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The Family Story of James Sumler

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The Family History of
James "Aaron" Sumler

13 November 2016

James Aaron Sumler authored this family history as part of the course requirements for HIST 813 Seminar in American History: Family History offered in the Fall Semester of 2016. It was submitted to the Pittsburg State University [Digital Commons](#). Please contact the author directly with any questions or comments: sum_aar_jam@yahoo.com

List of Direct Line Family Members

Generation One

- A1. James Aaron Sumler (1984-)**
- A2. Teresa Lynn Sumler (1984-)**

Generation Two

- A1a. Mark Lewis Sumler (1962-)**
- A1b. Birth Mom (1965-) [identity withheld for privacy concerns]**

Generation Three

- A1a1. Harry Lewis Sumler (1935 -)**
- A1a2. Norma Ruth Sumler (1938-)**

Generation Four

- A1a1a. Earnest Sumler (1903-1979)**
- A1a1b. Opal Sumler (1905-1970)**
- A1a2a. Orvil Kidd (1901-deceased)**
- A1a2b. Lola Kidd (1903-1987)**

Generation Five

- A1a1a1. Aron T. Sumner (1872-1919)**
- A1a1a2. Mary L. Sumner (1876-1964)**
- A1a2a1. John T Kidd (1872-deceased)**
- A1a2a2. Mary E. Kidd (1868-deceased)**
- A1a1b1. Jesse L. Coppock (1872-1933)**
- A1a1b2. Ollie B. Coppock (1879-1947)**

Introduction

"HOUSE IMPEACHES, SENATE TRIES.....HOUSE IMPEACHES, SENATE TRIES!!!" came the loud chorus of student voices throughout the 500 hallway of McDonald County High School. Usually, any loud noise in a public school is a cause for concern or at least peaks the interest of others, but in this instance, it is typical everyday behavior for my classroom. When other teachers or my principals walk near my room, they have grown accustomed to my highly excited and spirited teaching methods. Organized chaos, excitement, and overall craziness are just a few words that best describe my pedagogical methods.

My name is James Aaron Sumler, but do not ever call me James for that annoying honor is reserved only for my wife, who only uses it when I do something wrong (or stupid) and then the full name is often followed by a glare that could give Medusa a run for her money. God not only gave me a “peculiar” personality, but also permitted me to use that weird, craziness constructively by being a high school Social Studies teacher. I use the word peculiar personality because that is what my younger brother referred to me as when he was talking to my students one day last year. During the spring semester of 2016, my younger brother came down to McDonald County High School where I teach for a job interview as he was graduating that May. After the interview, he came down to my AP Psychology class where I asked if he would give my seniors a few pointers and some advice about life in college.

As the conversation progressed, the questions of my students became less and less about college work, professors, and dorm life and became more and more about what his life was like as my younger brother. For some reason, my students thought it was more interesting to hear stories of our childhood growing up than it was to listen to an actual college graduate with real life applicable knowledge of a world they were about to enter. As the question and answer forum progressed, one of my students asked my younger brother, "How is Mr. Sumler different from the rest of you all in your family?" My younger brother looked over at me with a sheepish grin on his face and replied, "Well, Aaron is not like the rest of

the Sumler Brothers, he is the weird one with a "peculiar" personality." My students, who know me all too well, erupted in hysterical laughter as if everything they knew about me finally began to make sense. Therefore, that is where I shall begin this personal narrative. My name is James "please call me Aaron" Sumler and I have a peculiar personality.

The Beginnings of My Peculiar Existence

On September 25, 1984, I came forth into this world at Sales Hospital in Neosho, Missouri to Mark Sumler (dad) and my birth mom (identity withheld for privacy concerns). Sales Hospital no longer exists and is now known as Freeman Neosho. Coincidentally, they no longer deliver babies at Freeman Neosho and the year of my birth was one of the last years they delivered newborns. At this point, my beloved wife would interject a sarcastic remark connecting by birth and the signs of the apocalypse as the reasons for the hospital's discontinued baby delivery service. I would like to think that upon my birth, the hospital realized that a perfect child had finally entered into the world and they wanted to end on that perfect record. By the way, I hope sarcasm, wit, levity, and humor is not lost on those that read my personal story. You have all been forewarned that I have a peculiar personality.

My first few years of life were awesome. Like most one and two year olds, I do not remember a single thing so I can only conclude that they were exceptionally great. My parents and grandparents remember more than I do, although I personally cannot collaborate their stories. One story of note was an interesting nickname that my older sister and I received from my Grandpa. My older sister Kayla and I were in the potty training stage of life. She was more mobile than I was, being fourteen months older than I am and therefore using the toilet whereas I was still crawling/walking in diapers. One day, I had loosened my diaper just so much to leave a nice trail of human waste behind me as I crawled across Grandma's nice clean carpet. This was understandable for a nearly two year old. However, my sister on the other hand did something far more interesting. She had ran out of toilet paper in the bathroom and decided to use Grandma's curtains as a substitute. From that point onward, Grandpa called us both "curtain monkeys" because we were like monkeys at a zoo throwing our excrement everywhere. To this day, Grandpa will still jokingly refer to us as such. This was one of the more interesting stories from this

moment of my life that others can remember. The term of endearment “curtain monkey” has also been attributed to my son. A few years ago when we were at Sunday dinner, Grandpa saw my son crawling on the floor and said “There’s another curtain monkey in the family.” One of these days I shall regale my son with the meaning of that term of endearment and perhaps call my future grandchildren “curtain monkeys”.

Earliest Memories from My Peculiar Existence

Every person's life is a wonder full of great experiences, joys, and sheer happiness. However, just like there are moments of awesome joy, there are equally terrifying moments. My first conscious memory came when I was very young. My dad and birth mom were young, newlywed couples. My dad was 22 years old and my birth mom was only 19. They had married right out of high school after giving birth to my older sister. Their marriage did not last very long and my first conscious memory was of their tumultuous marriage. I remember walking from my room and saw them yelling at one another very fiercely in our dining room area near the front door. I remember feeling scared at the sights and sounds that I did not understand at the time. Life is something where the good must be taken with the bad and this was one of those moments. Fortunately, that was all I remember of their marriage, as they divorced shortly thereafter. It was a blessing, if you will, because I was spared the nastiness of being caught between two parents going through a nasty divorce, which is something that too many children experience in this day and age.

What is most interesting about my dad and birth mom getting a divorce was that it was the first time in our family that it had happened in a few generations. Both my Grandparents remain married to this day and there are no records of divorce for my great grandparents or great-great grandparents. Their divorce was an indication of the changing times and societal values of the mid 1980s. Prior to World War II, death was the prime reason marriages ended.¹ Divorces peaked in the early 1990s to 51 for every 100

¹ Claude S. Fischer and Michael Hout, *Century of Difference: How America Changed in the Last One Hundred Years* (New York, Russell Sage Foundation, 2006), 72.

marriages.² There was a changing cultural attitude about divorce when my dad and birth mom married. Between 1970 and 1985, every state had adopted what was known as "no-fault" divorce laws.³ Essentially, no-fault divorce laws provides a way for either partner in a marriage to file for a divorce without having to show evidence or prove that the other party had violated a marital contract.⁴ This made divorce very quick and easy.

The age of my parents may have also been a factor in their divorce. They were young when they became married with Dad being 22 and my birth mom being 19. During the 1990s, divorce rates decreased because individuals were tying the knot at older ages than in previous decades.⁵ Divorce rates for young married couples were higher than those that married at older ages. According to a US Census report *Studies in Marriage and the Family*, female teenagers were at the highest risk of divorce with 32.4% of first-time marriages for women under the age of 20 ending in divorce.⁶ Divorce rates during the 1980s for young teenage women were up more than 20% when compared with rates during the 1970s.⁷ The data for divorce illustrates that it was not only a common societal trend during the 1980s, but was also more likely for young married couples.

The situation surrounding my creation was also based on the changing culture and society. My sister was born in 1983 and is fourteen months older than I am. This means that my dad was 21 and my birth mom was 18. It was not uncommon during this time for young couples to have premarital sex. In fact, by the 1970s, two-thirds of teenage girls had engaged in premarital sex.⁸ By the 1980s, an increasing number of Americans believed that premarital sex was acceptable.⁹ By the 1990s, one in two first-time

² Fischer, *Century of Difference*, 72.

³ Fischer, *Century of Difference*, 92.

⁴ Wikipedia contributors, "No-fault divorce," *Wikipedia*, The Free Encyclopedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=No-fault_divorce&oldid=749153330 (accessed November 12, 2016).

⁵ Fischer, *Century of Difference*, 71.

⁶ US Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 162, *Studies in Marriage and the Family* (US Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1989), 13. Accessed November 11, 2016. <https://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/marriage/data/cps/P23.162.1989.Report1.pdf>

⁷ US Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Accessed November 11, 2016.

⁸ Claude S Fischer, *Made in America: A Social History of American Culture and Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 142.

⁹ Fischer, *Made in America*, 142.

mothers had given birth outside the bounds of matrimony.¹⁰ What was unique about my parents versus the majority of Americans was that they married after having my older sister. During modern times, premarital pregnancy did not often result in a marriage.¹¹ My parents on the other hand did marry immediately after my older sister was born and divorced shortly thereafter.

It is hard for me to grasp, but at one time, my parents were just as hormone crazed as any other teenager in the United States. In fact, I do believe that societal pressures concerning premarital sex were stronger when they were teenager than when I was a teenager during the late 1990s and early 2000s. During the 1990s and 2000s, teenage sexual intercourse was on the decline in comparison to the 1970s and 1980s.¹² The choices that my parents made concerning sexual relations, getting married young, and divorce were cultural trends that many Americans their age engaged in (with the exception of getting married after the premarital pregnancy).

I believe that their decision to marry was primarily based on my grandparents' morals and values. According to my grandparents' beliefs, children are supposed to be raised with a dad and mom inside the confines of marriage. Pressure from their parents to do the "morally right thing" is what probably prompted my dad and birth mom to get married, even though they themselves were not ready for such commitment due to their youth.

My Peculiar Life with Good Ole' Dad

Living with Dad without a mother figure was something of an interesting experience. Tremendous accolades must be given to Dad for he found himself a 22-year-old man with two small kids living in a house that was over 70 years old while trying to get his life straightened out. Dad decided that the best way to get his life straightened out was to get his relationship with God straightened out and so he started to take us to the church that he grew up in, which brings me to my next memory.

