

REUNION 2010

RobersonReunion 2010 Reflections

Over a century ago this family was drawn together by the power of two, Lee and Idella Roberson. They united and a family tie began that binds us together today. It has expanded; stretching from a small farming community to the metropolises of America. It has reached across cultures and set foot on other continents and embraced other nations. Yet it has held fast by the power of two.

Like a child who hears the voice of her mother, a son who knows the voice of his father, the Robersons heard the call of family, wherever they stood "Come home."

And they knew it was time.

So doctors dropped their stethoscopes and business men left their briefcases, nurses put away their needles, teachers erased their whiteboards and students stored their books in lockers.

Everything else could wait, the agenda had changed and they were being drawn for the first time or for another time by the tie that binds. Drawn by a power stronger than a magnet, pulling at the heart strings of their curiosity and expectations. The pull of a family tie started by the power of two.

MARY ELLEN CLEWIS TURNS 100

IN LOVING MEMORY (JULY 7, 1910—AUGUST 10, 2010)

On July 7, 2010, Mary Ellen Roberson-Clewis became the 1st child of Lee and Idella Roberson to turn 100 years old. She was joined by her baby sister Ruby Lee Roberson-Jackson, 98, and her daughter Nita and son Harold Clewis with other relatives and friends to celebrate this historic moment.

She lived in the Alderbranch area until 1953. After her husband suffered a stroke she was forced to move to Palestine.

She married Boyd Clewis in 1931 and they had six children. Those children were: Emma Clewis Ward, Lee Boyd Clewis, Effie Clewis Freeman, Ruby Clewis Virgil, Arnita Clewis and Harold Clewis. She had 12 grandchildren but two have passed away. She has 16 great grandchildren and 13 great-great grandchildren.



Mary attended Union Hope school, Saint James school and Flint Hill school.

On February 12, 1935, her twin sister passed away from injuries suffered during a hurricane.

It became obvious to her that living in Palestine was not going to offer her much in the quest to care for her family. She moved to Houston in 1958.

She worked in several places as a maid. Sometime during the middle 60's she secured a position with the Owens family.

That took her first to New York where she went to help an Owens daughter settle into a new townhouse and ended up living there for 12 years overlooking the Hudson River.

ROBERSONREUNION 2010 REFLECTIONS

So they came by cars, vans, buses and planes. They came from Washington and California, Colorado and Iowa, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and New York. They came from Georgia and all over Texas, drawn together by

the tie that binds.

There had been 14 years between the eight and ninth family reunion and Bruce Roberson, the chief organizer of this event had this reflection: during a visit with Aunt Doll for

Christmas in 2008, she talked about having a family reunion and seeing the family again. By summer of 2009 I was committed to making a family tree. So I began the phone calls to say hello to other family members

LEE AND IDELLA HISTORY

To know the Robertson history you will need to look at both sides. Let's start with Mama Idella's story. Her grandmother was a slave named Adeline, her mother was Ellen Whitehead. Ellen lived on a farm outside of Denson Springs Texas, owned by R.P. Grayson.

He was a medical doctor from North Carolina with roots in Ireland. Everyone knew him as "Doc" Grayson. Doc Grayson was Idella's father. In April of 1878 he and his wife Miriam were massacred by Night Riders, who didn't take kindly to his liberal attitude toward blacks.

Idella could well have witnessed this horrible crime. Aunt Ruby tells us that she was taken from this place by a former slave named Uncle Dan. She and her sister Ulah also lived with Uncle Pete and Anna Jasper and later Idella married Lee Robertson.

Papa Lee Robertson was born in Grimes County around Bryan Texas. His father's name was John Robertson. He was from Alabama. His birth mother is unknown. He grew up with his stepmother, Harriet Jackson Robertson, and was made to work for the entire family.

Lee was never sent to school. When he was around 19 years old, he declared his own freedom and left Grimes County. When he reached the Brazos River, he tossed the keys into its flow. He made his way to Anderson County with Mr. Bill Murchison where he married Mary Ellen Effie Idella Jacqualina Tennessee Aunt-nie Whitehead (Grayson) on December 17, 1891.

