

Jesus Lives at the Foot of the Hill

A Talk with Essie Mae (Thomas) Ogelvie

Written by Jackie Layne Partin

Just this week, I read that someone had seen Jesus in a “Cheeto” curl. He has also been seen on toast, on woodwork displays, in cloud formations, on leaves, and the list goes on and on. I am a believer, but give me a break about all the sightings of Jesus. As far as I know, there was no photography back in His earthly, physical days; as far as I know, He never sat for an oil painting or even a watercolor; and as far as I know, He never stood or lounged for a drawing or sketch. I do know that in Isaiah 53:2, the prophet was inspired to write, “...he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him,” and these words concerned His physical body. No one knows what Jesus looked like, but it’s fine with me if folks want to let their imaginations fan out in all directions, I just don’t want to hear about it. But hey! What do I know? After saying all that, I am going out on a limb and say, “I have seen Jesus today, May 26, 2009. He lives in Monteagle at the foot of the hill on King Street, and He manifests Himself through a tiny little female body.



Essie Mae (Thomas) Ogelvie posing with the Monteagle Hotel “Eagle”

Essie Mae (Thomas) Ogelvie was born July 27, 1917, in Rutherford County, Tennessee, near Christiana. Her father was Roy Dunn Thomas (b. 1891-d. 1966), son of Robert Scott Thomas (b. 1859-d. 1898) and Nancy “Nannie” Marie (Espy) Thomas (b. 1861-d. 1908). Essie Mae’s mother was Frances Ann Todd (b. 1895), daughter of George Washington Todd (b. 1858) and Bettie (Williams) Todd (b. 1866). They were born and lived in Cannon County, Tennessee. Essie Mae was a young girl when her grandmother, Bettie, died, but she still remembers her. Essie Mae’s father farmed for a living, but his occupation changed not long before the family had to make a move. His wife, Frances, became ill with tuberculosis, and the doctor recommended a move to the mountains for her health. Roy had begun a new job with the State of Tennessee in the Highway Department. Although the Great Depression was unfolding, there was work on the plateau for him, so he moved his family to Monteagle, Tennessee. By that time, he and Frances had six children: Nina, Essie Mae, Robert, Elizabeth and identical twins, Alma and Thelma.

Around 1929, the Thomas family moved into one of the two large buildings that stood between the Monteagle Depot and the entrance to the Monteagle Assembly. They sat back a little further than the old Depot. The other building was a store operated by C. J. Cantrell before he moved his business over to the Eagle Theater building on College Street. The store, spoken of by Essie Mae, may have formerly belonged to John Mortimer Francis who had died with cancer in 1925. He was an older brother to Robert and James "Jim" Francis who also later had their own stores in Monteagle. For fun, Essie Mae and her brother, Robert, played around the Depot. There were folks, new and known, to meet, loading and unloading of freight to be watched, the train with all its whistles and steam to be investigated, and many other interesting things for inquisitive children to see and hear. Time was spent chatting with Mr. Lafayette "Fate" Condra who was the baggage handler and janitor at the Depot.

Essie Mae went to the old Monteagle School on King St. when there was just an old dirt road going to it and a wide dirt path going down to the bottom of the hill. She had no idea what future significance lay ahead for her at the bottom of that hill. It was a nice, quiet, wooded hill with a small branch of water at the bottom, an interesting place for children to play. Mr. Howard Sanders was her teacher, and he also served as the principal of the school. Eloise Partin taught in one of the rooms. Essie Mae remembered that when students entered the school through the front door, there was a long room they called the "soup kitchen," and a lady from "across town" came in to do the cooking. The school was divided into four classrooms. The students started their day by gathering around the pot-bellied stove to hear a Bible reading and share a prayer. My father, Cleveland Layne, and his sister Wilhelmenia, were in school with Essie Mae. Morgan Conry, Bertha Johnson, Zelma Pirtle, Glen Richmond, and Ruby and Jane O'Neal were other fellow students.

