



## **Sterlin Arnwine**

**STEARLIN ARNWINE, 94, was born a slave to Albertus Arnwine, near Jacksonville, Texas, who died when Stearlin was seven or eight. He was bought by John Moseley, of Rusk, Texas, who made Stearlin a houseboy, and was very kind to him. He now lives about six miles west of Jacksonville.**

"I was bo'n 'fore de war, in 1853, right near this here town, on Gum Creek. My mammy belonged to Massa Albertus Arnwine, and he wasn' ever married. He owned four women, my mammy, Ann, my grandmother, Gracie, and my Aunt Winnie and Aunt Mary. He didn' own any nigger men, 'cept the chillen of these women. Grandma lived in de house with Massa Arnwine and the rest of us lived in cabins in de ya'd. My mammy come from Memphis but I don' know whar my pappy come from. He was Ike Lane. I has three half brothers, and their names is Joe and Will and John Schot, and two sisters called Polly and Rosie.

"Massa Arnwine died 'fore de war and he made a will and it gave all he owned to the women he owned, and Jedge Jowell promised massa on his deathbed he would take us to de free country, but he didn'. He took us to his place to work for him for 'bout two years and the women never did get that 900 acres of

land Massa Arnwine willed to'em. I don' know who got it, but they didn'. I knows I still has a share in that land, but it takes money to git it in cou't.

"When war broke I fell into the han's of Massa John Moseley at Rusk. They brought the dogs to roun' us up from the fiel's whar we was workin'. I was the only one of my fam'ly to go to Massa John. [Pg 32]

"I never did wo'k in the fiel's at Massa John's place. He said I mus' be his houseboy and houseboy I was. Massa was sho' good to me and I did love to be with him and follow him 'roun'.

"The kitchen was out in de ya'd and I had to carry the victuals to the big dinin'-room. When dinner was over, Massa John tuk a nap and I had to fan him, and Lawsy me, I'd git so sleepy. I kin hear him now, for he'd wake up and say, 'Go get me a drink outta the northeast corner of de well.'

"We had straw and grass beds, we put it in sacks on de groun' and slep' on de sacks. I don' 'member how much land Massa John had but it was a big place and he had lots of slaves. We chillun had supper early in de evenin' and mostly cornbread and hawg meat and milk. We all ate from a big pot. I larned to spin and weave and knit and made lots of socks.

"Massa John had two step-daughters, Miss Mollie and Miss Laura, and they wen' to school at Rusk. It was my job to take 'em thar ev'ry Monday mornin' on horses and go back after 'em Friday a fternoon.

"I never earnt no money 'fore freedom come, but once my brother-in-law give me five dollars. I was so proud of it I showed it to de ladies and one of 'em said, 'You don' need dat,' and she give me two sticks of candy and tuk de money. But I didn' know any better then.

"I seed slaves for sale on de auction block. They sol' 'em 'cordin' to strengt' and muscles. They was stripped to de wais'. I seed the women and little chillun cryin' and beggin' not to be separated, but it didn' do no good. They had to go. [Pg 33]

"The only chu'ch I knowed 'bout was when we'd git together in de night and have prayer meetin' and singin.' We use' to go way out in de woods so de white folks wouldn' hear nothin'. Sometimes we'd stay nearly all night on Saturday, 'cause we didn' have to work Sunday.

"'Bout the only thing we could play was stick hosses. I made miles and miles on the stick hosses. After the War Massa John have his chillun a big roll of Confederate money and they give us some of it to trade and buy stick hosses with.

"When Massa John tol' us we was free, he didn' seem to min', but Miss Em, she bawled and squalled, say her prop'ty taken 'way from her. After dat, my mammy gathers us togedder and tuk us to the Dr. Middleton place, out from Jacksonville. From thar to de Ragsdale place whar I's been ever since.

"I wore my first pants when I was fourteen years ole, and they stung 'till I was mis'ble. The cloth was store bought but mammy made the pants at home. It was what we called dog-hair cloth. Mammy made my first shoes, we called 'em 'red rippers'. [Pg 34]