I was sitting under the carport with about a dozen toy cars lined up. It was the beginning of summer, and I was ready to spend the days at my grandparents without a care in the world. There would be no more homework or school. I could stay up a little later at night and watch the late night show with my Paw Paw. I could have extra ice cream, ride my bike and play baseball in the back yard with the other kids in the neighborhood.

It was perfect.

And then I heard the slam of the screen door.

My Paw Paw, who was confined to a wheelchair, came around the corner. With a pipe in his mouth and his can of snuff sticking out of his shirt pocket, he nodded his head at me.

“Let’s go,” he said.

I immediately grabbed my bike and rode along beside him as we made our way down the road. I didn’t ask any questions.

But I could tell something was bothering him. When members of the Jackson family get mad, their eyes tighten up and they start taking deep breaths. They don’t say much. They just sit in silence. But the wheels in their head are turning.

I never asked Paw Paw what was wrong with him at any time I thought he was upset. He would always tell me in his own time.

“Women are something else,” he said, bringing his wheelchair to a stop. “Promise me that you’ll never become one.”

I started grinning at him, and he chuckled a little.

At that point, I knew Maw Maw was back at the house, fuming over whatever they got into an argument about.

Knowing her, she was walking around the house, talking to herself about how mad she was.

Paw Paw was the kind of man who would just leave the house when they got into an argument. There had been many walks down that country road for him and I.

When Paw Paw had the use of his legs, he would always take off to his garden. Maw Maw would get to sputtering, and he would grab his hat and just walk out the back door.

I think him leaving made her even more angry. I would usually follow right behind him. And we would make jokes that she was probably yelling at the dog just so she could have something to complain to.

My uncle and I joked years later about how much of a hard outdoor worker Paw Paw was in his prime. He had the largest garden in Lawrence County. His tomatoes were the best around, probably because he spent so much time taking care of them.

Paw Paw would tend to the flower beds even though he considered flowers to be “women’s

work.”
But he did all that just to get out of the house from time to time, especially during a heated exchange.
As a child, I thought it was funny. Maw Maw would start waving a dish rag around her head, complaining about how the fridge is still leaking or the toilet continues to run. Then she would begin to tell Paw Paw about how Mrs. Lee next door recently bought a brand new satellite dish while we still had rabbit ears.
Paw Paw would look down at me and smile. I think he thought it was a game. He would nod at me, and I would throw my shoes on.
Within seconds, we would be out the door. Once outside, we would chuckle about Maw Maw, who at this point would have locked the back door on us. She would throw out an occasional threat about no supper and such.
About an hour later, we would return. Supper would be waiting on us.
Even though Paw Paw was against it that summer day, I eventually became a woman with a husband of my own. And he is a man after my Paw Paw’s heart.
When I start waving dish rags around, he immediately heads outside on a “project” with our son James right behind him.
They don’t come home until dark...and supper is always ready.