O. C. Gregory's father had a well at the foot of the hill between his house and the King's house, so every school day at recess, O. C. ran down to prime the well for his dad. School discipline consisted mostly of a lot of standing in a corner, and if paddlings were needed, they were not administered in front of the other children. Essie Mae never got a whipping in school; someone like her, noticeably a kind, gentle person who is in control of her emotions and behavior, would never need to be disciplined! I admitted to her that I had never gotten a paddling in school, but I don't know how I kept from it because as a student, I was in control of exactly "nothing." Marbles was the big recess game for the boys; however, Mae Pearl King loved to play marbles as much as the boys. "Hide and seek" and races of all kinds were popular also. Mr. Howard, as Essie Mae called him, enjoyed having the children do plays and other programs. In one certain situation, she was supposed to hug Morgan Conry, but she shied from the task. Mr. Howard said, "Just act like you are hugging a telephone pole." That made it easier for her to carry through with her part of the play, but I wonder how Morgan felt knowing that Essie Mae was hugging him, but thinking of a telephone pole!

The family did not stay long in Monteagle until they moved to Sherwood Road in Sewanee where Roy Thomas was assigned a new task. The State was beginning the project of building the Sherwood Road up and down the rough, curvy mountain terrain. In the 1930 Census of Franklin County, Roy's occupation was listed as "patrolman" for the State Department. Essie Mae said that at first, her father had a crew of men working with him on the road project. Roy was a tractor driver. During this period,

there was an epidemic of flu, and everyone in the Thomas family got quite sick except Essie Mae and her father. Dr. Henry Kirby-Smith was the family doctor. One day Roy came home from work and asked his daughter to help him get his high top boots off because he was too sick to do it by himself. He too had come down with the flu. Essie Mae was the only one in the family spared from the illness; this may have been an early sign that maybe she was going to grow into a strong person, both in health and determination. Dr. Smith, along with caring women from the Episcopal Church, helped young Essie Mae in her dilemma by bringing food and clothing items to the family. She was a young girl, and her twin sisters were still babies. She recalled that the ladies made gowns for the twins, and that Dr. Smith not only asked if there was enough food in the house, but he checked the kitchen to be sure the family had enough to get them through the crisis. Even an uncle in Nashville came to keep the wood cut for the stoves in the house. Everyone was so helpful, and thankfully, the family slowly regained its strength. Was young Essie Mae being trained for something in her future? She never wavered in her care for her whole family during that flu season.

The children went to the Sewanee Elementary School, which is still on the same spot today. Most of the time they walked two or three miles to school, but if the weather was bad, their father had an old vehicle he used to transport them. I mentioned to Essie Mae that walking to school was rough at times, except when the month of May came around, and children were full of excitement because they had permission to begin their summer-barefoot-adventure. She agreed that May was the month her mother allowed her and her siblings to pull off their shoes for the summer. I can remember a few “Mays” that started with cool, if not cold weather, but the rule was the rule. Out the school building I’d go, and off came the shoes on the first of May.

During these years, Roy and Frances Thomas’ family was battling the Great Depression. Times were hard and were about to get harder. Roy’s crew began to be laid off from work one at a time until there was only Roy. Then the news came that he, too, would lose his job. This caused the family to have to move back to Monteagle. This time they moved into a gas station owned by Lee Tucker. It sat next to “the spring” on the side of Highway 41. Later it became what I call a “beer joint,” but Essie Mae said it was just a gas station while her family lived there. By this time she was in high school and could catch the bus right at her front door. She met lots of valley boys; Taylor, Grover and Paul Partin were her friends, but Albert Mayes was the one she became “sweet on.” One of her sisters dated Wilson Gilliam another valley boy. She also went to school with Chuck Bowden, son of Dr. Upton Beall Bowden. Sometimes Chuck drove the school bus. Not too much later, the family moved a few curves up the mountain, but on the other side of the road before the horseshoe curve. There was a brand new gas station there that she thinks may have been built by Mr. Jim Meeks from Paynes Cove. Essie Mae and the family moved into the station, and her dad operated it for some time.