If one has ever tried to get young children ready for church on a Sunday morning knows that it is almost like herding cats in the middle of a rainstorm. I remember him trying to comb my very curly hair,

¹⁰ Fischer, *Made in America*, 227.

¹¹ Fischer, *Made in America*, 227.

¹² Fischer, *Made in America*, 227.

which was so curly it was an afro. At the same time, he was trying to get himself cleaned up and get my sister dressed. Mind you, this was one of the first times we were going to church so first impressions were important. After he had gotten us ready, he quickly realized that we had not eaten breakfast. If there is one thing that you do not do with children, it is send them to church hungry as it is in violation of the 11th Commandment of child rearing. Seriously, try keeping a hungry three-year-old quiet during the singing of "Amazing Grace" and you will be convinced that Moses should have wrote "thou shalt keep kids fed" on the back of the 10 Commandments. The best moms in the world do not keep make-up or jewelry in their purse. They keep Goldfish and fruit snacks and if you have a super mom, there will always be some candy in the purse as well.

Being a single dad, my Dad's cooking ability was extremely lacking. Therefore, he grabbed a box of cereal and began pouring my sister and me a couple of bowls. Then, he reached for the milk in the refrigerator only to find to his horror, that we only had a small amount of milk left in the carton. The one quality about my Dad is that he is never short of great fixes. Without stopping to complain about the lack of milk, he quickly divides the milk evenly, which was enough to get a few flakes of cereal good and soggy. Then he takes both of our bowls to the kitchen faucet and pours water onto the cereal. Needless to say, that was not the best idea because cereal was never intended to be eaten with any liquid other than milk. For future reference, water and cereal do not make a wholesome breakfast. However, we did make it to church on time and we were not hungry. To this day, whenever I am eating a bowl of cereal and someone turns on the water faucet, I cringe.

The Darkest Moment of my Peculiar Existence

Every person has low periods in his or her life and my story is no different. Before I begin, let me put a disclaimer. This is not a happy story, but a story that must be told nevertheless for it helped make me who I am today. Today, I hold no ill-feelings or grudges against anyone. As Rafiki from the *Lion King* once said, "It doesn't matter, it's in the past. Yes the past still hurts, but you can either run from it or learn from it." I have chosen the latter. I have accepted what happened to me, which is why I can freely discuss it. All I ask of the reader is to take my experience and make this world a better place.

When my dad and birth mom divorced, my birth mom chose to remarry rather quickly to another man, who became my step-dad. During the year of 1988, when I was four years old, my step-dad began abusing me. Some of my most vivid memories of my childhood are from this period of my life. I remember very well the violence that my step dad did to me. At night, he would make me put my face down into my pillow so that my screams of pain would be stifled as he hit me continually with a walking cane. One day, he noticed that I would hide from scary movies on the TV as any four year old would do. He ducted tape me to a chair, taped my eyelids open, and forced me to watch scary movie marathons. To this day, scary movies torment me. Whenever I go to the movies with my wife, I have to walk out of the theaters during the previews for fear of a scary movie preview coming on the big screen. Even as an adult, if I watch a scary movie or a scary movie preview, I will have nightmares for several nights and sleep walk around the house. I was not the only object of my step-dad's abuse. I remember one day he held a knife to my birth mom's throat and threatened to kill her if she ever left him. My birth mom was as much a victim as I was. My step-dad was also manipulative. One night he poured a cup of his own urine on me. The next morning, my birth mom punished me for wetting the bed. I can still remember the smirk on his face as my birth mom led me to the bathroom to clean me off. I make no excuses for the actions of my step-dad. I do know that he was addicted to drugs. I remember he would wrap his own marijuana joints in front of my sister and me. Whether or not drugs had a part to play in his actions towards me, I cannot say. I do want to end this dark moment of my peculiar life by stating that I fully forgive what he did to me. I do not condone his actions, for no child should ever have to go through what I went through. Nevertheless, I do forgive him for what he did to me.

I also remember very well how I was removed from that abusive situation. One Friday night, I was staying with my grandparents waiting for my birth mom to pick me up for the weekend. I begged my Grandma and Grandpa not to force me to go, but they lovingly told me that they had no choice and had to let me go. At the time, they did not know the full extent to what was happening to me. A few days later, I remember going over to my Grandparents house one-night because my dad and step mom worked the night shift. I was so bruised from the abuse that I had a very hard time going to the bathroom. I

remember my Grandma coming in to check on me, seeing the bruises, and calling for my Grandpa. It was the first and only time in my life that I ever saw my Grandpa on the verge of tears. A few weeks later, the abuse ended and I was taken from that situation in January of 1989.

One must wonder why I put such vivid and very emotion content in a scholarly paper for a Masters' program. The answer is very simple: education. I am an educator by nature and profession. I see every life circumstance and situation as an opportunity to enrich others' lives through dissemination of information. This part of my life is what teacher's call a "teachable moment." According to the US Census in 1990, there were 690,658 reported cases of child mistreatment and of that total 186,801 (27%) suffered from physical abuse.¹³ In addition, 323,339 (43.5%) of the victims were male and 172,791 (23.6%) were between the ages of 2 and 5 years of age.¹⁴ Today the numbers are even more shocking. The Child Welfare Information Gateway, a service of the Children's Bureau under the United States Department of Health and Human Services publishes current information on child abuse throughout the nation. According to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System, there were 1,546 deaths due to child abuse in 2014.¹⁵ The report also notifies that the fatality number is underestimated because some abuse deaths are classified as death caused by maltreatment and that the number of deaths caused by physical abuse is 50% greater than reported.¹⁶ The report also states that children under the age of 1 constitutes 44.1% of deaths caused by child abuse and that children aged 1-3 constitutes 33.6% of deaths caused by child abuse (therefore, newborns to 3 year olds constitutes over 70% of child abuse deaths).¹⁷

Thousands of children every year suffer from child abuse and maltreatment and there are thousands of deaths because of it. The saddest issues about child abuse cases are those that go unreported. The large percentages of child abuse victims are between newborns and 3 years of age. At

¹³ US Census, *Table 342 Child Abuse and Neglect Victims by Selected Characteristics* (2009). Accessed November 16, 2016 www2.census.gov/library/publications/2011/compendia/statab/131ed/tables/12s0342.xls

¹⁴ US Census, *Table 342*, Accessed November 16, 2016 www2.census.gov/library/publications/2011/compendia/statab/131ed/tables/12s0342.xls

¹⁵ Children's Bureau, *Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities 2014: Statistics and Interventions*, 2. Accessed November 16, 2016. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/fatality.pdf>

¹⁶ Children's Bureau, *Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities*, <http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/fatality.pdf>

¹⁷ Children's Bureau, *Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities*, <http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/fatality.pdf>

this age, a child does not really understand what is going on or even who to go to. In essence, they are voiceless victims. What happened to me was tragic to say the least. Thankfully, I had a great and loving family and a gracious loving God who got me through the darkest moment of my peculiar existence. I was very fortunate, but as the Census statistics point out, I was one of the lucky ones. Child abuse is more common than statistics illustrate because of the unreported or misreported cases. I hope that my experience can save a few lives or at the very least, shine light onto horrible situations that are tragically more common than we realize.

The Extended Family Surrounding my Peculiar Existence

Family is an essential part of my life, mainly because there are so many of us Sumlers. In 1988, my Dad remarried my step-mom, Dayna. With that blessed union, my stepbrother Jeremy entered the family. What was once a three-person family expanded into a five-person family: Dad, Dayna, Kayla, Jeremy, and me. We were a typical nuclear family during the 1990s. By 2000, 62% of children lived in a nuclear family with two parents and other siblings.¹⁸ In this regard, we were like the majority of households in the United States during this period. However, the definition of a typical family in the United States had evolved during the late twentieth century. As stated earlier, divorce rates had increased by the end of the twentieth century and while it was feared that these rates would have affected the family structure in the United States, it simply redefined what it was to be a family. When couples divorced before World War II, they most often blended with another household.¹⁹ Because of the changing demographics, couples that divorced in the late twentieth century had other options such as being a single parent or cohabitating.²⁰ However, the changing trends did not mean the end of the traditional nuclear family, but rather gave couples more options and redefined what it meant to be a family. The family that was created when my dad and Dayna decided to marry was very typical during the late 1980s as most

¹⁸ Fischer, *Century of Difference*, 59.

¹⁹ Fischer, *Century of Difference*, 75.

²⁰ Fischer, *Century of Difference*, 75.

Americans still believed that the two-parent household raising children was still the primary family structure in the United States.²¹

My dad remarrying shortly after getting divorced was also typical of this period. Rose M. Kreider presented a report on remarriage in the United States on August 10-14, 2006. In this report, she stated that in 1990, 46% of marriages had at least one spouse who was remarrying and 91% of remarriage occurred because of a divorce.²² The characteristics of my household were also typical of the period with slight differences. 50% of the remarried households included children with 24% of women bringing their biological children from another relationship into the family and 8% of the men bringing their biological children from another relationship.²³ The difference with our blended family compared to the typical blended family in the United States at the time was that my dad brought two children into the new family while Dayna only brought one child. Usually it was the woman who brings in children from another relationship, but this was not the case with our family.

My Peculiar Existence in an Old House

The five of us lived in a small 70 year old house that was comprised of two bedroom, one bathroom, and very drafty. My Great Aunt Laura (1904-deceased) previously owned the Sumler house. The only things that I know of my Aunt Laura was that she was the sister of my Great-Grandpa Kidd and that she had previously owned our old house. The "old part" of the house (as I shall henceforth refer to it) was constructed based on human grit, sweat, prayer, but no electrical tools or any technology more advanced than a hand saw and a hammer. The builders decided that their eyes were more accurate than a carpenter's level and square and if the house walls are any indication, the builders were cross-eyed. Nothing in the old part is square or level. We would race toy cars in the hallway because all you had to do was let go of the car and gravity would pull it down the hallway due to the slight slope. Dayna banned

²¹ Fischer, *Century of Difference*, 77.

