

## **FAR FROM HOME**

*Memories of World War II and Afterward*

By Mary Herring Wright

### **An Excerpt from**

#### **CHAPTER 21—CHANGES**

Lots of things changed, as they always do, but Cousin Bert was still a regular overnight visitor. I'd put a let-out couch in my living room so she'd have a comfortable place to sleep. One cold day in January she'd gotten some turnip greens from somewhere and asked if she could cook them at my house. I said, "Sure," so, she set about happily cooking her dinner, a full course meal with meat and bread as well. She ate a big supper and seemed to enjoy it so much. Afterward she took her shoes off and settled in a comfortable chair near the wood heater and listened while I read and discussed the Bible stories with my children. Then I started to get them ready for bed.

Mary had taken off her shoes, and I had Judy on my lap to get her ready for bed when Red noticed something about Cousin Bert and told me to look at her. I looked and saw that both legs were stretched out in front of her, with her head resting on the back of the chair and hands across her stomach. Alarmed, I sat Judy on the floor and ran to her, calling, "Cousin Bert, Cousin Bert!" No response. I took her shoulders and tried to pull her to a sitting position, but she seemed to be too stiff. My children had all run into their bedroom and slammed the door. I ran out in the front yard and lifted my voice to high heaven screaming for help, hoping nearby neighbors would hear me and come. No one did. I started back into the house and met my children coming out at full speed. They

passed me heading for I don't know where. Looking down, I saw my baby girl trotting along beside me. Picking her up and putting her on my hip, I tried to catch up with the other three. I could see they had turned the corner and gone down the road heading to William Boney's house. I followed, but when I reached the corner, I was just in time to see light coming from William's front door and my girls disappearing inside. I broke into a trot rounding the curve and fell right into the ditch. Judy had both arms locked around my neck and both legs around my waist. She didn't even come loose when I fell, except to use one hand to pound my back and say, "Get up, Mommy, get up."

"How am I going to get up with you strangling me?" I asked her. I finally managed to crawl back out with her intact on my back. By the time we reached William's house, he'd called his brother, Albert Henry, next door. His wife, Melissa, was with him. They put me and my children in their cars and drove back to my house. Cousin Bert had come around, but she was sick to her stomach. She didn't even know what had happened to her. Mrs. Lizzie, Artelia, and Sadie had also come over. They cleaned Cousin Bert and everything up and told her they'd take her to her daughter's house out on the highway where she could get to a doctor if need be. It took me and the girls a long time to feel settled enough to go to bed. We waited up for James and Louis to come home. I was horrified to find that Mary and Carolyn didn't have on shoes when they had run down to William Boney's house. Mary did have on socks, but Carolyn didn't have on socks or shoes. Red assured me that Carolyn would be all right because she and Mary each had her hands and had run so fast they kept her feet lifted off the ground. After that Cousin Bert spent only one night with me. The children were uneasy even then and kept looking and listening to see if she was still breathing. Mrs. Mary

Hayes, her daughter, kept her at her house from then on. Her health declined, and she was never able to walk the road and enjoy being out as she had once done. Poor Cousin Bert, we had come to love her, and the children said she was the closest they had to a grandmother. The last time I visited her before she died, she asked about Judy. I will always remember Cousin Bert. She lost her sight a year or so before she died.

**NOTE:**

Read about and enjoy more delightful characters like Cousin Bert by purchasing FAR FROM HOME. It is available along with Mary Herring Wright's first book, SOUNDS LIKE HOME, at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) or [HalfPriceBooks.com](https://www.halfpricebooks.com).