Three more moves lay ahead for the Thomas family while Essie Mae was still at home. Roy moved his family from the horseshoe curve on the side of the mountain into “Squire” Bennett’s house on College Street in Monteagle. Next, the family moved into the house on King Street across from the old school, which later was owned by Wilburn and Josephine (Rogers) Sampley. Then even later, they moved into

the J. T. Brannan house that stood where the First Baptist Church building is now, but the house faced First Street. While still in high school, Essie Mae worked some hours in the evenings and weekends.

Her first job was at the Monteagle Diner; then later she worked for Miss Coker Parker who had previously been a postmaster, but later operated a boarding house, a big two-story house that stood where the present Methodist Parsonage is. Because she had to clean the bathtubs, Essie Mae remembered the Parker house having them, but she doesn't think the water was hooked up to the tubs. In a 1937 photo of the inside of the kitchen, a water bucket with a dipper handle can be seen, so I assume there was no running water inside the boarding house. Whatever chores needed to be done before the guests' arrivals, Essie Mae did them. While the guests were there, the kitchen and dining room were a flurry of activities. Miss Coker Parker's homemade yeast rolls were spoken of far and wide, and the recipe still remains in the family's possession. The recipe ingredients sent to me by Doris Ann (Keown) Green, a Parker descendant, (*left: in front of the Coker Boarding House in 1937*), are as follows:



Ingredients for Aunt Coker's Parker House Rolls

1 cup milk, scalded	6 Tlbs butter or shortening	1 egg, well beaten
1 tsp salt	1 cake yeast	4 cups sifted flour
¼ cup sugar	2 Tlbs lukewarm water	

Essie Mae got right in the middle of Miss Coker's kitchen and learned many recipes and cooking methods that were put to good use in her own kitchen.

While living in the Brannan house and still in high school, Essie Mae fell in love with Frank William Ogelvie, the son of Fred Washington and Laura Alice (Hunt) Ogelvie. His grandparents were John and Caroline Ogelvie; when Caroline died, John married Josephine Russell in 1903. Frank was an only son in a house full of sisters whose names were Clara, Quinnie, Etta, Lelia, Dicey Mae, Ora Lee, Nannie Myrtle and Polly. The Ogelvie family was living in the house that later became known as the Garland Foutch house when their son proposed marriage to young Essie Mae. She said, "I was so smart in school that in my third year, I got married!" She got tickled, and the two of us had a good laugh over that declaration. I could have told her, "I was so smart in school that I got married at the age of seventeen!" (*Quickly, she proudly told me that in the early 1960's she and two of her friends, Helen Partin and Clarine Thomas, went back to school to earn their GED diplomas. In 1963 they all graduated with one of Essie Mae's future sons-in-law.*) On July 04, 1936, with B. G. Keebler officiating, Essie Mae Thomas married Frank William

Ogelvie. At first, the young couple lived in the house with the Ogelvies, a common practice of the Great Depression years. There just wasn't enough money for young couples to rent or own a home.

As a young married lady, Essie Mae still had to work to help Frank with the expenses. She continued her job with Miss Coker Parker even throughout her pregnancy with her first child. William Frazier Ogelvie was born in 1937. The little baby was quickly nicknamed "Brother," a name that stuck with him his whole life. Dr. Jackson was summoned when Essie Mae went into labor. When he arrived, he wanted to speed up the birth and gave her a shot of "something." Her mother had been sent for, so she was on her way to be with her daughter. Essie Mae's description of events was that her labor pains and baby came so fast, that his little head was terribly pointed. She shaped her sweet hands to look like an arrow to impress on me what she meant by pointed. She was reliving a moment in her life, "the moment" that had changed her life forever.

