

Floyd B. Reese

by Velma Young his daughter 2000

Floyd B Reese (Nov 15, 1898-May 25, 1982) was born to Lee V. Fry Reese (March 5, 1875- May 15, 1955) and Martha E Freeman (Feb 1875-Aug 1946) near Mountain View Missouri (in Howell County) on what was called the "Flat land" (in Shannon County) in the Ozarks between Mountain View and the Blue Springs (in Shannon County) on the Jacks Fork River (of the Current River). Lee and Martha later moved to the Blue Springs and ran a camp with cabins for rent. On a visit for a Reese family reunion in the 1970s the area was a State or Federal Park and all the cabins torn down. The area had completely changed due to gravel extraction. We have one picture of the cabin where Lee and Martha lived.

Kern and June Ann Reese have done extensive Reese family genealogy so no genealogy is included here. Floyd's brothers were Frank (married Viola Reynolds), Fed (Feb 1897; married Alma Beck), Cloud A Widge (married Lucille Langdon), and Charlie Freeman (married Florence Hibbard). His sisters were: Anna (married Verne Louke), Mary (married Clarence Davis), Myrtle (married Lester Hamilton) and Sylvia (Feb 1987-twin to Fred-married Frank Cleft who died then she married John Campbell), Ona, called "Bob" (married Alba Belew).

I know very little of dad's childhood. He was called the "runt" due to his youth and short stature of 5'7". He was thin and very, very athletic and strong. He could still stand on his head and turn cartwheels with my children in his seventies. He had piercing dark brown eyes (part of his Indian heritage). I often heard Ray Reese, his cousin, call him "Boscoe" because the B initial in his name was just a letter so Ray made up a "B" name.

Dad grew up in the beauty of the woods, hills and the cold clear sparkling Jacks Fork River. Caves to explore were in the many high bluffs and Indian Arrowheads found in them. He learned to be a great outdoorsman and always had hound dogs for hunting. They were working dogs and not pets. Game that was killed was not for sport but food on the table. He made his own fishing boats of wood. The craft was handed down from father to son. The boats were long and slim and narrow at the end, and made to negotiate the rocky shallows and deep fishing holes. I can remember his scoffing at those "inefficient tubs" used by outsiders. At times he would act as a guide to tourists from his dad's campground. Frogs were giggered at night and the frog legs were fried until they

were crisp and delicious. We always had wild meat at our table. The fish was mostly bass and once in a while eel and catfish.

Alva Jean and I used to like to go fishing with dad for bass because he used cracker crumbs to catch minnows for bait and once we had enough bait, we were allowed to eat the remaining crackers. Dad caught his minnows which were very abundant in the rocky river pools close to shore. He took a gallon-canning jar and taped a funnel inside the jar at the lip. The minnows eagerly swam inside the jar to get the cracker crumbs but could not figure out how to swim back out the narrow funnel end.

Floyd went to elementary school at the Heelstring School. That old wooden structure was later abandoned and a stone school built nearby. All his children attended some school there and his wife, Lucile, taught there in 1942. He attended high school at Mt. View HS. I have a picture of him with the basketball team.

His cousin, Ray Reese, talked him into going to Springfield Teachers College where he took classes to be a doctor like his grandfather, Sherwood Reese. He worked his way through college by delivering newspapers but in the end there was not enough money to finish the expensive program so he graduated as a teacher June 21, 1928 from South West Missouri Teachers College and later got an agricultural degree from the University of Missouri.

While going to Springfield Teachers College, Floyd met Lucile Montgomery and they were married Oct 6, 1924, Greene County, Springfield, Missouri. Their children are: Don Lee Hunter, MO, Feb 26, 1927), Lynn Carol (Annapolis, MO March 24, 1927-Sept 9, 1971), Russell Robert (Mt. View, MO-June 6, 1933) Velma Elenora (Mt. View, MO- Oct 22, 1934), George Arthur (Mt. View, MO, March 23, 1936), Alva Jean (Mt. View, MO.-July 24, 1937).

Both Floyd and Lucile were teachers and principals and taught at the same schools. I have a letter from Consolidated District No 1, Iron County, Annapolis, MO, April 8, 1929, signed by EL Funk, Secretary of the school board which gave both very high recommendations for their "fine work in the school system and the community." The letter mentions Floyd instructing a band. He played trumpet, saxophone, banjo and guitar. I played his old C melody saxophone in high school and still have it today.