²² Rose M. Kreider, *Abstract Accompanying Poster Presented at the American Sociological Association Meetings: Remarriage in the United States* (Montreal, CA, August 10-14, 2006). Accessed November 16, 2016. <https://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/marriage/data/sipp/us-remarriage-abstract.pdf>

²³ Rose M. Kreider, *Abstract Accompanying Poster*, <https://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/marriage/data/sipp/us-remarriage-poster.pdf>

us from wearing socks in the kitchen because the nails that held the tiles and flooring would sometimes snag our socks and rip holes in them. You could never level a picture on the wall because the walls and the ceilings are not level. The old part was also well air conditioned minus the air conditioner. It was so drafty that you could hear a strong breeze from under the doors. This was great during the summers, but frigid during the winters. As you slept, you could feel a slight breeze blow across your cheeks if you were close enough to the walls.

Nevertheless, the old part was built to last. It may have crooked and uneven walls and floors, but after close to 100 years, it is still standing. The old part was also very small for five people to live in. This precipitated my parents to add on to the house. As you can imagine, that was a very interesting experience as construction and destruction, emphasis on the destruction, was very exciting to watch as a five year old. One particular memory was during construction of the addition there arose a freak rainstorm. Construction of the new addition took place during the summer months to ensure that rain would not be a factor. But this one night, the weather apparently did not receive the memo that the Sumler house was undergoing an expansion and it rained heavily. I remember my parents scrambling around the old part of the house with pots and pans trying to catch all the leaks that were springing up around the part of the house where the new addition and the old part met. Tarps were hung around the old window/entrance to the new addition in a particularly successful bid to keep the old part of the house dry. Imagine the excitement for a five year old at the sight of water dripping from the ceiling. We were finally able to get the new addition built. Dad and Dayna finally had a master bed and bathroom, my sister got a room all to herself, and Jeremy and I ended up sharing a room. Many pillow fights and spit-wad wars were fought in our bedroom. We were all one big happy family.

The fondest memories in that bedroom during this period were when Dayna would read us bedtime stories. I loved it when she would read because she would make voice characterizations. I sometimes still read the same books to my son at night. One book in particular was titled "The Very Best Home For Me" by Jane Werner Watson. I use to love how Dayna would vocalize each of the characters in that book, especially the little puppy dog that loved to eat bones or the squirrel that loved acorns or

nuts. Another book I loved was “All By Myself” by Mercer Myer. My favorite part of this book was seeing all the crazy things that the Little Critter tried to do all by himself and all the trouble he got into or the messes he made. I use to think that I had a lot in common with the Little Critter because I would try to be independent myself, but would end up making messes as well, like when I spilled half a gallon of milk trying to pour it into a bowl of cereal. Story time was an awesome time for us because we knew it would be an imaginative adventure. We would huddle on the bed as close to Dayna as possible to catch a glimpse of the pictures as she read. Sometimes, my dad would use those moments to be ornery and play practical jokes on us.

This one time, when Dayna was reading a bedtime story to us, my dad decided to play a prank on us. You must understand that part of my peculiar personality came from my dad and he can be very ornery. This one instance at bedtime while Dayna was reading a story, Dad decided that it would be hilarious to take a little stink bomb, break it on a plastic Tupperware lid, and slide it under the bedroom door. Moments later the smell of rotten eggs permeated the room and all of us came out of the bedroom gagging. Dayna began yelling at Dad while he laughed hysterically. Other times he would turn off the lights or take a little water in a cup and throw it at us as we were sitting in a group. Dad made life interesting for us in the Sumler Family, albeit it was little annoying at times.

My Peculiar Existence in a Growing Family

My family was further expanded when Dad and Dayna had their first child together, Logan, in 1991. Daniel followed Logan in 1993. Poor Dayna was living in a house with four boys and one girl and desperately wanted a little girl. God gifted my parents with a little girl, but not before providing another boy at the same time. In 1997, my brother Joshua and youngest sister Rebecca was brought into the world. The twins completed the Sumler family to nine people, living in a three bedroom, one bathroom house. You read that correctly, nine people and one bathroom. We Sumler boys learned to have large bladders or else find a big oak tree far from the house. We lived in the country so that was not a problem.

Having a large family was one of the perks of growing up. There was always someone to play with and we were close enough in age that playtime was very interesting. However, being in a large

family did have its downfalls. For one thing, there was no privacy. You could expect the bathroom door to be opened at any time while you were occupying it if you failed to lock the door. Having a single shower was also something of three ringed circus act. During Wednesdays, it was customary for all the kids to get a shower before church. We would get off the bus at 4:30 in the afternoon and have to eat and be ready to leave by 6:00 p.m. Three minute showers became routine for us boys. Of course Dad would take those opportunities to intentionally run the hot water in the kitchen when we were in the shower to make life just a little more interesting.

The size of my family is very unique in the late twentieth century. By 1980, women were only averaging only two births.²⁴ By 1990, only women in the 80th percentile had 4 or more children, meaning that only 80% of women in the United States gave birth to 1 to 4 children.²⁵ Dayna was by far the exception to the birthing trend and gave birth to 5 children. This meant that statistically, Dayna was part of the 20% of women who had 5 or more children. By the end of the twentieth century, large families were becoming less and less common.²⁶ Being part of a large family was unique during the 1980s and 1990s and it is even more unique today. According to the American Community Survey in 2014, the average family size in McDonald County was 3.35 and the average household was 2.76.²⁷ The Sumler Family has 9 people in our immediate family and at one time we were all living under the same roof. This made my family very unique in size in comparison to the rest of McDonald County and the United States.

My Peculiar Existence on the Sumler Family Farm

Everyday life in the Sumler Family was always an adventure. There was something always crazy going on. We lived on a 150-acre farm out in the country. The farm had a 50+-year-old barn, horses, a milking cow named Rose, chickens, a couple geese, pigs, a couple of dogs, and even some pygmy goats. Life in the Sumler Family on the farm was typical for rural McDonald County. According to the 2012

²⁴ Fischer, *Made in America*, 137.

²⁵ Fischer, *Century of Difference*, 65.

²⁶ Fischer, *Century of Difference*, 65.

²⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, *2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*, Accessed November 10, 2016. <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>

Census of Agriculture report, there were 926 farms reported in McDonald County.²⁸ About 400 of the 926 farms were around 50-179 acres with the average farm being about 202 acres.²⁹ Our 150 acre family farm was typical of the farms with McDonald County. However, it should be noted that our family farm was not the primary source of income for our family. My dad worked outside the home as a Farrier, which was his primary occupation (a Farrier is someone who shoes horses). According to the American Community Survey for McDonald County, only 4.5% of the population has an occupation in the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining industry, 6.2% of the population is self-employed, and 16.1% of the population works in service occupations.³⁰ My dad best fits into one of these three categories. He provides a service of shoeing horses, works in the agricultural industry because horses live on farms (I have yet to see a horse in a backyard pen in a city), and is self-employed. In essence, we lived on a farm, but the farm was not our sole source of income. My dad was self-employed as a landscaper during the 1990s and works as a Farrier during the 2000s to the present. Because he shoes most of the horses of McDonald County, he is known throughout the County. I have students who come up to me and tell me how my dad came to their farm over the weekend to shoe their horses.

Living on a 150 acre farm was awesome. There were always things to do and as the older brother, I was on top of the food chain so to speak. As farm boys, we had Ryder BB guns, pocketknives, bikes, and very vivid imaginations. Life was never boring around the Sumler House. We would take our BB guns and shoot at anything that moved. We were careful not to shoot livestock that is, if our parents were around. Once in awhile we would take pot shots at the chickens and the geese when our parents went to town or were otherwise busy. For those of you thinking that we Sumler boys were sadistic, let me explain that Ryder BB guns were not very powerful and would only smack the chickens, but not penetrate their feathers or skin. But boy did it make those chickens squawk and jump around. Of course,

²⁸ US Department of Agriculture, 2012 Census of Agriculture County Profile, McDonald County, Missouri. Accessed November 10, 2016.

https://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Online_Resources/County_Profiles/Missouri/cp29119.pdf

²⁹ US Department of Agriculture, 2012 Census of Agriculture County Profile, McDonald County

³⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, *2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates: Selected Economic Characteristics*. Accessed November 10, 2016.

<https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>

if our parents caught us shooting chickens or the occasional pig or goat, they would make sure us boys were the ones with welts on our bottoms and our BB guns were taken away.

I previously made mention that our dad was ornery. Well we Sumler boys learned a lot of mischievous deeds from him, including our use of BB guns. Keep in mind that as farm boys, we were not stupid in the use of guns or firearms. Ryder BB guns are another matter. I remember one incident involving our dad and a Ryder BB gun. We were outside on a nice spring day doing yard work. Of course, yard work meant that Dayna would be working in the flower beds and us Sumler boys would be horsing around. Dad decided to take one of our BB guns and sneak up behind Dayna as she was bent over planting Magnolias in a flower bed. He silently pumped the BB gun (our Ryder BB guns only pumped once so they were very low powered), took steady aim at Dayna's rear end, and fired. Dayna jumped up in surprise and started to chase after dad in a fit of rage. That was the only time I ever saw Dayna mad enough to smack dad on the back a few times yelling at him all the way. Dad of course apologized for his lapse of good judgment and all was forgiven. Later that day, Dad ironically made it a point to warn us boys against shooting people with BB guns. It was one of those parenting moments in which parents told children to "Do as I say, not as I do." Now we never shot each other, but we did dare each other to shoot ourselves.

One incident I can remember was when Grandpa got a brand new multiple pump BB guns that also shot pellets. This new BB gun was far more powerful than our Ryders and we decided to see just how powerful one was. My younger brother was wearing heavy duty leather work boots and decided to pump the BB gun up ten times and shoot himself in the foot to see if the BB would penetrate leather. What he forgot to do was remove his foot from the leather boot before shooting. This did not bode well because the stainless steel BB penetrated the leather boot, his sock, and embedded itself in the top of his foot. To this day, you can take a magnet over the top of my younger brother's foot and move the BB that is still in his foot.

