

A SEPTEMBER WEDDING DAY by Monette Morgan Young

One Friday in late September in 1928, my parents and I got in our old T-Model Ford and bounced down the seven miles of dirt road between our house and my Murphree grandparents' home in the Lloyd community in Calhoun County, MS. I was overjoyed to be going to "Mama's" house. One big reason was that my Aunt Leila was still there, the only one of the children still at home. She had been teaching school in the surrounding communities for several years.

However, she was not destined to teach that particular day. Unknown to her parents, this was to be her wedding day. Her parents and siblings had been aware of her romance with Clifford on the neighboring farm for only a few months, but there had been association and companionship between the two for much longer. Her parents were vocally opposed to this courtship, but no one could find fault with the young man, he was one of the area's finest. Their voiced objection was that Leila was 29, ten years older than Clifford. But the real reasons were that life at their home was going to be much less pleasant with Leila gone: she helped out financially; she was young and strong with never a lazy bone in her body; she kept things running smoothly; and she owned a car but they didn't. At thirteen, I saw all that clearly.

Occasionally when I was visiting my grandparents Aunt Leila would let me go places with Clifford and her, perhaps to a singing at a nearby church. I was pleased when Clifford went along. He has such dry wit and humor and I enjoyed listening to their talk and to their laughter. Leila was a pretty, silvery blonde, and Clifford was as handsome as the popular male movie stars of the day. I could sense that there was more interest between them than just as neighbors.

We usually visited Mama's on Sundays, and our unexpected visit this Friday caused Leila's carefully made plans for a secret marriage to have to be revamped. Once we had arrived, Mother and Mama got busy talking in the kitchen. I trailed after Aunt Leila, and after we had gotten in another room she said, "You have all come at a bad time. I'm preparing to leave here this morning. Cliff and I are getting away to be married." I was thrilled and excited for her, but my heart sank. Never again would she be mine alone. Though she loved her other nieces and nephews, I considered her, somehow, to be completely mine.

She told me her plans. She had told Mama earlier that she was going to get Delia Zinn to come help with the wash that day. Delia lived about a mile to the east. Aunt Leila was actually going to stop at Delia's and ask her to walk over to Mama's to do the washing and to also tell Mama and Papa that Leila would not be home again that day, or ever again, to live.

Leila quickly changed her plans. She asked me to slip her suitcase out to her car, but I knew I'd never be able to do that. Mother watched my every move, and she would have seen out of the corner of her eye from the family room that I was moving about out front and she would have seen the suitcase. So Leila said she would put the suitcase in the car if I could create a diversion to keep Mama's and Mother's eyes off her while she did. Papa and Daddy had gone down about the barn, so there was no danger from that point.

Well, I was good at creating diversions, i.e. messes, so I went into the kitchen and "accidentally" spill a pan of water. While Mother scolded and cleaned up and Mama stood by and cajoled, Leila put the suitcase in the car. Then Aunt Leila asked me to go to the car and blow the horn, long and loudly. She would call out, "Get away from the car and leave the horn alone." The horn would be the signal for Cliff since he could hear it from his home. When he heard it, he would start walking across their pasture to meet her just around the bend.

Well, I went out and blew the horn long and loudly and was told to get away from the car. After about 15 minutes more, Aunt Leila told Mama and Mother that she was going to get Delia and she said, "Monette will ride with me." I was now to be the courier to return and tell them what had happened instead of Delia. Leila was wearing an everyday house dress. The plans were for Aunt Leila to drive around the bend, meet and pick up Cliff, and drop me off, Then they would drive to her sister Inez's home where Leila would change into her wedding clothes which she had hidden there.

Cliff was waiting for the car at the rendezvous point. He looked a little startled when he saw me. He had no way of knowing how we had inadvertently cut into the plans. He was already dressed in his nice suit. I ran all the way back, very excited to be the bearer of the news. Oh! Such a clack and a clatter. But it all soon subsided and everyone accepted it happily and appreciated Cliff so much as a part of the family.

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That's the end of Mother's story of Aunt Leila's wedding day. Mother died in 2000 at the age of 85. Aunt Leila and Uncle Clifford were married for 62 years and had two sons, both fine, successful men that I see occasionally. Aunt Leila died in 1990 at the age of 92, and Uncle Cliff died in 2001 at the age of 93. -- Jim Young, great nephew of Cliff & Leila --