

*Visiting School with Auda* (age 4)

One time Mama let me stay with Maggie down at Grandma Corn's. I knew a lot of the younger children around there and I loved to play with them. On this particular day, I was playing with Auda Turner, a girl about my age. After we had eaten a big lunch at Grandma's, we decided to run up to the mission school and play with the other children during their lunchtime and then maybe we would go watch Charlie McGaha teach. Auda had watched him before and she said he was funny the way he would swing his arms around and make faces when he taught.

Charlie McGaha was one of the men who had lived back up there by the Moraine Mission. I don't know if he had hardly any education at all, but he was allowed to teach. Back then you could teach to the eighth grade without teaching credentials. He only taught a couple subjects.

By the time we got up to the mission, they were already playing a game called "good night." It looked like a fun game, but we had never played it before, so we just watched. To play the game, the girls got in one line and the boys were in another line facing them. The girls were each given a boy's name, and the object of the game was for the boy to find the girl who had his name and take her back across the boy's line to the base.

The boy had no idea who his girl was, so he had to make guesses. He would walk up to the girl he thought might be the one, bow, and escort her by the arm toward the base. The girl would tease the boy by going part way with him, pretending that she really was the one. Then she would yell "good night" as she broke away from him and ran back to her line to avoid capture. The boy then tried again by choosing another girl.

It was the funniest sight ever watching them play that game. They were running into each other and laughing. Most of the older children were helping their folks plant crops, so the only older students playing with them were Aunt Florie and the ol' Turner boy. He was short and as skinny as a sapling tree, whereas Aunt Florie was a great big ol' thing, round and tall, like Papa. Well, those two got their feet all tangled up with each other and down they came with Aunt Florie landing on top of him. It was a real miracle he wasn't hurt, as big as Aunt Florie was. But he got up, a little slowly, and as he brushed himself off, the bell for class rang. That bell probably saved his life, because another fall with Aunt Florie certainly would have killed him.

We waited a little while and then Auda and I slipped into Charlie McGaha's class practically unnoticed and sat at the very back of the room on one of the long church-like benches. Charlie was already busy

teaching a class in physiology. That's a branch of biology; now they just call it health class. There were only two students in the class: Aunt Florie and Frank Turner, the one she had just flattened out on the playground. They were the oldest students in the school.

Aunt Florie and Frank sat at the front of the classroom intently listening to Charlie McGaha talk about this kind of bone and that kind of bone. He was just a-wavin' that big red textbook back and forth while he ranted on. Auda and I kept still in our seats in the back, sometimes trying to listen and understand what he was talking about, but we soon decided that bones weren't very interesting. We thought the way he talked and waved that book up and down at his side was kind of like a one-winged goose attempting to get off the ground. We would whisper quietly and snicker to ourselves about Aunt Florie falling on Frank. We knew better than to let anyone hear us.

Well, we were sitting on that bench with our arms around each other just a-huggin' when suddenly he slapped that book on his leg making a big crack. The noise startled us so that we fell off the bench and onto the floor, making a big commotion. Why, I think we might have scared Aunt Florie more with our commotion than the book-slappin' did!

That man yelled, "You! Come up here!!" His booming command nearly sent us into tears. I can still see that big ol' red book and him a-wavin' it up and down at us like he was going to hit us.

Well, we made our way up to the front and stood there hanging onto each other, looking wide-eyed up at him. He put one hand on his hip and with the other hand he pointed that book right in our faces and said, "What was you'uns doin'?"

I wasn't answering. I was scared so bad I was speechless. But, you see, Auda had family going to school there, so she knew him. So she replied, "We's was just a-wovin' each other."

"Well, don't be doin' that no more! You get back there to that seat and I don't wanna catch any more of that lovin' goin' on." Well, we sure didn't. We got back there and we didn't do it no more. Of course, I didn't come back to visit anymore either.

That was Frank and Aunt Flora's last year at the mission school. What made me happy was finding out that it was Charlie McGaha's last year too.