These were their children: Collie who was born and died between 1892-1900, Jennie was born in 1894, Katie and Maggie, in 1896, John was born, in 1897 and Sudie, after 1900. Jennie, Sudie and John died in a cholera

epidemic. Eula was born in 1901, Arlene about 1902, Clarence Patterson was born to Lee in 1904, Andrew in 1906, F.S. 1907, Mae and Myrtle, were born in 1910, Ruby in 1912, Orvin, in 1914 and Baby Roberson, in 1916.

Their farm house consisted of an open space for the living room. The children would play games or read books by kerosene lamps. There was a bedroom for Mama and Papa, one for the boys and another for the girls and a pallet for Ruby, who didn't want to squeeze between her twin sisters Mae and Myrtle. The kitchen was separated from the house and each child had their assigned seats on the bench at mealtime.

The older boys hauled water, cut wood and worked in the fields. Since Mama Idella was born with a birth defect that left her handi-capped on the left side, she depended on her daughters to help her around the house. Mama always made every child a birthday cake. Myrtle helped with the cooking, Mae with the housework and even the young ones had chores. Ruby emptied pee buckets and Orvin picked up chips to start the fire in the wood stove, for breakfast.

The children walked to school with lunch buckets filled with biscuits, ham and syrup and a tin cup for water from the barrel. There they would meet their friends from the community. The boys

played baseball and the girls engaged in spelling bees and other more "ladylike" games. Of course, this was between reading, writing and arithmetic.

Papa Lee Roberson didn't know exactly when he was born. He took the same birth year as Mama Idella and chose Christmas as his birthday. He was nearly 30 years old when his daughter Eula taught him to write his name. As a young man with an ever-growing family, he took full responsibility to care for them, without depending upon others for help. He didn't own a wagon so you might see him walking the road with a tote sack of groceries over his shoulder to feed his family.

He and the children went to church every Sunday, but once a

MAE'S FAMILY



ORVIN SR'S FAMILY



RUBY'S FAMILY



F.S. SR'S FAMILY



HISTORY CONTINUED

month, when the preacher came he would borrow a wagon to take Mama to church also.

He was the treasurer at St. James Church. He took such pride in that position, that he would bury the money in a syrup bucket, and he would not even give change from what he called "holy money."

As time passed Mama developed a cancerous growth from a mole on her foot. Though the doctor tried to burn it off, it returned and grew. She died December 15, 1931. Papa lived and remarried. He celebrated his last Christmas birthday on December 25, 1956 and died on January 6, 1956.

As you look back at your family members (or think about you and your family) and the things they like or don't like, you may find that a few of the Robertson favorites have been passed on:

Is your favorite color yellow? Are you fond of fresh flowers for your dining table? Do you find yourself humming familiar tunes throughout your day. Mama may have passed that on.

What about cornbread for breakfast or eggs over-easy? Don't like Irish potatoes? Not fond of biscuits. Papa may have passed that on.

Some of the things they did pass on were a deep love and dedication to family unity, honesty and hard work, a spirit for

overcoming personal handicaps and adversities of the times in which they lived, overcoming the hardships of past they left behind, and above all, a sincere faith in God. A faith that He was able, would be able and is able, to keep this family going forward for another 114 years.

God bless you.

Some of the things they did pass on were a deep love and dedication to family unity, honesty and hard work, a spirit for overcoming personal handicaps and adversities....a sincere faith in God.

Mary Clewis



While she lived in New York, she often spent time in New Harmony Indiana on the family's farm, in Oyster Bay where she would carry her granddaughter Rhoda to spend the summers. She traveled extensively with the New York family.

She later moved from New York to New Orleans Louisiana to care for another Owens daughter. When she moved to New Orleans she spent most of her time caring for the family's son, Jamie Coleman. Although she spent time with Eric and Ingrid in New York, Jamie became almost her sole duty.

While she worked in New Orleans she was given the task of caring for Princess Margaret. She liked her a lot and enjoyed "taking tea with her."

Aunt Mary sacrificed a large portion of her life to care for her family and she took pride in what her children did.