He was Superintendent of schools but I am not sure where. I have a card which

was saved by Aunt Alva. He handed out the card when he ran for election. It lists his qualifications as: Age 35, born and reared in Shannon County, BS Degree in Education at Springfield, AB Degree, 112.5 hours at Springfield, pre-medical student two years at Springfield Business College, 1 year at Springfield vocational agriculture at University of Missouri, seven years experience as Superintendent of Consolidated schools in Missouri.

I also have a letter he wrote to the Democratic Party requesting the opportunity to run for Superintendent and their return letter giving him permission. Dad always talked about the Pendergast Machine in Missouri politics and knew Harry Truman personally. I have a letter that he wrote to dad which explains his position on the Supreme Court. I gave this material to my daughter, Cheryl Rutledge. Dad said he spent many hours in Democratic politics in Missouri.

I do not have verified dates and schools for dad's teaching career but do have the information in Mom's life story. Since they both would have taught in the same schools, it is not repeated here.

For some reason dad quit teaching around 1931 (No, Don has a picture of his class in 1938) because he moved the family to the Jacks Fork River home place. He soon built a new house there as he was now working as a carpenter with his brothers. I have a picture of the house remodeled, which mom and Alva Jean took in 1961. It was the ranger's house for the park at that time.

From my memory the family grew sugar cane and corn for cash crops, raised cattle so we had plentiful milk, cream and butter. There were always hogs for meat and bacon. During butchering time, the whole family helped. The hogs were lowered via a rope into a boiling vat of water long enough so the hair could be scraped off by Alva Jean and me. Dad, Lynn and Don did the cutting and mom cooked the meat down, packed into large crocks covered with grease. It kept well using such a procedure. However with 8 people consuming the meat, it didn't need to last all that long.

Once dad tried to make molasses from his sugar cane. He set up a big vat by the river. We all gathered wood and had a bubbly mixture going but it started to rain so hard that we had to quit, the creek flooded and the whole experiment was a disaster. We continued to use honey as dad had several hives of bees.

Dad, Don, and Lynn spent many hours plowing the land with an old hand plow pulled by Nell and Bell, the workhorses. I can still recall in my mind Don and

Lynn standing on the plows to weight them down while they bobbed up and down the rows of plowed earth. They also put in long hours in the deep canyons cutting and pulling out the hard, prized black and white oak to sell. Sprout oaks quickly took over fields so the men spent hours chopping them down. Rattlesnakes were very common and the area around the house had to be kept clear. I was glad I was a girl as men and boys had to do a lot of heavy physical labor. Don says plouging up arrowheads was very common. Dad and mom had a very extensive arrowhead collection which we divided up among 5 heirs but someone took mine so I did not end up with any.

It was my feeling that Dad always remained aloof from his four younger children. The feeling was that we just got in his way and his temper flared up often. The switch was ever present and used in anger. I don't ever recall any encouragement from him. Later in life, I had a better relationship with him and he spent many hours in our home and going camping with us along Elk Creek. Dad had one personality of seriousness and stress with his family and a totally different personality at work and with his friends. He was very outgoing and jovial with friends. His dual personality was always a puzzle to me. Now that I look back, I realize that feeding and caring for 6 children was a major serious task that took all his time and effort.

In 1941 WWII was declared, ration stamps came in. In 1943, Dad and his brothers worked as carpenters on Fort Leonard Wood, Neosho, MO, and our family lived with Mom's mother in Exeter-Lenora Montgomery. By April 1944 we moved to Mt. View and dad went to California to work in the shipyards at Wilmington, California. He soon came back for his family. There were 8 of us in the car and whatever possessions we could fit in were our sole remnants of Missouri life. We camped out along the way.

Dad bought a house in Torrance, California, Los Angeles area. When it became evident in 1944 that WWII would end, dad took a job at the Blythe Agricultural Quarantine station. We moved there March 1945. Blythe is in Riverside County near the Arizona border in the Mohave Desert. Dad really missed hunting and fishing on the Jacks Fork but he discovered the Colorado River. Don built a motorboat and the family camped on the Alligator Slough. I have a picture of Don's boat and several pictures of the Alligator Slough Area.

