



Daily Mountain Eagle - Elizabeth Higgins

Earl Tidwell of Double Springs reaches out after seeing his sister, Oma Overton, via video conference from South Bend, Indiana.

After almost 30 years, 90-year-old siblings reunite via video conference

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BIRMINGHAM — After not seeing his sister in almost 30 years, one Winston County man was overjoyed to finally get to see her again, even if it was on a video monitor.

Earl Tidwell, 95, of Double Springs met with his sister, Oma Overton, 94, in South Bend, Ind., along with her daughters and granddaughters through a video conference at Birmingham's Quorum Videoconferencing for a tearful reunion Friday morning.

When Overton first saw her brother through the monitor, she reached out to try to hug him and thanked the Lord for the opportunity to see him



again.

"It's a miracle what they can do now," Overton said to her daughters, Norma Zimmerman, Tressie McCavitt and Onie McQueary.

The two greeted each other by talking about how good they looked after all these years.

"You look as young as those girls do," Earl Tidwell said,

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talking about Overton's daughters and granddaughters.

"We took care of them, now they're taking care of us," Overton replied.

Earl Tidwell was also joined by family: daughter, Jean Tidwell Wilson; son, William Tidwell; and grandchildren, Tyler and Jessica Tidwell.

Earl Tidwell asked his sister to "pray a prayer." She then zealously prayed, thanking God for being able to see her brother again.

The relatives wept in the background at the joy of seeing the two happily reunited after so long.

"It was emotional," William Tidwell said. "I was really proud to see Aunt Oma and her family. It was a good experience. I was more proud of daddy to get to see her than anything. They were close growing up."

The family talked about Overton's dedication to religion.

"When she prays a prayer, you know it made it through," Wilson said.

"She's always been a Christian," Earl Tidwell said. "She got salvation while she was young. Her husband hid her clothes to keep her from going to church. He finally gave in and went with her to church."

Earlier, Overton spoke to her other brother, Reese Tidwell, 98, over the phone, who is bedridden in Camden Nursing Facility in Camden, Ala.

"We're a long ways apart," she said to her brother. "I

don't get to see you that much. I still love you and think of you. Praise the Lord."

Overton's granddaughter, Julia Maloney, said the three siblings haven't seen each other since Overton's husband died in 1979.

Maloney was the one responsible for setting up the meeting, which was sponsored by InterCall, a worldwide conference call company.

"I remember having a conversation with my grandma about what she would want," Maloney said. "She said she wanted to see her brothers. I know she's not able to travel, so I came up with the video conference idea."

She said her neighbor, Marty Dunn, is the national sales director for InterCall, and she talked with him about the idea. He spoke to his co-workers and the company decided to do it for free.

Overton and her two brothers are the only remaining siblings out of fifteen brothers and sisters.

The large family grew up on a farm in Double Springs and didn't even have electricity until the 1950s. They were amazed by the technology that brought them together.

"It was like reality," Earl Tidwell said. "I've seen her in person. It looked just like her. I was glad to get to see her, too."

Maloney said Overton also really enjoyed it.

"She really had a great time," she said. "I really just wanted to make my grandma happy."