

MY MOTHER'S FAMILY

Stories and photographs of the family
of Phyllis Jane Butler Price

by Sheri Price Tiner

2017

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Phyllis Jane Butler

Phyllis Jane was my mother. She was born in Delaware County, Oklahoma in 1933 and I think she would have lived there her whole life happily. Unfortunately for her, her mother Velma liked the big city and moved to Oklahoma City when mother was fairly young. After her parents divorced they moved to Houston, Beaumont and even to Edmonton, Canada.

When she was small she couldn't really say her name well. Clemie, Velma's cousin, told me that everyone started calling Mother "PooJane" because she just could not say Phyllis. Eventually she started going by Jane.



Jane's parents divorced in 1936 and her father Clint Butler moved to California soon after that. He eventually re-married and settled in the Los Angeles area. Jane - Sept. 7, 1933

Mother often spent summers with her grandparents Florence and Marion (Mom and Pop) in Oklahoma. She loved Pop above all people. He would take her around visiting or ride horses with her. Pretty much anything Pop was doing, Mother wanted to be there. She was close to her Oklahoma cousins too, particularly Tommie Ward. Tommie was the daughter of Elmer and Grace Asher Ward, brother and sister-in-law of Velma. Tommie was a bit of a tomboy and I'm sure that's why she and my mother got along. Tommie's sister Vesta was much more of a little lady. Actually, once I was grown, Tommie became my favorite cousin too.

From the stories she told, Mother really loved Canada. She spent her high school years there and had quite a large circle of friends. She told several stories about that time. One was about being out with friends driving around and they noticed that the road was exceptionally smooth. Pretty sure there was beer involved. Well, about the time they noticed the road, they also noticed the police cars. It seems the driver had made a wrong turn and they were on the runway at the airport.

Mother always loved cold weather so I'm sure Edmonton suited her just fine. She said for parties during the winter they would fill ice trays with water and set them on the back porch to freeze. Some days it was so cold you couldn't go outside without covering your nose and mouth or your lungs could freeze.

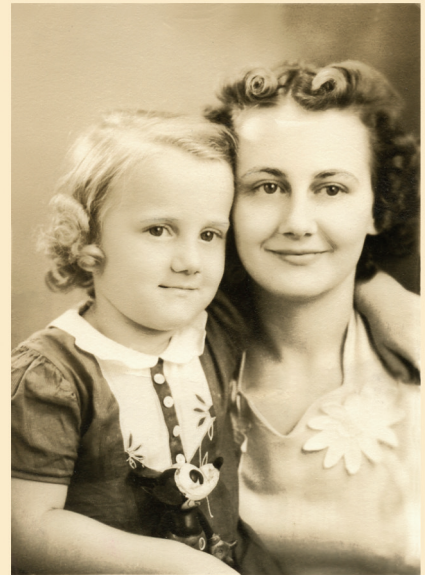


Jane - about 1942

Mother told my brother Lindsay a story about skiing. She said that sometimes the weather was so nice after a good snow that she could go skiing in just shorts and a t-shirt. Knowing her it didn't have to be much over 50 degrees



Jane and her father Clint Butler - 1936



Jane with her mother Velma Ward - 1938



Jane in Oklahoma City - 1938



Jane in Oklahoma City - 1938



Jane and the maid, March 1942



Jane with Velma and Florence
Galveston, TX - about 1939



Jane in Galveston, TX - about 1939



Jane in Galveston, TX - about 1939



Jane in Galveston, TX - about 1939



Jane in Galveston, TX - about 1939



Jane in Beaumont, TX



Jane in Oklahoma City, OK - 1942



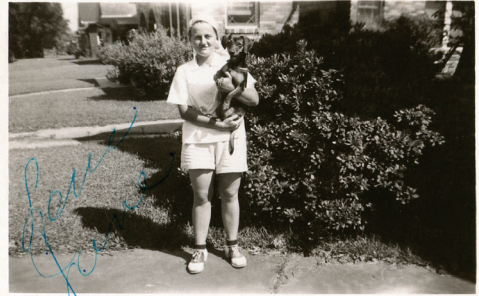
Jane - 1943



Jane - 1942



Jane - High School in Houston, TX



Jane - age 14



Jane - Houston, TX 1951



Jane - High School in Houston, TX



for her to wear shorts. All of us kids got the hot natured gene from her.

Another story was about a friend of hers. Mother was 5 feet tall so fairly short. Her friend was quite a bit taller. Well, one night late there was a knock on Mother's front door and she opened it to find herself wrapped in a huge hug from her tall friend who cried, "Mother, thank goodness you're home!" The officer standing behind her friend caught on real quick that he had been duped and took the friend off to find her real mother.

Mother loved to play golf. She tried for years to get me interested but I just didn't care for it. When she was in high school her friends played. Because they lived so far north the nights were really short in the summer, a little less than seven hours. They would go out partying in the evening and when it started getting light they would hit the golf course.

Mother returned to Houston to live at about 17 years old. She told a few stories about being out with friends drag racing on the south part of I-45 known as the Gulf Freeway. This is before the freeway was officially open. They would go out to the finished part and race about every weekend. She never told me who was

driving but I have a feeling she was behind the wheel a time or two.



Jane - October 1947

I really wish I knew how my parents met. Mother was nearly 20 years younger than my dad, Gail Price. I do know they met in Houston. They were married there in 1955 and lived in the West End area where his family had lived since arriving in Houston around 1900. By the time I was born they had been living in Alief, Texas for a while. They had quite a bit of land and kept both horses and cattle. They even boarded horses for people. I remember very well living there.

My father was certain I would be a boy and bought me a Shetland pony before I was born and named him Trigger. Obviously he was wrong but it didn't stop him from teaching me to ride. That pony really hated adults to ride him but didn't seem to mind when two or three children were riding him around. If an adult got on his back he would take off running for the corner of the barn where a pear tree grew. That pony knew there was only enough room for him to get between the tree and the barn and he would knock his rider off as he passed through. Smart boy.

Mother was 'encouraged' to quit working for Houston Lighting and Power when she got pregnant with me. I'm pretty sure it was a bit of a fight between she and my father but she never said how much. I do know he was very particular about his first child, his baby girl, he wouldn't let mother take me to the store with her because he didn't want me sitting in the nasty buggy where other children had sat.

So, Mother had a lot of time to spend with me. She was never much for daytime television so she taught me to play cards. This was before I was five years old. We played Gin Rummy. I have no idea who won but I do



Jane - Bobbie Sockser



Jane and friends



Jane - 1941



Jane and friends



Jane with Band Hat



Jane - Galveston, TX about 1950



Jane and cousin - Kansas, OK abt 1945



Jane and cousin - Kansas, OK abt 1945



Jane - December 29, 1949 in Houston, TX



Jane in San Antonio, TX



Jane in Houston - December 29, 1949



Jane - January 6, 1952



Jane and friend Ernie(Pookie) - January 6, 1952



Jane and friend Ernie (Pookie) - January 6, 1952



Jane - January 6, 1952



Jane with Friend Herma - December 31, 1951



Jane and friend Herma - January 6, 1952



Jane with Cynthia Russell, Tim Thompson and dog Pat



Jane with boyfriend Mac and Herma
at Evelyn's house - 1951



Jane - her shorts were too loose



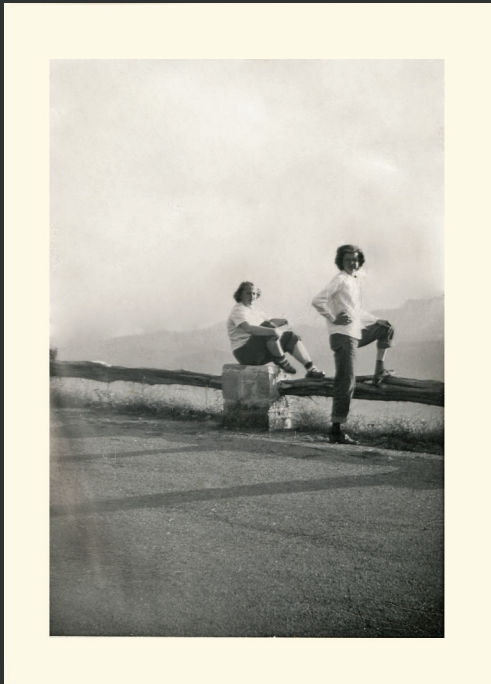
Jane with step father Wallis at
Galveston



Jane with a boyfriend at
Galveston



Jane with her mother Velama on the Glaveston Ferry



Jane with Herma



Jane with friend Herma at the McDonald Observatory



Jane with her mother Velma



Jane with dog X-Mas



Jane in Canada



Jane in Canada



Jane in Canada



Jane in Canada with friend Cynthia Richards



Jane in Canada with friend Cynthia Richards

remember playing. She also taught me the alphabet, numbers and began to teach me to read. It made kindergarten very boring for me.

We had a dog named Ruff, a pit bull. Mother was afraid they would have to get rid of him when I was born and tried to keep him away from me as a baby. Once she had me in the middle of her bed and went to get a bottle only to return and find Ruff on the bed next to me. She tried to reach for me but he growled at her. He turned into my protector. If I was in the front yard nobody was coming through the gate or he would tear them apart. He didn't even like my toy rocking-horse, he literally tore up the nose of the thing by attacking it every time I tried to ride it.



Jane in Canada

Ruff always slept with me but only at the end of my bed where my mother put a towel for him to lay on. She said one night he was pacing and worrying and she went to see what was wrong. It turned out she hadn't put his towel on my bed so he couldn't go to sleep.

My brother Ford was born when I was three years old in 1966. I wasn't too pleased, I liked being an only child. Marion Ford Price was a mess from the time he could crawl. Once I was in the bath and he came in and threw all of my clean night clothes in the tub with me. Just one of many times I was tortured by having brothers.

Mother had cats, a lot of cats. It made sense because we had a barn and cats are excellent at getting rid of rodents. One night during a storm we heard an awful screeching coming from the other side of the garage and Mother went out to see what it was. It turned out to be a little red kitten under the fig tree freezing cold and wet. She brought it in and fed it with an eye-dropper until it could eat on its own. She named him Goof. He became the only inside cat.

My parents would have barbecues on Sundays. Friends and family would come out to the house in Alief, sometimes the people they boarded horses for. There was usually some riding going on. I remember my father had made a smoker out of a large steel barrel and cooked a lot of meat for the group. This is what my birthdays were like until I was five. All adult parties with a cake made by my aunt Hattie that actually had a plastic doll coming from the top of a dome shaped cake iced to look like a large hoop skirt. I loved those cakes.

I remember my mother making cakes too, nothing as fancy as a doll cake but she had her talents. Once she made a train cake for my brother Ford. It was a cake baked in loaf pans then cut to form the individual cars. From what I can remember, it turned out well, even if I did insist on "helping".

Helping my mother cook was a thing when I was small. I always wanted to be involved and she let me. Once I had demanded I needed a knife and Mother gave in and handed me one. I promptly cut myself. When Mother said she had told me I shouldn't have a knife, I responded with something like, "well what were you doing giving a baby a knife anyway?" Nope, she didn't kill me. As with most things, she laughed.

I also helped feed the horses. Now that I think back on it I wonder... I had to be less than five years old and Mother would put some feed in a bucket and send me out the gate to the pasture to call the horses in. We're talking about six to eight full grown horses. I would stand there until they came to nose the bucket and lead them to the trough for feeding. I can't imagine how I didn't get trampled but I can remember doing that a

number of times. I suppose I was never afraid of the horses. I would take saltine crackers outside for a snack and feed them to the horses through the back fence. They would have a bite, I would have a bite. Mother never seemed to mind that I was eating after the horses.

Mother told me a story about an argument she and my father had where he was not happy with the way she folded his socks. Apparently he learned in the navy to fold then roll them a certain way. She said fine. Next time she did the laundry she put starch in his underwear. He never complained about how she did the laundry again.

Just before my fifth birthday, April 4, 1968, my father died. (I figured out later that he died the exact same day as Martin Luther King Jr.) We moved in with my grandmother Velma and her husband Ted (aka Pootsie and PawPaw), in Bellaire. Nobody was aware that mother was already pregnant with my second brother, Lindsay.

I have some memories of my father's funeral. Mother also told me a story about it. What I remember is looking at the casket and thinking that my big tall father would never fit in that box. That memory is vivid. What my mother told me is this, when the preacher from our Baptist church got up to speak apparently I recognized him and remembered conversations between my parents about him. It seems that I said to my mother, "there's that man who talks too much." It probably would have been nothing except that my comment caused Mother to break out in a big laugh... at her husband's funeral. Probably everyone there thought she was crazy. I don't think she minded.

When I was very small I would find my mother by her laugh. I once got lost in the local grocery store and just followed her laugh to find her. When I think back to that and other times I found her by listening for her laugh, I'm amazed at how often she did laugh. She saw humor in so many things and was an excellent joke teller.



Jane - about 1955

My brother Lindsay was born the September after our father died. I remember riding to the hospital with mother in the back seat and my grandmother driving. That was in the days when kids still rode standing in the front seat of the car. When they came home from the hospital I was none too pleased to have yet another brother. I was sure by then that being an only child was the way to go.

Eventually Mother went to work in accounting for JC Penney's in Meyerland Plaza near our house in Bel-



Jane - May 16, 1953



Jane with Leona Bryant Bell - taken on the way back to Texas from Canada



Jane in Oklahoma

laire. She was one of those people who was amazing with numbers. When we were in the car I amused myself by throwing numbers at her to add in her head. She loved it. I did not get the math gene which was a great disappointment to her.

Mother was actually quite good at many things and was never afraid to try something new. She could draw clever cartoons, panel the house, fix the car, build amazing forts and keep up with three kids. She was interested in everything. She planned great trips across country and would load us all up in the car and take off.

We saw the American West from the back of a red Ford Pinto station wagon which she had to stop and reset the points on (part of the distributor) when we changed altitude. She eventually had to replace the distributor in that car. She got a book and figured it out. She couldn't set the timing so she called AAA and told them her car wouldn't start, they towed it to a garage where she had the timing set cheap and drove it home.

My mother was pretty amazing. She was fierce about her children and taught us all to try new things. We all inherited her humor and enjoyment of travel. She made sure we were strong enough to go out in the world by pushing us just enough and knowing when the time came to step aside and let us grow.



Jane in Pensacola Florida in the late 1950's

Mother once told me that she couldn't control what I did when she wasn't around and if I felt I was big enough to get into a situation, I'd better be big enough to get myself out. Her intent was to make me think before I acted. I've pretty much lived by that. I made decisions as a teen based on what might kill me. First, was it dangerous, like riding behind an idiot on a motorcycle? Second, if my mother found out I did it, would she kill me? There were quite a few things my friends did that I didn't do for one of these two reasons.

Other times Mother was right in the thick of things. When I was about 12 mother let me have a slumber party on Halloween. She even drove me and my girlfriends around to wrap cute guy's houses. We were all piled in the back of her 1972 Ford Pinto with loads of toilet paper. She drew the line at eggs though, no egg-ing houses. Well, we were cruising back by one of the houses to admire our handiwork when the boys who lived there came flying out of the carport on bicycles and started throwing eggs at the car. Mother's window happened to be down a few inches and one of the eggs broke on the edge of the window and went right in her face. Did she get mad? Nope. She took us to the store to buy eggs. She got even!

I think I was in about 6th grade when a girl named Janie Luna threatened to beat me up. My grandmother

had always said a lady doesn't fight. That was okay by me, I was scared of getting hit anyway. So, I went home and told my mother about the threat. I was sure in the next few minutes that she had lost her mind. She picked up the phone, dialed Janie's mother and invited that little hellion over to spend the night! Mother took me to the store to buy all sorts of junk food then made me ride to Janie's house to pick her up. Mother stayed up all night feeding that girl and making friends. Monday morning at school Janie Luna was my best friend. Smart mother, great life lesson.

There wasn't much that could shake my mother. There were so many times my brothers came home with broken bones, needing stitches or a stomach pumped (Ford would climb anything and Lindsay would eat anything). I can't even count them all. Not once did I ever see my mother panic. She just put them in the

car and headed to the Bellaire Hospital emergency room. She swore her insurance company built the new wing that was added at about that time.

My amazing mother died in Houston, Texas on November 21, 1992. I'm thankful she shared so many stories with me and gave me my love of family history. I just wish I could ask about a million more questions.



Jane in Pensacola Florida in the late 1950's



Gail and Jane Butler Price - My Parents

Marveleen Sue Butler

In April of 2012 I received an e-mail from a man named Charlie Nelson that had me very curious. He asked me why, in an online family tree, a woman named Marveleen Butler (daughter of Clint Butler) had been left out. I wrote him back immediately and asked him for more details. As far as I knew, my mother had only one sister and she had only lived a few days.

