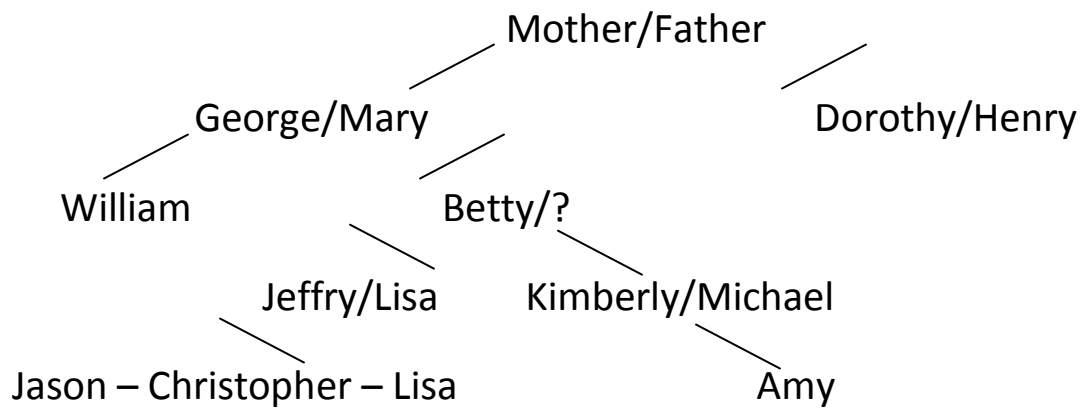


A Lifetime of Memories

By Lee Giles

George's Family Tree



Part of the Easy Peasy All in One Homeschool

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Chapter 3

“You fought in a war?” Christopher asked excitedly. “That’s awesome!”

“Not exactly. War is awesome if you mean fearsome. I enlisted, which means I signed up to fight. They sent me off to Camp Lee in Virginia, taught me to shoot a gun, even gave me a number for my family to check on the casualty lists in the papers to see if I had been killed or wounded. But the war ended just a year later and I had never even been shipped out. Your great uncle Henry was shipped out though, and never came back.”

“Why didn’t he come back?” Christopher asked innocently.

“He was killed. The Lord is sure mysterious. I wanted to fight in battle; Henry never did. But I’m the one who stayed in the States, and I am still here today. My sister Dorothy never remarried. After the war she moved back in to live with my parents and worked as a secretary.”

Jessica wandered distractedly over to the tree where Chris and his dad stood, listening to George’s stories. She bent over to pick up a dandelion.

George took the dandelion from Jessica and slipped it into her hair, tucking it behind her ear. “Did you know your grandma used to always wear flowers in her hair? Do you know who I’m talking about? Your Grandma Betty. Did you know she’s my daughter? You know you’re old when your kids have white hair.” George poked Jessica and she laughed. George smiled and closed his eyes.

August 5, 1923

“George, want to drive me into the city tonight?” Dorothy asked. “I want to hear Bessie Smith sing.”

Father chimed in. “The city isn’t the best place for a young woman. There’s an opera on the radio tonight.”

“For crying out loud, Father,” Dorothy replied in exasperation. “You know I don’t like opera. It’s too hot to stay in anyway,” Dorothy said. “And I like the new music. I feel it when Bessie sings the blues. I got the blues. Don’t worry, Father. I won’t be out drinking. They’ve dried up the city remember?”

Father didn’t respond but looked at George who answered, “Sure, I’ll take you.”

It was hot in the city. And crowded. “Do you know where we’re going?” George asked Dorothy.

“Not exactly, but we’ll see lots of others going too. Look. I bet it’s over there. Look.”

George maneuvered into a parking place. They made their way inside and squirmed into the crowd. The majority of the audience was black though not completely so. George fidgeted and Dorothy flirted. Dorothy loved every minute of it and shouted out her encouragement during the soulful show along with all the others who had the blues.

July 25, 1925

George walked into the library on a sunny Saturday morning, as was his habit, to spend the morning there reading. As he glided over to his usual spot, he found his chair occupied. He didn’t speak at first. He was transfixed by the sight. A woman was in his usual spot, reading a magazine. George had never seen her before. She wore her hair twisted and tucked so it covered her head like a hat. She wore a summer dress to her ankles and didn’t notice George at all.

“Excuse me, Miss.” George took his fedora off.

The young lady looked up and smiled. She had a yellow carnation in her hair. George just smiled and forgot to speak. After several more silent moments passed, the woman laughed and said, "You can say that again." George snapped to and was confused for a moment and then began to laugh.