We Sumler boys were always finding something to get into or finding new adventures outside. My parents did not have the monetary resources to buy expensive electronics for us, which was fine by us

because we had over 150 acres of land and timber to explore. We would spend our summer vacations rampaging through the woods and pastures. We climbed every climbable tree and nailed 2 X 4 ladders into the trees where the limbs were too high for us to reach. We built tree houses in every suitable tree we could find. Our best tree house was a three-story building that was constructed into a unique tree that had seven separate trees growing together. The tree house had a patio, tin roof, lookout platform, and a drawbridge. We also built forts and hideouts in every corner of the woods in order to protect the homestead from imagined Indian attacks. Indians were the frequent imagined enemy of the Sumler Boys, not because of any racial animosity, but because of John Wayne and watching many Westerns. Our bikes were our horses and we could fashion a sword or a gun from any stick lying on the ground. We would spend hours outside, even in the hottest summer months. My favorite time of year was around June when we would go to the blackberry bushes and Mulberry Trees and eat berries until we were sick.

As the saying goes, "boys will be boys" and we Sumler Boys got into lots of trouble. Since Jeremy and I were the two oldest brothers, naturally we picked on Logan and Daniel. Anyone who has older and younger siblings and were picked on or did the picking, knows that this is simply a way of life for large families. One favorite game we would play was cops and robbers. Of course, with this game you needed to have a jail and some restraints for when you caught the robbers. Jeremy and I, being the oldest, would always attempt to try our knot tying skills on Logan. The problem with trying to restrain Logan is that when he was younger, he had long fingers and very thin hands. This made tying him up almost impossible, as he would always escape. We tried everything on him from my Dad's lasso, shoestrings, bailing twine, and rope, but nothing could restrain him. Then one day, my Grandpa was cleaning out his garage and came across a huge roll of camouflaged duct tape, to which he gave to us. Jeremy and I thought up a brilliant plan to restrain Logan. We were playing cops and robbers out in the woods and after we caught Logan, we used the duct tape to tie not only his hands, but also his feet. After securing him tightly, we decided to leave Logan in the woods for twenty or so minutes scare him a little.

Keep in mind; we were the older brothers so it was our sacred duty to pick on our younger siblings. Nevertheless, leave it to Logan to get away. As Jeremy and I were in the barn thinking that we

would go get him, we heard Dayna yelling our names from the backyard. We both looked across the barnyard and saw Logan with his hands and feet duct taped bunny hopping towards the house, crying all the way. We were busted, literally and figuratively. It was rather painful to sit down at the dinner table that night because our bottoms were a little tender from the whipping.

Whenever we regale our childhood stories at Sunday dinners, Dayna always shakes her hand and wonders how we survived without permanent injury. We had bottle rocket wars and had firecrackers blow up in our hands and near our heads. One time, I shot a bottle rocket that went right into the shirt of my brother Jeremy and exploded against his chest. We would make swings out of grapevines in the woods and swing until the vines snapped. I had the wind knocked out of me from falls from trees and vine swings more times than I can count. One time we decided to make our own parachutes out of Wal-Mart sacks and jumped out of the barn loft. We walked away with bumps, bruises, a sprained ankle, but no broken bones. Sometimes when we were bored, we took our Ryder BB guns and took pot shots at my Grandpa's bull. I do not advise ever shooting a bull in his manhood. It may seem like a funny thing to do, but those bulls can run fast. If it were not for all those tree houses we built, we would have never gotten away from that bull. When I think back to all the crazy things we did, I too wonder how in the world we survived.

My Peculiar Existence at Rocky Comfort Elementary

I went to elementary and junior high at Rocky Comfort in the McDonald County R-1 School District from 1990-1999. Coincidentally, it was also the same school my grandma graduated from in 1954. When I say it was the same exact school, I am not exaggerating. The Rocky Comfort school building that I went to was the same exact one that my grandma went to (more on that later). By the time I graced the school with my presence, the building was over 50 years old. Rocky Comfort is one of the smallest schools in the McDonald County R-1 School District. According to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, enrollment in Rocky Comfort Elementary in 2016 was at 187

students.³¹ The majority of the student body also comes from low income families as 62.4% of student enrollment at Rocky Comfort is on a Free or Reduced Lunch Program.³² I was one of these students. My dad was the only one working because Dayna had to stay home and care for the kids as childcare costs would have bankrupted them. Because of this and my family size, I qualified for the Free or Reduced Lunch Program, but I never considered myself from an impoverished family. We always had food in our bellies, clothes on our backs, and a roof over our head. We did get many second-hand clothes from cousins or yard sales, but they were of good quality.

My first memories of Kindergarten were of my teacher, Mrs. Burns. She was one of nicest teachers that I ever had and taught me many life lessons like how to tie my shoes or to work together with other students. As a child, I had a lot of pent up anger. I imagine that this anger had to do with my previous darkest moment of my peculiar life and I was struggling with coming to terms with it. I would sometimes be overtly hostile to fellow classmates and more than a few times I had letters sent home to my parents telling them how I would push other students while standing in line for the drinking fountain or play too rough with others on the playground during recess. Mrs. Burns had patience with me and helped me through that rough patch, but full reconciliation did not come to me until the second grade.

My second grade teacher, Mrs. Burnett, was by far one of my most favorite teachers at Rocky Comfort. It was during that school year and in her class that two things happened that would change my life forever. First was the spark that fired up my love of teaching. Not many people in this world can say with absolutely certainty what they want to do with their lives when they are young. I have taught over 1000 students in my 8 years of teaching and every year, only a small handful of students know with absolute certainty what they will be doing for the rest of their lives. In second grade, after just a few

³¹ Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, *Building Demographic Data: McDonald CO. R-1 (060077) Rocky Comfort Elementary*. Accessed November 16, 2016. <https://mcds.dese.mo.gov/guidedinquiry/District%20and%20Building%20Student%20Indicators/Building%20Demographic%20Data.aspx?rp:District=060077&rp:SchoolYear=2016&rp:SchoolYear=2015&rp:SchoolYear=2014&rp:SchoolYear=2013>

³² Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, *Building Demographic Data: McDonald CO. R-1 (060077) Rocky Comfort Elementary*. Accessed November 16, 2016. <https://mcds.dese.mo.gov/guidedinquiry/District%20and%20Building%20Student%20Indicators/Building%20Demographic%20Data.aspx?rp:District=060077&rp:SchoolYear=2016&rp:SchoolYear=2015&rp:SchoolYear=2014&rp:SchoolYear=2013>

months of being in Mrs. Burnett's class, I knew that I wanted to be a teacher just like her. I would help Mrs. Burnett grade papers and would help other students with their assignments. I thought it was awesome being a teacher and being able to help and educate others. From that point one, I was obsessed with becoming a teacher and everything I did in my life was geared towards that goal.

The second thing that changed my life that year was when I gave my life over to the Lord. As stated earlier, I had a very troubled childhood and was not coming to terms with what happened to me during the darkest moment of my peculiar existence. I had a lot of anger and would lash out at others, sometimes in a physical manner. I even broke another student's leg during a rough soccer match on the playground. During recess one day, we were playing soccer and the match was getting very physical with lots of pushing and pulling. This one student in my class was particularly physical with me during the soccer game and out of frustration and anger, I kicked him in the leg as he was going in for a score, breaking his leg. My anger was getting the best of me and was drawing me down a very dark path. That all changed when I became a follower of Jesus Christ.

Earlier I had mentioned that my dad was beginning to go to church shortly after his divorce with my birth mom. My family and I began attending Union Chapel Church with my grandparents. One Wednesday night after church, my dad started to talk to Jeremy, Kayla, and me about Salvation and Jesus. Up until that point in my life, I had felt that something was just not right in my life and that I was missing something. That night I found it and it was Jesus Christ. I remember kneeling down beside our blue love seat in the living room and giving my life over to God. Almost instantly, the anger, frustration, fear, and hurt that had been building up in my life since the darkest moment disappeared. I felt a freedom and a joy that I did not think was earthly possible. That night my entire life was changed and turned around. Truly, God only knows what my life would have turned out had that night never occurred. I genuinely believe that my life would have turned out drastically different.

Let me interject another teachable moment here. Child abuse does not just affect childhood nor does the pain and hurt end when the abuse does. Child abuse makes a lasting impact that is oftentimes difficult to overcome. According to the U.S. Department of Justice in 1999, 20.2% of state and federal

male inmates and 59.7% of state and federal female inmates suffered prior abuse before the age of 18.³³ In 1998, two-thirds of individuals undergoing rehabilitation or treatment for drug abuse reported suffering some form of abuse during childhood.³⁴ As with any correlation statistics, as my undergraduate psychology professor would say, "correlation does not cause causation." Just because there is a link or relationship between two variables does not mean that one causes the other. However, when I look at these statistics and remember how I was as a young boy, it makes me wonder what my life would have been like without Jesus Christ. Would I have been another statistic? Would I have fallen into drugs to cope with the hurt and pain that I felt? Again, only God truly knows that answer.

After that fateful Wednesday, coming to Jesus moment, I was extremely excited. The next morning, I went up to Mrs. Burnett and asked her if I could make an announcement to the class. I stood up in front of the room and stated, "I've been saved". Of course, most of my classmates had no clue what I was speaking about. However, I remember very vividly Mrs. Burnett's reaction. Tears began to well up in her eyes as she gave me a hug and said how happy she was. She then briefly told the class what I was referring to when I said, "I've been saved".

Religion is a very important aspect in Americans' lives. In 2000, 60% of the population reported to be of a Protestant faith.³⁵ The largest Protestant denominational group in 2000 was the Southern Baptist Convention, which constituted 15% of the Protestants and other Baptists constituted one-third of all Protestant faiths.³⁶ Our family was part of the Apostolic Faith and Full Gospel denominations. In fact, my dad is an ordained minister of the Apostolic Faith movement. The Sumler Family held typical views about religious beliefs like most Americans. Religion was a significant aspect of family life growing up. The Sumler Family was in church every Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night. This was also typical of the American population. During the 1990s, one-third of Americans reported to having

³³ Caroline Wolf Harlow, *Bureau of Justice Statistics Selected Findings: Prior Abuse Reported by Inmates and Probationers* (U.S. Department of Justice, April, 1999), 1. Accessed November 15, 2016. <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/parip.pdf>

³⁴ Neil Swan, *Exploring the Role of Child Abuse in Later Drug Abuse* (National Institute on Drug Abuse, July, 1998). Accessed November 15, 2016. https://archives.drugabuse.gov/NIDA_Notes/NNVo113N2/exploring.html

³⁵ Fischer, *Century of Difference*, 187.