It turns out that Charlie Nelson is my first cousin. His mother, Marveleen, was the daughter of Asa Clint Butler and his first wife, Cauleen Middaugh who were married in 1926. Marveleen was born in 1927 in Tulsa Oklahoma a month after Cauleen's 17th birthday, Asa Clint was 21 years old at the time. They divorced when Marveleen was less than 5 years old. Clint was married to my grandmother Velma by about 1931.



Marveleen Butler - about 1945

After a few e-mail exchanges with me Charlie talked to his mother who he found out had been aware of my mother. Charlie told me that his grandmother's family moved to California not long after Cauleen and Clint were divorced and they lost touch with his family.

I was so excited. I sent Charlie my phone number for his mother to call me. I couldn't wait, I had another aunt! Growing up with one aunt and one cousin made this pretty amazing. When Marveleen called I was so thrilled. She sounded pretty excited as well. She said she was so glad to know she had a niece. I think we both had tears in our eyes while we talked. I promised to send her what photos I had of her father and of my mother, her sister.

Lesson learned, again. I really should have jumped on a plane and headed to California to meet my aunt in person as soon as I heard about her. Charlie and I have kept in touch but I only talked to Marveleen that one time. Unfortunately now it's too late. Charlie sent me her obituary in March of 2016. He was so gracious as to include my mother among her family members.

Marveleen "Marve" Sue Handley passed away March 14th 2016 at Warnerview Skilled Nursing Facility in Alturas. She was born Marveleen Sue Butler on September 27, 1927 in Tulsa Oklahoma to Cauleen Middaugh and Asa Clint Butler.

"Marve" graduated from Cleveland High School in Portland Oregon in 1945. After graduation, she moved to the Yuba-Sutter area and worked for the Yuba City Police Department. She re-

signed from the police department to raise her twin babies in 1954.

In 1966 “Marve” opened a restaurant in Olivehurst Ca. It was there she met her future husband Richard Handley. Richard retired from the US Air Force and married “Marve” in 1967. In 1976 they sold their restaurant/pool hall and moved to Dobbins where they resided for 11 years. They have lived in retirement, here in Alturas, for the past 30 years.

“Marve” was an active supporter and Volunteer in Alturas. She was a Charter member of the Modoc Red Hot Hatters where she was known as “Marvelous Marve”. She loved playing bunko, bingo, cards and mahjong at the Modoc Senior Center.

“Marve” is preceded in death by her parents, Stepfather Leonard Holzbock, her daughter Shirley Jean McBride, and a half sister Phyllis Jane Price.

She is survived by her husband Richard of Alturas, her son Charles Nelson (Cheryl) of Yuba City, son in law Jerry McBride. She has 6 grandchildren, Daniel, Chris, Stephanie, Matthew, Sean, and Ryan. She also has several great grandchildren.

Velma Juanita Ward

Velma, my grandmother, was born in Delaware County, Oklahoma in 1912. Her parents were Florence Bryant and Marion Ward. She and her brother Elmer grew up and went to elementary school in Kansas, Oklahoma (locally known as Little Kansas). They lived for a time in Siloam Springs, Arkansas and for a short period around 1930 in Kansas City, Missouri where Velma worked as a messenger for the telephone company, she was 18.



Velma - about 1914

Velma told me once that she would get in awful trouble for dancing the Charleston on her way to school because the dirt roads would tear up her shoes. She actually taught me to Charleston when I was a kid.

Velma's best friend was her cousin Grace Bell. They ran around Tulsa together and eventually Velma and her first husband Clint introduced Grace to her future husband Johnny Johnson. There's a funny story about Grace and Velma, I heard two different versions.

From Jane Price:

Velma and her cousin Grace Bell once ran off to Tulsa. They found a job in a night club singing and playing the ukulele. Pop (Marion) found out and drove to Tulsa to get them. They were too embarrassed to tell the club owner the truth so they called and told him that Grace had broken her leg so they could get out of playing.

From Velma:

Grace and I was taking a Beauty Course in Tulsa next door to the Tulsa Hotel. A man advertized for someone to sing at the supper club on the main floor- we went up one day and played for him he liked us and was going to rent costumes I wanted long and she wanted short. She was going with

Johnny and he did not want her to (sing there) so she didn't so what could I do - we didn't call and tell him we weren't going to sing so we started slipping out of our building so he couldn't see us - so one day he saw us and started calling us we started running and he was right after us - he just wanted to know what we were going to do - The more we ran the scarer we got - he finally gave up and didn't bother anymore, guess he thought we were nuts.



Velma with brother Elmer about 1915



Velma - 1926 at Little Kansas, Oklahoma



Velma about 1929



Velma - 1929 at Little Kansas, Oklahoma

After leaving Kansas City, Velma moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma. There she met and married Asa Clint Butler in about 1931 and they had a daughter Beverly Ann in September of that year. Beverly only lived a few days, she was born with a heart defect that prevents oxygen from circulating in the blood known as blue baby syndrome. There wasn't a cure until an operation was developed in the 1940's. My mother Phyllis Jane came along in August of 1933.

Velma divorced Clint Butler in 1936, my mother was three years old. They moved to Oklahoma City and worked in a hotel as a manicurist for a while, then eventually moved to Texas.

My grandmother told me a story about living in Oklahoma City. One morning she sent mother off to school and a few minutes later when she was leaving for work she opened the door and saw a tornado coming down the street. She was terrified it was going to get Mother as she walked to school and there was nothing she could do.



Velma in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma - 1942

I always knew my mother had a sister who didn't survive but nine days. She was born a 'blue baby', this is what they called babies with a heart defect that didn't allow the blood to fully oxygenate. Her name was Beverly Ann Butler and she was born September 2, 1932. Every time I hear the name I think of Bonnie Blue Butler from "Gone with the Wind".

I'm not sure why Velma moved to Texas but there she married Irvin Wallis and they lived on the south side of Houston before moving to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada for a few years. This is where my mother went to high school. There are quite a few stories about my mother and those years.

After Velma returned to Houston, a man named Rex Vann who wanted to marry her paid for her divorce from Wallis. She was working for Oshman's at the time and all the girls she worked with wanted to know how she was able to afford such a fine lawyer.

She never did marry Rex. She moved to Beaumont and was dating an opera singer who flew planes for an oil company. Mother told me she loved to fly with this guy in small planes until she

found out he was actually afraid of flying and had to get about half drunk before he could fly a plane. While out on a date with this man Velma was introduced to Ted Turner, husband number three.

My grandmother's third husband was Lindsay Harding Turner (known as Ted), an attorney in Houston. Velma worked for a time in Ted's office. Velma told this story to my brother Lindsay: *Apparently*



Velma in 1928



Velma with Dollie - abt
1920



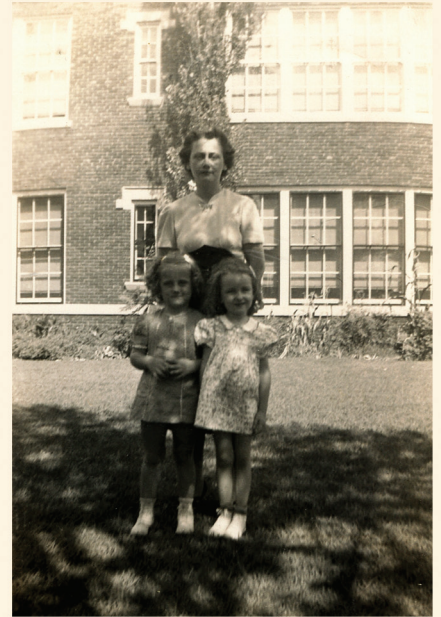
Velma and cousin Grace Bell - Memories
of Nov. 27, 1930



Velma - "In Memory of Oct 1929"



Velma with Frank
Brewer July 4, 1936 at
Kansas, Oklahoma



Velma with Jane and cousin Carol Sue
Johnson - 1938 in Oklahoma City, Okla-
homa



Velma and Clint Butler with Johnny Johnson - 1932



Velma - May 6, 1937 in Oklahoma City,
Oklahoma

one day Marvin Zindler came in the office, he worked for Harris County Sheriff's Department at the time. He came in with an attitude and a pistol on his hip and said something that made Velma good and mad. She told him, "you get out of here you son of a bitch". Marvin Zindler ended up being a television personality on Channel 13 for years. He was supposed to be an investigative reporter but pretty much did the 'roach report' going around to restaurants and reporting on their rodent issues. He became famous finally by reporting on the Chicken Ranch in La Grange, a whorehouse everyone knew about and left alone... well, until Marvin ruined things and they had to close it down. Ever see the movie "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas"?

Mother told me that when she was young and they lived in Houston, Velma loved to ride the train down to Galveston to gamble at the Balinese Room. This was a dance club located on a 600 foot long pier stretching out from the Galveston seawall. The dancing was legal, the gambling was not. Apparently the place was run by Sicilian bootleggers. It was the place to be in the 1940's and 1950's. They had the big name acts, Frank Sinatra, Bob Hope, George Burns. They also had an elite clientele like Howard Hughes and wealthy Houston oil men.

Velma adored being around the rich and famous. I know she met Jan Stewart, an actress in the 1950's, and Pat Brady, known for being Roy Rogers sidekick. Her one-time suitor, Rex Vann, apparently was quite well off. Velma loved the glamour and could certainly dress the part and never lacked for male attention. Mother told me once that one of Velma's boyfriends tried to buy her a Cadillac but she had to turn it down.

Ted was the grandfather I knew, everyone called him Ted but I called him PawPaw. He was a total sweetheart when it came to me, he would take me to the drugstore for milkshakes and buy me most anything I would ask for. I remember once he bought me a princess comb, brush and mirror set. I was so proud of that set. PawPaw would play with me for hours, even playing with paper dolls. There were some major advantages to being the first grandchild.



Velma in Beaumont - 1940s

Looking back I'm a little surprised mother let me ride in a car with PawPaw driving. She said he felt like he paid his taxes and he took his share of the road right out of the middle. I don't remember that but I do know we went to the drug store often and obviously I survived. PawPaw died peacefully in his sleep (not at the wheel) in 1975.



Velma in about 1933



Loving
Friend
Verna

H. Robinson

Another name for my grandmother was Pootsie. Apparently she and my father, Gail, didn't get along and he taught me when I was a toddler to call her Pootsie. It was the name of a female character on a radio show who was an old battle-axe and her hen-pecked husband was always saying "yes Pootsie". I can't imagine my grandmother liked this very much. Ultimately it didn't matter, every kid in our neighborhood called her Pootsie and even some of the neighbors.

From what my mother told me, my grandmother didn't learn to cook until my mother was grown.



Velma - 1941

Left: Velma 1935

Once she learned she was very good at it. She taught me to make excellent homemade chicken and dumplings when I was too small to reach the counter. I loved playing with the dough and she would let me roll it out and cut strips (with a butter knife) then would bring a chair to the stove so I could reach to drop the strips of dough one by one in the boiling broth.

Pootsie always seemed to be in the kitchen looking out the front window. We never got away with anything in the front yard. Her pounding on the window over the sink could be heard several houses away. Neighbors marveled that she never broke the glass. I think Ford caused most of the window pounding. He had a habit of climbing to the highest reaches of the live oak trees in the yard. Very high, he started this at about age six.

My grandmother always loved Galveston and going to the beach. We would often head down for the weekend and stay with her friend Hazel Parham who she had worked with at Oshman's when she first moved to Houston. Hazel lived in Gilcrest, Texas, right on the coast. We were always crabbing or fishing or just hanging out on the beach.

Another long time friend of Velma's was Edna Boudreaux. Edna loved to make gumbo (she was from New Iberia and Cajun through and through). Many times on a Saturday morning they would head down to Kemah to the shops to get seafood fresh off the fishing boats then come back to our house to make gumbo. There would be fish or shrimp or crab all over the kitchen and a big pot on the stove. It must have been really good because everyone got excited over Edna's gumbo, I wouldn't know, I can't stand the stuff.

For years we had a vegetable garden in the back yard. Pootsie always wanted to grow tomatoes. They never worked out. She tried all kinds of tricks, planted them in pots, in the ground, you name it. One year instead of composting she began throwing vegetable scraps out over the garden. A few months later she had the most beautiful tomato plants sprouting up all over the place.

Pootsie tried to make us eat healthy. She would read articles and we would start eating whatever she read about. I learned to hate oatmeal and cream of wheat, also we couldn't have the fun cereal, we had to have something healthy. Well, one time she had been reading a magazine and suddenly cussed, threw down the magazine and left the room. Mother picked it up and saw that it was an article about feeding corn flakes to rats. It seems they gave one group of rats the corn flakes and the other group the



Velma and Wallis at Galveston 1940's



Velma at Galveston - 1940's



Velma with Jane and Wallis at Galveston - 1940's



Velma and Jane at Galveston with the Balinese Room in the background - 1940's



Velma at Galveston - 1940's



Velma at Galveston - 1940's



Jane and Wallis at Galveston - 1940's



Irvin Wallis at Galveston 1940's



Irvin Wallis at Galveston 1940's



Irvin Wallis at Galveston 1940's



Jane at Galveston about 1939



Velma with Jane at Galveston about 1939



Velma and Florence, her mother at Galveston about 1939



Velma at Galveston about 1939



Velma at Galveston - about 1939



Velma with Irvin Wallis - second husband



Velma at Galveston - 1940's



Velma and Jane with Marion and Florence Ward, her parents - 1936 at Dripping Springs, Oklahoma



Velma with Jane at Galveston - 1941



Velma and Frank Brewer - 1936 at Dripping Springs, Oklahoma



Velma at Galveston - 1963



Velma with actor Pat Brady - 1955



Velma with Rex Vann and actress Jan Stewart- July 1956



Velma in Houston - 1957

box. The group that ate the box was healthier. She got less picky about what we ate after that.

Everyone in the house loved to read. Pootsie favored true crime, biographies and anything to do with UFO's. We even had to go see the movie Chariots of the Gods when it came out in theaters. She was fascinated by the possibility that aliens built the pyramids and drew landing strips in the desert.

My grandmother was a talented artist. She was good at pen and ink sketches and loved to draw old barns or anything with a lot of texture. She was really great with watercolors. I have one she painted of cactus that I just love. It seems we can all draw or paint with varying degrees of skill. I always found it funny that Mother drew cartoons and Pootsie drew old things.

After all of us kids were out of the house Velma went to work at a dress shop. She loved it, possibly for the discount on the clothes. She was always very well dressed, even her night gowns and lounge wear were elegant. She also bought very good clothes. I still have some of her things and they have worn well for years.

In later years when I would visit relatives in Oklahoma on my own, family members would talk about Velma always being the prissy one. From the time her mother made her clothes until she died Velma was always fashionably dressed, hair and nails done and lipstick on. When I was in junior high she and I were the same size. I wore her clothes to school every chance I got and was always complimented. This was a big difference between her and my mother. If it was comfortable, mother wore it regardless of style. I got stuck somewhere in the middle.

My grandmother died in 1994 at the age of 81. She had been sick for a while and I got the call to come to Houston. Ford and I were in her room and Lindsay was home with his 18 month old son Braunsen. I had called her friend Edna to let her know and was on the phone with Edna and Ford was holding Pootsie's hand when she passed away peacefully in her sleep. I'm somehow sure she knew she wasn't alone.



Velma - July 1956



Velma - 1950's



Ted Turner - 1959



Velma - 1958



Ted Turner - Edmon & Turner Oil Tank - 1958



Ted Turner at Siloam Springs - 1959

Florence Gertrude Bryant

Florence Bryant Ward was my great-grandmother. She would ride the bus from Ceres, California to Houston every summer to visit us then we would all drive up to Oklahoma to visit other relatives. She was known to us kids as “Mom”. I learned that came from my mother always calling her that. It totally confused my husband that my great-grandmother was “Mom”, my grandmother was “Pootsie” and my mother was always called “Mother”.

Florence Gertrude Bryant was born in the Going Snake District, Indian Territory (now Delaware County, Oklahoma) in 1894. Her parents were Benjamin Franklin Bryant and Mary Adeline Thomas. Florence had five sisters and one brother. I only knew one sister, Rhoda, all of Mom’s other siblings died before I was born in 1963.

Florence was a Cherokee Indian through her father. She grew up speaking Cherokee but didn’t remember a lot of it by the time I was grown enough to ask. She was on the final roll the federal government took of the Cherokee Nation known as the Dawes Roll of 1906. She, her father and her siblings all received land allotments when the Cherokee lands were broken up. Florence hung on to land in Oklahoma until her death in 1984 when it passed to her children.

