



Michael Raleigh (Ike) Cooper and Alice Elizabeth Owens (Dollie) Cooper, 1913

MICHAEL RALEIGH COOPER

Aug 24, 1864 - Apr 24, 1941

Michael Raleigh (Ike) Cooper was the fifth child born of John Jordan Cooper and Louisa Slay Cooper.

On August 24, 1864 when John Jordan Cooper was 44 and Louisa Slay Cooper was 29, Michael R. (Ike) Cooper was born. He arrived during the end of the Civil War, just two days before Atlanta fell to General Sherman and General Lee was trying to defend Petersburg, Virginia which was vital to the survival of Richmond.

I imagine that it must have been uncomfortably warm for Louisa that day in August, when Ike was born. Louisa also had her hands full with four young children. Ike's oldest brother, Henry Moses was 12, William Erasmus was 9, John Robinson was 6 and James Fountain was only 3 years old.

While growing-up, Ike helped his father and older brothers work the farm and the family's involvement in the timber industry. Ike lived at home until the time that he got married in 1892. It has been said that he had his hands in a little of everything from harvesting trees, salvaging deadheads, trading and swapping dry goods and applying his carpentry skills where needed. It wasn't until 1916 when Ike was 51 that he started farming on his own. One of Ike's greatest skills was story telling. It was an Art Form in those days and Ike was one of the best. Story telling was the main means of family entertainment before the invention of movies and TV.

1892 was a very sad year for Ike but there was happiness as well. Ike was one of the fortunate Coopers to survive the devastating flu epidemic that took so many of the Cooper family. Ike's father, two sisters-in-law, one brother and two of his nephews died of the "Grippe" that year. One of the happy moments for Ike in 1892 was when the love of his life said yes to his proposal of marriage. He had been courting a young local schoolteacher by the name of Alice Elizabeth (Dollie) Owens. They married on August 31, 1892 when Ike was 28 and Dollie was 26.

During their 49 years of marriage, Ike and Dollie had five children, their names were: Alethea (Lee) Cooper, Raymond Leroy (Ray) Cooper, Elizabeth (Lizzie) Cooper, Margie Marigold (Peck) Cooper and Walter Kehoe (Bud) Cooper.

One of the stories, that I have been told, about Ike involves one of his nephews by the name of Floyd M. Cooper, Sr. Apparently one of the ways that Ike earned his living was by selling lumber. Ike was known to cut-down and sell trees from his nephew's land without his permission. This went on for some time but Floyd didn't do anything about it because he didn't want to start a family squabble so he decided to sell that particular parcel of land to a non-family individual so that they would have to resolve the problem.

During 1929, Ike and Dollie had the pleasure of taking into their home one of their granddaughters by the name of Cora Alberta Beck, the only child of Margie Marigold Cooper. Cora lived happily with her grandparents, on their 160-acre farm until she was eight. In Cora's own words, " He (Ike) was a sweet heart - Let me tell you - I think he was a kind of a rough-n-tough person when it came to raising his family, but by the time his granddaughter came along, she was the apple in his eye - nobody could get near her. He was kind of a toughie - the kids got their temper from him. Three of them were kind of flighty and quick to fly off the handle, but Uncle Ray and Aunt Lizzie were like my grandmother Dollie - very sweet and doleful."

Mary Lois Gillis (Granddaughter of Floyd and Lorena Cooper) said, "One of the things I remember all of the relatives saying about Uncle Ike was that he was very contrary and anytime one of Mama's grandchildren was contrary she would say, "You're just like Uncle Ike".

Jasper C. Blocker, Sr. told me, the day after the first annual "Cooper Basin" Coopers' Reunion (1996), that Ike Cooper used to twirl his mustache and that it was usually stained with chewing tobacco. JC also told me a story about his grandfather Jasper Adams and Ike - Ike was planning to geld his horse and Jasper told him that he should wait because the moon wasn't in the right phase. Ike said that he wasn't going to wait and did it anyway. Several days later the horse died.

Ike used to walk with his hands behind his back. Another individual characteristic was that he liked his beans only partially cooked. He said that he liked to hear the beans hit the plate and if they didn't make a ping noise when they hit the plate then they were over-cooked.

Ike lived to the respectable age of 76 before he died on April 24, 1941. His final resting-place is the old Cooper Cemetery. Dollie, his wife, is buried in the Crain Cemetery near Milton, Florida.

*Compiled by: Miles Davis Cooper, great grandnephew of Michael Raleigh Cooper.
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