³⁶ Fischer, *Century of Difference*, 189.

regular church attendance every week; however most scholars place the actual percent of church attendance at anywhere between 10-30%.³⁷ Americans reported having higher rates of regular church attendance more so than in Europe, which would indicate that most Americans place significant value on church attendance.³⁸ The Sumler Family certainly falls within that statistic of valuing regular church attendance and adhering to a set of religious beliefs. For us, our faith in Jesus Christ is very important. I was saved when I was seven years old and baptized the following summer. We prayed before eating every meal, read our Bibles every morning before school as a family, and was in church every time the doors were opened. Again, our Christian Faith is highly valued in the Sumler Family and a central pillar of who we are.

My Peculiar Existence at Rocky Comfort Junior High (Another Dark Moment)

Rocky Comfort was such a small school that the elementary and junior high was all at the same location. In fact, my class at Rocky Comfort was never above 20 students and the same students that I started kindergarten with were the same students that went into junior high with me. While this might have created strong friendships and bonds with some students, it did not bode well with me when our class entered into junior high. As a young adolescent, I was socially awkward and was probably considered a “social outcast”. During my elementary years, this was not a particular problem because everyone got along great with everyone else. However, when junior high began, my peculiar existence was not as readily accepted by the social in crowd and I began facing instances of bullying and harassment that continued until my 8th grade year.

During my 6th grade year, a rumor was spread around my classmates that I was a homosexual. Of course, this was false, but the rumor was spread anyways. This was during the 1990s when there was a backlash against homosexual relationships across the nation. In 2000, only 27% of Americans believed

³⁷ Fischer, *Century of Difference*, 191.

³⁸ Fischer, *Century of Difference*, 191.

that there was nothing wrong with homosexuality.³⁹ The late 1990s was not a good time for homosexuals because of the rampant homophobia and vicious derogatory language directed towards homosexuals. I was ostracized from my fellow classmates. I was called all sorts of derogatory terms that should never be repeated in polite company. At times, the bullying became physically violent. During gym class, other students would intentionally seek ways in which to be physically abusive while still making it look like an accident. Whenever I would go to the locker room to change, I would find that my clothes had been taken or someone would say a derogatory phrase and everyone would run out of the locker room like I had the plague. Whenever I would go to the bathroom, students would call, "Cover yourselves, Aaron's coming and he might _____ you" (the blank represents certain verbs that were used by my classmates to describe perverted behavior; I will let you fill in the blank). During lunchtime whenever I would sit at a table, everyone would literally pick up their lunch trays and move to another table. Later, they would block seats to prevent me from sitting down at the same table and then they would just reserve a lone table just for me to sit at. The bullying seemed to get worse as my years in junior high went on. Another rumor was added on that I had a boyfriend named "Bubba". Every afternoon before I got off the bus, students would yell out, "Hey Aaron, have fun with Bubba tonight" or some other remark that implied something. Things got so bad that during my eight grade year I even contemplated taking my own life. It was God that carried me through that rough patch of life. My faith and trust in him grew ever stronger.

I bring up yet another dark moment of my life (it is the last one I promise) for the same reason God placed me upon this earth, education. Bullying is an all too prevalent reality in American society. According to a 2005 report from the National Center for Education Statistics, 14% of students in 2001 reported being victims of bullying.⁴⁰ Bullying incidents were higher in junior high with 24% of sixth graders reported being bullied.⁴¹ I was part of the statistic that was bullied during my junior high years in

³⁹ Fischer, *Century of Difference*, 224.

⁴⁰ Jill F. DeVoe and Sarah Kaffenberger, *Student Reports of Bullying: Results From the 2001 School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey* (US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, July, 2005), 3. Accessed November 18, 2016. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2005/2005310.pdf>

⁴¹ Jill F. DeVoe and Sarah Kaffenberger, *Student Reports of Bullying: Results From the 2001 School*

the late 1990s. I was lucky though because the bullying did not follow me home. There were no widespread social media outlets to allow for continued harassment. Today, students face a completely new realm of cyber bullying that is 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Bullying during the 1990s was not the same as bullying is today. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services website *stopbullying.gov*, 28% of students in junior high and high school suffered bullying and 9% had been cyber bullied.⁴² These are just the reported cases. If you would have asked me if I was being bullied in junior high, I would have denied it in order to avoid further embarrassment or to put on a tough guy facade. As a high school teacher, I know there are students that are bullied or harassed, but never speak out. I pray for the day where bullying disappears entirely. In the meantime, let me provide a quote that I am fond of: evil triumphs only when good men do nothing. Let us decrease these statistics and do something.

My Peculiar Existence at McDonald County High School

I attended McDonald County High School from 1999-2003. Three things of not happened to me in high school. I received my first ever "C" on a progress report, I discovered my passion for teaching history, and I met my wife. My freshman year was pretty uneventful, except for the first "C" that I ever received on a report card. Throughout elementary and junior high, I had always been careful to keep an "A/B" average on report cards. Failure to do so meant being punished by my parents, usually in the form of taking a five-gallon plastic bucket and picking up rocks for several Saturdays until my grades came up. Picking up rocks was a favorite form of punishment for my parents because Missouri soil is well suited for growing rocks and our farm had the most fertile soil in the area for rock growing. During my first semester of my freshmen year, I got a "C" in algebra. When I came home with my progress report, my dad looked up at me after reading my report card and said "Boy, I ain't gonna raise no dummy." Luckily, Dayna saw the teacher that I had for algebra was the same one that my older sister had and reminded Dad

Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey (US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, July, 2005), 5. Accessed November 18, 2016. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2005/2005310.pdf>

⁴² "Facts About Bullying." Facts About Bullying: StopBullying.gov. Accessed November 18, 2016. <https://www.stopbullying.gov/news/media/facts/#listing>.

that she also struggled in that teacher's algebra class her freshman year. From that point on, I made an even greater effort to make better grades.

It was during my sophomore year that I met my wife and discovered what kind of teacher I was going to be. Mrs. Burnett opened my eyes to the passion of teaching in second grade, but it was Mrs. Hanks who showed me a passion for history. I had Mrs. Hanks for a modern world history class my sophomore year. She was such an awesome teacher she sparked my immense passion for history. I had always been interested in the subject of history and the social sciences, but it was Mrs. Hanks that showed me that I could also teach that subject as well. I fell in love with the idea of teaching history in Mrs. Hanks' class.

I also graduated from high school with my diploma. This was significant because I was the first male in several generations to have achieved this. My dad was 1/2 a credit shy from receiving his high school diploma, my grandpa dropped out in the 9th grade, and my great-grandpa only received marginal grade school education. During the 1980s and 1990s, high school graduation rates began approaching 80-90% of the population.⁴³ When my grandparents or great grandparents were young during the early and mid twentieth century, graduation rates were much lower. Today, most people in McDonald County receive their high school diplomas. According to the American Community Survey, 78.3% of the population of McDonald County had their high school diploma or a higher degree in 2014.⁴⁴

How A Peculiar Man Met His Wife

As cliché as it sounds, true love does exist. My wife, Teresa, and I have been married for 11 years and together for 16 years. We met in high school our sophomore year and have been together ever since. She was the first and only girl I ever truly dated. To say our relationship is one which fairy tales are made of would be accurate, if not cliché. A defining moment in my life was when I asked my wife to marry me. It was our senior year of high school during Christmas Break, 2002. I led her near the spot

⁴³ Fischer, *Century of Difference*, 12-13.

⁴⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, *2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates: Social Characteristics*. Accessed November 19, 2016. <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>

where I first laid eyes on her and proposed. The events leading up to that proposal makes the story all the more unique.

Just before the start of our sophomore year of high school, I went to the McDonald County Fair in July of 2000. As with any farm boy, I wandered aimlessly around the fairgrounds admiring the prized livestock. Later in the afternoon, a few friends and I decided to play a game of tag football out in the nearby softball field. Near the gate to the softball field was a display booth from a local Taekwondo business and standing next to that was a cute half-Korean, half-American girl. Being a teenage boy, I decided to do a little showing off for her during the football game. I remember one particular instance where I was going for a Hail Mary pass and the ball went over the fence near the Taekwondo booth. The cute girl that I was showing off for retrieved the ball and threw it back at me. After saying my thanks, the game resumed and we parted ways.

My sophomore year of high school began that August and I was astonished to see that same cute girl sitting in my chemistry class. A few weeks later, we started dating. It was during our Senior year in 2002 that I proposed to her. I asked her to meet me at the McDonald County Fairgrounds and we would drive together for our date at Olive Garden. I dressed up in a suit and tie for the occasion, but wanting to keep it a surprise, I did not inform my wife of the formal attire. She arrived in a t-shirt and sweats and the expression on her face when she saw me all dressed up was priceless. I did not lead her to the spot where we first met near the softball field because the ground was too wet from a recent rainstorm, so I led her to a spot where we could see the location where we first laid eyes on each other, got down on one knee, and proposed.

This was a defining moment in my life and I will cherish the memory for all time. It is as much as an important part of my history as any other event.

A Peculiar Kind of Marriage

The marriage I have with my beloved wife is one of deepest love, pure joy, and outright craziness. My wife and I were married on July 22, 2005 (and yes just like any other husband in America, I had to ask my wife for confirmation of our wedding day prior to typing). Our relationship is unique.

We are very sarcastic and witty towards one another. If you did not know us, you would think that we are rude or insulting to each other, but that is far from the truth. We use humor to demonstrate our love towards each other. We have absolutely no common hobbies or interests. I love playing computer strategy games like the Total War series and she likes Facebook (and I do not even have a Facebook page). I love Jeopardy and she loves Wheel of Fortune. I am a Social Studies teacher who knows the entire history of humanity and she is a Speech and Theatre teacher who can debate an atheist into believing in a higher power. I watch the History Channel and she watches the Food Network and HGTV. I love politics and political debates and she... well, doesn't. God put us together because we fill in the gaps that each of us have in our personalities.

We are attracted to each other like two magnets, although she would claim the positive side and leave me with the negative. We have a peculiar banter with one another. For example, one day while walking in Wal-Mart I could not find the Pumpkin Spice coffee creamer. I exclaimed "It is winter now, there should be Pumpkin Spice." My wife gave me this weird look and said "Calm down, your white girl is showing. I need you to hand over your manhood card." To this day whenever I say things that are not typical of traditional masculinity such as making sure we have fabric softener or getting really excited about a new vacuum cleaner she says something to the effect of "I was going to give you back your manhood card, but not after that comment." On the other hand, I get in a few jabs about her Asian heritage. She is one quarter Asian (1/8 Korean and 1/8 Japanese). Whenever there is a stereotype to be made, I will say something. For example, whenever she cannot reach an item on the top kitchen shelves I will ask something like "Genetic limitations causing you to have height difficulties?" When she has craving for Hot Pancakes or Kimchi, I will remark that her Asian is showing and that she needs to eat American.