From time to time, Laura Alice gently massaged her grandson's tiny head hoping that it would take on the normal shape of a healthy infant's head. Essie Mae worked so hard to get Brother to sit or lie in positions that a young child should, but to no avail. The doctor, and later specialists, told the young couple that their son was not, and would not be, a healthy child, but the loving, concerned parents would not accept that decision since tests and examinations found no medical reason for Brother to have the problems he was encountering. Dr. Thomas Franklin Taylor was the only doctor who expressed to Essie Mae that the injuries that Brother had suffered came at the time of his birth. As time passed, and at the moment Essie Mae made her decision that the doctors were right about Brother, she poured her heart out to Frank. Frank became so angry—angrier than Essie Mae had ever seen him in his life—*his son, his firstborn—not able to sit or stand or play or walk and not able to talk—ever!* Those facts were more than Frank could bear to believe. The doctors told them that it would be a miracle if Brother lived to be eighteen.

"Blessed are those who endure!" As soon as Essie Mae was able, she went back to work for Miss Coker Parker. Her weekly pay was four dollars. Two of those dollars were given weekly to her mother-in-law, Laura Alice, for taking care of Brother. The Great Depression wasn't just one year, 1929; it lasted until around 1940, or 1941, the beginning of our participation in World War II. Essie Mae and Laura Alice needed every penny that they could earn to put food on the table and clothes on their families' backs. With the special care and attention that Brother needed, Essie Mae was happier having him in the care of a family member. Fred and Laura Alice Ogelvie moved across the railroad tracks into the house across the road from the old Monteagle School where Essie had once lived as a child. Frank, Essie Mae and Brother moved with them.

Their next child, Charlotte, and later another daughter, Hazel, were born in that house, and both were delivered by Dr. Brewer. Meanwhile, Brother was growing ever so slowly, and although he was aware of his loved ones, he could not verbally communicate with them. He could speak through his facial expressions; the family quickly learned what his needs were, and what things made him happy. Not too long ago, a group of friends and I were invited into a home where an adult young man with disabilities was lying in the living room. His mother introduced us to him and then gave us permission

to just step right over him in our goings and comings. I thought of Brother. What made Brother happy was being a part of everything that was going on around him. No doubt, that was the purpose the other mother had in mind when she placed her son in the middle of the activities that would be going on that day in her living room.

Essie Mae's parents, Roy and Frances Thomas, were living two houses up King Street toward town in the "Jennie Warren" house. Fred and Ruby Kennedy lived in that house when I was a child. Frank, Essie Mae, Brother, Charlotte and Hazel moved in with the other set of grandparents. It was in that house that Catherine Joyce Ogelvie was born. Would Brother ever have a brother? Never mind, according to the family, he loved girls, and his sisters loved him. By this time, the United States was in the midst of World War II, and Monteagle's men were going off to war. Frank was not drafted because of health problems. In St. Elmo, Chattanooga there was a TNT plant operating at full speed, so this opened the door for Frank and Essie Mae to have a job together, a job where they would be doing their part to aid in the fight against Hitler. Once again, they moved their ever-growing family when they hired on at that plant. Essie's job was packing K-rations.

Soon Brother was presented with another sister, Maybelle, who was born in Chattanooga. With the size of the family growing, it seemed a blessing to have the two incomes. Frank's sister, Nannie Myrtle Ogelvie, was taking care of her nephew and four nieces while their parents worked. While Frank and Essie were at the plant, their house caught on fire. Frantically, Aunt Nannie tried to get all the children out of the house, but was unable to save little two-year-old Catherine Joyce who died of smoke inhalation. Trials and tribulations! Little Catherine Joyce was brought back to the mountain and buried in the Summerfield Cemetery. Frank moved his family into his parents' house once again, but they stayed only long enough for the family to heal a little and to find another place to live in Chattanooga. They moved back to Chattanooga, and finally Brother got a brother, when his mother gave birth at home to her second son, Milton.

