

A Most Memorable Moment

By Sherry Pittman

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The birth of a baby is a memorable moment in the lives of most families. The birth is usually anticipated with much joy and expectation. As the last few months approach, the occasional worry about the upcoming delivery and well being of both the mother and the expected baby filter into the minds of those awaiting the big day. Luckily, in most cases, these worries are needless and on the child's day of birth, a normal, healthy baby enters the lives of a thankful family.

The memorable moment I wish to share with you today, involves the birth of two little boys in the year 1898, in rural upstate New York. A young woman was expecting her fourth child in July of that year. Having already delivered three normal babies, the woman was not overly concerned about the pending birth of another child. However, on the 17th of May, between six and eight weeks earlier than expected, she found herself in labor.

The doctor was called, as well as the mid-wife, whom everyone called Aunt Margaret, even though she was no relation. After some time not one, but two baby boys were born, and together they weighed only 4 lbs. and 15 oz. It is important to remember that the year was 1898, the delivery was in a home in the country with no running water and medical technology was not what it is today. The doctor is said to have stated with conviction that there was no use in even cutting the umbilical cords of the two babies, because they could never survive. The mid-wife, Margaret, however, is said to have declared in a forceful tone, "You will cut the cords, these two babies will both grow to be 200 lb. men!" The doctor did as she commanded and Aunt Margaret began her arduous task of saving the two babies.

Aunt Margaret first made up a very weak whiskey sling, a mixture of whiskey, water and sugar, and using the corner of a soaked rag, forced a drop of the sling into the very tiny mouths of the very tiny boys. The babies were fed milk in this same manner for many months. They were not dressed for many weeks. They were laid on pillows covered with flannel and carried from place to place on the pillows to limit human contact as much as possible. The pillows were heated in the old cook stove before the flannel and then the boys were placed upon them. The effect of the heated pillows was probably much like that of the modern day incubator. In the end, both boys, Harry and Henry Noble grew to adulthood. Both boys, although small for their age for most of their lives, eventually grew to be normal sized adults, neither however grew to the 200 lbs. predicted by Aunt Margaret.

This event is memorable in that it is a fine example of the indomitable spirit of Americans who fought against of insufferable odds to raise families and become the prosperous society that the United States is today. The determination of one woman, resulted in the survival of two babies that otherwise would have been left to die. The birth and survival of Harry and Henry Noble were, however, even more important to me and my family, because Harry Noble was my great grandfather, and Henry Noble, who will be 100 years old on May 17th of this year, is my great great uncle. These two men fathered a total of three children, eight grandchildren, and 17 great-grandchildren. Had their lives been abandoned, a total of 28 individuals who followed them, also would not have come in existence. We are all grateful to the faith and will of that determined mid-wife known as Aunt Margaret.



Harry and Henry Noble, twin boys of Frank and Addie Buck Noble. Born 17 May 1898.

Notes of L. Freeman:

The name of the doctor was Dr. Daniel McCormick Taylor, who delivered many of the babies in Edwards, Russell, and Fine during that era.

Harry, as a young, married man and father of a daughter, died by drowning in 1922. His widow married Henry and they had a daughter and a son. Henry lived to be 101 years old, dying in 1999 shortly before his life would have spanned three centuries.

The daughter of Harry was Harriet (who passed away in 1985) who married Gordon Benoit (who passed away in 2002). They had a daughter, Sandra, who married Michael Pittman. Their daughter, Sherry, wrote the above article for a contest she entered when she was 13 years old in 1998.

When Henry and his wife, Ruth, had a daughter they named her Margaret in honor of the Aunt Margaret who was so instrumental in saving his life. Henry's son, Frank, was named for the twins' father.

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