A funny story concerning my wife's heritage would be appropriate to interject in this segment. When we were into our first few months of dating, I decided it was time for her to meet the parents and join us for Sunday dinner. Prior to going over to my Grandparents for Sunday dinner, I politely warned Teresa about my Grandpa. Grandpa was born and raised in the Greatest Generation. His oldest brother

fought in World War II and he enlisted in the army during the Korean War. As with many from that generation, my Grandpa's opinions of people from Asia, German, and Russia are different. He is not racist by any means, but he grew up referring to Japanese as "Japs", Chinese as "Chinks", Germans as "Krauts", and Russians as "Ruskees." You have to understand that this lingo has as much to do with the US government sponsored propaganda programs during World War II and the Cold War and therefore my Grandpa just referred to those race types by the names he grew up with. Prior to taking my wife to meet my Grandparents, my Grandpa had not really met any Asians. We sat in the living room waiting for Sunday dinner to be cooked and my Grandpa just stared at Teresa (not in a rude way, but you can tell he was checking her out). Then he leaned closer to her and asked, "You're not some sort of Jap are you?" My Grandma, who was by far more diplomatic than Grandpa, yelled from the kitchen "HARRY! DON'T YOU EVER SAY THAT TO HER!" To this day, we still laugh about it. One of the best moments of my life was when I witnessed Grandpa hugged Teresa on our wedding day and proudly exclaimed, "Now I have another Granddaughter in the family."

My Peculiar Existence During the College Years

I attended Missouri Southern State University from 2003-2008. I graduated with a Bachelors of Science in Secondary Education with an emphasis in History. This was a very momentous occasion because it was the first time in our family that an individual had received their college degree. Receiving my bachelor's degree was also significant in regards to the educational attainment of the population of McDonald County. According to the American Community Survey, only 12.3% of people living in McDonald County have a bachelor's degree or a higher degree.⁴⁵ College graduation rates for 2000 hovered around 30%.⁴⁶ As a college graduate, I belong to a small percentage of the population, especially in Southwest Missouri.

My years at college were very eye opening to the world outside McDonald County. I learned that there was great strength in diversity and learned to view the world through other's eyes. Prior to college, I

⁴⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, *2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates: Social Characteristics*. Accessed November 19, 2016. <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>

⁴⁶ Fischer, *Century of Difference*, 15.

lived in a bubble in McDonald County and the only knowledge of the rest of the world came from books I had read. At college, I was exposed to guest speakers from other cultures and societies, which greatly opened my perception of the world around me. I also had the opportunity to visit a charter school in the inner city of Washington D.C. That was the first time that I had been to a big metropolitan area. It was a real culture shock for me. What I remember most about that trip was the security at the entrance of the inner city school. We had to put our bags on an x-ray machine and walk through metal detectors. A few of us were even subjected to a physical pat down by security officers. That trip really got me out of my comfort zone. When I went to high school at McDonald County, I never felt threatened or that my life was in danger. Going to that inner city school made me realize that I had taken public education for granted and that there were students in the United States that feared going to school or are subjected to life threatening circumstances.

Being A Peculiar Teacher with His own Peculiar Style

One of my greatest accomplishments was when I was hired as a Social Studies teacher at McDonald County High School. Currently, I teach AP Government, AP Psychology, and Dual Credit Western Civilization. As stated before, teaching is my passion and my missionary journey in life. Becoming a teacher at McDonald County in 2008 was a dream come true. When I teach, my passion and peculiarities really come out. I love making history come to life and challenging my students to analyze things for themselves. The greatest moments of teaching are when my students have that "Ah ha" moments in the classroom. Education has opened up horizons on the world around me and I love to bring glimpses of other cultures and societies to my students. My ultimate desire for my students is to not only become productive members of American society, but to also be world changers. My expectations are that my students make this world a better place than when they came into this world. Towards that end, I try to be as passionate and excited about teaching as possible, because if I am passionate, then they might be as well. I also strive to be the best teacher possible and to help our school be the best that it can be. In January of 2014, the McDonald County High School was honored with being listed on the AP Academic

Honor Roll.⁴⁷ In order for a school to qualify, they must increase AP exam participation for minority groups as well as maintain or increase passing scores on the AP exams. In 2014, our school district was awarded this honor.

I am also a peculiar teacher in regards to my personality. It can get loud in my classroom. I tend to get loud and excited when I am teaching about a subject that I am passionate about. When talking about the goals of the United States Constitution as written in the Preamble or discussing the Social Contract Theory in the Declaration of Independence, I will stand on my desk and shout out the Preamble or quote Thomas Jefferson from the Declaration of Independence. During my first years of teaching, there would be a nearby teacher or principal that would stick their heads in my room to see if everything was alright. Now, everyone jokes during school meetings about how loud I can get while teaching. Students that I have never had will come up to me and ask, "Aren't you the teacher that stands on his desk? I heard you were really crazy when you teach." Sometimes, those are the greatest compliments I can ever receive because I know that if students are talking about my teaching, then they are talking about what I teach.

Starting the Next Generation of a Peculiar Peoples

One of the proudest moments of my life was when I laid eyes on my first-born son. He was born in 2011 with a head full of hair. Seriously, he had a lot of hair. We gave him his first haircut two days after his first birthday. It was also a great moment for my dad and grandpa. My son was not the first child born in the next generation, but he was the first Sumler born. The Christmas after he was born, my dad, my grandpa, my son, and I took a generational picture together. Four generations of Sumlers were all standing side by side. I can also tell that my son is going to inherit his dad's peculiar personality, heaven help him.

Another proud moment was when my wife and I found out about another bundle of joy heading our way in a few months. The due date is expected to be February 4th, 2017 and we are expecting a little

⁴⁷ Peck, Rick. "School District Receives Academic Honor." *McDonald County Press*, January 2, 2014. Accessed November 20, 2016. <http://mdcp.nwaonline.com/news/2014/jan/02/school-district-receives-academic-honor-20140102/>.

girl. I can already tell that she is a Sumler. She is at the stage of development where she is kicking and wiggling around in the womb. At nights when my wife snuggles up against me, our little daughter will kick or nudge me, sometimes with enough force to wake my wife. She is going to be another peculiar Sumler to come into the world.

I wonder what the next generation of Sumlers will see in their lifetime. I wonder what societal changes or challenges they will face. As all parents feel the same way for their children, I can only pray as a father that their lives will be immensely better than mine. I wonder what they will think when they read these words. Will it be thoughts of self-reflection or thoughts of pride at where they came from? I give this personal message to my children. There is a word that comes from the Bible known as Selah, which means "pause and think."⁴⁸ As you read about your ancestors...Selah.

⁴⁸ Wikipedia contributors, "Selah," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Selah&oldid=749523297> (accessed November 14, 2016).

Generation Two

A1a. Mark Lewis Sumler (1962-)

A1b. Birth Mom (1965-) [identity withheld for privacy concerns]

Mark Lewis Sumler (1962 -) was born on November 10, 1962 in Kansas City, Missouri. He was the only child with no siblings. He went to kindergarten in Kansas City in 1967. He later moved with his parents down to McDonald County on a farm 10 miles east of the town of Anderson, which was bought from his grandparents.

He attended Rocky Comfort elementary and junior high. He went to high school at the centralized McDonald County High School. He did not receive his high school diploma as he was one half credit shy of meeting the requirements. His first marriage resulted in the births of his two oldest children, a daughter and a son. Mark's second marriage to Dayna resulted in the addition of three sons and one daughter. The total number of children that Mark has stands at two daughters and five sons

During the 1990s, Mark was self-employed as a landscaper where he predominantly worked in the new residential construction projects in Northwest Arkansas, specifically the Bella Vista and Bentonville area. In the late 1990s, Mark went to trade school in order to become a Farrier. He was ordained as a minister with the Apostolic Faith movement and currently preaches at Union Chapel Church near Bethpage, Missouri in McDonald County.

[Much of the information about Mark was included in Aaron's life history]

Generation Three

A1a1. Harry Lewis Sumler (1935 -)

A1a2. Norma Ruth Sumler (1938-)

Harry Lewis Sumler (1935 -) was born in Dodson, Missouri. He had three older brothers, Glen Sumler (1926-2004), Raymond Sumler (1930-2009), Charles Sumler (1933-2014), three younger brothers William Sumler (1937-deceased), John Sumler (1944-1982), Cappy Sumler (1946-deceased), and a younger sister, Dixie Lea Sumler (1940-). One of his first memories was listening to the radio report on the Japanese Attack on Pearl Harbor in December of 1940 and listening to President Roosevelt. Another memory occurred in 1949 when he saw a television for the first time in a department store in Kansas City during a bus lay over from Kansas City to Nevada.

Harry's educational attainment was limited. He never went to kindergarten because it was too far for him to walk when he was 5 years old. He went to Center School in Dodson from the first through fourth grades. Midway through the fourth grade, Harry moved to Nevada, Missouri where he attended Union School to finish through the fifth grade. He later moved back to Dodson in 1951 where he went to Center High School, but ended up dropping out his freshmen year in 1952 where he took a job working at the Grappette Bottling Company. Not obtaining a high school diploma was typical of the American population during the 1950s as high school graduation rates were just a few points above 50%.⁴⁹ Harry was in the bottom 20% of years of schooling completed for Americans during the 1950s with having just completed 8 years of education.⁵⁰ Again, low education attainment was typical for this period.

Harry also held several jobs as an adolescent. He grew up on in Dodson, Missouri, but moved to a farm in Nevada during the fourth grade. He also moved to Richard's, Missouri to work at a farm with a cousin of his before starting a job at the Grappette Bottling Company in 1952. Careers in America had stabilized after World War II.⁵¹ Prior to World War II, unemployment rates exceeded 10% fifteen out of

⁴⁹ Fischer, *Century of Difference*, 13.

⁵⁰ Fischer, *Century of Difference*, 11.

