

Uncle George Stories

Albano George Fuchs

on his 95th birthday

15 July 2007

Recorded, transcribed, and compiled
by his niece

Sophora Fuchs Davis

ALBANO GEORGE FUCHS

REFERENCE DATES:

Born Marble Falls, Texas – 15 July 1912

Move from Marble Falls to Abernathy, Texas – early Spring 1918

Move from Abernathy to the ranch, Tatum/Lovington, New Mexico – 1926

Move to Hondo Valley, New Mexico – June 1945

Purchase Hollywood Inn Autumn 1945 (one winter only)

Purchase Fox Mercantile, Green Tree/Palo Verde – Spring 1946

Move to home in Ruidoso – 1950

Sell Fox Mercantile / Lease Fox Cave – December 1952

Open Fox Cave – February 1953

Total Fox Cave 4 ½ years, sell lease/merchandise – May 1957

Move to Durango, Colorado – Spring 1961

Move to Pagosa Springs, Colorado – 1977

Move to Gila, New Mexico – 1995

Move to Silver City, New Mexico – September 2006

Next move, Fort Bayard, New Mexico

[Died at Millie's Assisted Living, Silver City, New Mexico – 16 February 2008]

LITTLE RUDI

Having learned on previous visits something of the routine of the household and Uncle George's needs, AND having figured out something of how A.J.'s computer works and being blessed with some eighty pages of hastily scribbled notes from Uncle George's conversations over the last couple of visits, I vowed that this trip will be devoted to writing in the spare minutes. These recollections are a treasure of our heritage and they will be captured now or never.

Last night Uncle George, whose mind is wonderfully sharp, remembered, "You get up early." [4:30 AM normally, 5:00 AM on a lazy sleep-in day] "I'm used to getting up at 6:00 o'clock. (This was prior to living with A.J. and Betty, who get up a little later.) I have a woman coming in the morning to give me a shower. She said she will be here at 8:00 sharp. I want to be finished breakfast by then. So I'd appreciate you getting me up early if I don't wake up."

"Okay, Uncle George. How about 6:30?" He came walking into the kitchen, with the help of his walker at precisely 6:30 AM.

Every morning he has the same breakfast. Into a bowl he places a spoonful of each of

- oat bran
- wheat bran
- raisin bran
- chopped pecans
- 1/3 cup boiling water poured over

This morning he told me that he'd been eating this bran every morning for the past 40 years, "and I will eat it for the next 40 years." (In case you might be wondering what his plans are.)

Then he has

- a bowl of fruit (peaches in season, nectarines, strawberries, cherries)
- a slice of bread
- ham or two slices of bacon

See, Uncle George eats (some kinds of) fruit even though, as he says, "The amount of vegetables I eat would fit on the head of a pin."

This morning as breakfast was concluding, Uncle George looked around like, "Well, what should we do today?" there being some minutes before Judy (the hospice nursing assistant) would arrive. So I picked up my notebook, the one of many scribbles, and my pencil and said, "Uncle George, I brought my notebook to record some more stories."

Despite his every effort to maintain a poker face, it was clear he was pleased, although he said, "I've probably told you all my stories."

"Uncle George, you haven't begun to tell me 94-and-a-half years worth of stories. We've barely got started. He grinned, a really big grin, and immediately responded with, "Did I ever tell you

about Little Rudi?”

“Marion had two boys, David and Little Rudi. Little Rudi was the smallest boy I ever saw, but he started growing when he was about 15 and grew up to be normal size.

“One day when Little Rudi was about this size (not very big!), I went in the bathroom and Little Rudi was standing on his tiptoes to be tall enough to use the commode.

“I said, you want to be careful not to fill that thing up.

“He said, ‘Years and years ago when I was little, I use to fill these things plumb full!’ Chuckling, “There he was about this high (3 feet at the outside).”

“One day we were going out to get a load of wood. Little Rudi had a toy hatchet. He walked up to this great big log, must have been 4 feet in diameter and 15 foot long. Years ago, when they were logging and any logs were too big for their equipment, they just left them lay there.

“Little Rudi said, ‘Uncle George, you go find something else, I’ll chop this one up.’

“He was always full of fun. I didn’t ever plan to try that log myself, it was too big for my chain saw.”

“We had something kind of bad happen. Little Rudi was in some kind of band concert. They came to Durango when we were living there. He sent us a card to tell us when it would be. We received the card the day after he’d been there. We wouldn’t have missed it for anything. Then we didn’t have an address or anything to get hold of him.

