

VIRGINIA DEAN TAYLOR (Mom Dean)

b. 1886

....."We can't let them hurt those little children and those women up there. When they turned the fence to get to me we started pouring that dynamite at their feet and everywhere....."

I was an unwanted child but I enjoyed a fairly good life. I went to good schools such as Frederick Douglas School in East Walnut Hill, Cincinnati, Ohio where I was born in 1886. I sang all kind of songs and tried to cover up everything that would break a little child's heart. I didn't have the love of my mother and father. My mother didn't really want me and she didn't allow my father to hardly pick me up or touch me and that I craved so much to be loved and picked up as other children were. I never had that blessing. But I made the best of it. I swung in an old rope swing outdoors and got jolly and rolled old hoops and old tires and made the best of my childhood. I was the only child. Its a cute little thing happened to me: I hooked a piece of chalk from school and I hid it on some of the rafters in the basement and I measured myself everyday to see how fast I was growing up so I could get out of that mess I was in. I lived 3 blocks from Howard Taft's Mansion. His mansion was on Grandon Rd. Three blocks over where I lived was called the ghetto, you know. The rich people, Alice Longworth lived on one corner. I passed by Howard Taft's house every day going to school and you know he became President of the United States. But I'm glad for that experience because I can understand people better this day. I can know people's problems and things. I can relate to people because I went through quite a bit of it.

And when I was 17 I ran away with the show called "Holiday in Dixie". I stayed with that show two years. At that time I had a pretty nice voice and I sang. And after I came out of the show business and had to be forced back home, I was 18 then and they couldn't keep me. And I later married by the name of Harrison Taylor from Columbia, South Carolina. We had a fairly nice life for about 28 years and then he started drinkin' and running around as most men do and then it got kinda dull. I promised him without a shadow of a doubt if he ever hit me...that would be him. And I meant that from the bottom of my heart. I kept my old trusty 45 where I knew it was at and I had been taught to shoot by shooting tomatoe cans and corn cans off of the fence. I was a pretty good shotsman.

Finally Harrison worked with the Pittsburg Coal Company. The Company needed an airway drilled and cut through for the miners in Kentucky and they moved him down there and I moved with him. And I had took training as a nurse and I was signed up with a nursing group. And I went from door to door on a mule there was no such thing as a car in Pike Co. Kentucky where they tell me now the roads are fixed. In those days you had to ride through the creeks, up the mountains and all over the hills on a mule was the only way you could get there. And I'd hang my bag on the saddle and away I'd go five miles back in the woods to help the doctor deliver a baby and whatever happened. My husband had sent back to Pennsylvania and got 15 black men to come o and help load coal because they were short on coal loaders.

But one night the whites of that community decided that the black people were getting all the money. We heard an expression one day, "We're gonna run all the niggers out of town tonight." And right back my house on the top of the hill was the Company Powder House. I only had the 45 and I had those ten men as borders and there was a German among them named Mike, he and my husband kind of buddied together. He was a good fellow. He said, "I'll tell you what we'll do. Taylor, we'll go up here and break in the powder house and get the dynamite out. We don't have a lot of bullets and we don't have a lot of ammunition, we'll get some." So he and my husband broke in the powder house and brought down 3 cases of dynamite what they call Moneybelle, and the fuse that went with it. So I had a little girl there about 17 who was my little dishwasher and my little helper and I sat down there on the floor and taught her how to cut that fuse in two small pieces four to five inches long--and stick it into that dynamite--and cut that dynamite half in two and pack it in the boxes. I gave my husband and this man Mike 2 boxes to take up on the hill. These men were shooting into all the black people's houses and as they came up the road four or five miles down the road, we could hear them shooting as they came. When they got to the turn of our road my husband and Mike set off this dynamite on the hill and it was just rainin' rocks! One right after another--LOOM LOOM LOOM! It sounded like cannons going off. There was about ten families above my house and a lot of little children and I says to this girl, "We can't let them hurt those little children and those women up there." When they turned the fence to get to me we started pouring that dynamite at their feet and everywhere. As I looked over to the road I saw this man coming our way by himself and I figured he was going to try and overpower us or do something and I shot the 45. Later the next morning I learned that I had shot through the Superintendents' hat, to my great surprise. He called