"Excuse me, Miss."

"You know, I didn't mean you had to actually repeat yourself."

George was embarrassed and started to turn away. "Of course. Excuse me. Sorry."

The woman laughed again. "You are just falling all over yourself. Is there a problem my polite gentleman?"

"No, sorry. There's no problem. I come every Saturday and sit in that chair and read *Time Magazine* and today you are here."

"Would you like me to leave?" The woman asked good naturedly.

"No, stay. Stay forever. Actually, don't stay forever. Come with me to the movies. Have you been to one of the talking movies before?" She laughed and nodded. "Ben Hur is playing at the theater now. Have you read the book?" She put down her *Reader's Digest*. Seven hours later George brought her home to introduce her to his family.

"Mother, Father, this is Mary." His parents beamed at the introduction and quickly invited her to stay for supper.

Over the meal Mother and Father chuckled to themselves when George ate his broccoli which they knew he couldn't stand. "It must be love," Mother whispered to her husband on her way to the kitchen to pull dessert out of the refrigerator.

When everyone was having coffee after their supper, Dorothy came in. "What did you do to your hair?" Mother asked in disbelief.

"It's a bob, Mother. Everyone is doing it. You've never had your hair cut your entire life. Don't you want to be free of all that care?"

"No, thank you," Mother responded. "I like my hair and my dresses long."

"Oh, Mother. You're all wet. You don't like my dresses? Do you think it's scandalous you can see my knees?" Dorothy laughed.

Mary sat uncomfortably during the exchange. George leaned over and whispered, "I'll explain her story later. We're still praying for her." They exchanged smiles.

December 25, 1929

"That was a delicious peanut butter sandwich, darling," George called to Mary.

"Would you like another? It only takes a second. I have the sliced bread. Isn't that just the greatest invention?"

"No thanks, Mary. I'm fine. I've got a treat for Betty, though. You don't mind me giving her sweets, do you?"

"Everything in moderation," she said with a smile. "I'll call her on over."

Mary stood by her husband and called their toddler. "Betty, come here and see what Father has bought you." George produced something from his shirt pocket. "Wow, a Reese's Peanut Butter Cup. Yum! Do you want to eat it?"

Betty nodded and George smiled at her excitement. "I hope you will save a bite for me?" he playfully teased. His smile faded and he turned from Betty. "Mary, sorry that we can't do much to celebrate this year. With the factory closed, I just don't know what we'll do next."

"It's a wonderful celebration, George. And being together is what makes it wonderful. You're not still thinking of going away to look for work are you?" She eyed him with suspicion. "I hope not."

Being together is what matters. If we're together, then things will be okay. Right, Betty?" Mary tickled Betty. Their laughs made George laugh too.

"How could I be away from my girls? I wouldn't last a minute." He sat on the floor and scooped Betty into his arms. "I have one more present for my beautiful little girl." He brought out a small yellow carnation and tucked it in behind her ear. "Now you're even prettier, if that's possible. You look just like your Mother did the day I fell in love with her." He smiled sweetly at Mary.

"You mean the day you met me."

"Same day."

Chapter 3

What I know...

- There was a draft in WWI.
- Camp Lee is a place in Virginia where troops were sent for training.
- There were some who went through basic training but were never shipped out.
- (By the way, why is it called “shipped out?” 😊)
- There were casualty lists published in the newspapers and families were given a number to look for.
- Bessie Smith was a blues singer that came onto the scene in the early part of the 20s and some credit her with helping the Harlem Renaissance take off.
- The first commercial radio broadcast was in 1920.
- They did have operas on the radio as well as whole plays and musicals.
- The cost of the Model T by 1920 was under \$300 and any average worker could afford one.
- Expressions that were new this decade: for crying out loud, to be all wet, you can say that again, to fall all over oneself
- It really was Saturday on July 25, 1925.
- Reader’s Digest first started in 1922.
- Time Magazine began in 1923.
- Talking movies began in 1923 as well.
- Prohibition (the city being “dry”) began in 1920.
- Flapper dresses (knee length) came into style in 1925.
- The stock market crashed in October of 1929 causing many factories to close.
- Sliced bread was sold beginning in 1928.
- Cities were now wired with electricity and home refrigeration was in use.

Other news in the world...

1925 Scopes trial
1927 Ruth broke the home run record
1928 Bubble gum
Mickey Mouse
Penicillin discovered

