Recorded at office this 17th day of October 1865

Josephus Finley Clerk

To help in understanding any situation, it helps to know who was involved so a brief review of Andrew J.'s situation will help. He was married to Nancy Derryberry — sometimes spelled Derebery, Deberry, etc. Her parents were **Jeremiah** and Susannah Derryberry. We believe she had a sister named Elizabeth who married Jeremiah Bush, sometimes referred to as Jerry Bush.

Now look at the people who signed the above bond; Jeremiah Bush, who, as their mother's brother-in-law, would have been an Uncle to Jeremiah Burkett and John H. Burkett; Jeremiah Dereberry (sic), who would have been the maternal grandfather of Jeremiah Burkett and John H. Burkett; and a

Hiram Todd. (Remember that when you see "sic" it means it has been copied exactly the way the original was so that is how the Derryberry name was spelled on the above document.) But who was Hiram Todd? To answer that question, look at the document on the next page which was a report to the court by Jeremiah Bush accounting for how he spent money which belonged to Jeremiah Burkett and his brother John H. Burkett. You will see that Hiram Todd was the Administrator of A.J. Burkett, deceased. So that identifies the three (3) individuals who signed the above bond. Now look at the next page.

SETTLEMENT BY JEREMIAH BUSH OF JEREMIAH BURKETT ESTATE

Jeremiah Bush) State of Tennessee Cannon County
Guardian of) In obedience to the Statute Laws of said State in such cases made and provided

Jeremiah Burkett) I, Josephus Finley Clerk of the County Court of said county have this day proceeded to make and state a settlement with Jeremiah Bush guardian of Jeremaih Burkett a minor heir at law of A.J. Burkett/Deceased and the said Jeremiah Bush reports the following amounts to have come to his hands as such guardian To wit

	\$	Cts	\$	Cts
Received of J.S. Ridley Clerk and Master of the Chancery court			127	45
Received of Hiram Todd Administrator of A.J. Burkett Deceased			44	57
Total Amount of Liabilities Reported by said Guardian is			\$172	02
I also find said Guardian Entitled to the following credits To Wit				
No. 1. One receipt from David Ralph & William Barnes for making coffin	20	00		
Interest on the same to January the 10th 1867		04		
“ 2. One receipt from L.B. Fields for shrouding	6	62		
Interest on the same to January the 10th 1867		02		
“ 3. One receipt from Josephus Finley Clerk	1	00		
Interest on the same to January the 10th 1867		08		
“ 4. One receipt from J. Searcy for	11	50		
Interest on the same to January 10th 1867		06		
“ 5. Credit to Revenue Stamp for Bond		50		
Clerks Fee for said Settlement	1	75		
Total amount of Liabilities after deducting credits			130	45

All of which is most respectfully submitted to the consideration of the worshipful court this 10th day of January 1867.

Josephus Finley Clerk

Approved by the Court February the 4th 1867 J.D. McKnight Chairman

Registered February the 18th 1867 Josephus Finley Clerk

In the above document, you will notice the amount of \$44.57 was received from Hiram Todd, Administrator of A.J. Burkett deceased so that establishes Hiram in his relationship with Andrew J. Burkett. The next question was what happened to John H. Burkett, Jeremiah's brother. Look at No. 1 above which shows \$20.00 spent for making a coffin and No. 2 which shows \$6.62 spent for shrouding. Since Jeremiah Bush, as Guardian, could only spend money to the benefit of Jeremiah Burkett and/or John H. Burkett, we believe that John H. Burkett died and these were funeral expenses.