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hissself trying to make peace with the men, how was I to know that? I had already shot him right through that felt hat he had on. This happened about 1920 and I was about 33 years old. So we just poured that dynamite every which way and they broke and ran back. I had saved those 10 families that lived above me. They had shot those others that lived there on the road... shot through their houses and their men had run to the mountains and the women were in the clothes cupboards and children ran under the beds and everywhere to keep from being shot. The next morning my husband went down to the Company Store to see how they felt about what happened. He heard Old man Belcher what lives in Pike Co. Kentucky been there for for years living only 18 miles from the county seat and had never been to town. And with his country hillbilly twang he says, "I'll just tell you there ought to be something done to those niggers up on Red Row, they run my son last night till his tongue was hanging out!". Of course we got a kick out of that. My husband immediately went to Jenkins, that's a company town, and bought a little box car and we loaded it that morning with all our belongings and put a padlock on it and got the 9:45 train on out to West Virginia. They tell me that the judge said if he ever got his hands on me he was going to make an example out of me. But I certainly blew that town up that night.

We lived comfortably there in Coalwood, W. Virginia, right out of Welch and not too far from Bluefield. One day my husband had an abscessed tooth and the doctor told me to take him to Welch to have the tooth pulled. I was driving an open Chevrolet, you have to get out and put the curtains up when it rains. I took him over to get his tooth pulled and the Dr. lanced it and pulled it and we headed back home. Now while I was gone the driver of the Company Store Truck had come and picked up \$35.00 worth of empty pop cases. I had this store called the "Elks Cozy Corner". I served sandwiches and home-made pies and cakes and candy and chewing gum, and things like that, in the store I sold. He had picked up those cases and took them back to the store. When I drove down to get my credit for them he said I was a damn nigger liar, that he didn't pick them up. But the Polish lady next door had seen him pick them up. I told the manager of the store whose name was Mr. Green the best way we can prove this out is I just had a little party at my store and I had some bills struck (handbills) that said Elks Cozy Corner on them. Some of the girls that were serving at that party swept that dirt in those empty cases. Go look in those cases and you'll find some of those bills and he looked in his storeroom and sure enough he found those bills and he counted them right on down. He said, "Don", that boys name was Don. "Don, I don't know why you'd lie like that". Heres Mrs. Taylors bills in there showing that she did have those cases. So he gave me the credit and I bought up the 35 dollars worth in candy and chewing gum and Pop for my store. Now this boy had called me a damn nigger liar.

Well I went back to my store and I had a gate that I let down to keep people from coming back behind the counter. I let the gate down and was standing there casually drinking a bottle of NEHI pop. It was one of them thick fancy bottles they made then. So Mr. Green had told this boy Don that when ever he picked anything up he was to give me a ticket and keep one hisself, saying what he left and what he picked up. And when he finished writing the slip this day he says, "Here nigger, tell the boss that!" and when he said that he hit me with his fist up under my chin. And I popped him on up the side of his head with that NEHI bottle and the bottle broke and I kept the neck of the bottle in my hand and I cut him all in the top of his head with the neck of that bottle. Of course being in West Virginia something had stirred then! Everybody wanted to find me.

Now my husband was an Elk and the Elks took me and my baby and put us in a laundry truck right up against the cab with big bundles of laundry tied up with sheets all up around me and left me room enough I could get air. I had adopted this baby right after I had just lost my own newborn baby at childbirth. I took this baby and even nursed her from my breast until I bought her a cow to feed her because she had a stomach problem. So I gave the baby one of those tranquilizer pills that the doctor had left me when she'd have those stomach tramps. I gave her one of them so she wouldn't cry and she'd sleep as they drove me out of the county. They drove me over to Huntington W.V. where I caught a train and came on in to another state. I brought the child and my husband came 3 mos. later. They promised if they ever got a hold of me... they said that guys head was cut up like hamburger... well I had gotten mad and maybe I didn't realize what I was doing. But he had struck me up under my chin and called me a damn nigger liar. So these are some of the things that happened to me in my life.

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Many years later, long after my husband was gone and I had come out to Los Angeles, California a friend of mine came to me and says, "C'mon, I want you to go with me to hear a man named Jim Jones." Well I want to say I had long since fell out with all religion. Those preachers weren't doing nothing.

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