⁵¹ Fischer, *Made in America*, 52.

the fifty-five years leading up to the war.⁵² In the years after World War II, unemployment rates never exceeded 10%.⁵³ This allowed for more economic stability in finding and keeping jobs throughout one's life. However, Harry was an exception to this and travelled from place to place doing jobs from working in a bottling factory to being a field hand on multiple farms. His first career would not start until several years later.

In 1953, Harry enlisted in the United States Army as a mechanic at the age of 18. He was sent to Camp Crowder in Neosho, Missouri for two weeks where the military gave him his immunization shots and outfitted him with clothing and other essential military items. Afterwards he was sent to Fort Bliss, Texas for basic training. During his military training, Harry was assigned and trained on the M45 Quadmount anti-aircraft artillery.⁵⁴ According to Harry, the casualty rates among crews of the AAA mounts were high and so he was only given rudimentary training because they were not expected to last very long in combat. After basic training, Harry was given a 30-day leave in order to return home to get his affairs in order with expectations to be shipped overseas to the frontlines of the Korean War. However, just before his leave was over an armistice was signed on July 27, 1953, effectively ending the Korean War.⁵⁵ Harry was then shipped overseas to the American occupation forces in Germany.

Harry departed from New York harbor to Germany in the spring of 1954. He arrived in Bremerhaven, Germany on Easter Sunday in March of 1954. It was snowing the day he arrived in Bremerhaven and he stated he saw the biggest snowflakes in his life and some of those snowflakes were as big as his palm. He stayed in Germany from March of 1954 to September of 1955. Harry was stationed in Füssen, Germany just on the Austrian border.⁵⁶ There he was trained as a mechanic to work

⁵² Fischer, *Made in America*, 51.

⁵³ Fischer, *Made in America*, 51.

⁵⁴ Wikipedia contributors, "M45 Quadmount," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=M45_Quadmount&oldid=748610773 (accessed November 9, 2016).

⁵⁵ Wikipedia contributors, "Korean Armistice Agreement," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Korean_Armistice_Agreement&oldid=749707211 (accessed November 15, 2016).

⁵⁶ Wikipedia contributors, "Füssen," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=F%C3%BCssen&oldid=749332167> (accessed November 13, 2016).

on 90-millimeter anti-aircraft artillery.⁵⁷ Harry also received an opportunity to see British Prime Minister Winston Churchill as Churchill was touring the American occupation forces in Germany. Harry reported that he was standing at attention a few rows from the front as Churchill inspected his unit. Harry was discharged from the United States Army in 1955 after West Germany received its sovereignty and President Eisenhower began downgrading US forces. Harry went into inactive time status, but was placed under military obligation for 8 years afterwards. 1960 was a tense year for Harry. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, Harry received a call from St. Louis placing him on stand-by notification. Luckily for the world, war between the United States and the Soviet Union was averted and the stand-by order was rescinded. He was formally discharged from the United States Army in 1963.

Harry was not the only one of his family to join the military. His oldest brother, Earnest "Glen" Sumler also served in the military. He enlisted in the military during World War II in 1945 at the age of 19. However, Glen's enlistment records showed that he reported that his birth year as 1925, not 1926, so according to US Army records Glen was 20 years old at the time of enlistment.⁵⁸ Glen had a one-year term of enlistment with a rank of Technician 5th Grade.⁵⁹ One story that Glen use to tell was when he was stationed in the South Pacific Theatre as a code breaker. He was never stationed on the front lines, but he did remember a time when he and his friends went swimming in a nearby lagoon. As Glen and his friends neared the lagoon, they came across the body of a dead Japanese soldier. Glen recalled how frightened he was at the possibility of more Japanese soldiers being nearby and so quickly left the area.

The 1960s were an interesting time for Harry. He married his wife, Norma Kidd, in 1957. In 1962, their first and only child, Mark was born. Harry began working as a mechanic at Peterson's Auto Repair shop in Kansas City, Missouri. One vivid memory that Harry had was where he was at when he

⁵⁷ Wikipedia contributors, "90 mm Gun M1/M2/M3," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=90_mm_Gun_M1/M2/M3&oldid=749398589 (accessed November 14, 2016).

⁵⁸ The National Archives, World War II Military Records. Accessed November 19, 2016. <https://aad.archives.gov/aad/record-detail.jsp?dt=893&mtch=52&tf=F&q=Sumler&bc=&sort=24996%20desc&rpp=50&pg=1&rid=6894801&rlst=1483518,6894801,8291305,2912762,3015425,509130,8283628,3016127,3140605,8536603>

⁵⁹ The National Archives, World War II Military Records. Accessed November 19, 2016.

heard that President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Harry was on his lunch break at a local dinner near where he worked when he saw the news report on a television. He recalled how shocked he was at the tragedy. Another event that Harry remembered during the 1960s was Astronaut John Glenn's orbit of Earth in 1962. Harry also remembered the Apollo 11 Moon Landings in 1969. Harry watched on television as Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin exited from the Apollo Lunar Module, climbed down the ladder, and became the first humans to set foot on the Moon.

The late 1960s were also a turning point for the Sumler family. In 1967, racial tensions were on the rise in Kansas City. Missouri had a long history of racial tension and violence. For example in 1917, 48 people were killed in East Saint Louis during a race riot.⁶⁰ Racial tensions were on the rise in Kansas City in the years leading up to the 1968 Kansas City Race Riots. Harry was concerned for the safety of his family. Several race protesters had already been traveling in the area protesting a segregated public swimming pool known as Kanoodles. The Kansas City Race Riots were also sparked in the wake of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.⁶¹ Harry mentioned that he heard gunshots at night and would keep a gun handy when they slept. His son, Mark, was in kindergarten when his parents were informed that he would be bused from his local school to an inner city African American school on the other side of town. Harry grew even more concerned for his family because he did not want his son to be bused from a school a few blocks from their house to a school 15 miles away in the inner parts of Kansas City where the protesting and violence was taking place. Because of this, Harry decided to move his family from the Kansas City area, away from the chaos and violence of the race tensions, and move his family down to McDonald County on some land owned by Norma's parents. This was how the Sumlers moved from the Kansas City area to McDonald County, Missouri.

Harry set up residence on some acreage from Norma's parents and placed a kit built home on a cinder block foundation. Harry also began a new career working at the Missouri Department of

⁶⁰Margo J. Anderson, *The American Census: As Social History* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1988), 134.

⁶¹ Wikipedia contributors, "1968 Kansas City, Missouri riot," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=1968_Kansas_City,_Missouri_riot&oldid=739386483 (accessed September 14, 2016).

Conservation in Neosho, Missouri as a mechanic. He would work on various mechanical equipment and vehicles. He would also help the game wardens during hunting season by riding along with them on patrols. He worked at the Department of Conservation from 1969 until he retired from the Department in 1997. During his retirement, he would work on his farm baling hay, running cattle, and doing other various farm jobs.

Norma Ruth Sumler [Kidd] (1938 -) was born in McDonald County, Missouri. She grew up on a farm that her parents bought in 1918, 10 miles east of Anderson, Missouri. On this farm, there were milk cows, pigs, a couple of workhorses, and chickens. Their living came mostly from selling milk and chickens to nearby neighbors or the local stores. Their small farm was not very profitable as with most agricultural operations during the Great Depression.⁶² The lack of financial resources affected their lives in many ways. Norma remembers that her mom use to fix a lot of potatoes and cornbread for most dinners. On Sundays, they would have beans for dinners which Norma thought was a real treat. Norma's mother canned everything that was edible from sausage, bacon, and even American Pokeweed or Polk Greens as they were called. Great care was taken to make sure that the Polk Greens were suitable for consumption because the plant itself is poisonous.⁶³ Absolutely nothing was wasted in regards to food and there were no leftovers. Norma also remembers when they first got electricity when she was young. She remembers having to use kerosene lanterns for much of her childhood and stated that her family went to the bathroom in an outhouse all the way up to the year 1967.

Norma took any part time job she could as a child and adolescent. She would pick strawberries for the Baker family on a nearby neighboring farm. She would also pick blackberries and sell them at Cook's Store, a nearby general store that serviced the local area. Norma also remembers picking green beans for 2 cents a pound and strawberries for 5 cents a quart. She exclaimed that if they made one dollar a day then they were making good money.

⁶² Fischer, *Made in America*, 50.

⁶³ Wikipedia contributors, "Phytolacca americana," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Phytolacca_americana&oldid=744237200 (accessed October 14, 2016).

Norma's educational attainment was also typical of the period. She started going to Puckett School in 1943, which was a two-room school a few miles from their farm. Norma and her sister would walk the distance every morning regardless of the weather. She started in the first grade and by Christmas of that year was promoted to the second grade. By the time the school year was over, she was promoted to the third grade. She went to high school at Rocky Comfort at the age of 12. She remembers that Rocky Comfort High School had no water, so all the children had to walk a couple blocks to a community well to draw water from and they would have their lunch every day near the water faucet. She graduated from Rocky Comfort in 1954 at the age of 16 with her high school diploma.⁶⁴ Norma obtaining her diploma during the 1950s placed her in the top 20% of the American population in regards to graduation rates and educational attainment.⁶⁵

Norma decided to move from McDonald County in 1956 at the age of 18 to Kansas City, Missouri in order to find work. She started working at Hallmark that year. In March of 1957, Norma met Harry Sumler. Norma and Harry's first date was at Grandview Church. That September, they were married. She left Kansas City with Harry and her son Mark because of the racial tensions and the race riots in 1967. Norma, Harry, and Mark moved back down to McDonald County on a small farm owned by her parents as part of her inheritance. There she was a stay at home mom for a little while before working at a nursing home in Anderson, Missouri. She retired from there in the early 2000s.

⁶⁴ It should be noted that the same building at Rocky Comfort that my grandma graduated from was also the same building that I completed elementary and junior high at. My dad also completed his elementary and junior high education there as well as four of my siblings. Unfortunately, Rocky Comfort School is not longer at Rocky Comfort, but south of Longview in a new complex, though it is still known as Rocky Comfort.

⁶⁵ Fischer, *Century of Difference*, 11.

Generation Four

A1a1a. Earnest Sumler (1903-1979)

A1a1b. Opal Sumler (1905-1970)

A1a2a. Orvil Kidd (1901-deceased)

A1a2b. Lola Kidd (1903-deceased)

Earnest Theodore Sumler (1903-1979) was born in Missouri and resided in Dodson, Missouri in Jackson County. He had seven sons and one daughter. He worked on a small farm and did some freelance mechanical work.