Florence married Marion Ward in about 1911 in Oklahoma. He had been married before and was eleven years older than Florence. They had two children, my grandmother Velma born in 1912 and her brother Elmer born in 1915, both in Oklahoma. In 1920 the family was living in Hico, Arkansas, just on the edge of the Oklahoma and Arkansas border, now a part of Siloam Springs.

By 1930 the Ward family had moved to find work and were in Kansas City, Missouri where Florence had a job as a packer for the Ruby Manufacturing Company. They didn’t stay in Missouri very long, by 1935 Florence and Marion had moved back to Oklahoma where they lived at Mosely, near Marion’s father’s family. Elmer lived next door with his wife and two daughters. By this time Velma had moved to Tulsa and married.

Sometime in the 1940’s Florence, Marion and Elmer with his family moved to California. Florence went to work on the war effort building ships, working at the Kaiser Company, Inc. in the Rich-



Florence with husband Marion Ward - about 1910



Florence at Little Kansas about 1943



Florence about 1925

Florence with Marion
at Little Kansas about
1943





Florence with Marion, Elmer and Velma about 1920



Florence holding Jane 1933



Florence (with glasses) holding Jane at a family reunion
 Front Row: Left to Right - Mary Thomas Bryant, Mary's sister Elender Thomas
 Larmon and her husband Mart Larmon Second Row: Percy Bell, Alice Bryant,
 Carol Sue Johnson (baby), Susie Bryant, unknown boy, Mary Bell, Rhoda Bryant



Florence in Galveston - 1955



Florence in Galveston - 1955



Florence and Velma at Galveston - 1939



Florence and Velma at Galveston - 1939



Florence with Vesta's first husband, Kenneth



Florence on the Galveston Seawall - 1959



Florence about 1960



Ward home in Little Kansas



Florence with Ted Turner - 1959

mond Ship Yard Number Three. She saved all of her pay stubs from 1944 and took home \$31.59 per week, deductions included a \$9.00 victory tax. Florence was a member of two unions, The Cannery Workers Union of Stanislaus and Merced Counties and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Warehousemen and Helpers. When I found her Teamster's dues book I thought it was so cool to be able to say my great-grandmother was a Teamster!

Florence and Marion went back to Oklahoma for visits fairly frequently. They still had their home in Kansas, Oklahoma aka Little Kansas and of course quite a lot of family. It was on a trip to Oklahoma that Marion died in 1951. I was in Little Kansas a few years ago and got into a conversation with a woman who ran a gift shop. I told her who I was and she said she vividly remembered the

day Marion died. It seems he had been working on their property and collapsed. This woman told me that Florence came running into town (she never did learn to drive) screaming that Marion was dead. Nobody could quiet her, she kept screaming and crying until her daughter Velma got there from Houston.



Florence about 1960

Mom was a great seamstress and I guess she always sewed. She told me that as a young girl she had lost most of her sight and would stitch doll dresses by touch. She said that a doctor put boric acid in her eyes and she could see again. My grandmother, Velma Ward, aka "Pootsie", said that during the depression she would go to town and look at the nice clothes in the stores then come home and tell her mother what they looked like. Mom would make a pattern and make Velma the clothes. Velma talked about her friends envying her fashionable clothes.

Once when Mom was in town I was about 8 and got invited to be on a local television show and needed a costume. Mom stood me against a paper sack on the wall, traced around me then from that pattern made a peasant blouse and skirt for a Daisy Mae costume. I eventually learned to sew and I always think of Mom making that costume when I sit down in front of a

sewing machine. I happen to have Mom's sewing machine, it sits on my side of the bed as a night stand and my husband Kirk's great-grandmother's machine is his night stand.

Mom always rode the bus two days from California to visit us in Houston. My mother argued that she should fly, that it would be faster and easier on her as she got older. Mom refused. She was determined she would not fly in an airplane. That had to change when Mother had a wreck in Tulsa in 1972. Her car was totaled. Mom ended up in the hospital with a leg broken in multiple places

and had a cast from her hip to her toes. There was no way we could drive home. It took quite a bit of argument but finally Mom had her first and only ride on an airplane from Tulsa to Houston. She stayed with us until her leg was healed and she could take the bus back to California.

One evening when I was about 12, so probably 1975, we received a call from Mom. She started the conversation with something like, “guess where I am...” I don’t think anyone would ever have guessed that my great-grandmother would be up in the Sierra Nevada Mountains camping and riding motorcycles with my cousins but that’s exactly where she was. She would have been just about 80 years old at the time.

Everyone I ever talked to loved Florence. She was sweet and lady-like always... except... Cousin Clemie Wilson Weese once told me a story about Florence getting really mad at some woman who dared to say something bad about Florence’s husband, Marion Ward. Clemie said that Florence was standing on the front porch of her house down at Battle Branch and some woman came up mouthing bad things about Mari-



Florence with her mother and sisters

Left to right, back to front: Florence Bryant Ward, Rhoda Bryant Holman, Leona Bryant Bell, Mary Thomas Bryant (mother), Alice Bryant Johnson

on and Florence got so mad she jumped off the porch and attacked the woman. My grandmother denied it but Clemie seemed pretty sure.

When Mom’s health started to deteriorate in 1981 my mother moved to California to live with her. I did get to visit her once more before she died in 1984.

I was very fortunate in that the family felt that I was the best keeper of many of Mom’s personal possessions such as her and Marion’s wallets, their old check books, address books, bibles, jewelry, trinkets, letters and many, many photographs which make these stories so much more than just words on a page.

Mary Adeline Thomas

Mary Thomas was born in Pickens County, Georgia just at the start of the Civil War in 1860 and lived to be 98 years and one day old. I knew this when I was very young, my mother made sure I knew. Mary Bryant was known later in life as Grandma Still due to her second marriage to John Still.

Mary Adeline Thomas moved to Arkansas from Georgia in ox drawn wagons at about 8 years old. The family was looking for a better place after the hardship of the Civil War in North Georgia.

They had originally intended to move to Texas but seeing people leaving Texas because of the hardship there, they turned and went to Benton County, Arkansas.

After her parents, Joseph and Mary Collins Thomas, died in 1871 she went to work in the hotel in Siloam Springs. She never went to school and never learned to write her name, she always marked with an X.

In his application for the Cherokee Dawes Roll Benjamin F. Bryant says he married Mary Thomas in 1886 under Cherokee law. Benjamin was part Cherokee through his mother Sarah Jane Martin and they lived in Indian Territory after their marriage except for a short time when the entire family moved to Snohomish County, Washington around 1910.

Mary and Benjamin had seven children, six girls and one boy. Unfortunately Martha Viola, the youngest daughter, and Johnny Ira both died young. Johnny died of an illness at the age 17. Martha Viola was killed at the age of 14 in a train accident while she was traveling with her mother. The family called her Viola and mentioned her often. She was born March 10, 1905 in Indian Territory and was the last child of Benjamin and Mary Thomas Bryant.



Rhoda Bryant, John Still, Mary Thomas Bryant Still, Alice Bryant and Mary Bell

My grandmother Velma remembered Viola and her mother Mary staying the night with her family then her father Marion Ward took them to the train station the next morning. The family was informed the next day of the train wreck. Velma also said she remembers going to get ice cream with Viola the day before they left. Velma lived in Siloam Springs at the time and was six years old.

(The Claremore Progress (Claremore, Okla.), Vol. 27, No. 46, Ed. 1 Thursday, October 16, 1919)

WRECK OCCURS NEAR WAGONER SUNDAY – Mattie Bryan Killed and 20 Other Are Injured,

Victims Taken to Wagoner – BROKEN RAIL THE CAUSE – The Northbound Iron Mountain Went Into the Ditch, Wreck at Neodesha

Wagoner, Okla., Oct 12 – Mattie Bryan, 14 years old, of Row, Okla., was killed outright, and 20 persons seriously injured this morning when a northbound Iron Mountain passenger train struck a broken rail one mile out of the little station of Neodesha, five miles northward of Wagoner.

The injured were brought back to Wagoner on a special train and received treatment at a local hospital. Those taken to the hospital were: Mrs. Mary Bryant, mother of Mattie Bryant, Row, Okla., (other injured passengers are listed).

Late this afternoon it was thought that all the injured will recover.

The train, which left here at 6:40 this morning, struck a broken rail one mile out of Neodesha, with the result that three coaches left the rails, two of them turning over, killing Mattie Bryant, who with her mother, was on her way to Row, Okla., and badly injured her mother.

NOTE: Mary Bryant lost an eye in the train wreck.

In addition to Viola and Johnny, Mary had five daughters. Sophia Alice, Leona Elizabeth, Rhoda May, Florence Gertrude (my great-grandmother) and Susannah.

I only knew Florence and Rhoda. Leona was the grandmother of my cousin John Johnson and he has shared a few stories about her so I do know something. Sophia Alice and Susannah I know very little about.



Johnny Bryant - about 1910



Mary in Colcord, OK - September 6, 1952



Mary, Rhoda and Rhoda's husband Harley Holman - Colcord, OK - 1952



Mary with daughters SuAlice, Susie and Rhoda in Colcord, OK - September 6, 1952

Sophia Alice, known as Alice by the family was born in Indian Territory in 1887. She married first Harvey Johnson in Siloam Springs, Arkansas in 1906 and they had five children, Oma, Emmett, Robert, Cecil and Bennie. Harvey either died or left before 1920 leaving Alice with small children. She lived with her mother until she married her second husband, William “Buddy” Kaiser in 1940 at Siloam Springs, Arkansas. Alice died in Oklahoma in 1952.

Susannah Bryant, known as Susie, was born in 1899 in Indian Territory. She was the second youngest of the Bryant children. When she was seventeen she married Charles Duncan in Siloam Springs, Arkansas. They lived with Charlie’s family when they first married. By 1940 they had one son, Jesse. I haven’t been able to find the family after the 1940 census.

By the time my mother knew her, Grandma Still had been blind for years. My mother talked about going to visit, taking her ice cream and sitting at the kitchen table asking questions about the Civil War. Mother said sometimes Grandma Still would talk for hours and others she would answer that “ain’t no war civil” and refuse to discuss it.

When Grandma Still would talk of the Civil War she told of the bushwhackers roaming Georgia. These men robbed the women whose men were away fighting. As a child she remembers shucking corn then it would take her brother all day to get the corn to the mill and back. They had to hide the meal he brought back in a hollow tree so the bushwhackers wouldn’t find it. Sometimes they would hear the bushwhackers whooping and hollering coming down the road and they would get up in the night and run down to a cave to hide. One time they left a small boy at the house and were afraid he would be killed. When they got back to the house they found the boy had hidden under the bed. This was not a very safe place as the bushwhackers would even cut up the straw mattresses looking for food and things to steal.

Mary was widowed in 1912 when her husband Benjamin Bryant was killed and sometime after 1920 she married John Still. She was widowed again when he died in 1946. She never re-married.

MARY A. STILL, 98, DIES AT COLCORD

COLCORD, Aug. 22 - Mary Adeline Still, 98, or rt. 1, Colcord, a pioneer Siloam Springs, Ark., area resident, died here Friday at the home of her daughter Mrs. Rhoda Holman.



Martha Viola (standing), Mary Bell (daughter of Leona Bryant) in the chair, Oma Johnson Baser (daughter of Alice Bryant) sitting - 1909



Alice Bryant - about 1900



Alice - about 1930



Susie on the right with Martha



Alice with second husband
William "Buddy" Kaiser



Bryant Sisters - Leona, Rhoda, Florence and Susie



Back row: Rhoda, Leona and Susie
Front row: Unknown couple, Florence, Nettie Ward (sister of Marion Ward) and Harley Holman, Rhoda's husband



Bryant Sisters - Leona, Rhoda, Florence and Susie



Rhoda, Florence, Susie and Leona

Born in Pickens County, Ga., she moved to Siloam Springs as a young girl and lived there until moving to Colcord 9 years ago.

Survivors also include three other daughters, Mrs. Leona Bell 243 Mohawk Blvd., Tulsa: Mrs. Florence Ward, Ceres, Calif., and Mrs. Susie Duncan, Steward, Okla., 11 grandchildren, 39 great-grandchildren, and 16 great-great-grandchildren.

Funeral services will be held at 2 p.m. Sunday in the Colcord high school gymnasium. Interment will be in the Allen cemetery under the direction of the Pyeatte funeral home in Siloam Springs.

Mary's father Joseph Thomas was born in Rutherford County, North Carolina in 1823. He married Mary Collins, daughter of Ransom and Rhoda Collins in 1847 in Gilmer County, Georgia. Joseph and Mary had seven children, all of which were born in Georgia. Elizabeth was the oldest, born in 1850 then came Rhoda Caroline in 1853, Ira Washington and Julia Alice were twins born in 1857. In about 1858 William T was born and in 1859 Jane. Their last child was my great-great-grandmother, Mary Adeline Thomas.

Soon after the end of the Civil War, Joseph and Mary Thomas with Mary's parents left Georgia to move to Texas. Along the way they made the decision to turn north and ended up in Benton County, Arkansas. Once they arrived then sent the following letter home to Georgia to let their families know where they had settled. Below is a letter from Ransom & Rhoda Collins to their son in Georgia.

Benton County, Arkansas Dec. the 1, 1867

Dear Son, We write you a few lines to let you hear from us. We have stoped traveling at last. We declined the idea of going to Texas and stoped in this state, We met a great meny people coming from Texas and they tell us it is very sickly there for the last two years, and their looks proved it. There is a great many coming in this county from Texas. They say there has been so much rain there for the last two years is the cause of it being so sickly, although they say a mighty good country. Mr. Registure went on to Texas. Capt. Allred was going to stop at Hot Springs in this state. We left them all at Little Rock, Arkansas. We turned to the right and came on here.

We came mighty out of our way. They call it nine hundred miles from here to there and I know we came over one thousand. We are all here in a house together. We have all rented a place here although we can't get the house till New Years Day. Elick and William and John has to build a house, and also Dock. We think we will like this county very well. There is mighty good corn here and they say it is mighty good wheat country, and it is a great fruit country. There is plenty of fruit here now. We ar all living with Raina chastain, all rented from him and we have got mighty good land. They say it has made forty bushel to the acre this year and we have got good spring water and plenty of it, and the prettiest running creek you ever saw and you may depend we haven't saw many of them since we left. The people say here is as healthy a place here as there is in the world and their looks prove it.

And the best of all they are all rebels and say what they please to anybody. When the people come in here they ask them if they are rebels or feds and if they say fed they can't rent land. We think

we have seen hard times but we don't know nothing about it to what they have here. They have nearly all been burned out and eat out. They say here they lived on weeds till wheat got so they could frail it out and then boil it and eat and thought they was doing well, but they have all got plenty now. The people say here is the best place for mechanics in the world. They can get almost any price. I can't tell you much about the country now. When I look around a little I can give you more satisfaction. We both stood the trip as well as could be expected. We all had very good luck to travel so far. We haven't been bothered but very little.

Just before we got here I traded Butler off for a mule. We swapped even. He stood the trip very well and I swapped my oxen for a mule. I have got two pretty good mules. We run pretty short of money before we got here, but not entirely out. We would all be satisfied if you all was here. We are all wanting to hear from you. Write to me where the baby is and how it is getting along and also all the rest. Jim Turnell owed us eighty five cents, get it and buy something for they baby. Give our respects to S. B. and tell her to kiss all the children for me. Some of us will write again next Sunday. We are all well. Say no more at this time.

Ransom & Rody Collins

Notes from a fellow researcher, Richard Nix:

Elick - Alexander Thomas, married Julia Ann Collins.

William - William Monroe Dodgen, married Sarah Ross Collins.

John - John Calvin Dodgen, married Martha Collins.

Martha was a daughter of Wylie Harris Collins and Nancy Martin. John and Martha Dodgen came back to Georgia. John C. and William M. Dodgen were brothers and Sarah R. and Martha Collins were double first cousins.

Dock - Milton Dewey Garrison married Delina Collins

The Baby - Susan Belle Collins, daughter of Miller Collins and Delilah Ann Langford. She married Daniel F. Bradford. Two of her great grand daughters live on Gilmer St., Cartersville, GA.

S. B. - Susan Belle Langford, sister of Delilah Ann Langford, she lived with Miller after Delilah died at the birth of or shortly after the birth of Susan B. (born 18 May 1867) and after Miller was Killed 25 July 1875 she raised the children. She never married.

