

MONDAY

Garlyn Webb Wilburn

Royal Fineworks Press
UNIONVILLE, NEW YORK



Copyright © 2022, 2004
Royal Fireworks Online Learning, Inc.
All Rights Reserved.

Royal Fireworks Press
P.O. Box 399
41 First Avenue
Unionville, NY 10988-0399
(845) 726-4444
fax: (845) 726-3824
email: mail@rfwp.com
website: rfwp.com



ISBN: 978-0-88092-626-3

Publisher: Dr. T.M. Kemnitz
Editor: Jennifer Ault
Cover Art: Christopher Tice
Book and Cover Designer: Kerri Ann Ruhl

Printed and bound in Unionville, New York,
at the Royal Fireworks facility. 3au22

CHAPTER 1

DUMB DONKEY

It was still dark when I awoke to the slam of the screen door as my granddad carried firewood into the kitchen. A few minutes later I could hear him coming back. He opened the door and stepped out onto the porch. There was just enough light glowing from the kerosene lamp in the house to see his outline. He cleared his throat to speak. I knew what he was about to say, and it wasn't something I wanted to hear.

"Time to milk."

"Aw, heck," I sighed as I sat up, letting my feet hang over the side of the bed while I searched for my clothes. "I hate milking cows."

My granddad and I slept in two beds on the front porch during the summer. It was cooler than being in the house. My grandmother always slept inside. Occasionally, if it was raining, she would make me sleep inside, too. I didn't like it, though. I would wake up during the night and hear rats running across the paper ceiling above my bed. I was always afraid one might fall through and land on top of me.

It was 1943, and my parents had sent me to spend the summer with my grandparents, who lived on a small farm in central Texas, about three miles from the town of Parkerville. I hadn't wanted

to go to my grandparents' house; there was nothing to do there. I wanted to stay home and hang out with my friends, but my parents wouldn't let me.

It was all the fault of Mrs. Brazwell, my fourth-grade teacher. I'd failed English, so she told my parents that either I had to complete a bunch of assignments during the summer, or I needed to attend summer school, which she would be teaching. If I didn't do one of those things, I'd have to repeat the fourth grade.

I don't think it was my fault that I failed. Mrs. Brazwell had to be the crankiest, most annoying teacher in school—always mad, never smiling. It seemed like nothing I did was good enough for her. Just for meanness, she would have us come to her desk and spell out the new words for the day. If we missed one, we received a swat on the palms of our hands with a ruler. I was never any good at spelling. It's a wonder I didn't have blisters on my hands from being swatted so often.

To make matters worse, she told us that she'd been reassigned to the fifth grade and would probably see us again the next year. I decided that if I got her for fifth grade, maybe I'd just be sick for most of the year.

My parents were pretty unhappy that I'd failed English, and they didn't seem to care what I had to say about it. They felt that a visit to my grandparents' farm for the summer might help to change my attitude. But they warned me that if I didn't complete all of my assignments on time, I'd be brought home and placed in summer school, which I definitely didn't want.

So there I was, stuck at my grandparents' place, having to do all kinds of chores for Dad and Maw (that's what I called my

granddad and grandmother), while my friends got to enjoy their summer back at home. It was going to be a long few months, but at least that meant it would be a long time before school started again, too.

Sometimes I didn't mind some of the chores so much. On this day, Maw wanted me to ride one of Dad's donkeys to the store at Parkerville for a twenty-five-pound sack of flour. My grandparents didn't own a car, so our only means of transportation was by donkey, in a wagon, or walking. This would be my first trip on a donkey.

Remembering the adventure in store for me that day, I hopped off the bed, slipped on my clothes, and went down to the cow lot where Dad was getting the cows up.

My granddad was a quiet man, seldom saying much. When he did say something, he usually said it in a mumble, and he always cleared his throat first. I was surprised that the three donkeys he used to plow his field never seemed to have a problem hearing his commands. I reasoned that their long ears enabled them to hear sounds that I couldn't hear.

"Dad, can I use Blue to ride to the store?" I asked him when I got to the cow lot. Blue, a grayish-white donkey, was my favorite of the three. She was easy to catch and bridle and stood still while I got on. With a brown stripe about two inches wide running down the middle of her back from her head to the end of her tail and another stripe across her shoulders, she was also by far the best-looking donkey Dad had.

Dad only grunted.

"What did you say?" I asked. "Did you say I could use Blue?"

Dad cleared his throat. “Mumble...Monday...mumble.”

I had learned to understand my granddad when he mumbled—at least most of the time. Just then I knew that what he was saying was that I had to use Monday.

Monday, about the same color as Blue, had to be the most cantankerous donkey that ever lived. Purely for meanness, she always did just the opposite of what you wanted her to do. And for some reason, Dad always made me use her.

“Why do I have to use Monday?” I whined. “Why can’t I use Blue?” I didn’t ask to use his brown donkey, Jenny. She had a bony back that made me sore.

“Mumble...Blue...mumble...Jenny...mumble...plow.”

“Oh,” I said. He always used Blue and Jenny to plow his field. That left me stuck with Monday.

By the time we finished milking, it was daylight. While Dad was letting the calves in, I carried the two buckets of milk to the house. We kept the calves away from their mothers at night so the cows would have plenty of milk the next morning, but after the milking was done, the calves got to be with their mothers again so they could get their breakfast.

I was hungry for my breakfast, too. “Is breakfast ready, Maw?” I asked as I went into the kitchen.

She smiled. “No, Baby. It’ll be a few minutes.”

I was almost eleven years old, and she still called me Baby. That bothered me. Why couldn’t she call me Jeff like everyone else?