“I haven’t seen Rudi in years, but I understand he went to his daddy’s funeral. I’m glad he did that.

Marion really mistreated them. Mildred and I, we took them to New York. Shipped them all over there. Shipped his car. They just got there and he sent them home.

I know Ewald was really upset about it.”

?How did you feel about it?

“One thing I could never understand: Marion told Kate, when you get home, don’t go see George. She’d go see Mama and Papa, but she wouldn’t see us. I didn’t do anything. I think Ewald caused him to lose his commission or something.

“I really felt sorry for Kate.”

?It sounds like it really hurt you that Kate wouldn’t see you?

“It did. Why would she obey Marion after what he did to her?”

?Little Rudi sounds like he was quite a special kid.?

“Oh yeah! He always had something comical!!!

“I know it hurt him that we didn’t go see the concert. We didn’t know about it ‘til the next day.”

My words are insufficient to describe the tenderness in his face as this man talked about this child whom it is clear that he absolutely adored and the love he has for the adult he has become.

Note later: Just as I typed the last period in the paragraph above this, Jose came in and said she couldn’t wake George for lunch. There followed a shower of stroke episodes and for more than 24 hours afterward, it seemed virtually certain this could be the last of Uncle George’s stories.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Thursday, 25 January 2007

ROOSTERS

Today I am with Uncle George again for a few days while A.J. and Betty take a break that will include a visit with their family in Las Vegas.

Uncle George is just amazing! He looks ever so much better than before he had the stroke(s). Everything about him seems sharper, more alert, and he seems to have better coordination, fine motor skills. Nevertheless, he is, in some measure, distinctly more feeble; he has less strength. Since he has the lift chair (which looks very much like his old recliner), he gets up and down to go to and fro without the scary effort that was so incredibly painful to watch.

On arriving last night, before unpacking anything else, I got out my pencil and the notebook he recognizes to let him know I was ready for more “stories.”

A note about Uncle George’s “stories”: The first time I asked if it would be okay for me to write down his stories, he was clearly affronted; he took serious exception to this terminology. With a very stern face and an equally stern voice, he said, “I don’t story. Everything I tell you is the truth, as best I can remember it.” We agreed that when I say “story”, we are talking about his memories and recollections, nothing that he just made up. Although I had not thought about the term in a very long time, I remembered that when we were children, “to story” or “to tell a story” was to out-and-out lie, to tell deliberate falsehoods, pure and simple. It means exactly that to Uncle George. He has never done it and doesn’t do it now. Following one account of his boyhood, he said, “I believe that’s the only lie I ever told Papa in all my life.”

There are, however, levels of rascality to which he readily admits — matched only by his beloved brother Vernon—that is another arena, a different ballgame. “He figured out I was just kidding, that’s why we could be such good friends.” And, “He didn’t need to know the truth.” When it was necessary to replace mine, he made sure it was clearly understood why a person should buy a new, and not a used, vehicle. Uncle George was, and still is, as master of mischief.

Uncle George said, “My old mind is about half blank.”

I allowed as how I didn’t see that as much of a problem.

He grinned and said, “We can just leave some blank spots on the paper.” I agreed that ought to work just fine.

“Did I ever tell you about the roosters?”

“Vernon was about six and I was about eight. We were living on that place east of Abernathy (Texas). We had some neighbors lived across the road, across the lane and all. They had a quite bunch of chickens. For some reason him and his wife were going on vacation somewhere and they were going to be gone quite a long time. They asked us to feed and water their chickens and gather the eggs. They said we could sell the eggs.

“They didn’t have any roosters.

“Vernon noticed the chickens would just squat down in front of us [in the mating mode]. He said, ‘These chickens need a rooster. Let’s get them a rooster.’

“Mama and Papa had gone to town for something. Anyway, they weren’t home. Mama kept her roosters penned up separate from the chickens except when she wanted to raise some baby chicks. She could get a penny more [per dozen] for infertile eggs.

“So we went over there, to Mama’s pen, and got one of her roosters and put it in the neighbor’s pen with all those chickens. That rooster went from hen to hen to hen to hen. I don’t know how many hens he went to, a LOT of them. All of a sudden he stood up straight, stretched out his neck, crowed real loud, and fell over flat on his back. Dead.

“We didn’t know what to do. So we put that dead rooster back in the pen with the others. Mama never knew what killed it.

