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Iris with “Jerry” the dog on the corn cob pile in Nebraska -- circa 1941.

chapter 5.3

IRIS ANN BROWN

Kiree & Orville’s third-born (b. 1939)

Iris Ann Brown was the third and middle child of Kiree and Orville Brown. She was born March 26, 1939, in Omaha, Nebraska. For all of the 1930s and into the early 1940s, Iris’s dad had either worked on a large corn farm near the town of Valley, NE, west of Omaha, or worked on his Brown farm south of Ava. It’s just that Iris’s birth happened to occur when the family was living in Nebraska—she’s the only one of the five children to be born there.

By the time Iris was school age, her parents had moved back to the Brown farm in Missouri permanently. Thus, she would have entered the one-room Black Oak School near the Brown farm when she became school age around 1945. Iris was a very pretty and smart little girl; she grew up in the shadows of two older and quite lively sisters.



Evelyn, Iris & Jana Lea - 1942.

Iris’s Grade School Days Filled with Change

Iris was eight years old when her father had to give up the farm because of health and move the family into Ava. Once he purchased the little house that sat across the street east of the Ava Schools, Iris was just a hop and a skip away from school all the way through the sixth grade. It was a wonderful location for the family’s home.

But while things went fine for Iris Ann in school, she had

to endure quite a bit of turmoil back across the street at home. Iris's dad was diagnosed with tuberculosis, and one day, she saw him placed in an ambulance for transfer to the State TB Sanitarium at Mt. Vernon, MO, never to return home. Her father would die of the disease when she was in the fourth grade. At that particular time, Iris still had an older sister and two little brothers at home with her mother.



Kenny, James & Iris in 1950

A few months before Iris's dad died, her oldest sister, Evelyn, got married. Then, her next oldest sister, Jana Lea, became a rebellious teenager as she struck out for her independence right at a time when the influence of Iris's mother was at its weakest. So Iris witnessed a lot of change and strife in the home at a very young age; in addition, she had to take on the responsibility for the care of her two little brothers, probably sooner than normal. This was so that her mother could go to Springfield for teacher training, get a teacher certificate, and start making a living as a one-room school teacher. Her mother's first school was at Mt. Tabor outside Ava in 1950-51.

While Iris's first six years of school were at Ava, her final two years of grade school were where her mother taught—Dogwood in the extreme northwest corner of the county. Now the Dogwood school was a few miles north of Grandma Hartley's Williams Hollow farm. So during the first year of school at Dogwood, the family lived in Grandma Hartley's house originally built for Uncle Eldon on her "upper forty." The house where the family lived for the second year at Dogwood was a much better setup; it was at the Pansy Breedlove place just a short distance from the school.

Why was Pansy's place better? Well, Grandma's house was the coldest place in which Iris and the family had ever lived (no insulation of any kind); plus it only had a dilapidated chicken house to use as a privy, and it had no electricity. At Pansy's

Iris Ann's Life in a Nutshell

- Born 1939 in Omaha, NE.
- Graduated from Ava High School in 1957
- Married Bob Durham in 1957
- Children:
 - Cathy
 - Stephen
 - Lisa
 - Susan
 - John
 - Julie
- Always known for her homemaking skills and her sweet disposition
- Lives in the Springfield, MO, area



1955—Iris Ann as an Ava High School cheerleader



Iris, a sophomore in the 1954-55 Ava Band .

place, the house was warmer, and it had electricity. Every night, Iris would tune into a Springfield radio station that carried a program called the “Hit Parade;” and she would invite her little brothers to listen with her, and she’d tell them about the songs.

Summer of 1953 at Sunflower, KS, west of Olathe

During the summer months between her seventh and eighth grades, Iris Ann and her brothers did get a glimpse of modern life when they all spent the summer in the Sunflower community between Lawrence and DeSota KS. The family was the guest of her sister, Evelyn, and her husband, Boyd Elliott. Both of them made good money at the Sunflower Ordnance Works Plant for which the town of Sunflower was created. That meant a big television set in their living room, and lots of modern things she had never experienced before.

Iris’s High School Years at Ava

For the 1953-54 school year, Iris Ann, her mother, and two little brothers moved back to the family home in Ava across from the school. Iris entered high school that fall and fit back in with the city kids immediately. Iris was a good student, very popular, and involved in a lot of school activities.

Because of its central location and because of Iris’s popularity, the Brown house across from the Ava High School was a frequent stop-off place for Iris’s school friends. Her fellow cheerleaders would change their clothes there before a Friday football game; plus Iris was a good and responsible hostess, and the gatherings were always under control. Eventually she even managed to teach her little brothers to close the bathroom door when they were using it, and when company was in the house!

