

[Ku Klux Stories]

[Union] [V5?]

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Folklore

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Edited by:

Elmer Turnage

KU KLUX STORIES Sanders

“I was born on the Fourth of July, 1862, in Pacolet, S.C. From that you see that I was a little girl during the Ku Klux days. Just today I was thinking what a scare I got then. The memory of it has never dimmed in my mind.

“My cousin, Lou Kennett, was a Ku Klux and he lived with us. I did not know that he was a Ku Klux, and I had never heard of them or known of them. Elders said that they would frighten you almost to death. I did not know what they were for except to frighten people.

“One night some masked Ku Klux came in the back way for Lou. I saw them and ran up stairs. He was coming down the stairs with his mask on. I screamed and he caught me. I closed my eyes and he spoke kindly to me. His arms felt friendly, and imagine my surprise when I opened my eyes and looked up to see his face and the mask hanging around his shoulders. He told me that they did not bother little girls or people who were loyal to the

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high principles and ideals of loyal Southerners. That meant nothing to me, and after he had gone it took a long time to make me understand what it was all about.

“Sometime later, my grandmother, Mary Kennett was going to take some things to the Ku Klux. She took me and my eight year-old cousin, Milton Kennett, with her. I was scared but Milton said he was not, and grandmother said that there was nothing to be afraid of. But just the same, I was scared. I thought that the Ku Klux were going to get grandmother. When we got there, she knocked on the wall. One man came out and got the things she had. I screamed and he laughed. Milton said that he was not afraid. The man asked him if he wanted to see all the Ku Klux. Milton said that he did, and they let him look through a crack. On the way home he stayed mighty close to grandmother. She held one of his hands and I held the other. As we passed some small sassafras bushes the wind rattled the leaves and Milton screamed. We laughed and told him that he thought it was the Ku Klux. He would not admit that he was scared, but he was just as glad to get home as I was. This is about my earliest recollection.

“Probably my next one was after I had started to school. Milton took care of me that first year. We rode a nice pony to and fro every day. Of course I rode behind Milton and he cared for the pony and saw that he was properly hitched and taken care of. We had a neighbor, a [?] bachelor who lived near us. We children were very fond of him. Often he stopped to talk to us on our way from school. When spring came he gave us fruit to take to school for lunch.

“When watermelon time came, he stopped us one morning and asked us if we wanted to take some to school. We carried two, and at recess we gave the entire school some. Our teacher cut them for us. We made faces out of the rinds. In those days children had no way to buy such things. On Halloween we made our faces from pumpkin skins. On our way home, the day we had the watermelons, we stopped and thanked our friend and told him of the fun we had at school. When we were ready to leave, he asked Milton if he had ever seen a Ku Klux, and Milton told him of the time we went with grandmother to carry

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them some things. He asked Milton if he remembered one jumping at him, and Milton said that he did, but that he did not tell grandmother why he was so scared. Our friend said that he was the one who had jumped at Milton and that he did it because he heard him say that he was so brave.

“At the age of three I went on a visit to my grandfather, Jack Kennett. One afternoon we walked to the family burying ground. I was 3 bare-footed and the briars scratched my legs and I cried. Of course grandmother stopped and rubbed my legs and got the briars out for me. When we reached the graveyard, grandmother was fixing her parents' graves and she began to cry. I saw her and asked her if the briars had scratched her legs, too. At that she began to laugh, and I did not understand what it was all about, until I was older and they told me how amusing I had been.

“I do not know for certain, but I have been told that my father was exempted from the Confederate War for the first two years because of his small children. After that he went to Virginia. When he came home after fighting in Virginia, he added the name 'Virginia' to my name, making it Mary Georgiana Virginia Sanders. I have never used Virginia to my name since it is already long enough.

“I went to a country school called 'Drag About School'. It was a double log cabin type, and on Sunday we had Sunday school there. I was about five years old, and my first teacher was Miss Becky Jeffries. I studied the Blue-back speller. We went to school at 8 o'clock in the morning and got out at five in the afternoon. We walked a mile to school and carried our dinner. We thought nothing of the distance. We were happy and contented children.”

Source: Mrs. Mary Sanders, 12 Lybrand St., Union, S.C. (77 years old) Interviewer: Caldwell Sims, Union, S.C. 11/2/37