Joseph and Mary Thomas didn't live long after they arrived in Benton County. My mother told me that they had both become ill and had taken some medicine that likely contributed to their death within days of each other. When I found their estate records included was a bill for \$15.00 for a visit and prescription medicine to Joseph Thomas by John. M. Lacy, M.D. dated November 10, 1871. It is interesting to note that Joseph died on November 11, 1871 and Mary died just three days later on November 14th. I really never expected that I could document a story like that. Once again, Mother was right. I can only guess that she was told the story by their daughter Mary Thomas Bryant.

Joseph Thomas was the son of Thomas Thomas born in Rutherford County, North Carolina in 1800 and his wife Hanna March. Thomas' parents were Aaron Thomas who was born in Orange County, North Carolina in 1760 and Sarah Silvy who was born in about 1770 in North Carolina. I haven't been able to find much about Aaron other than what was in his Revolutionary War pension application. He served under General Horatio Gates and was at the Battle of the Cowpens and served for some time as a guard for prisoners of war. At one point his company narrowly missed being taken prisoner by General Cornwallis. Aaron Thomas died in 1847 in Macon County, North

Carolina where he lived with his son, Elijah. Sarah died several years later in 1854.

Ransom Collins was born in 1806 in Lincoln County, North Carolina and Rhoda Martin Collins was born in York District, South Carolina in 1812. They were both living in Pickens County Georgia at the time of the Civil War and Ransom, several of his sons and his son-in-law Joseph Thomas all served in the Cherokee Legion, Georgia State Guard, also known as the Pickens Raid Repellers.

After the move from Georgia to Arkansas, Ransom lived until 1890 and Rhoda lived another seven years and died in 1897. They, along with Joseph and Mary Collins Thomas, were buried in the Hico Cemetery at Siloam Springs, Arkansas.



Rhoda Caroline Thomas, Ellender Elizabeth Thomas, Mary Adeline Thomas and Ira Washington "Bud" Thomas - children of Joseph Thomas and Mary Collins

Rhoda May Bryant

Rhoda May Bryant, sister of my great-grandmother Florence, was born January 24, 1892 at Paul's Valley, the daughter of Benjamin Franklin and Mary Adeline Thomas Bryant. Her first husband was Arthur Webster and they lived in Tulsa during the 1920's. I think she must have been divorced before 1930 but can't find it in any records. I later met Arthur Webster when Mother found out from Rhoda where he lived so she could go ask him some questions. On January 3, 1931, Rhoda married Harley Holman at Tulsa, Oklahoma. They lived many years in the Colcord community in Delaware County.

I remember so well visiting Rhoda and Harley in Colcord for several reasons. The first is that she would always make me a pan of fried okra and nobody ever made better okra. It might have had something to do with the fact that she went out to the garden to cut some right before she was ready to cook. I remember watching her with the corn meal, flour and a big iron skillet. I could have eaten all she would make! Another reason is that I learned about huckleberry pie from Aunt Rhoda. Little bitty berries that made a purple juice in the pie, really excellent. I figured out later it takes about two cups of sugar to sweeten one cup of berries, they're terribly bitter.

Aunt Rhoda never had any children but she dealt with my brothers and I fairly well. If one of us cried for some reason she would look at us and say, "Well, the more you cry, the less you pee." That sure shut us up.

Aunt Rhoda hated to wear her false teeth. I remember once when we were going to town she had to stop and run back in the house for her teeth. She would only wear them to town or to church.

Mother told me a story about Aunt Rhoda and her chickens. One night someone got into her chicken coop and stole one. She heard the squawking and ran outside with a shotgun, firing at someone as they were running away. The next day she tried to go to town with her gun to see who couldn't sit down and finish the job. Uncle Harley wouldn't let her go. It's probably a very good thing she never learned to drive.



Rhoda - about 1910



Rhoda - 1960's



Rhoda's husband, Harley Holman - 1959



Unknown woman, Susie, Leona, Rhoda and unknown couple - at Rhoda's house in Colcord - 1959



Back row: Rhoda, Leona, Ted Turner, Susie
Front row: Unknown couple, Florence, Nettie Ward, Harley Holman - 1959

Aunt Rhoda may never have driven but she sure liked to ride. Actually, she liked to ride with anyone but my father Gail. My parents were visiting Oklahoma and picked up Aunt Rhoda to go somewhere and Mother told me that my dad was driving the curvy hilly road out of Colcord so fast and Aunt Rhoda was so scared she accused my dad of turning her white.

It wasn't enough that Aunt Rhoda was tortured by my father, my mother made sure I did my share. When I was 13 years old we were visiting Oklahoma and Mother decided I needed a driving lesson in her 1972 Ford Pinto station wagon and it needed to be on the back roads of Delaware County. Aunt Rhoda knew all the roads and could direct us the back way into Siloam Springs so she was riding in the front with Mother in the back. It all went pretty well until we came to a creek. There was no bridge. There wasn't supposed to be a bridge, you were supposed to just drive on through. I stopped because this sounded like a terrible idea to me. Mother told me to go ahead, give it a little gas and drive on through. Aunt Rhoda told me I wouldn't get stuck and to just go. I went. To make sure we made it across I gave the engine plenty of gas. Enough gas that Mother swears we jumped that creek. Aunt Rhoda just laughed.

A really vivid memory and not a favorite is that Aunt Rhoda never had an inside toilet at her house. She and Harley had the money, they just couldn't ever agree on where to put the bathroom. The house was a little square of four rooms, two bedrooms, a living room and a kitchen. Uncle Harley wanted to take space from the two bedrooms to put in a bathroom. Aunt Rhoda said the bedrooms were too small and he had to build on a room for the bathroom. Harley said no. So, that's why they never had an inside toilet and my mother had to drive me to town to take care of business.

Rhoda died in 1979, having been preceded in death by her husband Harley. Both are buried in the Allen Cemetery along with her parents and other ancestors and kin - the Bryants, Barnetts, Stills, Martins, Cockrells, etc. Not having any children, Rhoda, willed her estate to the Allen Cemetery.

Leona Elizabeth Bryant

My great-grandmother's sister, Leona Elizabeth Bryant, was born in Indian Territory in 1889. She married William Benjamin Bell in Adair County, Oklahoma in 1908 and they had five children; Mary Olivia, Grace Marie, John Benjamin, Percy David and Lloyd Washington. All of the children were born in Oklahoma although they did move to Washington with the rest of the Bryant family for a couple of years around 1910. According to John Johnson, the family moved to Washington to get into the timber business.



Leona with son Percy Bell and Lloyd Bell's wife, Juanita

Leona and William lived in Armstrong, Oklahoma in 1920, all of the children were under 11 years old. William worked as a laborer for the "Public Works" which would have been a city or county job. By 1930 the family had settled in Tulsa and lived on East Easton Street. At this time William was a carpenter's helper and his two daughters, Mary and Grace, were working for a linen supply company. Mary had married Homer Lovins in 1926 and they were living in the household of Leona and William. Homer Lovins worked in a garage.

Mary divorced Homer Lovins and later married a man named Dan Dignan. In 1939 she was murdered by her husband. I found a newspaper article on the event.

The Ada Weekly News (Ada, Oklahoma) 27 Jul 1939, Thu Page 5

TULSA, July 25. __UPI__ Dan Dignan, 32-year-old huckster, pleaded innocent when he was arraigned in the death of his wife, Mary, 31.

Dignan was held in \$5,000 bail. Mrs. Dignan died in a hospital of skull fracture a few hours after she and her husband attended a dance with friends.

Dignan maintained his wife stumbled and fell, striking her head.

The huckster wept yesterday when he attended her funeral. "My God, I wish it was me and not her," he sobbed at the ceremony.

Apparently Dan Dignan did kill Mary, I found him on the 1940 census in the Oklahoma State Prison.

Grace Marie Bell married Hubert Parks (Johnnie) Johnson in 1931 and soon after moved to Okla-

homa City. They had been introduced by my grandmother Velma and her husband Clint Butler. I always had the impression that Clint and Johnnie had been friends. I do know that Velma and Grace, as first cousins, had been close friends. After Velma divorced Clint she also moved to Oklahoma City where Grace's daughter Carol Sue and my mother Jane became fast friends, both were born in 1933. Carol Sue and my mother were only two months apart in age. Carol Sue's brother John Hubert came along in 1939.

Carol Sue married Harry Andrew Anderson in 1955 and they had two children, Cherie and Michael. Carol and Harry currently live in Oklahoma City.

John grew up to be a musician and played from the 1950's through the 1970's around the Oklahoma City music scene playing both night clubs and dances. His band Full Flavor recorded some great music and is still called on to play reunion shows and benefits. I first met John face to face in Oklahoma City when he was in town to play a reunion show with Full Flavor to benefit the victims of the bombing of the Federal building in Oklahoma City. The night before the concert John and his friends were jamming at a small club and I got to watch a great show and meet my amazing cousin and his beautiful wife Diana. This would have been about 1996/1997.

I asked Diana and John to tell me how they met, below is a great story from both of them.

From John Johnson:

I was walking down the hall, between classes at Taft Jr. High in Oklahoma City, when I noticed the photography company had posted a few of the better pictures to be published in the Chief Justice Graduate issue (9A Class of 1956). As I glanced up, I happened to see a picture of a girl that I hadn't seen before (kind of unusual, because I had grown up with most of that class since kindergarten at Cleveland Elementary). I was really intrigued with her dark brown eyes. I didn't want to make a spectacle of myself by gazing at the picture for too long (I was always kind of shy), but I really wanted to know who that was. As a girl walked up beside me, we talked a little about the pictures, when I very casually asked "who's that over there?". I don't recall seeing her before. And she said "Oh, her name is Diana ~ Diana Allen. She's new here. I think she transferred over from Harding Jr. High. I said "well who does she run around with?" When she mentioned who Diana was dating, I was a little surprised, wasn't too impressed with the guy. I thought she looked pretty cool, and he was just a "nice little guy".

Later on, I worked up the courage to find out her phone number and call her (this was a big deal, we hadn't even been introduced). I always liked my fame to precede me, and to be the one being pursued. She turned me down; big letdown; all my fears were founded. After we started dating, about five years later, she said she didn't remember my calling her, but she always liked me, so she either didn't know who I was at the time, or it was because she was in music class with a girl



Carol Sue Johnson - January 15, 1936 in Oklahoma City

I had dated, that talked about me all the time, like we were practically engaged or something. She said she would not have accepted a date because of either one of those reasons.

From Diana Allen Johnson:



John and Dina Johnson - about 1968

Well, looking back, I can see why Johnny was pretty bamboozled. He was a very cute boy, and popular too. He was funny and very entertaining. However, at that time I was even shyier than he was, so was not really that aware of his persona; he was also President of the 9A Class; there was even a play that year, in which he starred as the male lead.

I was new and was in a fog from the previous year at a school that had not been a good match for me. I would imagine that was the first time he had ever been turned down.

From John Johnson:

After a period of time, since she was a singer, and I was a musician, we happened to do some joint appearances throughout High School with her trio and my band. There were a lot of zig-zags we went through, but after a while, we became pretty good friends. We both liked jazz, as well as several things in common.

From Diana Allen Johnson:

Johnny and I met in the ninth grade at Taft junior high in Oklahoma City. All through high school we were good friends. We never dated due to circumstances beyond my control. But I always thought a lot of him. We graduated in 1959 from Northwest Classen High School. Johnny was hired to play drums professionally right out of high school.

Johnny had been mentored by long time drummer named Billy Houck who recommended Johnny to the band that was headed by another excellent musician, pianist PeeWee Lynn. Both Billy and Peewee had played with Bob wills and the Texas playboys. However, this job was straight ahead jazz and dance music at a very nice upscale supper club. Of course Oklahoma City was dry then and you had to be in a private club to serve drinks. This was the premier club in my opinion as far as Music goes.

In February 1960, the supper club job was over and PeeWee was heading out to California. So I was invited to come and audition for the new band that was going in the club. I had also been mentored by a very good musician, pianist Dick Shreve, of Howard Rumsey's band at the Lighthouse in Redondo Beach California. He later toured with Benny Goodman and eventually he was the music director on the road for Andy Williams. So all this good musical fortune kept Johnny



Lloyd Bell



Percy Bell



Mary Bell



Grace Bell



Johnny and Grace Bell Johnson - about 1932



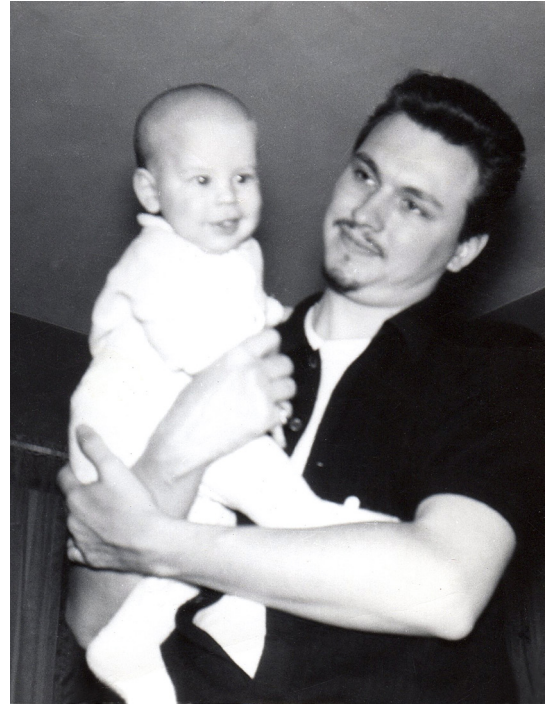
Johnny and Grace Bell Johnson - abt 1932

and me very close friends, as we had been musically all through high school. His band (Johnny Johnson combo) had played several jobs with the trio that I sang with, the Pollyannas.

Singing at the supper club, I wouldn't get off until around midnight and on weekends probably 2:00 a.m. Johnny's weekend jobs were usually over by 11:30 or 12:00 so he would bring his high hat and snare drum in to sit in until closing. We had another friend Richard from high school that we would sandwich date with. So after work we would either go to the Toddle House, an all night diner for hamburgers and milk or we would go bowling. It was not long before Richard figured out that something was happening with Johnny and me. When I was getting ready to throw my bowling ball I would look over and see his leather glove on my shoulder -just the empty glove. Johnny was very shy even after all those years. So he had a way of testing the waters. After several months of this, we decided we were for one another. He proposed, and we were married four months later, August 21, 1961 at my Aunt Wilma's house in a very sweet ceremony officiated by James McCrary, our minister at Saint Andrews Presbyterian Church.

Our first child would not be delayed. 1962 found Jeff joining us making our happy little family. A little over two years later Jennifer was born in 1964.

Jeff has made a career of his passions, narrow gauge trains and music. He works in narrow gauge rail in Durango, Colorado and promoting rail events. He also indulges his musical side playing fiddle in the band The High Rollers which has had several successful tours in Europe.

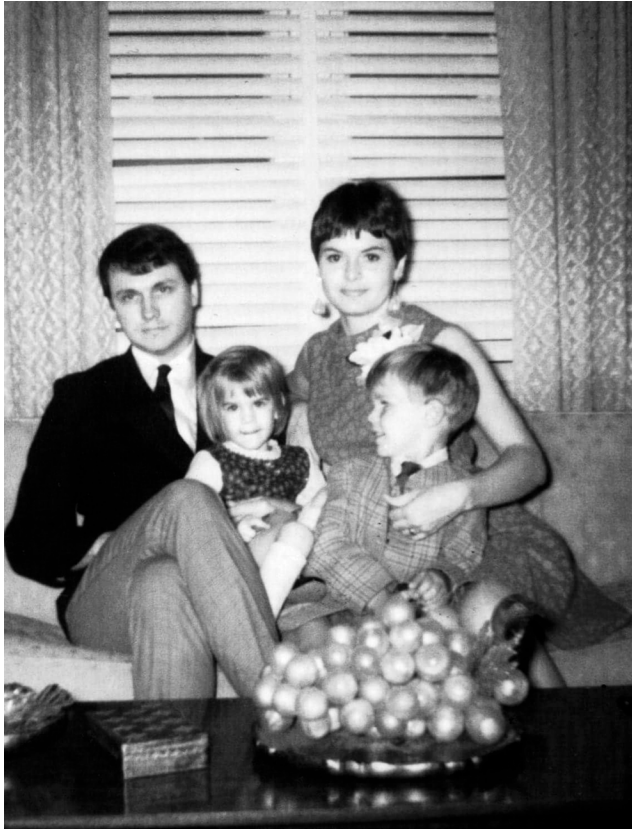


Jennifer has had careers in modeling, acting and as a booking agent for television. She finally settled on something close to her heart, a career in elementary education and working with special education children. Jennifer married Patrick Talley in 1991 and has three children, Clayton, Jackson and Katharine.

