

## Hide Under the House



About 1934 or 1935, after we had moved from the “little” house to the “big” house on Grandpa Brownlee’s farm on what is now McGee Road near Snellville in Gwinnett County, it seems that I had occasion to hide under the house. My doing so, I’m told, caused some problem and maybe a little excitement for the family, part of them at least. I have some memory of this incident, and Mom and Mildred have filled in some of the details over the years as they laughingly recalled and told the story – if for no other reason than to embarrass me of course.

The “big” house is still occupied today. It was built as most houses in the country were built, on rock pillars spaced 10 to 12 feet apart – no continuous foundation. Therefore a small boy, along with the chickens, dogs, cats, and other assorted varmints, could crawl under the house and roam some what freely while under there. For larger children, and certainly for adults, it was more of a challenge, for them it required they lay flat and crawl or wriggle to navigate, and still it was difficult for them to reach some areas. It was an ideal hiding place for a young innocent boy.



Well I guess I was about four years old when I went on this adventure. Why I went under the house is not quite clear in my mind. And more puzzling is why I did it without any clothes on – nude. In the words of Lewis Grizzard Jr., I was ney-kid, yes, *NAY-KID!* I think I was running from, or hiding from Mom. I cannot imagine why she would have been wanting to punish me – not me. At that time I was **The Baby**. I was well mannered, and disciplined, not to mention “cute”, and I am told I was doted on by two older sisters. I really don’t remember that last part - at all.

I can remember being under the house, near the middle around the chimney foundation. I remember Mom calling me. “Harvis, you come out from under that house right now”. The chimney was a good place hide behind, and I did, and I did not answer her. Surely, she would tire of this and go away, and then I would be free to come out when I pleased. She didn’t go away. She persisted. “Where is he - do you see him”, she asked?

I don't remember if Hollis and Edna was helping with this rescue operation (it was more of a "catch him if you can" than a rescue) or not. I do remember that Mildred was a part of it. "Do you see him" Mom asked again? Mildred was looking all around, but I saw her and made sure that neither she nor Mom could see me. "No, I don't see him, is he still under there"? "Yes, he is still under there, he has to come out this side or down under the back porch, and I can see all the way down there". "Well Mama I can't get up under there to get him out". "If I go up under there he'll just go to where I can't reach him, or run out and I'll miss him."

"Well I know how to get'em out" Mama said in a loud voice directed toward me. "I'll just set the house on fire and it'll burn down and he'll come out then I guess". This kinda got my attention, but I made no movement to come out. I would wait and see. "Go get me some kindlin from the wood pile, and some leaves, and some small limbs, and I'll start the fire right here." "Mama you are not really going to set the house on fire are you," Mildred asked? Yes I am, now go in the house and bring me the box of matches and some old newspaper and I'll get this fire going real good right here and then the house will catch on fire, "**and then he'll have to come out**", Mama shouted.

I was watching what was going on with more interest all the time. I was beginning to imagine what it would be like to be laying up against that chimney foundation and the house on fire all around me. I had to figure out what to do next. I decided I could make it out from under the house without them seeing me. I began to work my way toward the front of the house while they were busy gathering and preparing the great bonfire (which turned out to be nothing but a little pile of sticks). I then came down to the side of the house they were on at the front corner of the house where I could maneuver, about 30 feet from them. Just as I made my move out from under the house someone noticed me. "There he comes, there he is" they shouted!

Thinking as a four-year-old would under those circumstances, I made an instant decision to leave that territory. I needed distance between them and me. Mom was yelling, "catch him". I was just beginning my sprint. Remember I had no clothes on to constrict my movement. I headed straight for the road. I turned right on the road – picking up speed as I went – I thought. I was headed right down the middle of the public road – **NAY-KID!** Mom was still yelling, "go catch him and bring him back here". I heard footsteps. Someone was gaining on me. Try as I might I could not gain any more speed. Now Mildred had an early foot and ankle problem, but that day she overcame it. In spite of my running flat out – and dodging, she caught me, and dragged me back to Mom.

Strange, but I don't remember what happened next. Maybe she was so happy to have her baby boy back safe; she just hugged me and said, "now young man don't you ever run from me again". Nah, I don't think so. I think I probably got spanking or a whipping with a switch. I would not be at all surprised if one of my big sisters personally selected the switch.

The moral of this story is – for young boys, big sisters are deputy moms.