During Iris’s junior year of high school, she began dating a local boy by the name of Bobby Lee Durham. Bobby was a couple of years older than her, and he worked for the City of Ava with his dad, Robert Durham. Bobby had an early 1950s green Mercury coupe; so Iris and he dated in style. Their romance continued throughout Iris’s senior year. Sometime during that year, Bobby traded in the Mercury for a brand new 1956 black and white Chevy Bel Air coupe.

Marriage Over College

Sometime during the spring of 1957, Iris and Bobby were engaged to be married after her graduation in June. Now Iris was one of the smartest students in her senior class—ranked second. She earned scholarships to attend college the following year but she turned them down to marry the love of her life, Bobby Lee Durham.

Enough happened in the Brown house during the 30 days surrounding Iris's marriage to put stress on everyone, including Iris. Iris's mother was finishing up her term as teacher at the Frye School down on the Ozark County line in late May of that year. But a tornado tore across Douglas County on the afternoon of May 21, 1957, the day before school was to end. Iris's mother and the students barely escaped to a cellar down the hill before the tornado slammed into the school. That became the final day of school.

That spring was the end of one-room schools in Douglas County (they had all consolidated with larger school districts); Iris's mom had no teaching job for the following year because she didn't have enough education yet. So a plan was put in place: (1) Iris would marry Bobby on June 9, and the two of them would head off on their honeymoon; (2) Iris's mom would load up her possessions in her 1946 Chevy Coupe, and take Iris's two little brothers to Wichita, KS, (a teaching job was waiting for her there); and (3) Iris and Bobby would return from their honeymoon to the vacant but furnished Brown house across from the school. There they would start their family life together in the Brown house with its original furnishings.

Iris's Wedding, June 9, 1957

Interestingly, Iris and Bobby Lee were married at 8:30 a.m. on a Sunday morning at Ava General Baptist Church. The bridesmaid was Iris's sister, Jana Lea Sell, and the best man was Jan's husband, Paul Sell. Rev. C.W. Duffer was the preacher, and Iris Ann was given away by Aunt Rosie Davis's son, Herman Davis, Iris's first cousin.

Iris Ann and Bobby were continuing to live in the Brown house when their first two children were born. Eventually, they got a place of their own, and Iris's mom rented out the Brown house for several years before returning there to live in 1969.

Iris Ann turned out to be an excellent homemaker. She cooked, cleaned, and sewed as well as anyone. The couple would go on to have a family of six children—four daughters, and two sons. Recognizing that she had a large family, Iris Ann always swore to make sure they had clothes and other things as good as anyone. Indeed the Durham children were well dressed and fed.

Iris Ann and Bob's children:

- Cathy Lee Durham, born July 8, 1958, at Mansfield, MO
- Stephen Douglas Durham, born June 3, 1959, at Mansfield, MO
- Lisa Ann Durham, born March 13, 1964,



Aunt Levon & Iris at Levon's 80th Birthday Party in Wichita, August 2006.



Above: Easter Sunday, 1969, L-R: John, Susan, Lisa, Stephen and Cathy. All dressed up in clothes made by their mother.

- in Springfield, MO
- Susan Elizabeth Durham, born July 7, 1965, in Springfield, MO
- John David Durham, born February 17, 1967, Springfield, MO
- Julie Diane Durham, born March 24, 1969, Springfield MO.

Bob's Career Keeps Iris in Ava

During the first years of their marriage, Bobby remained with the City of Ava eventually becoming the head of the Electric Department. But working for a small city can be a thankless job; the pay and benefits can be low and the demands excessive. Still, Bob loved to hunt and fish, and leaving the area was out of the question. Then in the early 1960s, Emerson Electric began to build a plant in Ava. Bob did all the wiring for the plant, and Emerson management took notice—to say they were impressed was an understatement.

The company hired Bobby Lee away from the City of Ava, and he would spend the rest of his working life with either Emerson or its related company, Copeland Industries. That gave Bob the kind of a salary by which the family could live well and they could build their own house, a pretty split-level, just west of town. But right toward the end, Copeland began downsizing the plant. Bob was sent by the company to

other sites for periods of time to do certain jobs. Bob was on the job in Rogers, AR, for Copeland, when he had a stroke much like his dad had years before. He died on March 27, 2000, at the age of 64.

All the children attended Ava Schools and graduated from Ava High School. All left the Ava area except for Susan (note: Lisa returned to the Mansfield area for a few years, however). Susan married Dwight Evans, a farmer from down near Thornfield, MO.

Once Iris had an empty nest, she helped Susan with her children while Susan worked at the electric cooperative in Gainesville MO. Iris Ann also worked at Walmart at different times.



Above, March 2000, Iris with her children: Lisa, Cathy, John, Steve, Julie and Susan.