John Johnson told me some wonderful stories about his uncles.

John Benjamin Bell was born in 1914. He married once, a woman named a Miss Fryar and they had a son named John in 1945. John Bell served as a technical sergeant in the Army Air Corps during World War II and was stationed for a time at San Antonio, Texas. When he enlisted in 1941 his civilian occupation was listed as "semiskilled chauffeurs and drivers, bus, taxi, truck and tractor." When his son was still young, John and his wife divorced. She eventually remarried a man named Hall who adopted John who now uses the surname Hall. John Bell moved to Oklahoma City and in 1961 was attacked and so severely beaten he wasn't expected to survive. Ultimately he improved but was never able to live on his own.

Some years later John Johnson, a drummer, sometimes played at local hospitals. Once when playing a gig at the Veterans Administration Hospital at Norman, Oklahoma he got a big surprise. When the band took a break one of the nurses approached him. She asked him if his name was John Hubert. He thought this was strange since very few people would know his middle name. He told her that he was John Hubert and asked her why she wanted to know. The nurse told him about a patient who thought John was his nephew. The nurse obviously thought the patient was delusional but asked John if he would play along to make the man happy. John said he looked up and from the back of the room he saw his uncle John Bell excitedly waving at him. This time it was the nurse who was surprised when John told her that yes, actually, that was his uncle. They had



John, Diana, Jennifer and Jeff - about 1966

a nice visit that day and it was the last time he saw his uncle John who remained at the V.A. Hospital until his death in 1991. On a happy note, John Hall did eventually reunite with his father several years before his death.

Percy Bell was the second youngest son of William and Leona, born in 1917. He married at least twice and had five children. John Johnson says he believes there were more children but is uncertain as to what became of them. Percy's first wife was Maxine Able and their children were David and Rose. His second wife was Galelia Crawler, an Indian woman. Their children were Steven, Jerry and Thomas.

When he enlisted in the Army in 1942 Percy was already divorced from his first wife. He served as an ambulance driver in Patton's Third Army although when serving at the Battle of the Bulge he took part in the actual fighting. Percy was also at Buchenwald, the first Nazi concentration camp liberated by the United States Army. It is difficult to imagine what Percy experienced in the war.

John Johnson remembers as a child his mother putting together care packages to send to her brother Percy. He said she packed baked goods such as brownies and then other items that seemed strange to him like lipstick and nylons, "girly stuff." It turns out that his uncle Percy had a pretty serious girlfriend in England that the ladies items were meant for.

Lloyd, the youngest of the Bell children was born in 1919. He married Juanita Baker and eventually lived in Oklahoma City. He and Juanita never had any children. Lloyd also served in World War II but chose the Navy, enlisting in 1942.

John told me a story about being a child born to a world at war. Having been born in 1939 his first understanding of the world involved rationing, family in the military and the American War Effort which included such things as Victory Gardens. John was fascinated by soldiers and had an army costume and a hat like the one General McArthur wore. He said going around town when he was



John and Diana Allen Johnson 1965



Diana and Jeff Johnson - 1962



Jennifer Johnson -about 1983



Jeff Johnson on the left o with crew from the Ken Burns film "The West" about 1995 in Durango, Colorado



John Johnson with his father, Johnnie - 1982



Diana Allen Johnson - 1955



John Johnson - 1952



John Johnson about 2006



Oklahoma Historical Society Museum
"Another Hot Oklahoma Night" Exhibit



Percy and Galelia Crawler Bell, Helen, Leona Bryant Bell, William Bell and Lloyd Bell - about 1970



Bell home at Nowata, Oklahoma



Percy and Galelia Bell and Children - about 1970

wearing his costume he would be saluted by military men and that really tickled him. To young John it seemed that the world would always be at war and he expected to grow up and be in the military, just like his uncles.

John was fond of his uncle Lloyd and when he knew his uncle was coming to visit, he would change to his navy costume because of course, Uncle Lloyd was a sailor. I wish there were pictures of that.

John Johnson told me a little about his grandmother. He remembers her as a quiet woman. He said he heard stories about how she would be outside in certain times of the year and see a bee on its way back to the hive. John said his grandmother could track the bee and follow it all the way back to the hive and could always provide the family with honey. Not long ago John was doing some research on the family and ran across the name Bee Catcher. It makes you wonder if this is a family trait?

Another thing John remembered about his grandmother Leona was that she was referred to as a 'medicine woman'. He knew that she was good with herbs and home remedies. He heard it said more than a few times that his grandmother and her sisters were "making medicine." I know that Leona's sister Rhoda had a huge book on herbs that was beautifully illustrated and well used. I was fascinated by it when I was a child.



Percy Bell in a captured German uniform - 1944

Benjamin Franklin Bryant

Benjamin Bryant was the son of Samuel and Sarah Jane Martin Bryant. He was born in 1862, the same year his mother died. I have always assumed that she probably died in childbirth.

When I was about 12 years old my mother took me with her to OK and while we were there she said we were going to find out who killed Benny Bryant. This involved a long twisting drive along the red dirt roads in the hills of North Eastern Oklahoma.



Benjamin Franklin Bryant - about 1910

I have no idea how mother found this place but apparently Aunt Rhoda gave good directions and eventually, after driving dirt roads round and round through the hills, we reached the home of a man by the name of Arthur Webster. He lived in one of those old silver travel trailers surrounded by stuff, car sections etc. Mr. Webster was sitting outside his trailer in an ancient lawn chair and looked to be at least 90 years old. He apparently was the last person alive who knew who killed Benny Bryant. Up to this point most of our family knew who the killer was but as the killer was a family member also, no one would tell on him. My mother must have talked to Mr. Webster for at least an hour but in the end he told the tale.

Benjamin Franklin Bryant was killed by his cousin Sam Caywood. Apparently Sam went up to Missouri and killed a couple with a pair of scissors and robbed them. When he got back to Oklahoma he got drunk and bragged to Benny Bryant. He then thought of having told on himself and shot Benny in the back.

So that's the story I remember but being into genealogy and history and facts. I talked to my cousin Tommie Ward Gilreath and she said she always heard that the man who was first thought to have killed Benny Bryant was not the actual killer.

Eventually I found out more. Arthur Webster was the first husband of Benjamin's daughter Rhoda. In an article in the Siloam Springs paper I found out that Arthur Webster had actually confessed to

killing Benny Bryant. Here's what was in the newspaper:

(Siloam Springs, Ark., Oct. 4.) Arthur Webster shot and killed his father-in-law, Benny Bryant, at the latter's home in southwest Adair county, Oklahoma about eleven o'clock last night according to advises reaching Siloam Springs today. Webster came to Siloam Springs this morning and after transacting some business notified Bryant's relatives of the tragedy. He sent his brother to Stillwell, the county seat of Adair County, to notify the authorities that he would return home after dinner and surrender. He says Bryant came home in an intoxicated condition last night and abused his wife and little daughter. He drove Webster and his wife from the house, Webster says, and followed them in a threatening manner. Webster says he fired as he believed his life was in danger. Officers arrived at his house about four o'clock this afternoon and took him in custody. Webster has borne a good reputation. [Benton County Democrat 10/10/12]

John Johnson says he remembers hearing that Benny Bryant was a U.S. deputy marshal.

Benny Bryant spoke and read both Cherokee and English. Many times Indians would come to him with papers from the government for him to translate for them. He also was said to have studied law at Tahlequah. (Velma Ward Turner)

Benny, his brother Johnny, and sister Matilda were raised by their grandmother Nancy Guinn Martin Barnett. She frequently punished the children and refused to let their father visit them or let them go to school.

Dot Larmon told this story to Norma Thompson: *Nancy was their grandmother. She says Nancy was the one who: When those kid's dad went off to war, she hid out in the caves and stuff and when he came back and wanted the kids back, she wouldn't let him have them. She would have let him have the girl but not the boys. He didn't think he could handle a girl. But they finally ran away and went to Tahlequah and got a pretty good education. When asked exactly who this was she replied, "Hans' granddad Bennie and Johnny Bryant." I asked, "Their mother was the one who hid them?" She replied, "Their grandmother. Their mother had died."* (Norma Thompson)

From a paper written by Ora Cockrell found at the Talbot Museum at Colcord, OK:

Benny Bryant, was born Feb. 23, 1862 and his mother died shortly afterwards. Benny, his brother, Johnny, and sister, Matilda, were raised by their grandmother Nancy Guinn Martin Barnett. She



Benjamin F. Bryant - about 1910

frequently punished the children and refused to let their father visit them or let them go to school. Benny and Johnny ran away from home and walked over forty miles to Tahlequah where they worked their way through school at the Male Seminary which was operated by the Cherokee Nation.

His education later enabled Benny to obtain a job as a marshal and to assist the government in paying out money to the Cherokees. On March 13, 1886, he married Mary Thomas, daughter of Joseph and Mary Collins Thomas.

Seven children were born to this union: Sophia Alice (Johnson), Leona Elizabeth (Bell), Rhoda, Florence Gertrude (Ward), John Ira, Susanna (Duncan), and Martha Viola, who died in 1919 at age 14.

Benjamin F. Bryant's father was Samuel Bryant. He was born in Saline County, Arkansas in 1835. His father, Benjamin Bryant, was considerably older than his mother. On the 1840 census of Saline County Benjamin Bryant was 80 years old and was collecting a pension for his Revolutionary War service in the New Jersey Line. I have tried for a number of years to find out where Benjamin was from but so far I haven't had any luck. Samuel, his son, wrote a letter with some clues but just not enough. I have been in touch with some of Samuel Bryant's Texas descendants and they were aware of his first family in Oklahoma but until I contacted them, they knew very little.

Benjamin Bryant married Elizabeth Bond, daughter of Richard and Mary Baker bond, in 1834. A marriage notice in the "Arkansas Gazette" of the marriage of Benjamin Briant and Mr. Elizabeth Cochran which took place in the home of Mr. Richard Bond. This indicates that Elizabeth had been married before. They had two children, Samuel and Susannah. I haven't been able to trace Susannah but Samuel married Sarah Jane Martin before the Civil War.

Samuel Bryant served in the Civil War with the First Cherokee Mounted Volunteers. I can't prove that Samuel was a Cherokee but he most likely would have been accepted as Cherokee by marriage since his wife Sarah Jane Martin was Cherokee.

Samuel and Sarah Jane had a total of three children. Matilda was the oldest born in 1859 then John born in 1860 and finally Benjamin F. in 1862.

John Bryant married Margaret "Margie" Sanders. John and Margie had ten children: Sarah Jane, who married Charles Howerton; Martha Ann, married Miles Larmon; Linda Lou, married Tom Sims; Lottie Susan, married "Did" Howerton; Bertha May. married Dickson Collins; Benjamin Franklin; Lucinda, married Henry Murphy; William Cullen, married Jewell Philpot; Inola, married Ira Foster; and Jessie Viola married Walter Potter. John Bryant died in 1902 and is buried in the Allen Cemetery at Mosley Prairie, where many of his ancestors are buried.

Matilda Bryant, sister of John and Benjamin, married John T. Caywood and they had seven children: Samuel Moses, Herbert Theodore, Benjamin Franklin, Butler, Christopher, Elizabeth and Lemuel. This would be the connection to the Caywood who is said to have murdered Benny Bryant.

Sarah Jane Martin was the daughter of William A. and Nancy Guinn Martin and the granddaughter of Samuel and Catherine Hildebrand Martin. Through their mother, the Bryant children were descendants of the Cherokee family of Grant. Ludovic Grant, a Scotch trader, married a Cherokee

lady and their daughter, Mary, married William Emory. Their daughter, Mary Emory and Brig. Gen. Joseph Martin were the parents of Samuel Martin. There is quite a bit of historical information available about Joseph Martin including his several wives and more than 15 children. He was extensively involved with the Cherokees in Tennessee which is where he would have met Mary Emory.

Joseph Martin was born in Albemarle Co., VA in 1740, the son of Joseph Martin, Sr. and Susannah Childs Martin. Joseph's grandfather was William Martin, a wealthy English merchant. One story is that his son fell in love with an English girl that he did not approve of, the elder Martin sent his son to America, giving him a ship named "Brice." Down through the generations, the name "Brice" has appeared often in the Martin genealogy.

Sarah Jane's mother Nancy seemed to be an awful woman according to every account I've heard, including stories from Samuel's second family in Texas.

From the record of Allen Cemetery compiled by Virgil Talbot, 1982: Samuel Bryant did not mention the facts which prevented him from possessing the children but it seems that when he returned from the Civil War, and after his second marriage, his mother-in-law, Granny Lucas, would not permit him to see the children. Some say she attempted to have him killed to prevent his taking the children. She is always described as having been a "She-Devil". Perhaps she was afraid the stepmother would be unkind to the children, but it is hard to understand how a stepmother could have been more brutal to them than Granny was. She would hit them on the head with whatever she had in her hand - they carried scars to their graves to prove it.

Once she was chasing Benny to give him a whipping and she became angry because he eluded her and threw a butcher knife, which she was carrying, the knife barely missed Benny and stopped quivering in the block of wood burning in the fireplace.

Granny was a good mid-wife. And she was sent for to doctor illness of all kinds. She seems to have had remarkable results doctoring with herbs and etc. She always had a good saddle horse and money. She would go away from home for weeks away from the children, lock her smoke house where she kept the meat, lard and potatoes, leaving the children nothing much to eat. Once it is said that on one such occasion the children were so hungry that Benny, a small boy, climbed up to the gable end of the smoke house, tore some of the boards off and climbed down to get something to eat.

She was always losing her glasses and accused the children of hiding them only to finally find them on her forehead. She did not send the children to school. They slipped away from Granny and walked, through very thinly settled country, about 40 miles to Tahlequah where they worked their way through school.

Granny had very little Cherokee blood, but enough that when the Government began to talk of moving the Indians from Tennessee to Indian Territory, she knew that she would have to move. She had much foresight and believed that if she moved ahead of the others and of her own accord, she could take more of her possessions. That is what she did. They made 2 crops while they were moving toward the Indian Territory.

One interesting story told of Granny that occurred after her children were grown and gone from home was of an old colored woman who lived with her for quite some time. The colored woman turned out to be a man. He was referred to as "Ole Nigger Reb". It is believed that the colored man had disguised himself as a woman and come to Indian Territory to get away from officers of the surrounding state law. Of course Granny knew he was a man. She had a bed for him in the smokehouse, and when it was time for him to get up of a morning, she threw rocks at the log smokehouse and the chinking would fall inside making a terrible noise and he lost no time getting out of there. He worked for her for quite some time but finally disappeared mysteriously. Some thought he slipped back across the state line and others believed that some of the neighbors killed him because some had a very strong dislike for the colored people, the Civil War was just recently over.

Note: This article was probably written by Ora Cockrell who was related to the Bryants by marriage through the Martin and Still families.



Samuel Bryant and second wife California - 1897

When Samuel Bryant couldn't get his mother-in-law to give him his children he went to Freestone County, Texas to be near his mother's family, the Bond's. He married California Welch in 1865 and had a second family.

The following is a letter written by Samuel Bryant and provided to my mother, Jane Price in about 1970 by Harvey Bryant, a descendant of Samuel's Texas family:

1894

Grandfather Bryant was from England to America. Grandmother was from East India. I think father was born in America and had a brother Samuel for whom I were named. Fathers first family I have but little knolege of he was soldier in the Revolution War. Was married to my mother in Arkansas - date unknown. I Samuel Bryant was born in Saline County, Arkansas on the 19th of May, 1835 and was left fatherless at something less than 8 years old. My mother was so afflicted with fits that she broke up housekeeping and lived with her connection the rest of her life. I lived

with an uncle J. P. Bond until about 16 years old. We were then living in Louisiana. Soon after this we all moved to Leon County, Texas 1852. My People was poor, had no home, and I saw but little prospect for me to have a start in life. With nearly no education. I began working for wages, not knowing the uncertainty of man I lost some of my leighbor or got but little for it. Soon after we moved to Texas mother died and I nearly entirely strayed away from my relatives, after living in Texas about 3 1/2 years I went back to Arkansas and in my 22 year was married to Miss Sarah Jane Martin, formerly from east Tennessee. We moved to the Cherokee nation about the fall of 1858 and lived there until the Rebel War. When I could stay at home no longer in safety, I joined the Rebel army and as long as health would admit of served as a privit soldier, during the early part of the war my wife died leaving 3 children. When the war closed I came back to Tex-

as with neither health, money or property. In September 1865 was married to Mrs. California Hawes. She had 4 children, some cattle and horses but no land, this was in Freestone Co. When we bought some land and settled and lived up til this writing, 1894. to us was born 9 children, 6 are living. Emily Susan, Mary Elizabeth, Martha Ann, Samuel Lee, Allmon Welch, and Joseph Allen, at this time my health is very poor, my sight dim there is no promis of long life.

