

Chapter SEVEN

ELDON LEON HARTLEY

Ira & Mintia's third-born (b. 1920 - d. 2000)



It was late 1919 and Ira Hartley was in hurry--he wanted to get Mintia and the two kids (Kiree & Lawrence) set up on their new farm in Williams Hollow. Mintia was with child, and he wanted everyone settled before the child was born. The new farm was already in pretty good shape--it had a cabin on it that would be used until a family home could be built.

On January 19, 1920, Eldon Leon Hartley was born in that cabin. It wasn't too much longer that the newborn would have heard the taps of his Dad's hammer as a new home was being built not far from his cabin crib. In fact, Eldon's earliest memories were of his father building. He remembered being held by a man he thought was his Grandpa Bill Hartley and watching the building of the home going on. Since Grandpa Bill died when Eldon was only about 15 months old, other family members think that Eldon actually remembered being held by Uncle Andy Hammons.

Eldon did recall this early memory during his 1987 interview in his Wichita home with Kiree's son, Kenneth: According to Eldon: *"Now Dad was helping Uncle Charley Gunnels build a house over close to Mt. Tabor. Dad & Uncle Charley were up on the roof fixing it. They told me to stay away from the house for fear something would fall on me. Well, something did. Bill Hunt, an old man and a neighbor*

of ours, always had a big chew of tobacco in his mouth. He was up on the ladder next to the roof, and if he saw me getting close to the house, he'd spit tobacco juice down on me. Now I never forgot that--having tobacco juice being spit on me by old Bill



Above, Eldon, middle, with the Lathrop boys at Arden School, ca 1931-32

Hunt!"

Before Eldon was too much older, the brand new two-story house that his Dad was building at Williams Hollow was finished and life was good. Eventually, Eldon would enroll in Flat Rock School with his older brother and sister about the time that their little sister, Dochia Levon was born in 1926. Eldon's family was well thought of in the area. He eventually knew all the neighbors, and every Saturday night, there would be a party at the Hartley house--people came to listen in on a new device called a "radio." The Grand Ole Opry would be tuned in but only one person got to listen at a time. Also some time during the summer Eldon's Dad would uncover the winter ice that had been buried and Eldon got to enjoy homemade ice cream on a hot summer evening. The Hartleys were a well established farm family in Washington township of western Douglas County.

Late 1920s -- Difficult Years for Eldon and His Family

One could say that the 1920s was a wonderful decade for Eldon and the Hartley family if Ira had not fallen ill and died in October 1929 when Eldon was only nine years old. Mintia was left a widow with all four of her children still at home. Yet by all indications, Mintia steadied the family ship, and it sailed on.

And not long after that, the make-up of the family would change as Eldon's older sister, Kiree, married in early 1932 and left the household. A stabling presence appeared in the person of a widower by the name of Charley Breedlove.

Charley was a widower since May 10, 1930, when his wife and three of their children died in a storm cellar explosion outside of Seminole, OK. (The full story is provided in Chapter 4).



Eldon at the farm around 1940



Above, Eldon, with his little sister, Levon, early 1930s at the Williams Hollow farm



1942—Eldon in uniform at his Army boot camp



1942—Verda (Burluson) Hartley & Levon Hartley

Charley and Mintia married in 1932 and they merged their remaining families at the Williams Hollow farm. Eldon and all his siblings had nothing but fond memories of Charley and his children, Pearl and Bob Breedlove. That would end, however, with Charley's untimely death in 1936 of pneumonia.

Eldon, Filling A Man's Shoes at Age 15

As a young teenager, Eldon had finished the eighth grade back at Flat Rock School since Arden had closed for lack of funds, and he completed one year of high school in Ava. Then at some point, with the country's Great Depression raging on, Eldon joined one of President Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps camps intended to train young men and also construct public works projects. He was probably enlisted at Pond Fork, MO, south of Williams Hollow about 30 miles.

Eldon remembered the CCC camp experience with fondness. He even received an unusual side benefit. According to Eldon in his 1987 interview with his nephew, Kenneth Brown:

"At the CCC camp, they shaved our heads--like the Army. We worked outdoors a lot and I got a really bad sunburn on my head. Well, would you believe I never had dandruff ever since?"

