

J.C. Porter's Interview with Erma Lewis
(daughter of Wint Porter, s/o Alex, son of Andrew Porter)
3-29-1980

JC: Tell me what you know about her. (About Alex Porter's 2nd wife Liz)

Erma: I don't know nothing about her. Only what they told me about her.

JC: What did you hear about her?

Erma: Well, I just heard she wasn't a very good stepmother.

JC: Why not?

Erma: She was mean to all of them.

JC: Mean. What did she do?

Erma: I don't know. That was back before my time.

JC: They said she would lock the cakes up in a box.

Erma: Yeh, she would lock up everything to keep Arabelle from cooking for the work hands.

JC: Oh, they wouldn't let Arabelle cook?

Erma: No, she wouldn't let Arabelle cook. They got an axe and chopped the trunk open. It was Uncle Steve Porter's boy, I think it was. He said, "I'd tear into that trunk, I'd cut it open." So they got an axe and chopped it open, and she (Liz) cut a big shine over it. She even had the matches locked up so they couldn't build a fire, or anything.

JC: Which one of Steve's boys did that?

Erma: Charlie. The one that used to live in Wisconsin. I guess he's dead now.

JC: How did your grandpa (Alex Porter) meet her (Liz)?

Erma: I think she was Charlie Clay's mother's sister.

JC: Who's Charlie Clay?

Erma: He was just a neighbor. And she come back here. I think that is the way it was. I won't say for sure. Maybe she was Charlie's aunt? But anyway, she was on a visit, and he got acquainted with her after grandma died. Then she (Liz) left him. She (Liz) said some of her children were sick.

JC: Back in Missouri?

Erma: Ya, and she never did come back no more. Then when she found out Grandpa was getting married, she came and tried to catch grandpa, and he ran from her.

JC: He ran from her?

Erma: (Laughing) I've heard Dad (Wint Porter) laugh about that.

JC: How long had your grandma been dead before he got remarried?

Erma: I don't know. She (Laura) died when Uncle Everett was a year old. And she told mom, see that was before my brother was born. She said, not to let nobody run over Everett, since he was just a baby. She said the rest of the kids might be able to get by if Grandpa married again. And mommy made her a promise on her death bed that nobody would ever run over Everett while he was little. And mom said that if Liz ever did whip him, she never did find out, she must have kept it a secret.

JC: Your grandma knew she was dying then?

Erma: Ya. She had TB. That's what killed her. Her and Ike both.

JC: Who, Oh Isaac? When did he die?

Erma: He died when he was 17 years old.

JC: He is buried up at Old Fairview without a tombstone?

Erma: Yes, I doubt if he has a tombstone.

JC: He died in 1894 about the same time as your grandma then?

Erma: Probably did. I don't know.

JC: Was that going around then?

Erma: I guess it was. Cause I know grandma died with it and Isaac did too. But I really don't know. See that was back before my time. The only thing I know is what they told me.

JC: Isaac was next to your dad Wint who was oldest, then Isaac was next, then Jasper was next

Erma: Then uncle Millard.

JC: Sam and Arabelle, Charlie. What about this Luitta? Have you ever heard about her? Did she die as a baby?

Erma: Ya, wasn't that grandpa and (Alex's 3rd wife) Kate's kid?

JC: No, that was Ceola I think. They had a baby Ceola I think. Everett (son of Alex) said there was one right before him named Luitta who died when she was a baby. I never found out anything else about her.

JC: Your grandpa (Alex) was a blacksmith, huh?

Erma: Ya, he shod horses. I guess that's what killed him.

JC: That's what killed him?

Erma: Ya, eight years before he died he took some type of spasm. The doctor said it was a drop of blood that would hit his brain and throw him into a spasm. After 8 years, it took him. Everybody thought it was caused by him straining, shoeing those horses and all. I don't know if it did or not.

JC: Have you ever heard anything about him (Alex) being in the Regulators?

Erma: I don't reckon.

JC: You ever see a picture of your great-grandpa? (Andrew J. Porter)

Erma: No

JC: Have you ever heard anything about him?

Erma: No.

JC: You must have heard something.

Erma: No, I didn't.

JC: Do you know his name?

Erma: Is it Andrew?

JC: Ya

Erma: You sent me a picture of Andrew Porter's children, but he wasn't in it was he?

JC: No

Doris Tackett: JC is going to write a book.

Erma: Ya, he said he was. There will be a bunch of us crazy people in there.

Another Lady: That is one book I'm gonna buy.

JC: Oh are you?

Erma: Find out about all of your people?

Other lady: Heck, I don't know about half of them?

Erma: I don't either. Did you get any of grandma's people? Grandma Laura's people? They're Fulton's.

JC: Ya, her dad was Henry Fulton, and her mom was Nancy Reveal.

Erma: That must be who dad was named after. His name was Winton Henry.

JC: It was?

Erma: Ya, and he always went by the name of W.H. Porter. I wondered where he got that Henry at.

JC: Did Millard have a middle name?