Samuel Bryant

Samuel ends his letter with “there is no promis of long life”, he in fact lived another twenty years and died in 1914 at the age of 79. He and his wife California, who died in 1910, are buried at Hopewell Cemetery near Teague in Freestone County, Texas.

Marion William Sanders Ward

My great-grandfather, Marion William Sanders Ward, was born in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) in 1885. His parents and grandparents had come from Georgia through Alabama and Tennessee to settle at Mosley Prairie just west of Siloam Springs, Arkansas. Marion's parents were Francis (Frank) Anderson Ward and Mariah Angeline Whitten. They had six children, Marion being the oldest, then came George David born in 1886, Nettie Ann born in 1888, Mary Elizabeth born in 1891, John Riley born in 1893 and James Franklin born in 1895. Not long after James was born



Marion Ward - about 1908

Frank and Mariah divorced, each eventually remarrying and giving Marion three half siblings. The Wards were Cherokee Indians from their grandmother, Margaret Ann Welch who married William Green Ward in Cherokee County, Georgia in 1851. All of Frank Ward's children were on the Dawes Roll and received land allotments.

I was lucky to have been given several items belonging to Marion Ward, his wallet which contained his Masonic membership card, two All-state insurance cards, receipts for auto parts, a receipt for \$100 for a land payment, a receipt for membership to the Odd Fellows, a Montgomery Ward credit courtesy card, a receipt for his driver's license renewal and several check stubs. I also have his Masonic bible and apron and a special treasure, his gold pocket watch.

Marion Ward was first married to Ann Carter in 1906. I was told by Clemie Wilson Weese that Ann died in childbirth soon after they married. In about 1910 he married my great-grandmother, Florence Bryant and they had two children, my grandmother Velma Juanita and her brother Elmer Teesquantnee, both born in Oklahoma. Elmer always hated his name and insisted on being called Ward.

After Marion and Florence married they lived in Siloam Springs, Arkansas and in Kansas City, Missouri before returning to Oklahoma and eventually relocating to California. My mother said that Marion never worked a day in his life but always had cash, even during the depression. I did find on the 1920 census he said he was a farm laborer at Siloam Springs, Arkansas, on the 1930 census in Kansas City, Missouri he worked as a laborer at the Electric Light Company and in 1940 living outside of Kansas, Oklahoma he is shown as a farmer and trader.



Marion with his first wife Ann Carter - about 1905



Marion Ward



Marion with cousin Reece Welch



Marion with cousin Bruce Welch and unknown man



Marion with cousin Bruce Welch



Marion - about 1912



Marion and Friend



Marion with Albert Ty



Marion with Minnie Welch and Carry Mirer



Marion with Frank Webster and Fay Hubbard



Marion - about 1910



Marion Ward



Marion with Tom Branam

Mother said Marion was quite the salesman, he often traded or sold horses, cattle or whatever he could make a profit on. She told me one time he narrowly avoided going to prison for fraud when he had been selling a small box that was supposed to turn a one dollar bill into a ten dollar bill. Mother also told me that Marion sold moonshine. Since both Virgie Wilson Rogers (Marion's half sister) and Clemie Wilson Weese (Marion's niece) both told me the same thing I think it must be true. Virgie told me that Marion never drank a drop of alcohol. He would bring a new batch of moonshine by her house for her husband John to taste for him before he sold any.

Marion is always easily identified in photos. He's the one standing with one leg crossed over the other. The story I heard was that he was shot in the leg and it affected his knee so he stood that way to compensate. I was never told how he was shot but I believe it was when he was fairly young.

I think everyone I ever talked to who knew Marion Ward told me that he was quite a lady's man. Clemie told me that one time he moved another woman in with he and Florence and the people in the area called them Marion's two wives. The woman was Alta Adair and supposedly she was there to take care of Florence because she was sickly. Clemie didn't seem to think that was the only reason.



Marion with Florence, Elmer and Marion's sister Nettie

My mother once told me that Marion had an illegitimate child and that she wished she could find out what happened to it. One day years later, after my mother had died, the subject came up with Clemie. We were going through some old photos and she handed me a picture of a woman with the name Sybil Buck on the back. I asked about her and Clemie told me that was Marion's girlfriend that he had a child with. She couldn't remember if the child was a girl or a boy.

According to Clemie, her uncle Marion had an affair with Sybil Buck and they had a child. One day he took Sybil and the baby to visit his mother Mariah (Clemie's grandmother) who lived with Clemie's family. Sybil and the baby stayed in the car out front and Clemie's mother Nettie was furious and refused to go out to the car to see them.

My mother trained me very well. I did eventually research Sybil Buck and discovered that she had a child in the right time frame (1925) and did not appear to be married at the time. There was a girl named Sybil Buck born in 1905, daughter of Elbert G. and Minnie Buck. They were living in Tulsa in the 1920's. In 1930 Sybil appears on the census of Ottawa County, Oklahoma with a new husband, William Boles (Sybil and William married May 25, 1929 in Ottawa County, Oklahoma) and a daughter named Doris Buck, age 5. I later found Doris Louise Boles, age 15 and born in Oklahoma as the niece of Della Lowe in Shasta County, California on the 1940 census. I also found the record of Della Buck's marriage to Robert B. Lowe which, along with the 1910 census, confirms



Marion on the horse with Frank Webster on the steer o Kansas, Oklahoma



Marion (center with legs crossed) at a barbeque - probably at the old Siloam Springs, Arkansas courthouse

that Della was Sybil's sister.

I have no idea if Doris Louise was adopted by William Boles or just began using his name. I found that Sybil applied for a Social Security replacement in 1971 and identified herself as Sybil Olivas, Sybil Boles and Sybil Buck, daughter of Elbert and Minnie Buck. She was living in Yakima, Washington at the time. I haven't been able to find anything about Doris after 1940 but I will continue to search.

I never heard anyone say that Florence knew what Marion had been up to with other women but I do know she adored him and would defend him if anyone spoke against him. This makes me believe nobody bothered to tell her anything about his girlfriends.

Another thing my mother told me about Marion, or Pop as she called him, was that family was very important to him. Mother took after him in this and I suppose she passed it on to me or I wouldn't have collected all of these stories and photos over the years. Marion always kept track of his cousins, nieces and nephews, he kept in touch with quite a few of them. One of his cousins was quite famous, William Penn Adair Rogers, better known as Will Rogers. They were third cousins once removed. This means that Marion's gg-grandmother Elizabeth McSwain was the sister of Will Rogers' g-grandmother Margaret McSwain.

Marion was related to quite a few of the old Cherokee families either by blood or by marriage, sometimes both. His second cousin William Benjamin Bell was also his brother-in-law. William married Florence's sister Leona. Besides the Bells and Rogers, other related families are Blackwood, Stinchcomb, Welch, Adair, Hildebrand, Martin, Carnes and McCoy to name a few. Mother said that Pop knew exactly how each of the families were related.

One of Marion's nephews that I knew was an interesting man and as I remember, very nice, so was his wife Irene. Amos Ward was the son of Marion's brother John Riley Ward and Effie Martin, he was the Sheriff of Rogers County for a long time and lived at Claremore. The following is from an article about naming the new Rogers County jail after him. It was printed in the *Tulsa World*, Tuesday, August 25, 2015:

First elected to the post in 1948, Ward was sheriff more than 32 years, serving three stints over four decades: 1949-55; 1957-71 and 1973-81. After battling cancer, the World War II veteran died



Marion with wife Florence and children Elmer and Velma - about 1928



Sypil Buck - Marion's girlfriend



Marion at Kansas, Oklahoma



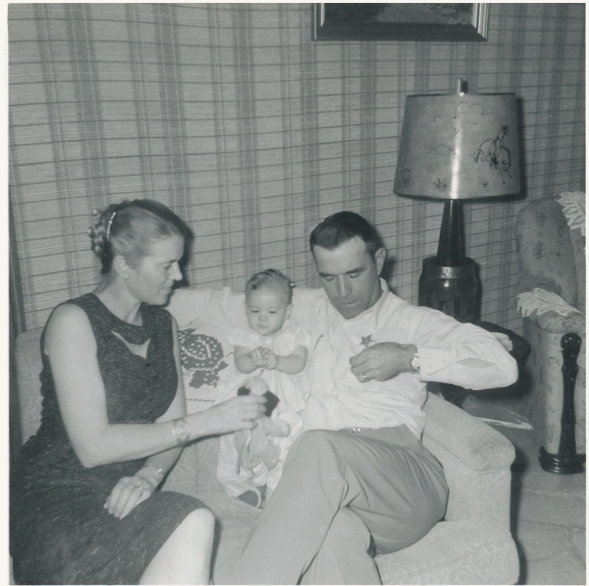
Marion at home in Kansas, Oklahoma



Marion at home in Kansas, Oklahoma



Amos Ward and younger brother Owen about 1928



Amos Ward with wife irene and daughter Dana about 1960



Sheriff Amos G Ward from Claremore at a still bust during prohibition - 1950's

in November 1982 at age 66. At the time of his death, Ward reportedly was the longest-serving sheriff in the state of Oklahoma.

“I remember him as a lawman being everywhere,” Walton said. “You didn’t go to an event that he wasn’t there, wearing a white shirt and khaki pants, a badge pinned onto that shirt and carrying a small .38 revolver.

“... Every funeral I went to as a child, he was there.”

During Ward’s initial years in office, he began enforcing Oklahoma’s Prohibition law, which wasn’t appealed in the state until 1959. In addition, he was so proficient at nabbing cattle rustlers that in the 1950s he served as investigator and brand inspector for the Oklahoma Cattlemen’s Association. He also was once president of the National Peace Officers Association and Oklahoma Peace Officers Association.

Defeated in elections for sheriff only twice — in 1955 and ‘69 — he typically appeared in public in western-style suits, boots and a smartly creased hat.

“Amos put a lot of bad guys in jail,” Walton said. “Some lawmen are heavy-handed. There’s a lot to be respected about his style of being a sheriff. ... His way was more wise and about knowing everybody.”

I knew another of Marion’s nephews, Henry David Ward, son of his brother George David and Hettie Miller Ward. It’s kind of a sad story, Henry lived in El Paso, Texas with his family but had come to Houston to have surgery to remove his leg, it had been discovered he had cancer. This was 1971 and M. D. Anderson was even then a leading cancer research hospital. Henry stayed with us before his surgery and insisted on mowing our lawn. My mother argued but he was adamant that he would get as much use of his leg as possible before they took it away. I thought that was a pretty positive attitude. Unfortunately he didn’t live another year, he died in Harris County in 1972.

The only other full sibling of Marion’s that I knew was his sister Nettie. Aunt Nettie married Silas Irvin Wilson and lived most of her life in Chelsea, Oklahoma in a frame house with a gray painted porch. I remember visiting there in the summer and the house stayed cool at night because of the high ceilings and open windows. I remember it being so quiet at night, even with the windows open. Completely different from where we lived in Houston.

Aunt Nettie was a wonderful cook. She always made a big meal for us when we visited. That’s when stories would come out about how all the women in the family preferred the dark meat from a chicken. They said it was because they would cook a big mid-day meal and the men would come in to eat and take all the white meat. Then the children would be fed. What was left was what the women would eat. Once everyone was fed a cloth would go over everything on the table and the rest would be eaten for dinner.

Nettie was Clemie’s mother and Clemie shared a few stories with me. She talked a lot about how her mother was the first telephone operator for the area and had a switchboard in the house. Any calls that were made in that town passed through Nettie, or Clemie if Netting was out of the house. It’s no wonder Clemie grew up to be such a great gossip. Even as late as the 1970’s the phones in



John Ward with wife Effie Martin and daughter Mary
-- 1915



John Ward with wife Effie Martin and children Mary
and Amos - about 1918



Marion wiht brother George



James Ward with wife Edna Trammell and daughter Lenna



Mary Ward



Left: Nettie Ward



Right: Nettie's husband
Silas Irvin Wilson



Marion with Florence, Elmer and sister Nettie



Marion and Florence



Marion - 1940's



Marion Ward in the 1940's



Marion Ward in the 1940's



Marion with the principal of the Kansas School

the Kansas, Oklahoma area were party lines which are essentially loops of phone communication where only one conversation at a time could take place. This didn't prevent others from picking up and listening though. During my visits to Clemie in the 1990's you still only had to dial four digits to make a local call.

Of Marion's other siblings I know very little. George David, the second oldest, married Hettie Miller in 1910 and had seven children who scattered across the United States, some ending up in Washington and Oregon. George and Hettie divorced before 1940 and George died in 1964 in Marion County Oregon.

Mary Elizabeth Ward married Melvin E. Robinson and had four children, James, Ruth, Lucile and Ruby. The family all moved to Stanislaus County, California by the 1950's. Melvin died in 1959 and Mary died in 1976. I never knew anything about the children beyond their names.

The next to the youngest, John Riley Ward, married Effie Martin and had four children; Mary, Amos, Owen and Nettie. Amos is the only one I knew even though all of them remained their entire lives in Oklahoma. Effie died in 1960 and John in 1966 and are both buried in Rogers County.

James Franklin Ward was the baby of the family. He married Edna Trammel and they had three children, Merrie, Lenna and Roy. Roy eventually moved to Lyons, Colorado where we visited him once on our way to California.

Marion Ward died on December 3, 1951 at the age of 66. This is interesting to note because I was supposed to be named Marion in honor of my mother's favorite grandfather. When my parents discovered I was a girl they decided to name me after a friend's daughter and wait for a possible son. Next in line was in fact my brother who received the name Marion. My brother was born on December 3, 1966. He looked just like his namesake and he also had the roving lady's man tendencies and need to be the center of attention, just like Marion Ward. My other brother and I take after my father. Fate is a funny thing.



Marion O 1940's



Marion at Kansas, Oklahoma - about 1943



Marion at Kansas, Oklahoma with grand-daughters Jane Butler and Vesta Ward about 1943



Marion and Florence Ward - 1940s

Elmer Teesquantnee Ward

My grandmother's brother was Elmer Teesquantnee Ward, he was three years younger, born in 1915. Elmer married Grace Asher in about 1935 in Oklahoma. The Asher family lived on the farm next to the Wards. Elmer and Grace had two daughters, Vesta who was born in 1936 and Tommie Lue who was born two years later in 1938.

Elmer and Grace lived in Oklahoma for a while but moved to California with Elmer's parents in the 1940's. Grace contracted Tuberculosis and died in 1948. Tommie and Vesta adored their mother, she was beautiful and a lot of fun. They missed her terribly all of their lives.

Elmer re-married in 1951 to Jewel Stewart and they had a daughter, Judy Karen Ward. Judy always felt left out of the family. She said that her mother was never accepted by Florence who loved Grace like a daughter. My mother always liked Judy and would be pleased that I've tried to stay in touch with her over the years. Judy married Danny Womack in 1971 and they had three children, Elesha, Daniel and Lacey.

I've been in touch with Judy off and on over the years. She's very interesting, her husband's job has taken them all over the country and she always had something interesting to talk about. She is very interested in the family history, an interest we share. I love it when we finally talk after a long silence. Judy currently lives in Oregon.

Vesta was a sweetheart. She loved the idea of being in love but had a very hard time with marriage... four of them. Her first husband Kenneth Stewart, I remember when she left him. We got a call one night when we lived in Bellaire. It was Vesta, she told my mother she had left her husband and run away with his best friend. All she took was her Thunderbird and her clothes. They had driven to Houston and wanted to visit. It was late but mother and I got in the car and met them at their hotel. Mother and I both thought Vesta had traded down. Her next two marriages weren't any better.



Elmer Ward, about 2 years old

Kenneth was the father of Vesta's son Kenneth Junior who was usually called Little Kenny. Little

Kenny didn't do so well in life. He married young then joined the military. He had two children, a boy and a girl. I remember the boy, he had black hair that was an inch long and stood straight up on his head. He was adorable in spite of the funny hair thing.

Little Kenny ran around with a very bad crowd. He was into drugs and known to steal to support his habit. Eventually he ran into a bad drug deal and was shot and killed in Keyes, California in 1989. Vesta took it really hard and I think the loss of Little Kenny contributed to her failing health. She died in 1992.