Rattlesnakes were abundant along the Colorado River and dad always warned us to keep our eyes alert. One day to press the point, he set up a dead rattlesnake behind a log on the path we always took to the river. He told us

there was an interesting sight down the path so Alva Jean, George, Russell and I went running down the path. We jumped over the log, never saw the snake and returned with questioning voices about what sight we were supposed to see. George and Russell never saw the snake on the return run but I did. Adrenalin caused me to high jump the log and land to safety. My heart was pounding. Alva Jean stopped dead in her tracks before she got to the log. Dad started to laugh and recount his warnings and dire predictions of how we'd all be dead by now if the snake were alive. The incident did make us more alert.

Dad became an avid rock hound on the Mohave Desert. If he couldn't hunt game he would hunt rocks and eat store-bought meat. He and Mom had an impressive rock collection and also old purple bottles. He was always going to find gold but settled for geodes, obsidian and quartz roses, and agates. In 1955, he and mom went to Wyoming and prospected for uranium. He took lots of pictures (which I have), drilled holes, worked hard, but to no avail.

All of us children placed stakes and notes in bottles and cans all over the desert. We were sure that all that glittery stuff call fool's gold was real. Dad always assured us that our claims were valid.

Dad also worked at the Vidal Inspection Station in the summer and returned to Blythe in the fall so we could attend school. Lynn always stayed in Blythe. Don was in the army with occupational forces in Japan.

Dad really missed fishing streams and hunting so when an opening occurred in Northern California at the Hornbrook Inspection Station near Hilt, we moved to the Siskiyou Mountains in 1948. There dad was in his element again. He happily hunted deer, quail, grouse, ducks, and pheasants and on weekends fished the Klamath River. We vacationed at the cool clear Beaver Creek as no one lived along it then. The sparkling clear Elk Creek reminded him of the Jacks Fork and fish were abundant. He would catch so many fish that we had fish for breakfast, lunch and dinner. The only reason he didn't catch more was that there weren't enough people to eat them and the idea of "catch and release" would never have entered his mind as fishing was not sport, it was providing food for his family. He used grasshoppers for bait.

Hilt was company-owned lumber town. The lumber company rented its houses only to the people who worked for them and the company owned store was run for its employees but we were allowed to us there. We rented parts of the old historical hotel a couple of miles out of Hilt owned by the Smiths who had a

cattle ranch. Dad could hunt by just walking up the hill.

In 1950 dad transferred to the Dorris Quarantine Station in Siskiyou County just before the Oregon border near Klamath Falls, Oregon. Hunting and fishing became week-end pursuits. He drove to the Klamath, Elk or Beaver Creek, Shoal Creek and sometimes Medicine Lake.

While in Dorris, dad pursued story writing but he could never get anyone to publish his work. I have most of his stories. Some of the titles are: "Old Pete" (he was a real character the lived on the desert near Blythe), "The Gopher and the Turtle," "The Gator Boat," "The Red Headed Woodpeckers," "Five Coyotes" (which was a series of Uncle Jack stories-a Jack rabbit-16 in all). It includes a poem "Uncle Jack" (a guest of nature).

Dad also wrote music. I gave the music scores to Linda. He and Elma Murray a piano player recorded some of them and sent them to companies but all were rejected. "Red Hot Poker" and "Gardenias Don't Lie" were my favorites. I gave the records to Don.

Dad became an avid archer in Dorris. He took up bow hunting. He made his own arrows and patented a circular arrow quiver with George's help-patent #2,980,305 April 18, 1966. I have some of his papers which he gave me one day in San Bernardino. Also 2 stories he wrote for the paper for the Klamath Archers Club. "The Arrow In Flight" and "The Redding Trail Shoot" (May 19, 1963).

Dad was an ingenious inventor. He invented a fogless gun sight in Dorris but did not patent it. He contacted a gun company who sent a representative to the house and was very impressed. He asked dad if he had a patent and when Dad said no, the representative took his papers said, "Thanks" and left. The company used the invention without a twinge of guilt so when dad decided to do something with his circular quiver, he applied for a patent.