“Dad said I’m s’posed to ride Monday to the store,” I announced. “I’m going down to the barn lot to catch her.”

“Don’t be long,” Maw told me. “Breakfast will be ready shortly.”

“I won’t,” I promised, hustling out of the house and down the porch steps.

Dad had finished the morning chores and was on his way to the house. “I’m going to bridle Monday,” I blurted as I trotted by.

The three donkeys had finished eating the corn Dad had given them and were waiting at the gate to be let out—all except Monday. She had her ears laid back and her teeth bared and was chasing a chicken that had hopped into the feed trough.

“Come here, Monday,” I coaxed, strolling toward her with a rope in my hand.

Monday eyed me, scrambled to the other side of the lot, and turned her back to me as if to tell me she was going to kick.

Slipping the rope up under my shirt, I waited for her to turn back around. When she finally did, I ambled over as though I was just going to pet her, and then I eased the rope around her neck.

“Fooled you, didn’t I, old gal,” I gloated.

Catching Monday was usually hard, but I’d managed on this morning without too much trouble. However, the next step, putting the bridle on her, would be next to impossible.

After tying her to a post, I found a bucket to stand on while I tried to force the bridle bits into her mouth. That was a challenge Monday dearly loved. Holding her head as high as possible, she

clenched her teeth together so tight that it would take a crowbar to get them open.

“You hateful old donkey,” I snorted. “You’re as hateful as Mrs. Brazwell.”

Monday almost seemed to be smiling as she continued to hold her head high in the air while I struggled to put the bridle on her. But as I stood on tiptoe to reach her head, the bucket I was standing on slipped out from under me, and I hit the ground with a thud.

“I hate you,” I sputtered, dusting myself off and stomping out of the lot, leaving Monday tied to the post.

I was still mad when I reached the house. Going up the porch steps, I could smell the aroma of sausage and eggs drifting from the kitchen. In that moment, I forgot all about being mad.

“Maw, can I have a biscuit now?” I asked as I sat down at the table, my mouth watering.

Maw shook her head. “No, Baby. We’ll eat when Dad gets here.”

As Maw was bringing the food to the table, Dad came in. He was a tall, lanky, graying fellow, but his thin frame was deceiving. He was as strong as an ox and could work harder than anyone I ever saw. He took off his hat and sat down in his chair.

“Dad, will you bridle Monday for me?” I asked him. “She wouldn’t let me put it on, so I just left her tied to the post.”

Dad grunted. That meant yes.

“Baby,” Maw said as she settled into her chair, “are those books in that satchel under the bed the ones your teacher sent for you to read?”

“Yes, ma’am,” I answered. “But I don’t have to get them read ’til the end of the summer.”

Maw peered at me over the top of her glasses. I hated it when she did that. “Don’t you have some spelling words to learn, too?” she asked.

“Yes, ma’am,” I admitted.

“Then you’d better get started before the end of the summer, don’t you think?”

“I guess so,” I mumbled. But I hoped she’d forget about it before I got back from the store.

By the time I reached the lot gate after breakfast was over, Dad had already bridled Monday and was about to lead her to the house. Handing me the reins, he mumbled something about a switch. He meant for me to get a switch to use on Monday.

Taking the reins, I led Monday around the house to the woodpile, where I found a good limber switch. I also found a loose stump to stand on. It was Dad’s chopping block.

I led Monday to the stump, but as soon as I hopped up on it, she sidestepped away. I got down, hustled around to the other side of her, and pushed her up close to the stump again. But again, when I hopped up on the stump, she moved. So I marched around in front of her and looked her straight in the eyes. “I’ll show you, you old smarty!” I barked.

Monday just stared back at me, not even blinking. I led her over to the woodpile and shoved her up against it, then rolled the stump over beside her. Now she couldn't sidestep to get away from me. But this time, when I tried to mount, she backed up, leaving me standing with one foot in the air and the other on the stump. I wanted to clobber her with my switch!

I dragged her back up to the stump and stacked firewood behind her. She just stood there, acting uninterested in what I was doing. This time I knew I had her boxed in. Even so, I jumped up on the stump and then onto her back as fast as I could—before she had time to think about moving. “Dumb donkey,” I muttered.

I rode Monday around to the front of the house. Maw was sitting on the porch at her sewing machine, trying to thread the machine needle. Her glasses, which were usually perched on the end of her nose, were pushed up against her face. Her head was bent down close to the needle as she poked the thread at the needle's eye. I liked watching her. She was a slender woman with dark eyes and long, dark brown hair that she kept braided and rolled up in a bun at the back of her head. Only her brown, lined, sun-baked features revealed her age.

I sat on Monday, quietly watching her. Monday stood motionless, long ears hanging out to the side, occasionally flicking one to get rid of a fly.

After a while, Maw sat up, letting her glasses drop back to their usual place on the end of her nose. Peeking over the glasses at me, she said, “Baby, be careful, and try to be back before dinner. You can read one of your books to me after dinner.”

Mrs. Brazwell had sent five books and a whole bunch of long spelling lists to my parents, and my parents had sent them all to my grandparents' with me, along with strict instructions to make sure I did the work I had been assigned.

"But Maw, I'll be tired," I protested. "Can't it wait 'til tomorrow?"

She shook her head. "If you don't read your books and learn your spelling words, your ma will come and take you home and put you in summer school. Do you want that?"

"No, ma'am."

"Then we'll read this afternoon after dinner."

"Yes, ma'am," I pouted.

No matter how hard I tried, it wasn't going to be a very good day. Not only did I have to ride a dumb donkey to town, but I had to read to my grandmother all evening, too. I hate school, and I hated Mrs. Brazwell. My summer was ruined, and it was all her fault.