Dear reader, as you read Essie Mae's story, please don't forget that her firstborn child, Brother, was like having a newborn baby in the house at all times. All his life, he needed the care of an infant. When I asked her if she ever got a full night's sleep, she said, "I was up and down all night every night." It was her life, her routine, but she never wanted pity from anyone. A particular lady in Monteagle who was financially secure, once said to Essie Mae, "Honey, I always felt so sorry for you having that sick little boy and everything." Essie Mae is kind and gentle, but I could read in her face that she did not want pity, nor was she one to sit on the "pity pot." Her extended family was there if she needed them, but Essie Mae's character would not allow her to abuse their willingness to help. When I asked her whom she could call on for help and know that she would get it immediately, she named three people. First, there was Frank's sister, Ora Lee (Ogelvie) McFarland, who was an angel in her life. I remember Ora Lee, and I loved her vibrant personality. She was not one to sit around when there was work to be done. Secondly, she named her father; he came as quickly as he could get to her and helped in any way he could. Thirdly, she named her second daughter Hazel, who was just like a little mother, and she *voluntarily* took on some of the responsibilities. Essie Mae said that she could depend on Hazel to take

good care of all the children, especially Brother. The children obeyed whatever Hazel told them, so Essie Mae had less to worry about when she had to be away from the home.

There came a time when Essie Mae needed to be near her extended family, so Roy Thomas moved his daughter and all the children back to Monteagle. This time, a little house beside the DuBose School, on or near where the Jim Layne house is, was rented. Across the railroad tracks was a kindergarten called the King's Daughters; Willa Caldwell operated the little school, and some of Essie Mae's children attended. Essie Mae was pregnant at the time, so baby Janie was soon born in that house. With Frank away working at whatever jobs he could find, the house full of children, one with special needs, and an overwhelming amount of daily chores, Essie Mae hired Beulah Mae Perry to come and stay with her. When things became so overwhelming financially, Roy Thomas helped his daughter and the children. Tubby Wallace had built a little four-room house on the Marion County side of town, over near the area where Jimmy Gipson now lives, and the family moved into that house.

For the first time in her childbearing years, Essie Mae went to the hospital to give birth to her third son, Tony. Always before, the doctors came to her house to deliver her babies. Drs. Jackson, Taylor, Farr and Brewer were some of the names she recalled. She must have felt like a queen when she entered the hospital and saw all the fuss that was being made over her. In those days, new mothers were kept in the hospital and free from major chores for a longer period of time. They were treated as though their bodies had undergone nine months of changes, and as though in giving birth, the body had been through "a major car wreck," and it had. Nowadays, giving birth to a child reminds me of something I read or saw in a movie years ago— when an American Indian woman was ready to give birth, she dismounted her horse, found a good tree to "squat" behind, gave birth, got back on her horse and followed her husband who had ridden off ahead of her. My goodness! It took me nearly four days in the hospital to give birth to my first child, so had I been that American Indian woman, I would have never caught up with my husband. I wonder after the first, second, third and even the fourth day of my absence if he would have even missed me! But happily, Essie Mae appreciated her stay in the hospital.

After Tony was born, Frank moved his family to Dunlap for a summer so that he could work in the logging industry. When they moved back to Monteagle, they rented the Paris Layne, Sr. house on North Central. With their daughters' help, Frank's parents had bought and moved into the four-room Jennings house at the foot of the hill on King Street. Each one of their daughters gave them a hundred dollars, so that they could finally have their own home. Because of the older Ogelvies' health, Frank would not put the extra burden of caring for them on Essie Mae, so they rented the Layne house a couple blocks away. Frank's sister, Ora Lee, eventually took her parents to live with her and her husband, Mitch McFarland. She took care of them until they passed away

Frank William and Essie Mae (Thomas) Oglevie

with

*“Brother,” Charlotte, Hazel, Maybell, Milton,
Janie and Tony*



Essie Mae once again was pregnant, but thankfully, once again, she went to the hospital to give birth to her daughter, Linda. Frances Thomas was gone at the time of her granddaughter's birth, so Roy hired a lady from Tracy City to come down and help Essie Mae with the housework. Frank was driving a coal truck at the time and just could not make enough money to keep the family's finances afloat. When baby Linda was ten days old, her Grandmother Ogelvie died. Essie Mae went to the funeral at the Methodist Church, and many women thought that Essie Mae should still be in bed or close to one, but family was important to her. She wanted to show her respect for her mother-in-law.