Her greatest love for the things she did was being an usher in the churches she attended (Saint James, Alderbranch, South Union, Palestine. Saint Marks, New York, Pilgrim Rest, New Orleans and back to South Union where she was still ushering at 98 years old.

KATIE'S FAMILY



MAGGIE'S FAMILY



EULA'S FAMILY



ANDREW'S FAMILY



Find more family photos, reunion reflections, the family tree and history online at :

robersonreunion.org

Questions and comments can be directed to:

bruceroberson@gmail.com

Reflections Con't

As I did, I found they were in favor of a reunion too. So I said to myself I believe we can do this. And it took off from there."

(Aunt) Ruby Jackson expressed her gratitude.

Reflection (Ruby)- "I was glad Bruce thought about getting the family together again and how he arranged it."

The arranging went on for almost a year, with a core group of family members working tirelessly to cover the different aspects: from programs, food and decorations to histories, activities, and T-shirts. Looking at every detail from lodging to securing a place for Sunday services. They spent hours in conference calls and then more hours completing the task.

After months of genealogical searches that included computerized, family search organizations and the Texas State Library and Archives in Austin, Bruce and Linda took a road trip to the Roberson family roots, in Grimes County. There they visited the County Courthouse, in Anderson, Texas reviewing documents that led them to a cemetery where Lee's stepmother and stepbrother are buried. Then they made their way northward to Palestine where the Reunion would be held.

The first and most proper step to begin the Roberson Reunion was to honor Lee and Idella, the two who drew the family together at its beginning. A wreath was placed at their gravesite.

Then the group gathered at the Holiday Inn Express, to get ready for the "meet and greet." The family poured in, in trickles and bundles and single drops. They came in wonder and expectation. There were faces very familiar, vaguely familiar, and faces never seen before. Faces of mothers turned grandmothers, children turned adult, faces changed by the passage of time. Faces of family they had not seen in ten, fifteen or twenty years. Drawn together again, or for the very first time by the power of two.

Acquaintances and connections, memories and laughter went on late into the night.

Saturday morning came early, but soon everyone was in place. Finding their own niche, every hand was busy transforming the Palestine Senior Center into a Family Recreation room with lunch provided.

Five generations were present from (Aunt) Ruby's family alone. She also had the highest number of attendees. However, every branch of the family was represented.

Wouldn't Papa be proud?

The main events, the Saturday night banquet began at 6:30 p.m. Family ushers directed members to beautifully decorated tables.

(Aunt) Ruby, committee members and other designers occupied the head table as dinner was served.

Each program participant rose to share their assigned parts. The evening ended with the presentation of commemorative plaques to a member of each Roberson branch and the younger Roberson members getting their boogie on at the dance.

The Sunday program focused on the theme: "The Roberson Family since 1869: Waiting upon the Lord." (Is. 40:31) It included a review of past reunions, honoring family members gone before, in a service of praise songs, solos and devotions. The reunion message was the most important reason for which this family congregation had come. They were "waiting upon the Lord"...to speak, and indeed He did.

MARY CLEWIS HISTORY

She developed a love of traveling and she went to visit Linda Gaston in Korea with her grandson Richard. She would come to Detroit to visit Chicago and Canada especially Toronto.

In spite of the many hardships in her life, especially the deaths of her twin sister, her husband, 4 of her children and 2 of her grandchildren, her faith in God has kept her a free spirited person. I asked her once how she could remain so peaceful and she told me that "faith works a miracle".

The wonderful glow of a gifted mother, sister, grandparent



Family Reunion—to check out more of the family history including a family tree and reunion reflections Go to:

robersonreunion.org

Please send any comments or corrections and/or additions to bruce@robersonreunion.org

Reflections Con't

One more event before the reunion ended. One of the major reasons for the reunion being held at this time. We had a very special birthday to celebrate! (Aunt) Mary Clewis had reached the century mark of 100 years old. Although the official day would not be until July 7, 2010, her family had gathered to give her the "family tribute" of love she so richly deserved.

Read more online:

www.robersonreunion.org

Editor-in-Chief

Linda Gaston

Asst Editors

Anita Clewis

Bruce Roberson