Of particular note, Earnest changed the family name from Sumner to Sumler. The 1940 Census records for Earnest and his family has him stating that the last name for his family was Sumler.⁶⁶ However, the 1910 Census taken when Earnest was seven years old, has his father recording that the last name for the family was Sumner.⁶⁷ It is unknown why Earnest decided to change the family name. Harry Sumler believes that Earnest changed the family name to avoid racial discrimination because Earnest's father had a significant amount of Cherokee heritage. This attempt at integration would make historical sense. In 1887, Congress passed the Dawes Severalty Act with the primary goal of integrating and assimilating Native Americans into American society.⁶⁸ There was legislation that was being passed in order to assimilate Native Americans, which would imply that many Native Americans would also try to attempt to assimilate into American culture by changing their family names a few decades after this legislation. Harry has also stated that Earnest never did like the name Sumner and was the only member of his family to refuse to go by the name Sumner. Whatever the reason, Earnest changed the family name

⁶⁶ "United States Census, 1940," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:K747-C77> : accessed 20 November 2016), Earnest Sumler, Ward 8, Kansas City, Kaw Township, Jackson, Missouri, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) 116-169, sheet 1A, line 10, family 4, Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, NARA digital publication T627. Records of the Bureau of the Census, 1790 - 2007, RG 29. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2012, roll 2172.

⁶⁷ "United States Census, 1910," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M2BP-8HS> : accessed 20 November 2016), Aron T Sumner, Tavern, Pulaski, Missouri, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 80, sheet 2B, family 41, NARA microfilm publication T624 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1982), roll 806; FHL microfilm 1,374,819

⁶⁸ Margo J. Anderson, *The American Census: As Social History* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1988), 87.

from Sumner to Sumler. The Sumler name has only been in use for five generations.⁶⁹ Prior to that, the family name was Sumner.

Opal Ovetta Sumler [Coppock] (1904-1970) was born in Indiana. At some point, she traveled to Missouri, where she married Earnest Sumler on June 30, 1924.⁷⁰ She had seven sons and one daughter from that marriage. She died on December 7, 1970 and was buried in Jackson County at Memorial Park Cemetery.⁷¹

Orvil Kidd (1901 - deceased) was born in Missouri. In 1919, he purchased a 150-acre farm 10 miles east of Anderson in McDonald County. He was married to Lola Kidd and they had two daughters, Dorthy and Norma.

Cash money was scarce and his financial resources were limited. He would farm for most of the year, and in the fall he would travel to Colorado to work for cash money harvesting broomcorn. This was not unusual during the Great Depression. By 1938, there were 11 million unemployed Americans throughout the nation.⁷² Steady jobs were hard to find so Orvil travelled in order to obtain cash money to pay for things that they could not make or grow themselves on the farm. Orvil usually spent what he made in a given year and did not really save or invest the money because he did not trust banks. This was not uncommon as the banking system collapsed during the Great Depression.⁷³ This caused many people not to trust banks during this period. They used cash money to purchase what they could not make or grow themselves and would oftentimes barter for what they needed as well. People usually spent the cash they made as soon as possible and avoided putting their money in banks.

Lola Kidd (1903-1987) was born in Missouri. She was a woman of strong faith. Her daughter Norma reports that people from all across McDonald County would call upon her to pray for loved ones to be heal of sickness. Lola also stood firm on her convictions. She would not allow playing cards in her

⁶⁹ Earnest Sumler, Harry Sumler, Mark Sumler, Aaron Sumler, and my son

⁷⁰ Source comes from private Family Records

⁷¹ "Find A Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q249-2R9X> : 19 September 2016), Opal Ovetta Coppock Sumler, ; Burial, Kansas City, Jackson, Missouri, United States of America, Memorial Park Cemetery; citing record ID 168879113, *Find a Grave*, <http://www.findagrave.com>.

⁷² Anderson, *The American Census*, 179.

⁷³ Anderson, *The American Census*, 165.

house because she believed that gambling was a sin and therefore abstained from all appearance of gambling. One story that Norma tells occurred during one summer of severe drought. The well at their farm had gone dry and so Lola took Norma and Dorthy to Aunt Laura's farm to draw water from her well. However, when they arrived, they found that Aunt Laura's well was also dry. Norma stated that Lola prayed over the well and afterwards the sound of water was heard gushing into the well. Lola also never believed in going to doctors because she felt that if one went to a doctor then they were not putting their faith in God for healing. As previously stated, religious beliefs, especially Protestant faiths, were extremely important in the lives of many Americans during this time.

Lola died on January 1, 1987 and was buried in Owsley Union Cemetery south of Longview Missouri.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ "Find A Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVV6-9VKL> : 13 December 2015), Lola A. Kidd, 1987; Burial, Longview, McDonald, Missouri, United States of America, Owsley Union Cemetery; citing record ID 10157363, *Find a Grave*, <http://www.findagrave.com>.

Generation Five

A1a1a1. Aron T. Sumner (1872-1919)

A1a1a2. Mary L. Sumner (1876-1964)

A1a2a1. John T Kidd (1872-1949)

A1a2a2. Mary E. Kidd (1868-unk)

A1a1b1. Jesse L. Coppock (1872-1933)

A1a1b2. Ollie B. Coppock (1879-1947)

Aron Theodore Sumner (1872-1919) was born in Virginia. Aron appears in the 1910 Census in Pulaski, Missouri.⁷⁵ He married Mary L. Joiner on May 13, 1894 in Pulaski County, Missouri.⁷⁶ They had five sons and one daughter. His son, Earnest Theodore Sumler, would later change his last name from Sumner to Sumler.

Little is known about Aron except that he migrated from Virginia to Missouri sometime prior to 1910. This tends to fit historical records with migration patterns after the American Civil War. Most eastern states had lost population according to the 1870 Census and western and mid western states such as Missouri experienced growth rates of over 50%.⁷⁷ According to Sumler family personal records, Aron came from Virginia with the Roupe family after the death of his parents and settled on a farm near Crocker, Missouri.

Mary L. Sumner [Joiner] (1876-1964) was born in Missouri. She died on September 15, 1964 and was buried in Saint James in Phelps County Missouri at Saint James Cemetery.⁷⁸ In the 1920 Census,

⁷⁵ "United States Census, 1910," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M2BP-8HS> : accessed 20 November 2016), Aron T Sumner, Tavern, Pulaski, Missouri, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 80, sheet 2B, family 41, NARA microfilm publication T624 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1982), roll 806; FHL microfilm 1,374,819.

⁷⁶ Source comes from private Family Records

⁷⁷ Anderson, *The American Census*, 84.

⁷⁸ "Find A Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QV2F-HKJ4> : 13 December 2015), Mary L. Sumner, 1964; Burial, Saint James, Phelps, Missouri, United States of America, Saint James Cemetery; citing record ID 70720041, *Find a Grave*, <http://www.findagrave.com>.

she was reported as being the head of the house and as a widow after her husband Aron's death the previous year.⁷⁹

John T Kidd (1872 - 1949) was born in Arkansas. He was married to Mary E. Kidd. Together they had one son, Orvil Kidd and one daughter Laura Kidd. His father and mother were both born in Kentucky according to the 1930 Census.⁸⁰ He died in 1949 and was buried at Owsley Union Cemetery in Longview in McDonald County, Missouri.⁸¹

Mary E Kidd (1868 - deceased) was born in Kentucky. She was married to John T. Kidd and had one son and one daughter. According to the 1930 Census, her father and mother were both born in Kentucky.⁸²

Jesse L. Coppack (1872-1933) was born in Indiana. He married Ollie B. Jamison on December 31, 1895.⁸³ He died in 1933 and was buried in Memorial Park Cemetery in Kansas City in Jackson County, Missouri.⁸⁴

Ollie B. Coppock [Jamison] (1879-1947) was born in Missouri. When her husband, Jesse Coppock died she moved in with Earnest and Opal Sumler and appears on the 1940 Census records as

⁷⁹ "United States Census, 1920," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M8HC-XC6> : accessed 20 November 2016), Mary L Sumner, Washington, Jackson, Missouri, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 283, sheet 17B, line 51, family 389, NARA microfilm publication T625 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1992), roll 923; FHL microfilm 1,820,923.

⁸⁰ "United States Census, 1930," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHFB-NW6> : accessed 20 November 2016), John T Kidd, Elk Horn, McDonald, Missouri, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 6, sheet 9B, line 95, family 211, NARA microfilm publication T626 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2002), roll 1210; FHL microfilm 2,340,945.

⁸¹ "BillionGraves Index," database, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:KD9S-HFH> : 24 June 2015), John T. Kidd, died 1949; citing *BillionGraves* (<http://www.billiongraves.com> : 2012), Burial at Owsley Union Cemetery, Longview, McDonald, Missouri, United States.

⁸² "United States Census, 1930," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHFB-NWX> : accessed 20 November 2016), Mary E Kidd in household of John T Kidd, Elk Horn, McDonald, Missouri, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 6, sheet 9B, line 96, family 211, NARA microfilm publication T626 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2002), roll 1210; FHL microfilm 2,340,945.

⁸³ Source comes from private Family Records

⁸⁴ "Find A Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q249-25PR> : 19 September 2016), Jesse L. Coppock, ; Burial, Kansas City, Jackson, Missouri, United States of America, Memorial Park Cemetery; citing record ID 168586371, *Find a Grave*, <http://www.findagrave.com>.

being part of the household.⁸⁵ She died in 1947 and was buried in Memorial Park Cemetery in Kansas City in Jackson County, Missouri.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ "United States Census, 1940," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:K747-C76> : accessed 20 November 2016), Coppack Olie Sumler in household of Earnest Sumler, Ward 8, Kansas City, Kaw Township, Jackson, Missouri, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) 116-169, sheet 1A, line 18, family 4, Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, NARA digital publication T627. Records of the Bureau of the Census, 1790 - 2007, RG 29. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2012, roll 2172.

⁸⁶ "Find A Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q249-25RQ> : 19 September 2016), Ollie Coppock, ; Burial, Kansas City, Jackson, Missouri, United States of America, Memorial Park Cemetery; citing record ID 168586336, *Find a Grave*, <http://www.findagrave.com>.