

Shirley Campbell: Still Active and Independent at 88

By Lynn Coffey



Shirley Cash Campbell at her home

At 88 years of age, Shirley Campbell is still driving her car, visiting friends, attending Sunday church services, and adding daily to her vast genealogical database. She's an attractive lady who can still remember what times were like growing up at her family home which was located on the steep gravel road to Crabtree Meadows.

I didn't know Shirley before meeting her at last year's Campbell reunion, held in Lowesville. I happened to sit next to her, listening to stories she told as a young girl living near Montebello and thought to myself, "This is someone I'd love to interview." Long story short, I contacted her daughter several months later and asked if her mom would let me talk to her about growing up in the mountains. She was kind enough to agree and this article is the result of the interview that took place at Shirley's home on January 31st.

Shirley Temple Cash, the seventh and last child of John Samuel and Grace Rachel Campbell Cash, was born in Nelson County on August 21, 1935, delivered by midwife Hautie Maddox, John's sister.



John and Gracie Cash's wedding photo

The order of the seven Cash children's births is: Ronald Monieth, Henry Vernon, Frances Alease, George Elbern, Margaret Marie, Rebecca Arnell, and Shirley Temple, a famous name Shirley said she was never fond of. All the children had nicknames that everyone called them by; Ronald was "Tommy", Vernon was "Hunk", Frances was "Pippin", named by Gracie's brothers who said when she was born, she was about the size of an Albemarle Pippin apple. George was dubbed "Dingle", Margaret was "Maggie", Rebecca was "Becky", and poor Shirley had to endure "Temple".

Shirley's maternal grandparents were George Washington Campbell and Flora Lee Mays Campbell and her grandparents on her father's side were Henry Taylor Cash and Susan Rebecca Campbell Cash. It is recorded that Henry died at fifty-nine years of age as a result of a fall in a tobacco warehouse elevator shaft in Lynchburg in 1919. In her genealogical research, Shirley has

documented both the Cash and Campbell sides of her family. William Cash, on her father's side of the family, came to the United States in the 1650s, and the family eventually settled in the Little Piney area.

Shirley's parents were married by a preacher in Lynchburg on January 31, 1920 and they lived in various places before buying the house on the road up to Crabtree Meadows where their youngest daughter was born. Her parents saved up the money to buy the property outright and Shirley said, "Mama took the money and sewed it into a pillow case to hide it so it wouldn't get used up for something else." The large two-story house was thought to be built by Davis Bradley and the hundred or more acres where the house stood was known as the Bee Gum Tract.

When Shirley was only eleven months old, her father died at home at 39 years of age, leaving her mother with seven children to raise, the oldest being only 15. Shirley said it was a blessing that her parents bought and paid for the house and acreage about a year before her father died so there were no payments her mother had to worry about. Gracie's brothers suggested she split up the children to help ease her financial burden, but Gracie was a resourceful Christian woman whose motto was, "Where there's a will, there's a way." She traded goods at the local country stores for

the essentials, kept animals for milk, meat and eggs, and planted a large garden that grew most of the family's food.



Gracie with six of her seven children

Like many of the mountain people, she worked in the local peach and apple orchards and she also sold Blair products, taking orders from people in the area. Blair was a mail order company started by John Blair in 1910 that sold practical, everyday items that every household used. In later years, when most of the children were grown and gone, she took in a few boarders; sometimes loggers who were working in the area.

In fact, many years later, she married one of those loggers by the name of Charles Hampton Fitzgerald, an older man who had been boarding at her home. Gracie was 44 and Charles was 65 years old when they married in October of 1947.

Shirley said the family worked as a unit, doing all the many chores that needed to be done on the farm. In addition to the farm animals, Shirley said they always had pets like dogs and cats. When she was six, she began attending the Montebello School, which previously had covered first grade through the second year of high school (1-9), but was only an elementary school (grades 1-7) when Shirley went there. The eighth grade was not added to the school system until she had finished her first year at Fleetwood High School. Some of Shirley's first teachers were Miss Farrar, Miss Kibler, Miss Southhall and Libby Carter. I asked if at that time she had to walk to school and Shirley said, "We had to walk from home out to route 56 where Mr. Tom Byers drove a bus to pick us up." Edwin and Elsie Seaman were the bus drivers to Fleetwood High School where she graduated in 1952.

