

THE INCLUSIVE
STORY OF
Uncle Big Bud

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Insert Publication Data:

ISBN978-0-980110241

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Publisher-HenryRetta's

Order at henyretta.com

Copyright-May 6, 2008

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Chapter One – The Gees and the Begiches

In Staunton, Virginia, in about 1800, a slave girl was born who went by the name of Hattie May. In her life as a young woman she bore six children. When Hattie May had gone past her forty-first birthday, she gave birth to a baby girl and named her Sarah Evaline. In 1862 Sarah Evaline bore a daughter and named her Lucinda. Lucinda was later nicknamed “Mama Lou.” In turn, Lucinda gave birth to four children with her husband, Paul Williams. Her first child, born in 1887, was a son named Henry Esley, later nicknamed “Big Bud.” Lucinda’s second child was a daughter, Evaline. Soon after came a second son, Ben, and a second daughter named Sarah – named after her grandmother, Sarah Evaline.

In 1816 in the same state of Virginia, but in the town of Mecklenburg, lived a white family whose surname was Gee. The husband’s name was Neavel; his wife’s name was Elizabeth. Together the couple had four sons. Two of the sons were married and the other two had moved out on their own, when a surprise baby was born to them in 1816; they christened him Nevil. In 1819, when baby Nevil was only three, his father Neavel lost his battle with pneumonia. As a consequence of Neavel’s death all the responsibility of trying to operate their small farm rested on the shoulders of his wife, Elizabeth. For two years Elizabeth and her five slaves – a father, mother and

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their three children, worked hard at carrying on the business of operating their small farm without the help and expertise of her husband. At the end of those two years Elizabeth had failed to break even. She decided to sell the farm, her five slaves and livestock. With the profits from the sale Elizabeth Gee and five-year-old Nevil joined up with her brother-in-law, William O. Gee, and his wife Nancy, and the four of them signed on to travel by wagon train to Henderson County, Kentucky.

There they took up residence in a small farming community where they had relatives. Elizabeth, her son and her in-laws arrived in Henderson County to find their Kentucky relatives were as poor as church mice, as poor as they were themselves. Their Kentucky relatives may have owned a small farm that provided the four travelers with a temporary roof over their heads, but they could offer nothing more. As a result, to put food on the table, Elizabeth and her party had no choice but to hire themselves out as migrant workers.

But Elizabeth's life took a turn for the better when she met and married a relative of her late husband, Milford D. Gee. Milford D. was a hard-working, ambitious man. Milford made it known to his new bride as well as the folks who lived in that particular community that he was passionate about two things: his love for his new family, and his desire to possess wealth. More importantly, Elizabeth could see that Milford D. took great delight in Nevil. He told her that, with

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her cooperation, he would teach the boy the things his late father would have.

Right away Milford D. began to instill in the boy the importance of an education. He taught young Nevil that he would be rewarded if he followed Milford D.'s lead and focused his attention on a hard day's work and not on a lot of nonsense. By the time young Nevil was six, and in his first year of kindergarten, Milford D. involved the boy in an after-school routine. Nevil would step down from the buggy which was driven home from school by his mother. He then walked into the house, placed his books on the table, and immediately went to join his stepfather for an hour or so in whatever project Milford D. had undertaken for that day. Throughout his early years young Nevil stayed on course carrying out his stepfather's wishes with one exception: he had an uncontrollable appetite for women, starting with a kindergarten kiss with a schoolmate named Martha Gresham.

By his sixteenth birthday Nevil made it obvious he was developing a mind of his own. In spite of all the nagging he took from his parents, who tried to discourage him from thinking about girls so much and at such an early age, Nevil married Martha Gresham when the two of them were barely seventeen. He brought her home to live with him and his parents. Martha was close to her own family and spent a great deal of time with them as well. All went well with the young couple – until Milford D. and the boy's mother Elizabeth

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announced that they had decided to leave Kentucky and move to Texas. They invited their son and his wife to make the wagon train journey with them.

Nevil and Martha got busy trying to separate the positives from the negatives, the pros from the cons. Finally Nevil settled the debate, believing that it would be more beneficial for them to tag along to Texas with his parents than it would be to stay in Kentucky. He was certain they would be more secure living with his family, but he had invested twelve years of hard labor in his stepfather's new adventure. He sincerely believed in his stepfather's ability to turn his savings into a fortune once they arrived in Texas. Martha's opinion, however, was quite different. She believed moving to Texas was a bunch of nonsense. She told Nevil she couldn't imagine living so far from her own family that she couldn't see them daily.

So at odds were the two of them, that in the end they decided the only way to settle their dispute was to divorce. This they did, and in the fall of 1834, Milford D., Elizabeth and their seventeen-year-old son, Nevil left Henderson County, Kentucky. Martha moved back in with her parents. After a few weeks the three travelers came to a farming community outside the town of Caldwell, in Burleson County, Texas. This was farming country called Brazos Bottom; known for its fertile land and suitable for growing cotton. But the Gee family's dream of growing cotton in that area turned out to be nothing

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more than a short-lived fantasy. They quickly realized they couldn't afford to buy land in Brazos Bottom.

