

Chapter FIVE

About Grandpa Bill and Grandma Sarah Hartley, Kiree: "...remembered it being a quiet place where her Grandma and Grandpa would sit around reading a book or a newspaper. As best she could, Kiree tried to emulate them—providing a quiet home where she enjoyed reading books and magazines."



Above, the Upton cabin where Kiree was born. It was just west of Arno. The original cabin has been encased by this residence.

MILDRED KIREE HARTLEY

Ira & Mintia's first-born (b. 1911-d. 1999)



On September 13, 1911, ten months after her marriage to Ira, Mintia gave birth to a baby girl whom she named Mildred Kiree Hartley. This little girl always went by the name of Kiree (pronounced "caw-ree" or simply "cree.") The family legend told by Kiree and her eldest daughter, Evelyn, was that this was a native-American name.

Kiree always preferred and went by her middle name. In fact, she didn't like the name "Mildred" at all. She would eventually list her name as Kiree M. Hartley on documents such as her Social Security card and her driver's license.

Mintia gave birth to Kiree in a cabin in which she and Ira were living and located between the Arno store and Beaver Creek. The cabin was on a place owned by Fred Upson (the father-in-law to Ira's brother John). Since that time, a house was built around the original cabin, and it is still standing but abandoned.

In one of her recorded interviews with her son, Kenneth, Kiree vaguely recalls living in the Upson cabin for a short while. She recalls her Uncle John Hartley's wife, Ethel, and her children being there, and the youngest child, Mabel, crying. Later she would realize that there was trauma in the family at that time.

You see, Uncle John had been working over in Kansas, and was reportedly on the way home but never arrived.

Kiree's memories would be vivid from that point on. She recalled when her brother, Lawrence, was born in 1915 on the farm that Ira and Mintia had purchased on the other side of Grandpa Nick & Grandma Sarah Gunnels' place. According to

Kiree, that's when things got to be "serious" to her.

From the outset, Kiree loved books and education. She talked fondly of her nights staying with Grandpa Bill and Grandma Sarah Hartley over on Beaver Creek. She remembered it being a quiet place where her Grandma and Grandpa would sit around reading a book or a newspaper. As best she could, Kiree tried to emulate them—providing a quiet home where she enjoyed reading books and magazines.

Because Ira and Mintia sold the "Humphreys Place" where Lawrence was born, Kiree and her parents were living back at Grandpa Bill Hartley's place northwest of Arno. This caused Kiree to start school at the large two-story Arno School that was built in the 1870s.

But in 1919, when her parents bought the Williams Hollow farm, Kiree transferred to Flat Rock School about a mile south of the farm. She attended there and also at the school at Arden to the north (for the time it was open).

In 1926, a "Job" high school" was established at Goodhope. Named after a State Senator by the name of Job (pronounced "jobe" like the Biblical character of the same name), these two-year high schools were established around the county. Kiree was one of those lucky enough to start her high school studies in 1928 without traveling to Ava.

After graduating from Goodhope Job High School, Kiree got a room in Ava and completed her high school diploma at Ava High School in 1931.

In the same rooming house southwest of the Ava Square, Kiree met and started a life-long friendship with Lulu Brown. One day, the two girls walked by a house that Lulu's brother, Orville "Jake" Brown (a carpenter and farmer), was working on. Orville was smitten by the dark and curly haired Kiree and asked Lulu for an introduction. (All the old-timers recall Orville by the name of "Jake" Brown. But Kiree really disliked that name, and she insisted on "Orville," the name she would later place on his headstone.)

Although Orville and Kiree started dating, immediately, Orville returned to eastern Nebraska where he worked the corn crops for a large farm there, and Kiree continued her teacher training at Southwest Missouri State Teachers College in Springfield for a short while.

After Kiree had completed her education in Springfield, she returned to the Williams Hollow farm to help with the family and to teach at nearby Arden School for a short while (less



ca 1930 at age 19
Kiree Hartley.

than a year) until the school district ran out of money, and the school closed. By this time, however, the relationship between Orville and Kiree had gotten quite serious, and the two were married on Valentine's Day, 1932.



Above, Kiree pictured with Orville Brown's 1929 Model A Ford. After their marriage, the family vehicle became a Chevrolet pickup.

Orville and Kiree first rented a Upton farm near Arno where Kiree had been born. Their first child, Kiree, was born there. (For the next decade afterwards, Orville and Kiree would either live at the Brown farm south of Ava or in Nebraska—Orville farming and Kiree a housewife.)

Between December 1932 and February 1945, Kiree gave birth to five children—all difficult for her. But she and all her children survived to reach adulthood.

In 1947, Orville's health began to fail. The couple left the farm and moved to Ava. Orville set up the Brown Furniture Company, selling used furniture. But he was eventu-

ally diagnosed with tuberculosis and committed to the Mt. Vernon TB Sanatorium.

Orville passed away on March 12, 1949, at the age of 39. Kiree was left with four of the five children still at home (Evelyn had married a few months earlier).

Kiree never remarried but returned to teaching as a way to raise her family. In the summer of 1950, Kiree returned to the teachers college in Springfield (now Missouri State University). That course work qualified her to accept a teaching position at Mt. Tabor School in Douglas County, MO, while she continued to live in the family home in Ava.

