

Mallie Lester Wallace
1910-2002
The last of the "Old Wallaces"

Biography written by granddaughter Jenny Chriscoe Purvis

Mallie L. Wallace was born May 31, 1910 to Lucian and Nancy Jane Williams Wallace. He grew up a farmer's son and was at heart a farmer himself. He married Clara Cockman and was the father to four girls: Jacqueline, Chloe, Doris and Patricia.

A textile mill worker who raised hogs and grew crops as well, he knew how to enjoy life. He delighted in the simple things. Rabbit hunting, auction houses, pumpkins in the fall, and flowers in the spring were among his favorite things. He enjoyed "riding around" and sharing details of old home places and names of creeks while looking at how the crops were doing. He always went home a different way than he came even if it meant taking the long way around. We never, ever saw him rush around or get in a hurry. He savored his time with each of us.

Above all he enjoyed his grandchildren. He taught us about life, how to be positive, laugh, and have a good time. He always kept a "quarter jar" and would take it with us to the beach each year. We'd dump all those quarters in a big pile and divide them out among us. Those were ours to spend however we wanted and boy did we feel rich. He gave freely of his time and love, showed us what things were most important, and taught us to keep a penny in our pocket so we'd never be broke. In his presence, you always had the feeling that you were his favorite. We never doubted Papa's love.

His house was the Sunday meeting place. Roasted peanuts, Cracker Jacks, and little Cokes in glass bottles were always enjoyed by a big fire in the fireplace or out in the yard in his "tree-house." It was there we listened to him sing songs like "The Man That Rode the Mule around the World" and heard wonderful stories from his life. One of our favorites was when he and his daddy traveled by wagon to Sanford and he got to see electric lights for the first time as they topped the hill that night. It was also there that we learned about our family heritage. Papa was proud of being a Wallace and wanted the younger generations to know their roots and heritage as well. He was the one to ask if you needed to know who was related and how.

Our Papa died in July of 2002, but his life lessons and love live on with us daily. We were so blessed to have such wonderful, unconditional love and support and will forever miss his knowledge and wisdom of life.

Eulogy given by grandson Morgan Jackson

We gather today to celebrate the life of Mallie Lester Wallace. I truly believe that celebrate is the most appropriate word to use for the man that some of you knew as Mr. Wallace, some as Mallie, but to us - he was "Pop." Papa was a man who lived life to the fullest, a day at the time.

First of all, I would like to give you the specifics of his life -- he was born in Robbins in 1910 to Lucian and Nancy Jane Wallace, the fourth of seven children. Like most in his day, he grew up on the family farm, and later went to work in the textile mills. But unlike most, he was one of those lucky men who got to marry the prettiest girl he ever met. He and Granny were married for more than 54 years when she passed away. Pop spent most of his working life teaching weavers in mills all over North Carolina.

But this does not tell Papa's real story -

His real story has a lot more to it. Pop was a man who welcomed each day with a smile and a little song. He was a man who loved his family and who taught us all how to enjoy life. Pop had that special ability to make each of us truly believe that we were his favorite and we all still do. He was a grandfather who always had a dollar for the candy store.

He had such a great way of looking at things. He was a man who believed that the good ol' days were today and tomorrow. He was a man who knew everyone and everything - and most importantly he knew everything about everyone. But he never judged anyone; he believed that every person should live their life as they wanted - as he did.

He loved to talk about those "old" people who just happened to be younger than him. When you asked Papa about his own age, he would tell you that he was signed up for Social Security and he would get his check the first of next month. What he wouldn't tell you was that he had signed up 25 or 30 years ago. He was not old, he would say, just been here a long time.

Over the years, he worked in so many places; from Swepsonsville to Red Springs, from Graham to Rockingham, from Cheraw, SC to Galax, VA - Papa loved to talk about the places he had been and the people he had seen.

He also loved to sit on the porch and enjoy the coolness of the morning and the calmness of the night. He loved to talk of the dances and corn shuckings that he and Hurley used to go to. He loved to eat at those little cafes, but his favorite place was Hardees - where you could find him everyday at two o'clock.

He loved to tell stories about the old Wallaces and prided himself on being the oldest Wallace living. Papa loved to ride around; Lord, did he love to ride - he was so proud - he had just gotten his driver's license renewed for five more years. And he had just returned from the beach. He loved going to the beach and loved the ocean -- or maybe, it was just all the girls in bathing suits. More than anything he was a man who always had a good time.

I hope you will take notice of how many things that I have mentioned that Papa loved to do. We could all learn a lesson from Pop about the preciousness of life and how we need to embrace each morning and live each day to its fullest. So today - we should not mourn for Papa - we should celebrate his life, because that is exactly what he would do.

To end his story - he was a man who married the love of his life, was a wonderful father to four beautiful daughters, grandfather to eleven, great-grandfather to thirteen and great-great grandfather to two - but most importantly he was a friend to us all.

And we will miss him...