Erma: I don't remember if he did or not.

JC: You don't know any of the other's middle names?

Erma: No. Now, Everett, I think Everett D. is his middle name.

JC: Ya, he said he didn't have a middle name, just as initial.

JC; The Fulton's came from over around Nicholas county, Carlisle and Mt. Olivet, and that is where your grandparents got married. That is also where Mary Porter married George Dwelly, and they stayed there, when the Porter's came back to Carter County.

JC: Somebody said your grandpa got shot once.

Erma: He did, through his ankle.

JC: How did it happen?

Erma: They come up there, The Bowen boy, and the Underwood boy, and they was gonna kill him. They came over there to kill him.

JC: Why?

Erma: Well, we had went to a pie supper. And they tore up the pie supper. That is where they sold pies for the school. And John Cline's girl was teaching, Mae Cline. And John had him put before the grand jury.

JC: Had who put before the grand jury?

Erma: Dad. It made them boys mad. He had to go before the grand jury and indict them.

JC: Why, what did they do?

Erma: Well, they just shot, and they done everything. Run everybody off is what they done. Mom and dad got us and took us home. They cut a big shine, and called all the boys around that was buying the pies, hillbillies, and everything. They just cut a big shine. Then when Dad had to go before the grand jury and indict them, they come up to the school, I won't tell all of it because...

JC: Ya, tell all of it, you can't stop now.

Erma: There is a lot of people dead who was involved in it.

JC: I won't tell the bad stuff.

Erma: You probably already know it. Your grand dad (Everett, s/o Jasper, s/o Alex, s/o AJP) knows all about it. I think Grace's sister married Paris Underwood.

JC: Oh really? Ya, that's right.

Erma: Ya, that was the one.

JC: Oh this is when he got shot, when Paris Underwood was killed, during that deal?

Erma: Ya.

JC: Oh, your dad (Wint) got shot then?

Erma: Ya, my dad got shot. Bowen shot him though. We was all standing on the porch, like stupid people.

Granddaughter: (asking Erma who was who in some old pictures)

Erma: This is my mother, and that is your grandma, and that is Harlan Porter's mother.

Granddaughter: And where is your father?

Erma: Right there. This is my brother. And if that ain't Reese Porter, I don't know who it is.

JC: I think it might be. They've got it written down. I should have written it on there, but I didn't. I've got it at home.

Erma: (Comment about bare feet in the picture)

JC: Everybody was bare footed (In the picture) weren't they?

Erma: I see grandpa (Alex Porter) had on his _____ boots.

JC: He always wore those did he?

Erma: Yes. They lived across the creek. Did they ever tell you about one time they had been down at the post office, or somewhere. The creek got up, and they started back home, and Kate was big and fat, and he (Alex) was slender you know. He told her to get on his back, and he would carry her across that creek. He fell in, and they both fell in. They were as wet as they could be.

Erma: Did you ever get Irene (Alex youngest daughter)? The youngest girl.

JC: Ya, I wrote to her once.

JC: So did your grandpa (Alex Porter) ever get shot?

Erma: Ya, my dad did..

JC: What about your grandpa?

Erma: Grandpa didn't. Uncle John did. (John C. Porter, son of AJP)

JC: Ya, he got shot by that Marshall Adkins didn't he?

Erma: Ya, they said he had a testament in his left shirt pocket, and the good book is all that saved him.

JC: Is that right?

Erma: Ya, that little bible in his shirt pocket is all that kept him from being killed. He took Marshall Adkins old woman away from him.

JC: How did he go about taking her away from him?

Erma: He just took her. That is all there was to it.

JC: How long was that after his wife (John C. Porter's wife) had died?

Erma: I don't know. But I remember Martha Jane (laugh). I remember seeing her. He's taping everything I'm saying, I know he is.

JC: No I'm not.

Erma: I know you are. Just don't let _____ Porter hear that. That is their grandpa.

JC: We (JC & his grandparents) went over to see Jim Porter, John's son this summer. He is 80 years old now.

Erma: What about Andy Porter's family?

JC: Is that Jim Porter's son Andy?

Erma: Ya, I guess he was. I got information on his family. You know Jim Porter's daughter Kate is still living.

Erma: Is she?

JC: She married a Jackson. She is 92 years old and lives in Middletown, Ohio. I talked to her right before Christmas, went and saw her.

Erma: She is 92? That is a long time to live, ain't it?

Erma: Did you get all of my sister Anna (Parrish) children? And grandchildren?

JC: Ya, I have that at home. There is so much of it.

Erma: Ya, there is a bunch of em. There is a bunch of my grandchildren, and children. And there is my crippled son (looking at pictures) I was telling you about. He died, it will be three years this April. Never walked a step in his life. He lacked from April till October being 41 years old. And that is one of my sons and his wife there. And that is Verle and his wife there in that little picture. And over here is one of my sons and their family. They've got three. It's Delno (?).

JC: Let's see, your dad was into some of that table walking when he was young, wasn't he? Knocking spirits?