Today, Iris Ann has a place of her own in the Springfield area. She sold the split-level house in Ava. Iris has all her children and several grandchildren who visit her regularly. She is at peace with her life, and like so many people, her children and grandchildren are her most prized possessions.

Where Are They Now? Here's a short bio of each of the children:

Cathy Lee Durham married her high school sweetheart, Jeff Alderman, after they both graduated from what is now Missouri State University in Springfield. They began their careers in St. Louis. While their two children, Sarah and Jacob "Jake," were still at home, they moved to the Lake of the Ozarks in central Missouri near Camdenton. The children graduated from high school there. Cathy retired a few years ago after many years as a hospital administrator and as a CPA.

Presently she is working part-time as an accountant for Lake Oil Enterprises in Camdenton. Cathy's daughter, Sarah is an ICU nurse, and Jake is an investment advisor with his father, Jeff, at Wells Fargo Advisors in Laurie, MO. Jeff has been an investment advisor for many years.

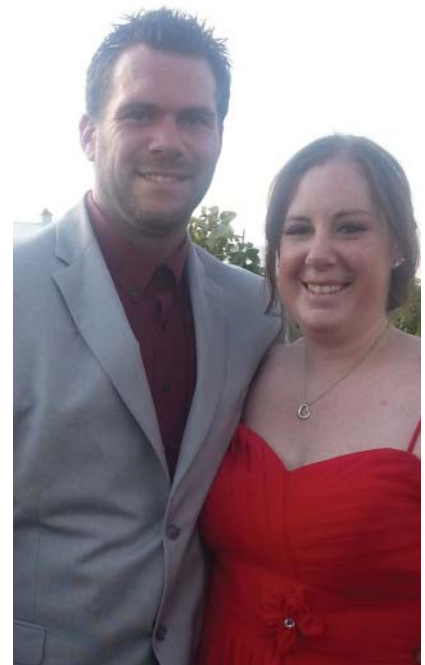
Cathy says she now has a "third child," Gracie, a German Shorthair Pointer.



2014—Cathy & Jeff relaxing in Aruba.



Cathy's son and husband, Jake & Jeff Alderman, at a golf tournament.



Above, Sept. 2014—Cathy's daughter, Sarah Alderman and her friend .



Steve Durham in 2000



Above, 2011—Iris Ann (Brown) Durham with her granddaughter, Jenna Eichelberger

Below, 2010—Lisa (Durham) Eichelberger with daughter, Jenna, on Jenna's 20th birthday.



Stephen Douglas Durham graduated from Ava High School in 1977. In 1978, Steve joined the military and took training in the military intelligence branch both in Boston, MA, and Ft. Hood, TX. After extensive training in foreign languages, particularly Spanish, Stephen was assigned to the Miami, FL, area to help interview and process a large influx of Cuban refugees in the early 1980s. While in the service, Steve got to see the country, and has lots of fond memories from those times. When his service time was over, Stephen moved back to Springfield to attend college. But an opportunity to become a teaching golf pro in Las Vegas, NV, took him away. After that, he spent several years in the San Diego, CA, area where he became a district manager for a couple of store chains.

Eventually he found himself back in Springfield going to college and working for the Morris family that owns all the Brown Derby liquor stores, including the International Wine Center and Bass Pro Sporting Goods stores. Eventually a part-time job turned into a career for Stephen. He became a wine expert for the International Wine Center, and worked with buyers and sellers of different wines all over the world. That job gave him a chance to visit wineries in Europe and, of course, California's Napa Valley.

Often Steve's customers were well known people around the nation. A favorite, perhaps because of his colorful personality, was long-time political advisor, James Carville.

Stephen was always interested in investments, and he left the International Wine Center to pursue those investments a few years ago. Presently, Steve lives in Ozark, MO, a city just outside Springfield.

Lisa Ann Durham lived with her Grandma Brown in Springfield for a while after graduation but eventually went to Tulsa, OK, to work. She returned to Ava and met her husband-to-be, Gary Eichelberger, of nearby Mansfield, MO. Lisa and Gary have built a strong marriage and family based on their faith in Jesus Christ, traditional work ethics, and strong family values. The couple now lives on the Tennessee slope of the Appalachian Mountains. Gary is an accomplished builder and specializes in decorative concrete. Lisa and Gary have two children, Jenna Lee, and Nathan.

In 2011, Lisa's daughter, Jenna, married Chris Simpson, and they have two sons, Adam and Luke. Jenna and her husband live "over the mountain" from her folks where she teaches violin lessons and tends to her family.

Lisa and Gary's son, Nathan, works with his father in the family business, is the fixer around the house, and enjoys camping and the outdoors



At left, Lisa's son, Nathan Eichelberger



Above, Lisa (Durham) Eichelberger and her husband, Gary Eichelberger.