George put money time and effort on the quiver but in the end dad refused to include him into the benefits. Dad excluded George, hired an unethical company to do the patent research. Again dad's invention was used by someone else and he had to watch while seeing his invention on bows. I have several pictures of dad, mom, and Alva Jean using the circular quiver. One picture has mom shooting a carp and she shot it in the tail. Dad wrote a poem:

How Women Shoot Carp

Shooting a carp is like shooting a whale
It takes less push to shoot thru the tail
If the arrow holds, carp drag like a mop
And when shot thru the tail the tail can't flop

Dad also invented a spring operated fire grate for camping but to my knowledge he never patented it.

Both mom and dad attended Chico State and got California Teaching Credentials. Dad resigned from the Quarantine Station and taught High School at Butte Valley High School in Dorris 1952-1955. I have his class pictures. In 1954 his salary was \$3566 according to a receipt I found. He had a great deal of conflict with one of the teachers there, Fannie Dennis. I don't know the details but his teaching career ended and he never held another job. The Quarantine Station refused to reinstate him according to a letter I found in his papers.

Dad and Mom divorced July 26, 1965, Siskiyou County. Mom wrote me an account of his reasons. Dad never related his side. He ended up at Ticopa on the Mohave Desert and took baths at Mercy Springs where he hoped the therapy would help his rheumatism. Russell, George and Don helped him while he lived there. He met Harry and Daisy Pike and began assisting them. Daisy was in a crippled condition and was also taking hot baths. When they returned to their home in San Bernardino, dad went with them and helped them with their property at 3329 NF Street, and 3330 NF St and also at their cabin in Crestline. When Harry died, dad married Daisy when our family visited them, Daisy needed constant around the clock care, required oxygen and special diets. Dad was exhausted caring for her and literally keeping her alive. She seemed to be a positive person and we all liked her.

Daisy collected glassware and had boxes of it in one of the buildings at 3339 F St. Harry had souvenirs all over the house that he collected from all over the world. They owned shares in the Centinel Mine and had a substantial

Don was helping dad a lot at this time. He drove dad and Daisy back to Missouri and they were considering staying in Missouri. Daisy died in Mountain View on that trip and was buried there. Dad went back to California and lived at 3330 F. St, San Bernardino.

In 1975, dad back-packed with our family to Lake Yukonom in the Marble Mountain Wilderness area. He and mom had only gone as far as Blue and Green Granite Lakes on their 1957 trip. I have their pictures. I also have pictures of a trip to Yukonom with Russell and Alva Jean later but there are no dates. Dad had also gone with Adam and Sally while I stayed at the Elk Creek Camps with our younger children in the 1960's.

On the 1975 trips dad was in excellent health and he had no trouble making the 15 mile uphill hike from Elk Creek. He had a delightful time but the fishing was not as easy as in previous trips. We used an old log raft in order to get out on the lake. Dad took off his shoes and socks while on the raft and badly sunburned his feet. He had delicate skin and always sunburned easily. We had to ration our food and stay a couple of extra days while his feet healed. He made some open top shoes from some tarps left by horse packers and used them to hike down the mountain. His complaints were few but we knew that he thanked his "lucky stars" when he made it back to our Elk Creek camp.

The 1975 trip was dad's last camping trip and with it an era ended in his life. During his life time game and fish were abundant and he was in his element. He was brought up as a food provider via hunting and fishing. That era was past and the adjustment difficult for his generation. It's a good thing he lived when he did.

One day dad went out his front door and the small porch's roof fell on his head and knocked him out. He was alone and would not seek medical help. Russell and Jan came by a few days later and Jan, a nurse, administered first aid and tried to get him to a doctor at a hospital; but he refused. Dad did not trust doctors and feared hospitals. In Missouri, you were taken to a hospital to die and he was not ready to die! Later a blood clot moved to his eyes and he became blind.

After his blindness, George put dad in Royal Oaks Convalesce Hospital at 144 F St n Galt, California because it was close to the Sacramento area where he lived. Alva Jean and I were able to visit him often. Later Alva Jean assumed his care and he moved in with her and Glenn, her son, in Sacramento.

Alva Jean took very good care of dad. I have written a personal family account of my viewpoint of this era in dad's life but I am not including it in this story. Dad did not leave a will so there were disagreements in the family. If we learn anything here its "make out a will," while you are capable of doing so!