From September of 1950 until May of 1957, Kiree taught in one-room schools around Douglas County. After one year at Mt. Tabor School (1950-51), she taught for two years at (West) Dogwood School. During the first year at Dogwood (1951-52), Kiree and her three youngest children lived on Grandma Mintia Hartley's "Upper Forty" in a house that had been built a few years earlier for Kiree's brother, Eldon and his wife, Verda. Each day, Kiree would load her three children—Iris Ann, James,

and Kenneth, in her 1946 Chevrolet coupe and make the trip to and from Dogwood School

For the second year at Dogwood School (1952-53), Kiree and her kids lived in a house belonging to Charley Breedlove's sister-in-law, Pansy. Then Kiree moved the family back to Ava for the 1953-54 school year so Iris Ann could go to high school; James and Kenneth attended the fourth grade in Ava.

Kiree taught at (West) Flat Rock School in 1953-54, Hunter School for two years (1954-56), and then a final year (1956-57) at Frye School down on the Ozark County line.

Kiree ended her career in the Douglas county one-room schools in a harrowing way—a tornado hit the school house the day before school was to end!

At the end of the 1956-57 school year, all the one-room schools in Douglas County were consolidated into larger schools. So Kiree did not have a teaching job for the 1957-58 year.

Kiree loaded up her 1946 Chevy coupe with her two sons, James and Kenneth, and headed to Wichita, KS, where all her siblings were living and working. She obtained a teaching job at Enterprise School on South Seneca in Wichita. She left behind a daughter, Iris Ann, who married at the end of the 1956-57 school year.

During the evenings and summers, Kiree continued her education at Friends University in Wichita. She graduated from Friends in 1964, just as her son, Kenneth, finished his freshman year of college there.

Kiree's last teaching assignment in Wichita was at McCormick School near the Friends University campus. In 1969, Kiree returned to Ava, MO, to live in the house that she and her husband, Orville, had purchased in 1947 across from the Ava High School. She taught in the Ava Elementary Schools until her retirement due to health concerns in 1976.

In 1978, the Ava Public Schools purchased her house,



Above, Orville and Kiree's family around 1947. Back: Jana Lea and Evelyn, Middle: Orville, Kiree and Iris Ann. Front: James and Kenneth.

and she moved to Springfield into a house she bought on Glenwood Street near Campbell Street, a main north-south route in Springfield.

In the 1990s, Kiree got to where she couldn't take care of herself, and had to go to a nursing home. She died on November 11, 1999. She was buried next to her husband, Orville, in the Ava, MO, Cemetery.

Kiree and Orville's Children:

- **Evelyn Marie** was born December 29, 1932, near Arno, MO, on a farm her parents had rented. Evelyn was beautiful, a talented musician, a salesperson, and an avid student of the Bible. She has been of the Mormon faith for many years. Now retired and 81 years old, Evelyn lives in Avilla, MO, with her husband, Robert Calvin.
- **Jana Lea** was born February 13, 1934, on the Brown family farm south of Ava. Jana Lea was beautiful, a talented musician, accomplished artist, and tenacious businesswoman. Not intended for rural or small town life, she lived her last years and passed away on September 24, 1981, in her favorite city, Kansas City, MO. Her body, however, rests in the Brown family plots at the Ava, MO, Cemetery.
- **Iris Ann** was born March 26, 1939, in Omaha, Nebraska. Iris was beautiful, an excellent student, and very popular in Ava High School where she graduated in 1957. She went on to become an accomplished housewife and raised six children. Now widowed, Iris Ann lives in the Springfield, MO area.
- **James Wendell** was born on December 2, 1942, at the Brown family farm south of Ava. He was handicapped from birth and was plagued with seizures all his life. He was a gentle person who developed a powerful Christian testimony. He was a 1962 graduate of Wichita South High School. His faith remained with him to the end as he died in severe pain of lymphomic cancer at the Wichita (KS) Osteopathic Hospital on September 20, 1966. He was only 23 years old at the time of his death. His body rests in the Brown family plots at the Ava, MO Cemetery.
- **Kenneth Wayne** was born on February 9, 1945, on the Brown family farm south of Ava. It was a difficult birth for Kiree, and she almost died. Kenneth fought off anemia and allergies to survive. Like his brother, James, Kenneth graduated from Wichita South High School in 1962. Kenneth left Wichita on January 1, 1968, and has resided in Springfield, MO, since that time. He was an accountant and a teacher before retiring in 2000.

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Above, ca 1949 not long after Orville's death.
 In back, Kiree, Evelyn and Jana Lea
 In front, Kenneth, Iris Ann and James.



Above, ca 1944
 Evelyn, Janalea, Kiree, and
 Orville with Iris and James
 in front. Kiree was pregnant
 with Kenneth at the time.
 Photo taken at the Williams
 Hollow Farm.



Above, gravestones of (l-r) Orville and Kiree, James, and Janalea
 at the Ava (MO) Cemetery.



ca 1976—Grandma Brown's house in Ava
Seated on couch: Judy Elliott, Rodney Sell, Paula Sell, Gerry Elliott, Jenné Sell
Front: Phillip Sell, John Durham, Kelly Brown, Skipper Vasconcellos, and Julie Durham.



1972—Grandma Brown's house in Ava.
Joy (Neal) Brown on porch and Kelly Brown in yard.



Above, early 1990s—Kiree (Hartley) Brown's house on Glenwood St. in Springfield, MO.



At Grandma Brown's House in Springfield, MO—1979. L-R on couch and along the back: Judy (Elliott) Lott with Zachary & Jamie; Jenne (Sell) Dock (holding baby Danyal), Cathy Durham, Susan Durham, Stephen Durham, Kenneth Brown (holding Dennis), Grandma Brown and Bob Durham. On floor: John Durham, Kelly Brown, Julie Durham, and Iris Ann Durham. (The large painting on the back wall was painted by Jana Lea (Brown) Sell Vasconcellos. Reportedly, the painting has been lost but is remembered by many who visited Kiree Brown's house on Glenwood in Springfield, MO).