Tommie was my favorite cousin. I think it might be because she was about the only person who could embarrass my mother. We were visiting California when I was about 13 years old and my mother and I had been having a debate about bikini swim suits. Mother thought what I wanted was too small. When we talked about it in front of Tommie she said, "as long as her nipples are covered it's fine." Mother quit talking. Loved it!



Elmer with sister Velma - about 1916

Tommie and her husband John Gilreath were up in the mountains camping every chance they got. They had converted an old bread truck into a camper and would take it out most weekends. They also had motorcycles and were the ones responsible for my elderly great-grandmother's riding around in the mountains on the back of a bike. When we visited from Houston there always seemed to be a camping trip involved.

Tommie and I stayed close over the years. Once during the time Mother had moved to California to help out with Florence when she was ill, I got a call from her. She said that somebody needed to talk to Tommie. I asked why? Mother said that Tommie had been hanging around with that Helen. I asked why this was a problem. Mother said that Helen was gay and people would think Tommie was too. I asked if Tommie was gay, Mother's answer was "hell, I don't know" and ended the conversation. I think that was my modest mother's way of telling me that Tommie was gay. Of course I called Tommie and asked her straight up and she said that she was and Helen was her girlfriend. I still shake my head when I think of how Mother couldn't talk about things like sexuality. I think Tommie told her things just to rattle her cage. I really loved that about Tommie.

Tommie married John Gillreath in 1958 in Reno, Nevada. It makes perfect sense, they drove up to Reno every chance they got, several times in the year Kirk and I lived there. Eventually they had



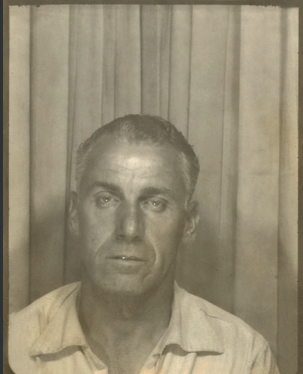
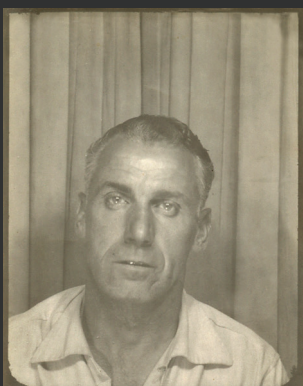
Elmer holding neice Jane Butler
in 1933



Elmer in Siloam Springs, Arkansas about
1930



Vesta Ward, age 13



Elmer about 1955



Elmer with hsi parents Florence and Marion Ward in California about
1940

two children, Diana and John Jr. Diana was born with a mental birth defect and spent her life at her mother's side. She may not have been completely capable of living on her own but she had an amazing memory, always knowing when and where things happened and remembering names of about everyone she ever met. She now lives in a group home that I understand she really enjoys, and has a job that fits with her abilities.

John Jr. had a son named Jesse in 1996. I don't think he ever married Jesse's mother, Lorrie Holmboe, but I believe they stayed together for quite some time. I think she died a few years ago, about 2015 or so. John still lives in Empire, having inherited his parents house when his father John Sr. died in 2009.



Grace Asher, Elmer's first wife

In 1998 I got a call from Tommie's husband John (yes, she stayed married and he liked Helen, she was a great cook). He told me that Tommie probably wouldn't live too much longer and if I wanted to visit he would pay for me to fly out to California. I took him up on his offer and spent a week talking to Tommie about everything. What I remember most is her telling me "I always thought I would..." in relation to a place to visit or a new thing to try. Right then I made a promise to myself that I wouldn't have to say that when I knew my time was almost up. I have taken amazing vacations, tried new foods, seen plays and art and lived like I wouldn't get a chance later. Thank you Tommie for teaching me not to leave things I want to do for "someday."

Tommie died just a few months after our visit. I didn't go back to the funeral and I remember her laughing and joking and being completely inappropriate. My favorite cousin.

I last saw Elmer during that week I spent with Tommie. He died later that same year, having outlived two of his three daughters.

Clemie Beatrice Wilson

Clemie was my grandmother Velma's first cousin. She was the daughter of Irvin and Nettie Ward Wilson, Marion Ward's sister. Clemie was on the final roll of the Cherokee Nation, the Dawes Roll. She would laugh when I told her she was older than Oklahoma (she was born in 1905) and then call herself a "blanket-ass Indian."

One of my favorite stories is about Clemie and her cousin Ruth Stinchcomb. I had driven Clemie over to visit Ruth and they got tickled telling about one time when they took lunch to the men working in the river bottom in an old Model A. Ruth was driving and they got down to the river, set up lunch for the men and everything went fine. The problem started when they were headed back up the hill. The angle prevented the gas from reaching the engine, it all moved to the back of the tank and there was no pump to deliver gas to where it needed to go. In order to make the car run, Ruth had to turn the car around and back up the hill. Clemie said there was no way she was riding backward up that steep hill so she got out and walked up, only getting back in the car once Ruth had it on level ground again and going forward.



Irvin and Nettie Ward Wilson, Florence Bryant Ward with Jane Butler and two of Nettie's sons - about 1936

When we visited Oklahoma on vacations we spent a lot of time at Clemie's house. We usually went in August so there were plenty of fresh vegetables coming out of the garden in need of canning. There was a lot of snapping green beans and other prep work to get things ready to can. As if that weren't enough, we would go pick up ripe peaches from the orchard and they would have to be canned also. All of it was stored in the root cellar/storm shelter. Most people in Oklahoma had them to escape tornadoes. Clemie in fact refused to move to the new house until a storm shelter was dug. She didn't mind that there wasn't a bathroom (it was the 1940's) but she had to be able to escape a tornado.

Clemie and her husband Pat Weese had two sons, Paul born in 1926 and Wayne born in 1928. I never met Wayne, he had moved with his wife and children to the west coast, but I knew Paul. I'm not sure because I never asked for details, but it seems that Mother said Paul had a childhood fever that damaged his brain. He was quiet and sweet, always somewhere near Clemie, wearing overalls and usually standing with his hands in his pockets rocking. Clemie took care of him all of his life, horribly afraid that if something happened to her that he would be put in a terrible institution. Everything she did after her husband Pat died in 1982 was focused on making sure that Paul would be taken care of properly.

Once I was an adult I started going to Oklahoma on my own to visit those family members who

were left. Clemie and her aunt Virgie Wilson Rogers were the ones I stayed with. Clemie and Virgie feuded for years. They were only a few months apart in age, Clemie being older, and were pretty much raised together like sisters. I knew they were close because they would be doing something together when we visited as children. I had no real understanding until I grew up and began to understand that, just like sisters, they bitched about each other all the time.

Clemie really was the bitchier of the two I think. She would complain that Virgie needed help with this or that domestic chore (usually canning meat or vegetables) and would be hounding Clemie to come over and help. Clemie said that Virgie was useless in the kitchen and I would have to agree after hearing Virgie complain that she hated cooking. So, Clemie would have to get her own work done then go over to Virgie's and do it all over again.

Clemie and I were talking about quilting one day and she said she had an old quilt top she had never put a back on and asked if I wanted it. I told her I didn't know how to quilt so of course she volunteered to teach me. We went to town and bought backing, batting, thread, needles and safety pins. Clemie sat in her chair and gave me instructions for laying it all out in the floor and pinning it together. Of course when I wasn't doing it right she decided she needed to crawl around on the floor with me. She was 90 years old at the time. In the end we got it right and she taught me to quilt.



Left to right: Unknown Man, Paul Weese, Irvin Wilson, Andy Wilson, Edna Morrow Wilson, Wilma Wilson Gertin, Nettie Ward Wilson, Clemie Wilson Weese, John Wilson Children: Claudia and Hilda Wilson, daughters of Andy and Edna Wilson and Bobby and Billy Gertin, sons of Lowel and Wilma Wilson Gertin - about 1947

On one visit with Clemie she was complaining that people kept telling her which of her things they wanted when she died. So-and-so wanted the table, such-and-such wanted her husband's old rocking chair. We laughed a bit about it and shook our heads. Well, that night I slept in the back room where it was cold and pulled out a couple of quilts for the bed. One was a lovely pink and white. When I got up the next morning I walked into the kitchen and told Clemie that I had figured out what I wanted when she died. She laughed, especially when I told her it was that old pink and white quilt. It turns out she had made the thing back in the 1940's and thought it was just an "old quilt". The cotton in it had been hand carded by "an old Indian woman". She told me I could have the old thing. I told her it would be my treasure.

One of my favorite recipes came from Clemie, it's for a dark chocolate cake called 'Crazy Cake'. The recipe uses no eggs or baking powder, instead it uses baking soda and vinegar to make it rise.

Clemie was a great cook and made wonderful pies even though she hated pie crust. She made pies so she could eat the filling. She had a terrible sweet tooth. Once she handed me a bowl of strawberries to cut up and told me to put some sugar on them. It was about a pint of strawberries so I put about two tablespoons of sugar on them. She watched and said that wasn't nearly enough and added almost another quarter cup of sugar.

Clemie was my favorite cousin in Oklahoma and she loved to tell all she knew! Here are a few of her stories.

Marion Ward had a woman living with he and Florence. Clemie said people talked about "Marion's two wives". Alta Adair was her name. Apparently Florence was 'sickly' so Marion brought Alta to help out.

Marion came to Clemie's house looking for dinner one afternoon so she told him to go kill two chickens and she'd cook for him. He ate so much she couldn't believe it and then went in the front bedroom to lay down. He slept all that afternoon and into the evening. She was scared he had died and was afraid to go check on him. He slept all through the night. Finally, Clemie made her husband Pat check on him when he got home the next day.

Clemie got her dearest wish, she outlived her son Paul and didn't have to worry about him going to some terrible place. After Paul died she moved in with her cousin Wanda Jackson Wall for a time before moving to a nursing home in Chelsea, Oklahoma. I went to visit her one last time in the nursing home. She was in the same room her mother had been in years before and was happy to live out her days there. When I walked in and said hello she looked up at me with tears in her eyes and said "I never thought I'd see you again." Those words about broke my heart until I realized that, at the age of 95, she was finished. She had raised her sons, protected Paul until his death and considered her mission complete. I took her out to lunch that day and afterward we rode around Chelsea and she pointed out places to me and told me stories for a couple of hours. Clemie died several months later on September 9, 2001.

Francis Anderson Ward

My great-great-grandfather was Francis Anderson Ward, usually known as Frank. He was born in Winston County, Alabama just after the start of the Civil War in 1861. Frank's parents were William Green and Margaret Ann Welch Ward, both from Georgia. In all there were five children; Mary, George, William, Emma Elizabeth, Francis and Rebecca Catherine. It appears that Frank and his siblings were all born in Winston County, Alabama.



Francis Anderson and Mariah Whitten Ward

The family stayed in Winston County until after the Civil War then moved west to Wayne County, Tennessee in about 1871 or 1872. Frank's sister Mary was married to Solon Whitten, son of George and Elizabeth Cox Whitten in 1872. Frank married Solon's cousin Mariah Angeline Whitten in 1880. She was the daughter of Solon's brother Joel Sumter Whitten and his wife Nancy M. Gresham.

It's not clear when the Ward family moved from Tennessee to Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) but they had arrived there by 1885 when their first child, Marion was born. Frank and family are listed on various census taken of the Cherokee Nation. The census that is critical for joining the Cherokee Nation is the Dawes Commission census. I have found all of the Wards and Bryants on the Dawes Roll and used them to become a tribal member. What that roll meant to the Ward children was an allotment of land. Frank and each child received a portion. Mariah Whitten was not an Indian. The Cherokee heritage comes through Frank's mother, Margaret Ann Welch.

After arriving in Indian Territory, Frank and Mariah had six children; Marion, George David, Nettie Ann, Mary Elizabeth, John Riley and James Franklin. Not long after James was born Frank and Mariah divorced. I can't find a record of the divorce but I know that Frank re-married in 1897 to Ella McLain.

While I was researching I found something curious. On the 1900 Census Frank is listed with his wife Ella which is what I expected. They are living with seven children, six were Mariah's and one was Ella's. The thing that surprised me is that Mariah Ward aged 40 and listed as mother was in the household. This would have to be Frank's first wife and I would like to know how that worked out and how long it lasted.

Frank and Ella had two children, Myrtle Beatrice in 1899 and Marvin Jefferson in 1902. I knew Myrtle a little and her husband Johnny Jackson. Their daughter Wilma was a teacher for a long time in the Cherokee Nation. She had some of the most amazing turquoise jewelry.

Wilma's father was also Cherokee and they had very dark skin as did Wilma's husband Jess Wall who was Choctaw. I went with Clemie to Wanda's house one year for Thanksgiving and I really stood out with my blonde hair and fair skin.

Once in the early 1970's Wanda had business in Houston and brought her father Johnny to stay with us. My mother was worried that us kids would disturb him, Wanda assured her that wouldn't be a problem. If he got tired of hearing us, he would just turn his hearing aid off. I remember visiting with Johnny, he seemed to like kids, we got along well.

I never knew Marvin Ward, he married Lora Hardin and had three sons, Roy, Raymond and Waborn. I know that Raymond ended up in San Bernadino, California but I don't know anything about the other two boys.

Frank died in 1906 leaving Ella with several young children. She eventually re-married a man named Howard. My mother always heard her referred to as Grandma Howard and that she was well liked by the Ward children.



Ward children in birth order: Marion, George, Nettie, Mary, John and James - about 1898

William Green Ward

My great-great-great grandfather, William Green Ward, was born in Georgia in 1831. I have looked for more than twenty years to find who his parents were with no luck. My mother looked for years also. All we ever found was the 1850 census of Cherokee County, Georgia where the head of household was W. Ward born 1796 and M. Ward, his wife born in 1797. Both were born in South Carolina. W. and M. had four children as far as I can tell. Anderson, William, F. and C. All of the children were born in Georgia.



William Green and Margaret Ann Welch Ward - before 1900

William married Margaret Ann Welch, daughter of George Washington and Margaret Jones Welch, in 1851 in Cherokee County, Georgia. They started their family in Georgia where the first child was born then the rest were born in Winston County, Alabama. In all there were five children, Mary was the oldest born in 1854, George William was next, born in 1856. Frank's sister Emma Elizabeth was born in 1858 then Francis in 1861 and Rebecca Catherine, was born in 1866.

Anderson Ward had been living in Winston County since before about 1849 and by 1860 the rest of the family had followed. Winston County was known as "The Free State of Winston" because the residents of the county were almost entirely on the side of the Union in the Civil War. Both Anderson and William Green served in the Union Army.

The Ward's were not Cherokee but William's wife Margaret Ann Welch was. Her father George Washington Welch was unfortunately one of the signers of the 1835 Treaty of New Echota between the Cherokees and the United States that was significant in the removal of the Cherokees from Georgia to the western Indian Territory. The treaty was not accepted by the majority of the tribe and the signers did not actually have the right to speak for the tribe. Andrew Jackson, president at the time, used the Relocation Act of 1830 to try to force the tribes out. The Cherokees took the issue to court. Even though the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Cherokees Andrew Jackson wanted the Cherokees out of Georgia and said that if the Supreme Court had a problem with it, let them enforce it. He sent troops to gather the Cherokees and that event became known as the Trail of Tears.

The Principal Chief of the Cherokees at the time was John Ross, he had not signed the treaty. According to tribal law, the signers had essentially committed treason and the sentence was death. John Ridge, Major Ridge and Elias Boudinot, several prominent Cherokees were located and murdered to avenge their signing of the treaty. Other signers went into hiding. There was a family story

that George Welch had been hiding and his family had stayed in Georgia to sneak him food and supplies. Martha Redus, a cousin and fellow researcher, told me this story. A couple of years later she called me excited to share that she had found the closest thing to proof of this family story.

Martha had been at the Georgia State Archives researching Cherokee applications for an unrelated person when she found a mention of George Welch by a witness in document unrelated to the Welch family. The witness was testifying to the Cherokee parentage of members of the Corbin family when he gives the statement “I also heard George Welch, Cherokee Indian Chief speak of Delilah Corbin and call her a Cherokee Indian. He signed treaty as I learned and had to hid from Indians to keep from being killed. He lay for some time under a Mill dam. He died at log rolling a few years after 1838. He had a son named George Welch who afterwards went to the Territory.” The “Territory” references the western Indian Territory now Oklahoma.

Margaret Ann Welch’s mother’s family can be traced back into early Virginia and Maryland to William Claiborne who arrived at Jamestown in 1621 and was a land surveyor in the new colony of Virginia. He was the Secretary of State for the Virginia Colony from 1626 to 1634 and then the Parliamentary Commissioner and Secretary of the Virginia Colony from 1648 to 1660.



