

The Blue-Eyed Girl and the Cotton Patch



One of the personal true stories from my book titled
“But, That’s Another Story”
by William P. Brown



In the summers of 1947 through 1949 I spent some of my summer vacation time in Moultrie, Georgia, visiting with my friend Hugh Pierce and his family. Now Hugh was a little skinny boy, even smaller than I was. In fact, we all called him “Puny Mae” Pierce. He was my best friend during those years and our friendship continued through our first year of college at Brigham Young University. (That’s another story). His parents were very kind people and he had several brothers and sisters. His dad worked at the local meat packing plant and he spent a lot of his spare time playing with the kids and me. His mother was a good cook so I always looked forward to meal time. It was a very nice family and I always enjoyed the times I spent there.

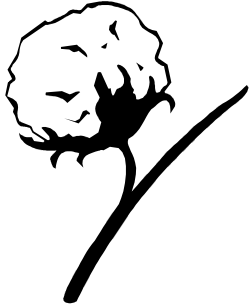
In the summer of 1947 Puny Mae’s grandfather had given him an old Model “T” Ford. It was a good running old car once you got it started, which was a chore sometimes. The old battery was quite weak so we had to use the hand crank most of the time. Since we were both small boys it was hard to turn over the motor with our light bodies. But, our determination to go “driving” gave us the energy to keep at it until we got it started.

One evening we drove down to one of the local “Drive-Ins” as most other young people did in those days. The Drive-Ins were the places everybody gathered. We would just mill around the parked cars talking with the other kids and comparing their cars and, of course, the girls. In one of the cars sat two girls. One of the girls had the most striking hair and eye combination I had ever seen. She had very light silky skin. Her fine wavy hair was long and coal black and her eyes were brilliant blue. She was a real knockout! We stopped and started a conversation with them. One of them knew Hugh so that broke the ice and before long we took them for a ride in Hugh’s Model “T.” I paled off with the blue-eyed beauty and Hugh drove us around until we were about out of gas. When we took them back to their car we asked if they would like to go to the movie. They said, “yes.” We made dates for Friday night when the movie theater would be running a new movie. As we left the Drive-In we tried to think of a way to get the money for the movie and gas for the Model “T.”



When we got back to Hugh’s house his father heard us talking about getting money and told us to go ask Hugh’s Uncle if we could pick some cotton. Hugh’s Uncle owned a cotton farm and it was in the middle of “cotton-picking season.” We drove over to his house and asked if we could pick cotton to earn some money. He seemed glad to have two more helpers and told us to be at the farm at 6 o’clock the next morning. We were there a few minutes early and he showed us

what to do. He gave us this long burlap bag. It was about eight feet long and three feet in diameter. A big bag! He had one of the black women “pickers” show us how to grab the cotton with the tips of our fingers and pull the ball from the hardened pod. You then shove the cotton ball down into your sack as you drug it on the ground down the row of cotton. Now, for those who have never seen a ripe cotton ball and pod, the cotton pod is very hard and shaped like an elongated large pecan. The hard pod splits open on one end leaving very sharp pointed ends with the cotton ball partially protruding out from the pod. The problem



is when you try to grab the cotton the sharp pod ends stick into your fingers. They are really sharp. The trick is to grab the cotton ball without sticking the sharp pod ends into your fingers. The experienced “pickers” made the job look easy but for us beginners it was a had job. Every time we’d grab a cotton ball, we’d stick our fingers. Soon our fingers were bleeding quite badly. We fell way behind the other pickers. While they would fill their sacks two or three times, we would fill ours once. Each picker had a large “blanket” on which to empty your bag so as to keep track of the cotton you picked. You were paid by the pound. We kept changing fingers and hands but soon every finger was so sore we could hardly use them.

Then to make matters worse, I developed a large “boil” on the front of my right thigh. Every time I moved my leg to get to the next bush, the pain was excruciating. Finally noon time came as we got a break. Hugh’s Mother had packed us some sandwiches which we quickly ate wanted more. Hugh’s Uncle came over and asked us if we were Ok. Of course, we said “yes” even though we both wanted to quit. One of the black women pickers noticed the problem with my leg. She came over with some kind of suave and bandage and put it on my boil. It felt better immediately. After the short lunch period rest, we went back to picking cotton. I didn’t know if I could hold out for the rest of the day but we sure needed the money for our dates, so, we pressed on. Suddenly, I noticed my thigh was wet. When I pulled up my pants, the boil had burst and the pain was totally gone. Whatever that woman had put on my sore, it sure worked.

The day finally ended when it was almost dark. Everyone gathered up their plie of cotton on their blankets and took it over to the scales to have it weighed. Our two piles were the smallest ones there. This was one job where experience really showed. We had the determination alright but our inexperience was all too evident. Most of the pickers received \$15 to \$20. Hugh and I together received \$8. Only \$4 a piece for one long hard days work.

We had enough money for our dates and had a swell time even with our very sore hands. I don’t remember the movie we saw or that beautiful girl’s name, but I sure remember that “cotton-picking” day. I made up my mind right then to never pick cotton again! Never!

- *Bill Brown*