The family attended Mount Paran Baptist Church, walking several miles in distance every Sunday. Shirley said, "The older kids would get dressed and leave for church before Mama got us younger children ready because we walked slower. If we got too tired on the way, Mama would stop at the Brethren Church behind Robertson's store and we would worship there. I remember two of the early preachers at Mount Paran were Rev. McGrady and Preacher Tate. Our family loved to sing, and we were always singing at home or walking the roads. You could hear us all over those mountains. When we grew older Becky and I sang in the church choir."

When asked about funerals, Shirley said, "Back then in our community everyone went to funerals to show their respect for the family. I remember one in particular where Becky and I had to miss

school to sing at Janie Floyd's service at Mount Paran Church. Janie was only ten years old when she died."

Shirley recalled that during World War II, the Army trained in the Montebello area because the terrain was similar to where the soldiers were going to serve in Germany. "I remember the first time I ever saw a Jeep. We were coming home from school and this weird looking thing came up the road. We learned that soldiers were on maneuvers here and sometimes some of the boys would come to our house to visit with my older sisters. Us younger kids would serve as chaperones and we stayed right there with them. They gave us candy and gum; things we didn't get very often. We still have some of the letters that were written to my sisters after the boys left."

There were quite a few country stores in the Montebello area when Shirley was growing up. Parrish Robertson, Albert Farris and the Grant family all had stores in the community. And Shirley said there was a grist mill across the road from Robertson's store, thus the name, Zink's Mill School Road which exists today although the mill is no longer standing. Shirley added, "We would go to the mill to be weighed on the scales to determine our weight for school that year."



Juen and Shirley, 1953

lived there also. On December 20, 1952, Shirley and Juen came home and were married in Lovings-ton, Virginia. She was 17 and Juen, 23. The couple rented a small apartment in northern Virginia where Shirley was employed as a secretary and her husband worked in the construction trade.

Dating consisted of talking to the boys at church, who would sometimes walk the girls home to visit. Or they would meet for group functions such as an apple butter boiling, where couples would stand next to each other, stirring the kettle of butter. Shirley said if a boy they didn't like wanted to walk them home, they would leave church and cut through Lottie Anderson's farm and take a shortcut home! But Shirley was a popular girl and had plenty of dates over the years. She met her future husband, Juen O'neal Campbell, on his way to a 4th of July picnic with his parents who stopped by to visit Gracie since they were good friends. Juen, who was six years older than Shirley, was in the Navy at the time. They began dating after she graduated high school at sixteen years of age. That same year, she, her sister Becky and Juen, who was no longer in the military, moved to the Washington DC area to get good paying jobs which were non-existent in the mountains. The sisters lived with their mother's sister, Ruth, who lived in that area and Juen moved in with his brother Jack who

Their first daughter, Deborah Corrine, was born on October 4, 1956 and their second, Beverly June, was born October 27, 1959. Shirley stayed home with the girls until they started school and then found employment at the Pentagon as a clerk/typist in 1964. After Debbie had graduated college and Bev was still in school, Shirley began taking night classes at George Mason University studying business, with programming and budget being her number one choice. Shirley helped type in the numerical data when the first mainframe computer, as large as the room in which it was housed, was introduced at the Pentagon.

The couple had a large home built the year before Shirley's husband, Juen, 54, died from a massive heart attack. He had been to the doctor the week before, coming home with a clean bill of health. After his death, Shirley stayed on at the Pentagon for seventeen more years, working in many different secretarial positions until she entered an internship for becoming a program and budget analyst. She retired from the Department of Defense in 2000, after 36 years of service. In prior years, the Campbells had bought a hundred acres in the Lofton area and after retirement Shirley had a home built on the property where she continues to reside.



Shirley in Washington DC



Shirley today with her daughter, Debbie Campbell

full of interesting tales and much good humor. Shirley, may God continue to bless you with good health and may you find many more interesting branches of your family tree in the years to come.

Shirley Temple Cash Campbell has come a long way from her early life on Crabtree Meadows Road. It's been an interesting journey from the isolated mountain hamlet of her childhood home to the bustling metropolis of northern Virginia where she spent 53 years of her life. Shirley celebrated her 88th birthday milestone this August and she is still an active, vital lady,