Margaret Ann Welch Ward with daughter Emma Ward Blackwood and a Blackwood grand-daughter at the Ward home in Delaware County, Oklahoma. The home is still there and is now painted yellow.

William Claiborne had settled on Kent Island which was later granted to Sir George Calvert, Lord Baltimore. William tried going through the courts to protest the grant and when that failed took up arms to fight to keep the land. Ultimately he failed but only after having caused the first naval military battle in North American waters. I understand that a portrait of William Claiborne hangs in the Virginia State Capitol at Richmond.

Margaret Ann Welch was born in 1833 in what is now Forsyth County, Georgia. She moved with her husband's family into Alabama then to Tennessee and eventually to Indian Territory in 1879. I have always assumed that the family moved because of her Cherokee heritage and to be with her siblings who also moved to Indian Territory. They settled in the Going Snake district at a town called Mosley Prairie, now in Delaware county.

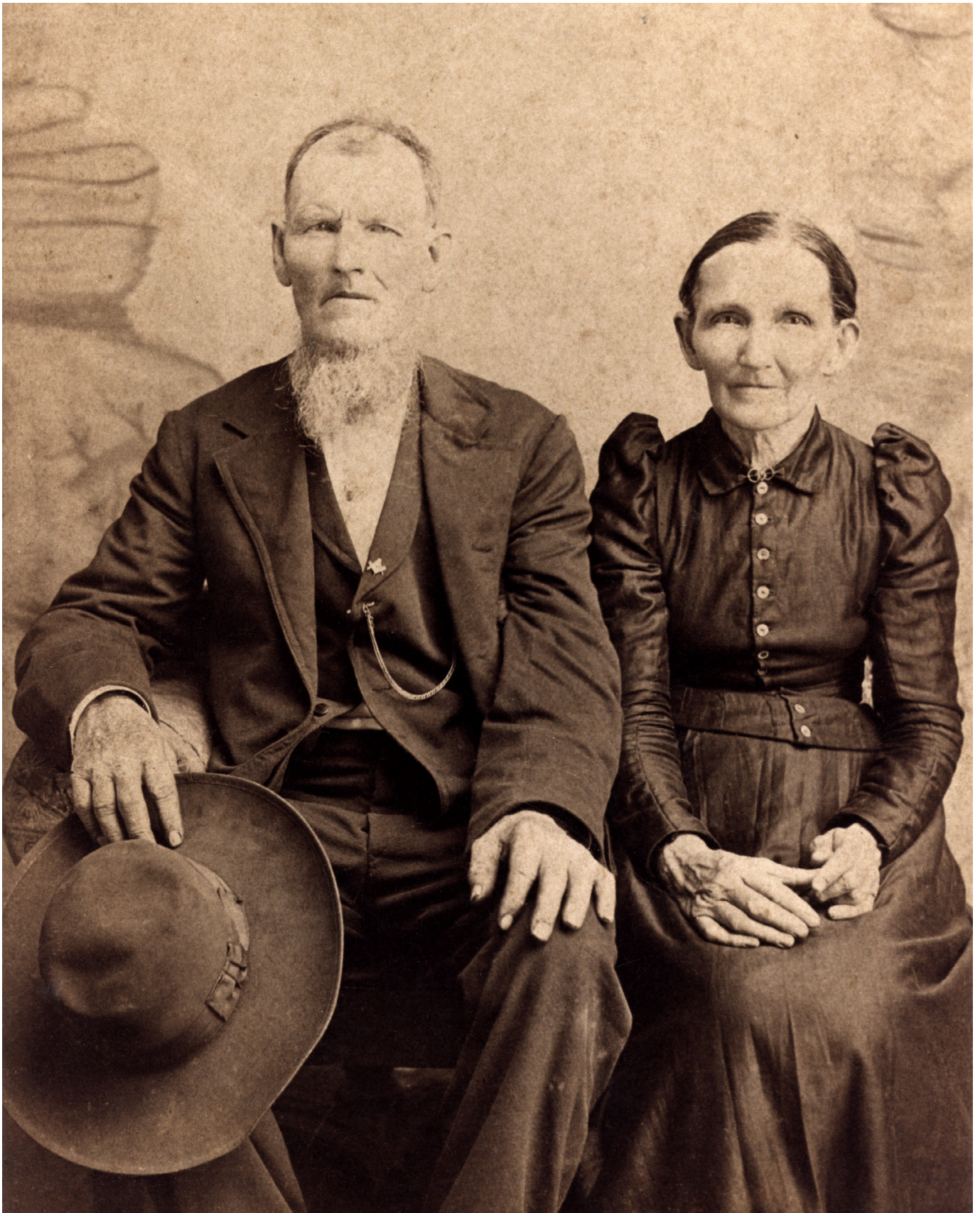
After her husband William died in 1900, Margaret lived with her daughter Emma who married John William Blackwood. Margaret's oldest daughter Mary married Solon Whitten, her son George married Margie Sanders and her youngest daughter married John R. Johnson. Margaret died in 1919 and both she and William are buried with their son Francis Anderson in the Johnson Cemetery in Delaware County.



Isaac Burr Blackwood



Lydia Blackwood



William Green and Margaret Ann Welch Ward - about 1890

Mariah Angeline Whitten

Mariah Whitten was my great-great-grandmother. She was born in Wayne County, Tennessee in 1859 and grew up in a family of twelve children. Mariah's parents were Joel Sumter and Nancy Gresham Whitten who were married in Lawrence County, Tennessee in 1839.

After Mariah married Francis (Frank) Anderson Ward they moved to Indian Territory with his family where they started having their own children. I never heard what went wrong in their marriage but after Mariah and Frank divorced she stayed in Indian Territory for just a few years before moving back to Tennessee to be near her parents. This was sometime between 1900 and 1904 when she married a man named William Henry Wilson. Although Henry Wilson had lived for a while in Wayne County, Tennessee they actually married in Lauderdale County, Alabama, just across the state line.

Both Mariah and Henry had been married before, each having several children from their previous marriages. All of Mariah's children stayed with their father Frank Ward. Henry was a widower and several of his children lived with he and Mariah. Mariah and Henry had one child together, a daughter, Virgie Cornelia Wilson, born in 1906.

Virgie's father committed suicide and she was the one to find him. She kept the newspaper notice of his death for many years, finally giving it to me when she told me the story. Here's the article (newspaper unknown).



Mariah in Oklahoma

COMMITTED SUICIDE

Mr. W. H. Wilson Hang Himself in His Barn

On Tuesday last about midday Mr. W. H. Wilson, who lives about ten miles north of Florence, on the Savannah road, committed suicide by hanging himself in his barn. The act was a very deliberate one, as all the surrounding conditions indicated. He had been about the house at noon and when he failed to return to dinner his family discovered him suspended by his neck dead. It is believed by his neighbors that his rash act was caused by an unsatisfactory business transaction which weighed on his mind. He was about 65 years of age. His body was interred in the Wesley Chapel cemetery on Wednesday afternoon. He leaves a wife and several grown children.

Virgie told me that her father had deeded his farm to his adult sons and discovered that they were

intending to sell it out from under him and that's what caused him to commit suicide. Virgie was ten years old when she found her father.

Not long after Mr. Wilson's death in 1917, Mariah and Virgie moved to Oklahoma and lived with one or another of Mariah's adult children. In 1920 Mariah and Virgie were living with George Ward. I know that they lived with Nettie and her family for a while. Clemie said that Virgie and Mariah moved from one child's household to another until Virgie married John Rogers in 1923. Mariah lived with Virgie until her death in 1935. She is buried at the Elm Cemetery at Leach, Oklahoma.

I knew Virgie pretty well, we visited her on our summer trips to Oklahoma and she was always fun to be around. Virgie always had some project or other she was working on. I remember her making a bunch of rag rugs one year. Virgie wasn't much for domestic chores, she would much prefer to be outside doing something or traveling or pretty much anything besides cleaning or cooking. She was something of a tomboy and I'm told she actually taught her boys to spit tobacco. Clemie thought it was terrible, I thought it was funny.

Virgie was another of my female relatives who never learned to drive but she would get in the car to go anywhere. She went back to Tennessee to visit family pretty much every year until she was in her 80's. When I would visit we would always go out to eat somewhere. Virgie hated cooking. It was something of a challenge for her with her bad knees to get up in my pickup but she was determined. She knew how to get anywhere in North Eastern Oklahoma by back roads so I took her driving quite a bit.



Virgie Wilson Rogers with sons Jack and Ernest - about 1928

Virgie wasn't Cherokee but her half siblings, husband and children were. John Rogers was related to the Wards from back in Georgia. I think picking on Virgie is why Clemie called herself a "blanket ass Indian". Virgie was Clemie's aunt but was several months younger and they were mostly raised together. Clemie complained that Virgie was spoiled. Virgie just went along happily through life, moving to her own tune.

The last time I saw Virgie was when my nephew Braunsen was eleven and we started taking trips together. He told me he wanted to see Indian stuff so I took him to Oklahoma to meet a few relatives. By that time Virgie was in a nursing home in Locust Grove. Her knees had finally given out and she was happy to be someplace where she was waited on and not expected to cook. Having reached the age of 98 and having over 70 grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren, Virgie had plenty of visitors. She had a cork board on the wall with pictures of most of the kids and it took nearly an hour for her to tell us who was who. Not a thing wrong with her memory at all.

Virgie did make it to her 100th birthday. She celebrated with her huge family and a bunch of

friends, the party made the local news. I'm so glad they all got to celebrate, Virgie died just five days later. It still makes me smile that she had fun right up to the end.

There was a lot of family in Tennessee and Alabama for Virgie to visit. The Whitten's had large families and lots of descendants. I don't know much about them but Edgar Byler, a cousin of Virgie's on the Wilson side, was the Wayne County, Tennessee historian for years and published a lot of material about the family and the Whitten's and the Ward's were connected by marriage twice. George Whitten who was born in South Carolina in 1787 married Elizabeth Cox, also from South Carolina. They had ten children: Turner F., Harriette Meranday, Mariah C., Joel Sumter (my ggg-grandfather), Jonathan M., Melton, David Clay, George Washington, and Solon who married Mary Ward, sister of Francis Anderson Ward.

Joel Sumter Whitten was born in South Carolina in 1817 and married Nancy Gresham who was born in Tennessee in 1819. They married in Lawrence County, Tennessee in 1836. Their twelve children were: Charles E., David H., Harriett L., Thomas J., Jabez Heron, Aaron A., Rachel Emeline, Mariah Angeline; Henry Beauregard, Mollie Jane, James Theodora and Addaline.

Most of the Whitten descendants stayed in Tennessee and Alabama with a few moving to Oklahoma and North Texas.

Asa Clint Butler

My grandfather was Asa Clint Butler, always known as Clint. He was born in Fair Play, Missouri in 1904. Clint had one sister named Cleta just two years younger born in 1906 and a brother named John Clifford who only lived to the age of two, he died of a fever in 1915. Clint's parents were Thomas Franklin Butler and Edith Gertrude Kennedy.

I don't know how my grandparents Clint and Velma met. It had to have been in Tulsa, Oklahoma since I know he was living there in 1930 with his father in a boarding house on North Boston Avenue. Clint was a driver for a glass store and his father was a driver for Trucking Corporation. Clint's sister Cleta had married in 1923 and was living with her husband George Warren Bradshaw and their son Billie who had been born in 1926. Eventually Cleta had two children with George Bradshaw, a daughter named Ava Jo was born in 1931. Both children have Osage heritage from their father's side. Clint had already been married to and divorced from Cauleen Middaugh. Their daughter Marvelleen was born in 1927.

Clint and Velma married, in about 1931 and were divorced in 1936 when my mother was three years old. At some time in the next few years Clint moved to California where he married a third time to June Clara (last name unknown). He was married to June Clara at the time of his death in 1946 and had been living in Los Angeles for about three years.

Velma must have stayed in touch with Clint at least a little because when I asked Velma what happened to him she told me how he died. She said that he had broken his leg and was on crutches and tripped off a curb and was hit by a car. I don't know if those details are correct but I do know that he died of a fractured skull and brain hemorrhage as the result of an accident in 1946 so the story is certainly plausible.



Velma with First Husband Clint Butler - 1932

Clint Butler's parents, my great-grandparents, were Thomas Franklin Butler and Edith Gertrude

Kennedy. They were both born in Missouri in 1884, Frank likely in Polk County and Edith, also known as Effie, in Cedar County. All of their children were born in Polk County, Missouri and then by 1920 the family had moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma. Frank was working as a chauffeur in the oil industry. Effie was home with the children which were teenagers by this time.

Effie died fairly young in 1921 and Frank lived as a widower for nearly 30 years and died in 1950. By the time Frank died Cleta had been married three times. After her divorce from George Bradshaw she married Rex Roland in about 1947. That marriage didn't last long, by 1950 she had divorced him and married Lewis Supernaw. At the time their grandfather died Marveleen was living in Oakland, California and Jane was living in Edmonton, Canada. Cleta, Marveleen and Jane were the only heirs listed in his estate.



John Thomas Butler

Frank Butler's parents were John Thomas Butler and Margaret L. Forgey. John was born in 1851 in Warren County, Kentucky to Henry Jackson and Rebecca Osborn Claypool. Both families can be traced back through Tennessee, Kentucky and into early Virginia and Maryland.

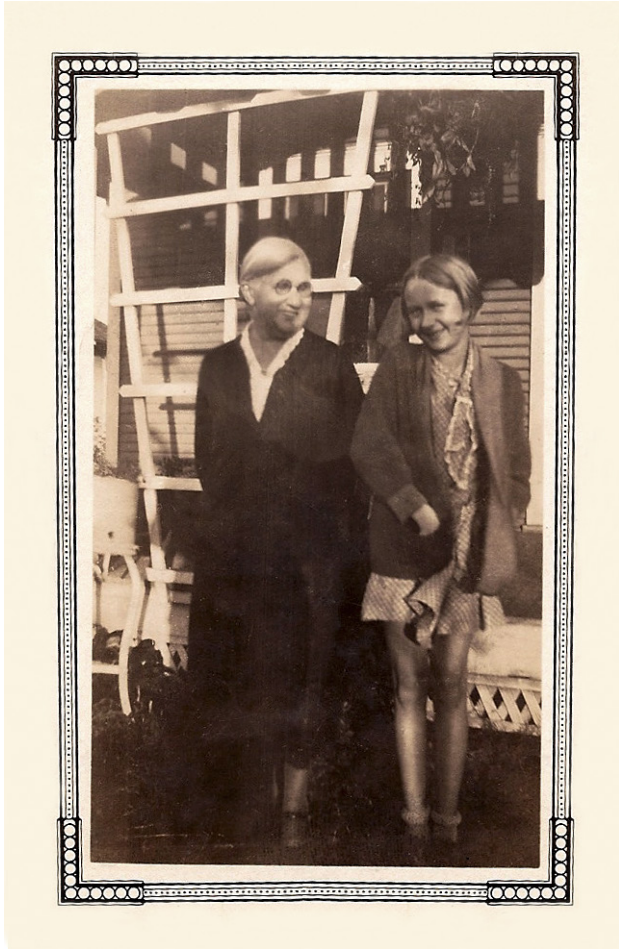
Effie Kennedy's parents were Asa Scott Kennedy and Clara Bell Simrell. Asa was born in Missouri in 1853 and Clara was born in Sullivan County, Indiana in 1857. They must have married in Cedar County, Missouri since that's where the first of their ten children were born. Eventually they moved to Polk County, Missouri. After her husband Asa died, Clara moved to Tulsa. I imagine to be closer to several of her children who had moved there.

Clara lived on the north side of Tulsa from about 1917, eventually living with her daughter Hettie Williams in Osage County, Oklahoma. She lived with Hettie until she died in 1942 at the age of 85.

I only met one Kennedy cousin, she lived in Tulsa and mother took me to meet her when I was maybe ten years old. I remember she had been a competitive golfer and

had a dining room filled with golf trophies. There were cabinets full around the room and the table was full of trophies. I now wonder if she was the person who got mother started playing golf? I wish I could remember her first name.

The Butler, Claypool, Simrell and Kennedy families settled fairly early in the neighboring counties of Polk and Cedar in southwest Missouri. These families are described as pioneers who left the heavily populated eastern states and moved progressively west into new territory. Many of the men in these families served in the military, some receiving land grants for their service. They were doctors, farmers, truck drivers and lawyers. I don't know their personal stories but I know the American story and it is made up of people like these.



Clara B. Simrell Kennedy - before 1942



Clara B. Simrell Kennedy - before 1942