After Eldon completed his CCC camp experiences he returned to Williams Hollow and helped Mintia with the farm. When the 1940 census taker came around, he found Mintia, Eldon, and Dochia Levon as the only three members of the Hartley household.

At some point Eldon began to court a little firecracker over near the head of Beaver Creek and north of Tigris (locally pronounced as ti-gurse) by the name of Verda Florence Burluson.

More than once, Eldon would walk over to Verda's house, walk her to church up at Dogwood to the west a couple of miles, walk her back home, and then make his way by foot during the night back to Arden and Williams Hollow.

If things weren't very serious already between the couple, they certainly got that way after December 7, 1941, when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. It was a day when men cried, and every American was shocked into the realization that his/her life would never be the same. For Eldon and Verda, they would head over to Ozark, MO, the seat of Christian County to the west of Williams Hollow, and get married on February 7, 1942. In his 1987 interview, Eldon recalled their close call trying to get back to Williams Hollow where they would spend their wedding night. According to Eldon:

“Well we were driving back from Ozark on our wedding night and some of our friends saw us. They took chase, and I knew what they were up to--it was a chivaree. Well I got out ahead of them and when we got to Garrison’s store at Arden, I drove around behind a pond and thought we were hid. Well, they saw us. They got us out of that car, and I had to do some high old talking to keep them from dunking us in that cold pond. This was February, you know.”

Before the year of 1942 was over, Eldon would enlist in the Army at Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis on August 3 and remain enlisted for the rest of the war. Very likely Eldon was in boot camp when his first son, Raymond Leon, was born in September of 1942. Eldon would stay in the Army until 1945. By then, Eldon’s mom, Mintia, had a hired hand by the name of Grant Hampton that many of her grandchildren learned to enjoy and love. A letter survives in which Grant wrote to the U.S. Army asking that Eldon be discharged so that he could help his mother with the farm on Williams Hollow. And, at some point, Eldon did return to the Williams Hollow farm. Mintia had a little house built on what became the “Upper 40” for Eldon and his family.

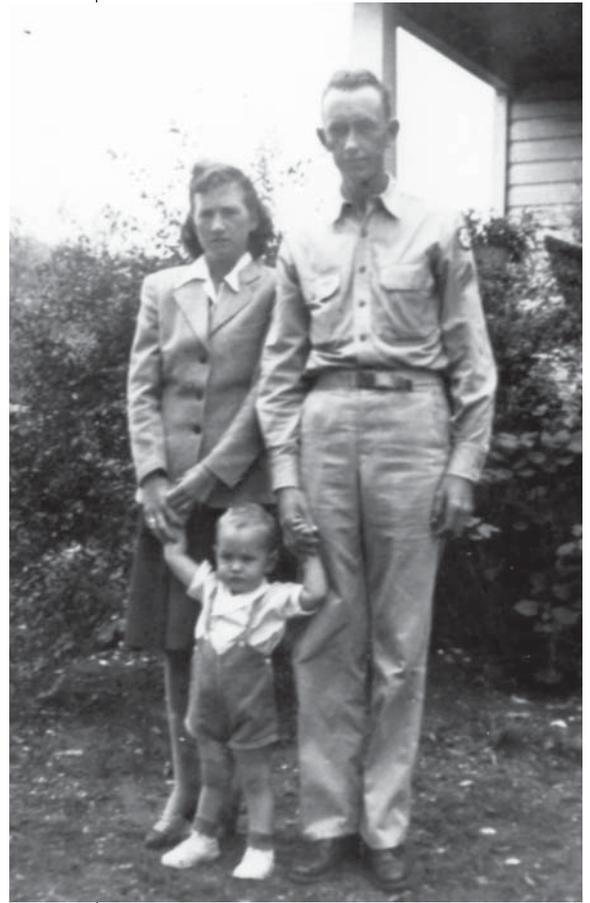
Eldon and Verda’s second son, Jerry Lee, was born at the house on the “Upper Forty” on March 28, 1948. At some point, however, the couple would pull up stakes and seek their fortune in one of the many places that was hiring people during the post-war boom.

Eldon & Verda Move from Missouri Never to Return

After Eldon and Verda left Missouri, they went to Washington state where Eldon worked as a warehouseman for two years. Now, Eldon’s brother, Lawrence, was already in Wichita where there were many jobs in the aircraft industry.