Erma: Ya

JC: Well how did he get into that?

Erma: I don't know. He said he used to think that there was something to that, but he said, that wasn't nothing but the devil. Mommy got so tired of it, that she told it to knock on his pillow, till he couldn't sleep. She got tired of fooling with big crowds a comin in, and she was cooking for borders, and she would have to get up early, and all of them keeping her awake. It got to knocking on his bed and his pillow so he couldn't sleep. So he had to quit fooling with it.

JC: You say your grandpa (Alex Porter) had farm hands?

Erma: Ya, he used to work on the farm. That's all they done back then, work on the farm.

JC: How big of a farm did your grandpa have?

Erma: Well, I don't know, it wasn't too big. I don't know how many acres he owned. Anyway, they said that Liz would hide everything from Arabelle, so she couldn't cook.

JC: We were talking to Don Porter (s/o Bob, s/o Levi, s/o AJP). He said he had heard that she (Liz) put all the pies in a box, and some of the boys sneaked in and turned the box over and shook it up.

Erma: Ya, they probably did. Lot of things they told on her (Liz).

JC: What happened to Kate's first husband? Did he die?

Erma: Ya, he died.

JC: How long had he been dead before they (Alex and Kate) married?

Erma: I don't know how long he had been dead. I know her youngest kid was 7 years old by her first husband.

JC: Was his name John Pelfrey?

Erma: Ya. We thought a lot of Kate.

JC: How long, Alex and Lizzie barely were divorced before he got remarried?

Erma: Ya.

JC: Did Alex and Kate know each other pretty well while he was still married to Lizzie?

Erma: I guess they did. I don't know. Now my brother's wife, is her (Kate's) daughter.

JC: She is still living isn't she? I talked with her this summer.

Erma: Ya, she is 84 years old.

JC: Wonder why they ever came to that part of Kentucky?

Erma: I don't know.

JC: Was your mom related to them too? Leadingham.

Erma: No, she wasn't related to them.

JC: Was she related to Charlie's 3rd wife? (son of Alex) Your mom and Charlie's 3rd wife Nellie Leadingham. Were they related?

Erma: Her husband was a 1st cousin to mom. He married that Leadingham woman. She left

him before she died. She went back to her children. I think that was Bucky Leadingham's woman. Her husband was a first cousin to my mother. He was Uncle Bill Leadingham's boy.

JC: What else can you tell me about the old Porters?

Erma: I don't know nothing much.

Other Lady: She ain't going to tell none of those secrets.

JC: She told some good ones.

Erma: A lot of them wanted to tie the will up (Will of Alex Porter), and my dad (Wint), they wanted him to go in with them, but he said, "No, if my dad didn't want me to have nothing, then he didn't want nothing that he had." That's what he said. And he wouldn't go with them to tie it up. He said, the first children helped make everything, but if that was the way he (Alex) felt now, that he (Wint) didn't want nothing that he had.

Erma: Did they tell you anything about, they had Kate make her will, that what she got from her daddy would go to his and her kids too (Alex and Kate's kids). Old man Coffey, Jim Coffey, her daddy, said that he thought as much of Katie's first children as he did of the others (Alex and Kate's children), and he said that he's just not give her nothing. So he gave it all to _____.

JC: Who was that, the other daughter?

Erma: Ya, his other daughter. So he didn't will her (Kate) nothing.

JC: Who was Kate's mom?

Erma: I don't know. I always liked Kate. Me and Irene (Alex and Kate's daughter) was big buddies.

JC: (Looking at picture) Is this Eva right here? Your sister.

Erma: No, that is my sister's daughter. See Evie is older than I am. That is Glennis Evans(?) Ann's daughter. If that ain't Ruth, then I don't know who it is.

JC: Did they drive down the creek bed back then? It looks like the car is setting in the creek bed.

Erma: Ya. I can't figure out where that picture was made. Probably somewhere where we'd been to church or something. I hope they didn't take me looking like that, but I guess they did. (laughing)

JC: So you remember George Dwelly then?

Erma: Ya, he's been up there at Dad's. I don't know anything. I just saw him. That's been years ago, but I know'd him when I saw him.

JC: You knew he was your grandpa's brother-in-law?

Erma: Must have been. If he married his sister, he had to be didn't he?

JC: Who died first, your grandpa or his brother John?

Erma: Grandpa died first. Two weeks before John died. And he was at his funeral. (John was at Alex's funeral). They both died with Bright's disease, some type of kidney trouble. And they died in the same hospital I think. Ashland Hospital.

JC: They were pretty close, these older brothers? (looking at picture of 5 Porter brothers)

Erma: Ya, I guess they were. These two always looked more alike than the rest of them. Now grandpa wasn't a bit grey when he died.

JC: And who has your grandpa's (Alex) old bible?

Erma: I don't even know. Does Harlan?

JC: No. I thought somebody said your sister had it.

Erma: No

JC: Do you have any pictures of the old family?

Erma: I think I've got some upstairs. I know where they are at. I'll go see.