



**Mama Tell Me a Hard Time Story: A Series of
Motivational Stories About Life in Mississippi in
the 1950s and 1960s as a Sharecropper's daughter
and ... to Continue to Influence Generations to
Come**

Linda Fay Covington

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That Old Man "That old man. That old man" Those were the first words out of your mother's mouth every evening when I dragged through the door from a long hard day in the field. She was so bitter about our life as sharecroppers, and it was tearing the family apart. I worked from sun up to sun down to take care of my family and provide income for my landlord. The white man don't work us like mules anymore" Dad talked, leaning over in his recliner. In a few months he would be seventy nine years old. He reminisced about his life experiences as a sharecropper. The old sharecropper's steps were getting slower by the day. His oversized head was full of gray curly hair and his thick black eyebrows, I knew as a child, were snow white but as eye-catching as ever. I moved close to him to make sure he could hear me. "Dad" I asked, "Why didn't you move north and get away from the south? Why didn't you take us and move away from the cotton fields of Mississippi for a better life" He looked up at me, flushed, and he slowly began to tell his story: One day I came home and your mother had packed her things and left for Illinois with all of y'all. I should have seen it coming; she has asked me so many times to pack up and go north, but I refused. I knew times were hard and jobs were scarce in the north because everybody was running there to get away from the cotton fields. She wrote me and begged me for weeks to come to Alton. Folks like us with little or no money didn't have a telephone back then, so we had to write letters. I was farming with an old broke down tractor that would turn over. One day the landlord came to the field to threaten, to curse, and to blame me for the tractor turning over. Even though he knew the tractor was old and worn out, he continued to blame me. Eventually, I gave in and moved to Alton, Illinois, to keep the family together and to get away from the abuse of that old man. I was in Alton for about five

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