Before their deaths, Fred and Alice Ogelvie had deeded their house to Frank and Essie Mae, so they made the move to the bottom of the hill, the same hill that she had played on as a school child. Finally, she and her children had their own home. The little house on the branch that also ran through my "Pop's" pasture, and the large family that had moved into it were my first remembrances of the Ogelvies. I remember Brother sitting in his little screened cover that Essie Mae thinks Harold Pressley built for him. That was a way that he could be outside with the children without the insects bothering him. He loved to have people to drop by and talk to him. People were kind and loving toward Brother, and he soaked up all the attention he could get. Frank had come to the conclusion that he would have to do what so many before him had done and that was go "up North" to look for work. He needed something substantial and long lasting. His family had needs that he could not meet with temporary jobs here and there. Reluctantly, he left Essie Mae, who was pregnant again, and his children, and he went to Ohio where he stayed with an uncle until he found a job. Since he was away in Ohio when Essie Mae went into labor, Ora Lee came to stay with all the children while she went to the hospital. Her daughter Pam was born in February 1952, only eleven months after her daughter Linda was born. Pam's birthday was always easy to remember because of "the tornado."

The tornado did a lot of damage around Monteagle. The Ogelvie house had water standing in the living room floor where the corner of the roof had been torn away. No one could immediately be found who could fix the roof properly, so Ora Lee climbed up on the roof and put a temporary “fix” on it to keep the water out. She was one more dependable sister-in-law. There was a fallen tree on Essie Mae’s front porch roof and one at her back door. I remember seeing my mother walk the floors that night. It was February, but it was so hot that Mama had all the doors open to cool the house. The night sky stayed lit with a bluish hue. In those days the lightning traveled down the electric lines like little balls of fire. Essie Mae was reading when she heard the storm coming. Then a deafening quietness filled the night. She looked out and noticed that the Jennings house above her was still standing, so she hoped for the best. Her daughter Hazel came to ask her what was going on, but Essie calmed her fears and put her to bed. She checked on all of her children like a mother hen would have gathered her chicks. I was about nine years old, but I remember being more worried about my mother being worried than I was about the storm. I probably didn’t even know what a tornado was. It’s strange what things one’s mind can store for years when there are others that we can’t recall even when they have just happened. Our toilet was several yards from the house, and as I made my morning visit to the little outhouse, I was so thrilled to notice that overnight the row of yellow daffodils had bloomed out in all their glory. The other thing I remember was that a huge tree had uprooted in Mrs. Nina Rogers yard and fallen straight across King St. with its top nearly on the porch of the Ernest Wooten house. It was a little difficult to get over it to get to school.

As soon as Essie Mae was physically able to go to work after Pam was born, she got a job at the City Café. Like many families in those years, there just never seemed to be enough money to have the simple necessary things. At first, Frank would come home for visits on some weekends, but they got fewer as time went on. He sent her money each payday, and as soon as Essie Mae got the money out of the post office, she stopped in at Jim Francis Grocery to pay off the weekly ticket. She would never complain to anyone about her hardships, but just believe that she had insurmountable problems. Her children managed to carry on while their mother was working out of the home, and their father was so far away. Some of their playmates were Charles and Shirley Sampley, my brothers, David and Freddie Layne, the Grooms children, Diane Smith and James Dillon Short. There were chores enough for the children, especially the older ones, but for the most part their childhood at the foot of the hill was memorable. They had woods all around to play hide and seek; the property followed a branch filled with little surprises; and then there were those two giant hills to slide on in frozen wintry weather, or to ride bikes up and down during the summers. And of course, Brother always had his visitors when the frequent pedestrians in those days stopped to chat with him and receive one of his big smiles.