Instead they moved northwest of Caldwell to a community near an even smaller town named Gause, where the land was less expensive. There the Gees purchased a small farm that had been deserted for so long that it had begun to revert back to nature. Milford D. and his stepson began the hard task of clearing the land for farming. By early spring of the following year, Milford D. and Nevil had cleared the land. They were able to plant their crops and harvest in time to send to market in the fall. They did well, and the farm's earnings grew with each passing year.

During the first year of taking on the task of farming in Gause, Nevil worked twelve-hour days, each and every day, alongside his stepfather. But as hard as he worked he still had a deep desire for a wife; a replacement for Martha. That desire had just barely manifested itself, when out of nowhere Nevil's estranged wife Martha showed up at his doorstep. All was well once again with the young couple.

During their years in Gause, the Gees bought two slaves, Patsy and Pappy. For the next several years, with their slaves alongside them, the Gees worked hard and saved their money. In time were able to buy the land they had originally wanted in Brazos Bottom. The river bottomland was very rich and fertile and still is to this day. As Pasty and Pappy had been with the Gees almost from the beginning, they had been fine-tuned with the way the Gees wanted things done.

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That earned them authority over the new slaves, as they trickled in, until the Gees owned more than forty. With that many slaves the Gees no longer had to work the fields alongside the slaves. Instead, the two men spent their day on horseback riding through the fields and driving the slaves to work even harder which turned out to be a very prosperous business for the owners. For sixteen years the Gees saw bountiful success from their cotton crop and the herds of cattle they transported to market every year.

At the end of that time Elizabeth found herself overcome with nostalgia for her four sons and their families back home in Mecklenburg, Virginia. Meanwhile, during most of those years of Nevil and Martha's marriage, Nevil had dabbled in and out of the young slave girl's beds. He made it known amongst the slave men that their visitation rights to certain slave girl's quarters was off limit until further notice. Nevil had somehow got it in his head that he was capable of not only keeping his wife pleased in bed and to her satisfaction, but also to see to those young colored gals' bedtime activities as well.

However the older he got, the more things started to be left undone, especially in his own bedroom. When time came for Martha's needs to be satisfied, he just couldn't muster up the energy. When she began to ask him for his reasons why he couldn't, he'd make up excuses, saying that he was losing his natural ability to indulge with as much enthusiasm as he once did as a youngster. Other

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times, when she'd ask him about leaving the house in the middle of the night, he'd tell her that he and his father had heard tales about slaves escaping other plantations under the cover of darkness. Since he was the only son, he was the one to enforce the slave curfew. This was why he'd leave their bedroom at all hours of the night to show himself, and perhaps the slaves would be less likely to try to escape. Martha sat there, pretending to be genuinely listening to his entire line of bullshit, which made no sense to her at all. In fact it made her that much more suspicious. So, one night as he was giving her his excuse about having to leave in order to patrol the area, she played opossum and watched him leave the house. She waited five minutes, and then quietly followed him to this slave girl's hut and caught him in the act. At once, she went back to her house, packed her clothes and moved out. Later, she filed for divorce. Needless to say, Nevil's mother and stepfather weren't surprised in the least bit when she told them about him dishonoring their marriage vows by lying around with these nigger slave girls. They had caught him salivating over girls of the same color so many times before. The divorce gave Nevil *carte blanche* to visit as many different slave girls' hut as he wanted. Once he had his fill of the black girls, he decided to go in search of a white woman to be his new wife. Soon thereafter he met a white woman; Christiana Oldham. He courted her for about six months, and then proposed marriage. When she accepted his proposal, he went straightaway and told his parents that he has put aside his foolishness,

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and promised them that he wouldn't ever passionately touch another slave girl. He didn't want his intended wife to have any reason to suspect he'd cheat on her as he had cheated on Martha. He even went so far as to get with his stepfather, asking for his help in drawing up a set of plans to remodel his home. Afterward he explained the drawing to Old Pappy; as soon as Old Pappy assured Nevil that he understood the plan, Nevil ordered old Pappy to take four of his best carpenters, do the renovation, and have it finished by the time he and his new wife married.

In order to meet the deadline, Old Pappy and his crew worked from early dawn and into early darkness, so that Nevil and his new bride, Christiana Oldham Gee, could move into their new home on their wedding night. In token of his appreciation for what Old Pappy and his men had done, Nevil decided that not only would he take a few days off to romance his new bride, but he would give Old Pappy and the four men that helped the following day off as well - which they used to go fishing.

A week or so after the wedding, Nevil's mama, Elizabeth fulfilled the wish she had made earlier, when she announced to her family that she would be taking a trip back to Virginia for a month's visit with her sons and their wives and her grandchildren. On her way there, she stopped off in Henderson County, Kentucky, to visit with a couple of friends. There, she became ill and shortly thereafter died from a case of influenza in February of 1852. Less than a year after