Eldon got a job at Boeing working as a machinist and was a machinist supervisor at the time of his retirement many years later. Working continuously over many years without interruption, Eldon was able to earn a good living for Verda and the two boys.

By 1957, Eldon and Verda had been able to buy a new three-bedroom house at 201 Alexander in Haysville, a few miles southwest of the



Above, Eldon and Verda with Raymond, in 1943 at the Williams Hollow farm.



Above, ca 1951—Jerry and Raymond



Above, 2008—Eldon & Verda's first purchased home at 201 Alexander Drive in Haysville. The original red brick has since been painted.

Boeing plant where Eldon worked. Raymond spent his teenage years in this house, and Jerry may have also. But this house really didn't suit Eldon who needed a place to garden and to have a shop. At some point, Eldon sold the house. He purchased the house and large lot at 5728 S. VanDale where he and Verda would live the rest of their lives.

It was at the VanDale house that Eldon would plant large gardens, fruit trees and maintain a large and beautiful yard.

It was while they lived in the VanDale home, that Eldon and Verda were blessed with their third son, Gary Dean Hartley, born on February 6, 1961. This would be the only childhood home that Gary knew. (With his parents and brothers passed away, Gary now owns the house and lives there with his wife, Jennifer).

Eldon passed away while living in this house on March 26, 2000. Verda lived in the house alone for another eight years before passing away on July 26, 2008.



Above, Eldon & Verda's long-time home at 5728 S. VanDale in south Wichita. The original house was just the central portion. Over the years, Eldon built extra rooms on to the house and built the garage on the right to replace the original one-car detached that was located to the left of the house. The photo was taken in 2008.



Above, 1961—Verda, Raymond (holding Gary), Eldon, and Jerry

Eldon & Verda's Children:

- **Raymond Hartley** was born September 25, 1942, in western Douglas County, MO. He and his parents moved to Wichita, KS, when he was young and grew up there. He served in the U.S. Navy, on the Wichita Police Department, and worked in the aircraft industry. He and his first wife, Kay Kramer, had two children, Kevin & Michelle. He and his second wife, Nancy, had two children, Alison & John. Last, he was married to Rose Norman for 27 years before his death in August 2012.
- **Jerry Hartley** was born March 28, 1948, in western Douglas County, MO. Then his parents moved to Wichita in 1950, and Jerry grew up there. Jerry served in the U.S. Navy and in the Wichita Police Department before a long career as an insurance claims adjuster. He and his wife, Linda, were married in 1971. Jerry passed away in August, 2013.
- **Gary Hartley** was born February 6, 1961, in Wichita KS. He and his wife, Jennifer, live in south Wichita in the home of his late parents. Gary has two children by a former marriage: Danielle and Elisia.

Raymond - Chapter 7.1
see page 166

Jerry - Chapter 7.2
see page 172

Gary - Chapter 7.3
see page 176



Above, 1996—L-R: Kevin & Michelle (Hartley) Dory, Eldon & Verda (Burluson) Hartley, and Raymond & Rose Hartley. In front are Kevin & Michelle's two children, Chelsi & Taylor



At left, Mintia (Gunnels) Hartley with her son, Eldon and his wife, Verda (Burluson) Hartley at the Williams Hollow farm.

Below, Eldon and Verda in November 1999 at Kiree's funeral. Eldon died four months later in March 2000



At right, November 1999, Eldon & Verda (Burluson) Hartley at the family dinner following the funeral of Eldon's sister, Kiree.



At left, November 1999 in Ava, MO following the funeral of Eldon's sister, Kiree. Possibly Eldon Hartley's last picture

L-R: Raymond, Gary, Eldon, Verda & Jerry



Above, July, 2000, near Clearwater—Hartley family reunion—Eldon Hartley's Family
L-R: Verda, Jerry & Linda, Gary with daughters, Danielle & Elisia;
Alison, Rose & Raymond



Above, 2006 Hartley Reunion at John Hartley's House in West Wichita
L-R: Gary & Jennifer Hartley, Linda & Jerry Hartley, Verda (Burluson) Hartley, Alison,
Raymond & Rose Hartley