When Essie Mae was a child living in Sewanee, her father brought his children to Monteagle to worship at the Methodist Church. A few times they attended the Presbyterian Church in Bobtown, a part of the Sewanee area. Essie Mae’s grandfather was a “Baptist,” but her father was a “Church of Christ,” as she put it. So she had connected with the Baptist faith early on in her life. While the family lived in Chattanooga, she and her children attended the Baptist Church. Once she had settled into her own home at the foot of the hill on King Street in Monteagle, she went back to her Baptist roots. The little group of like believers first met in an old chicken house located where the George Ramsey house is

now; it belonged to the “Strong Family.” Together they began building the little Baptist Church at the top of the second hill on King Street. Not too many years after they had moved into their little building, they were given the opportunity to move over at the corner of King and First Street and build again. It is there today, (2009), that Essie Mae still attends for worship. She is happy to have been a charter member of the Baptist Church in Monteagle. Do I want you to believe that this tiny lady was perfect? No, because we all know that none of us are, nor can we ever be. What I want you to know is that this kind, gentle woman is a saint! There are many definitions for the word “saint,” but I am speaking of the word that God calls all His faithful children. No one ever saw Essie Mae do a “real miracle,” nor was she ever voted on by some council who could supposedly decide her sainthood. The decision was made by the life Essie Mae exhibited and by God.

While Frank was working and living in Ohio, he became ill with cancer. Like the dutiful wife she was, Essie Mae went to her husband’s side. She stayed to encourage and strengthen him as long as she could. She spoke spiritual and healing words to him; she told him about God and His son’s grace. She spoke of forgiveness and mercy. He was the love of her life, and his soul was of utmost importance to her, but her children in Tennessee needed her too, so she had to return home. The call came in June 1961 that Frank’s health was deteriorating, so she boarded a plane for the supposedly quick trip to Ohio. On the way, during a long layover, she began to cry for fear that she would not get to see him and talk with him one more time. In the airport, a nice lady saw her tears and began to console her with encouraging words. Soothingly, the lady calmed Essie Mae with her optimistic belief that Frank *would* hang on until she got to his bedside at the Cleveland Clinic Hospital in Ohio. And that he did. He lived three weeks with Essie Mae sitting at his side. Frank wanted so badly to see his children one more time before he passed, but he did not get the opportunity. Frank asked his wife, “What will you do with me when I die?” Essie Mae lovingly, and in total devotion to the man who lay dying before her, told him, “I will take you home, Frank.” And that she did. Frank William Ogelvie died on June 30, 1961, in Cleveland, Ohio, and Essie Mae brought him home to Monteagle.

Later in life, Essie Mae and Brother were able to move into her parents’ home over behind the Jim Francis Store building. She had things arranged so that it was easier and safer for Brother to be carried from the car to the house. By the way, do you remember reading what the doctors told Frank and Essie Mae about Brother’s life expectancy—eighteen years? Brother was sixty-one when he passed away, quite a lot more years than predicted by the doctors. Essie Mae didn’t just carry Brother for nine months during her pregnancy; she carried and cradled him for nine months and sixty-one years. What devotion, what love, what a Saint! After the children all grew up and left home leaving no one to sit with Brother, Essie Mae arranged foam bedding in the backseat of her car for Brother to lie on, and off to the church meetings he went with his mother. Nothing could stop Essie Mae from living the best part of her life, her faith. Brother was one of God’s children; he never said a word, but folks from all around learned great spiritual lessons from him and his tiny caregiver—you remember her, the tiny little female body at the foot of the hill—you know, the body wherein I saw Jesus! —“A Christian’s life is the canvas on which others can see Jesus!”



Essie Mae (Thomas) Ogelvie--2009

NOTE: (Essie Mae is now, 2009, back home at the foot of the hill. The old Jennings/Ogelvie house is gone, but the land and the branch that borders it are still the same. As we stood on her daughter's back porch and talked, I watched Essie Mae's eyes wander about the area. There were moments of silence that left me wondering where her thoughts had taken her.)