

## MADISON BRUIN

MADISON BRUIN, 92, spent his early days as a slave on the Curtis farm in the bluegrass region of Kentucky, where he had some experience with some of the fine horses for which the state is famous. Here, too, he had certain contacts with soldiers of John Morgan, of Confederate fame. His eyes are keen and his voice mellow and low. His years have not taken a heavy toll of his vitality.

I'm an old Kentucky man. I was born in Fayette County, about five miles from Lexington, right where there are lots of fine horses. My old master was named Jack Curtis and my old missus was Miss Addie. My mother's name was Mary and she died in 1863 and never did see freedom. I don't remember my daddy at all. My missus was named Maggie.

The place was just a farm, because they didn't know anything about plantations up there in Kentucky. They raised corn and wheat and garlic and fast horses. They used to have big horse races and they had big tracks, and I stood in the middle of the big track in Lexington and watched them exercise the horses. Sometimes I got to help them groom some of the grand horses, and that was a big day for me. I don't remember the horses' names, no sir, but I know one big bay horse that won the race nearly every time.

I had two sisters named Jeanette and Fanny, and a brother, Henry, and after my daddy died, my mother married a man named Paris and I had one half-brother called Alfred Paris. Old master was good to us and gave us plenty of food. He never beat us hard. He had a son who was just one month older than me and we ran around and played a lot. Old master, he whipped me and his own son just the same when we were bad. He didn't whip us no more than he ought to have, though. There were good masters and some mean ones, and some worthless colored folks, too.

During the war cholera broke out amongst the people and everybody was scared they were going to catch it. They say it starts with the hurting in the stomach, and every time we'd hurt in the stomach, missus would make us come quickly to the big house. That suited us just right and when they sent Will and me to hoe or do something we didn't want to do, pretty soon I'd say, 'Willie, I think my stomach beginning to hurt. I think it's a sign I'm getting cholera.' Then he said,

'We better go to the big house like Ma says,' and with that, we'd quit working'. We got out of lots of work that way, but we've never taken the cholera yet.

During the war John Morgan's men came and took all the horses. They left two, and Willie and I took them to hide in the plum thicket, but we just got out the gate when the soldiers came again and they headed us off and took the last two horses.

My mother wore the Yankee flag under her dress like a petticoat when the confederates came raiding. Other times she wore it on top of the dress. When they heard the confederates coming, the white folks made us bury all the gold and the silver spoons out in the garden. Old master was in the Yankee army, because they constricted him, but his sons, John and Joe, volunteered.

Old master never sold any of his slaves. I used to hear him and missus fussing about the niggers, because some belonged to her and some to him and they had a time keeping them straightened out.

We boys had a good time playing. We'd draw the line and some got on one side and some the other. Then one would sing out, 'Chickama, Chickama, craney crow, Went to the well to wash my toe; When I got back my chicken was gone, What time, old witch?' Then somebody would holler out, 'One o'clock' or 'Two o'clock' or any time, and those on one side would try to catch those on the other side.

When I was young I didn't mind plowing, but I didn't like to ride at first, but they make me learn anyhow. Of course, that white boy and me, we liked most anything that was not too much work. We'd go down to the watermelon patch and plug melons, then we'd run, hide in the woods and eat watermelon. Of course, lots of times they allowed us to play just by ourselves. We played one game where we'd choose sides and then sing: 'Can, can, candio, Old man Dandio, How many men you got? More than you're able to catch.'

During the war we got whipped many times for playing with shells that we found in the woods. We heard the cannons shooting in Lexington, and lots of them shells dropped in the woods.

What did I think when I saw all those soldiers? I wanted to be one, too. I didn't care what side, I just wanted a gun and a horse and to be a soldier. John Morgan, he used to own the hemp factory in Lexington. When young master joined Woolford's 11th Kentucky Cavalry, they came to the place and halted before the big house on the turnpike. They had shotguns and blind bridles on their horses, not open bridles like on the race horses. They were just in regular clothes, but next time they came through they were in blue uniforms. All my white folks came back from the war and didn't get killed.

Nobody ever told me I was free. I was happy there and never left them till 1872. All the others went before that, but I got all I wanted and I didn't need money. I didn't know what paper money was; one time my master's son gave me a paper dime to get some squab and I didn't know what money was and I burned it up.

There's just one thing I like to do most and that's eat. They always had plenty of everything and they had a big, wooden tray, or trough, and they'd put potlicker and cornbread in that trough and set it under the big locust tree and all us little niggers just sat around and ate and ate. Just ate all we wanted. Then when we were full, we'd fall over and go to sleep. We'd just get fat and lazy. When we'd see that bowl coming, that bowl called to us just like hogs running to the trough. They were great on gingerbread and we'd go for that. They couldn't leave it in the kitchen or the pantry, so old missus got a big tin box and hid the gingerbread under her bed and kept the switch on us to keep us away from it. But sometimes we sneaked up in the bedroom and got some, even then.

When I was about 17, I left Kentucky and went to Indiana and white folks sent me to school to learn reading and writing, but I got tired of that and ran off and joined the army. That was in 1876 and they sent me to Arizona. After that I was at Fort Sill in what used to be Indian Territory and then at Fort Clark and Fort Davis, that was in Garfield's administration, then in Fort Quitman on the Rio Grande. I was in skirmishes with the Indians on Devil's River and in the Brazos Canyon, and in the Rattlesnake Range and in the Guadalupe Mountains. The troops were the Eighth Cavalry and the Tenth Infantry. The white and the colored folks were all together and I had three horses in the cavalry. The first one plays out, the next one shot down on campaign, and one was condemned. On that campaign we have the White Mountain Apaches with us for scouts.

When I got discharged from the Army I came to Texas and worked on the S.P. Railroad, and I have been in Texas ever since. And when I was in Dallas I got afflicted and got the pension because I was in the army. I haven't done much work in ten years. "I got married in San Antonio on December 14, 1882 and I married Dolly Gross - and that's her right there. We had a nice wedding, plenty to eat and drink. We had only one child, a gal, and she's dead, but we adopted several children.

We came to Beaumont in 1903 and I worked around Spindletop and I worked for the gas people and the waterworks people. I have been a carpenter and done lots of common work wherever I could find it.

It's been long time since slavery and I am old, but me and my old lady's in good health and we manage to get along fairly well. That's about all I can remember about the old times.