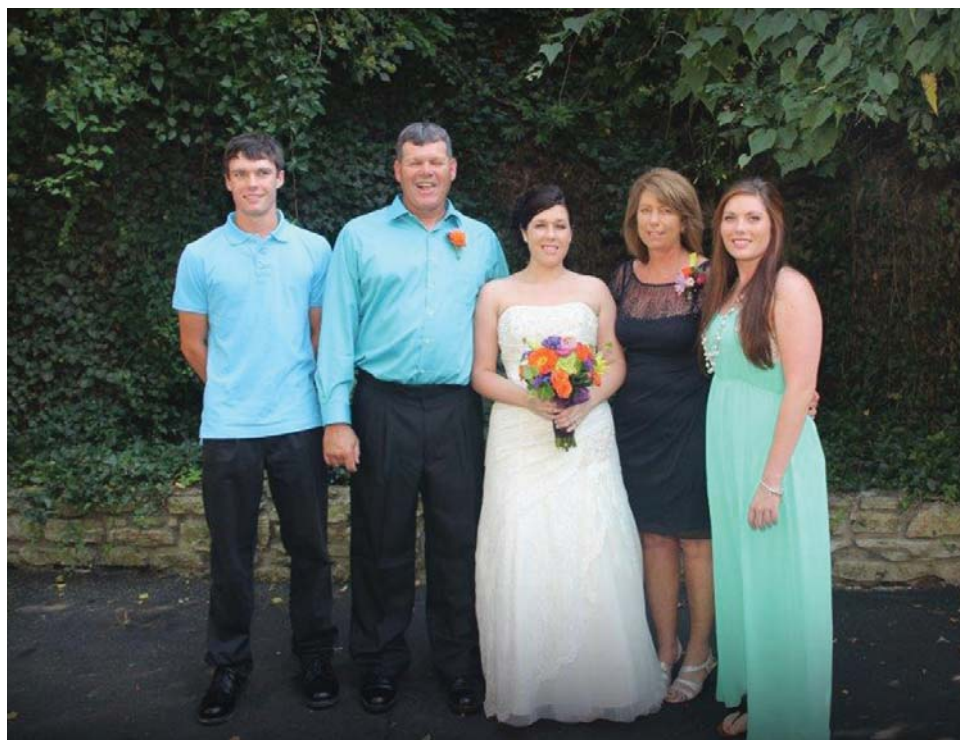


At left, Lisa's daughter, Jenna (Eichelberger) Simpson, her husband, Chris, her sons, Adam and Luke, and step-daughter, Mackenzie

Susan Elizabeth Durham is known for staying in the area and leading an Ozarks rural life. Susan graduated from Ava High School in 1983, and she married Dwight Evans in 1985. They have a farm in northern Ozark County, near the area Dwight's ancestors farmed all the way back to before the Civil War. Susan has worked for White River Valley Electric in the Gainesville office since 1985.

Susan and Dwight have three children: Paige Diane born June 22, 1990, Shannan Elizabeth born June 9, 1993 and Jordan Rylee born July 31, 1999. Paige is a registered nurse employed by Cox Medical Center in Springfield, MO. Paige married Dustin Burress in August 2014. Shannan is currently in her last year at Mercy/SBU School of Radiography in Springfield, MO. Jordan is a freshman at Gainesville High School.

At right, August 2014—Susan's family at Paige's wedding (L-R) Jordan, Dwight, Paige, Susan, and Shannan Evans.



Above, In August 2014, Susan (Durham) Evans' daughter, Paige married Dustin Burress in the Wilderness Church at Silver Dollar City near Branson. The people shown in the photo (left to right) are: Mr. & Mrs. Burress, Jim Burker, Dustin & Paige (Evans) Burress, and Paige's grandmothers, Norma Evans and Iris (Brown) Durham.

John David Durham graduated from Ava High School where he played on the football team. He attended the University of Missouri in Columbia before joining the military and serving in Europe and the Middle East. For many years, John, has been an appliance technician for the John Morris Equipment Company in Springfield, and he lives in nearby Ozark, MO. He remains the avid reader that he's always been since a child.



At right, John Durham in 2000.

Julie Diane Durham graduated from Ava High School. Julie had heart problems from birth, and is the family's survivor against all odds. But Julie never let her condition keep her from athletics or other activities. Julie loves horses, and she has always try to live on a place where she can keep her horse. Julie is a registered nurse at the Olathe (KS) Medical Center. She lives in Osawatomie, KS, with her new husband, Gus Rogers.

Below, Julie (Durham) Rogers with her horse.



Newly Weds!
September 12, 2014,
Julie Durham and Gus Rogers
in Osawatomie, KS.