“We were rascals. Vernon was always full of devilment.” [When Uncle George says this word, it sounds like ‘devil mint.’] With a big chuckle, Uncle George continued, “He was worse than I was — if that’s possible.”

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Saturday, 24 February 2007

WHEN VERNON WAS BORN

Today when Uncle George arrived in the kitchen with his walker at 6:30 AM, ready for breakfast, he mentioned that he wasn't remembering much this morning. But he visited awhile anyway.

According to Uncle George, today is A.J.'s birthday. He is 67, born in 1940.

Uncle George mentioned that his own birthday is the 15th of July and Vernon's, as best he can recall is July 27th, just a little more than two years younger.

?Do you remember when Vernon was born?

"Yes. I think I do. One day when I was about two years old, they wanted to get me away from the house. When I came back my brother had been born, Vernon. My brothers and sisters all left together and took me. I remember they made me a sandwich to keep me occupied because we would be gone awhile. We didn't get a hundred yards from the house before I started hollering for my sandwich because I was hungry! I just had to have that sandwich because I knew they made it for me and, of course, I couldn't wait."

"One thing I remember: (Abernathy, July 11th, best I remember) I know we went for a walk, I don't remember how many, Herman and I were in the group, the day Marco and Marion were born. We were coming back and Herman said, 'Well they've been born because I see them swinging on the front gate.' I think the doctor told Mama she would have twins so we knew."

?Did you enjoy having those twins?

"I don't remember anything in favor of it or against it. I enjoyed all my brothers and sisters."

"Another thing I remember: My dad had something wrong with his teeth, his gums. He went to the dentist at Hale Center (Texas) and the dentist pulled 32 teeth, every tooth he had. Papa got in the car and drove home by his-self. Nowadays they pull one or two teeth and give you so much medication you couldn't drive."

Uncle George revealed his longevity secret: "The only reason I lived this long is that I just never died."

"I remember something: We lived there at Abernathy. I don't know how many were sick. Mama and Papa and Ewald and some of the rest. They had flu or something real bad. They called the doctor. It was raining and the doctor said he did not know if he could get there. It was real muddy, the roads were bad. Ewald told him to put mud chains on his wheels. It took him an awful long time to get there. Turned out he had put chains on his front wheels—on a rear wheel drive car! I think Ewald and Herman changed them and put them on the rear wheels for him."

?Did you have a telephone then?

“We did. The old kind where you have to turn a crank. Lines from one place to another. All your neighbors could listen in.”

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Sunday, 25 February 2007

UNCLE MORITZ'S DOG

Uncle George's mother's name was Georginia. She was called "Gini," something like Gee-Nee only the initial G is hard like the g in 'guinea'. She was "Mama" to him and "Grossmama" to the rest of us.

The sisters in her family were Minna, Anna, Olga, Betty, and Gini, not in this order.

Mama's sister, Minna, married a man named Goebel. Moritz Goebel told me himself when I was just a kid about this high (pre-school height), he had two dogs. I guess the dogs were brothers. Somebody backed up and ran over one of them. Killed it. Moritz took a shovel out to the orchard there on his place, dug a hole and buried it. The other dog just watched. When he was done, the little dog laid down on the grave and never moved. He wouldn't eat or drink or anything. Just lay there and died. I never knew animals had that much love.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Friday, 25 May 2007

RECOLLECTIONS

You know, Marco* or I will be the survivor. It could be either one.

?That's true. Isn't it interesting that you are both boys. In the next generation, Ewalee and Ophelia are the oldest, both girls.

Which is the oldest? Ewalee? Or Ophelia? (We didn't come up with an answer.)

I remember one thing: Carolina and Ewald were married the same day, but Carolina got married first. Called home to tell us she was married and Ewald said, "She's not going to beat me much." I was home when she called. It was Christmas Eve.

I don't know if Ewald had previously planned to get married that day or not, but he sure made up his mind real quick. One thing, both marriages lasted through their lifetime.

I believe Ophelia was born at our house. They came and stayed with us a few days then.

Ernest would have me hitch up the buggy and take Ophelia to get the mail, to entertain her, you know. The mailbox was down the lane about a half mile or so. She was just a baby. She loved it, riding behind that horse.

That little dog Ken was talking about: We were driving north of Ruidoso when we found him. He was there beside the road, lost his mother. Wild. You could never tame him. He was harder to tame than a coyote and you can't tame a coyote. I finally shot him because he would bite anybody who came around when we were gone. You couldn't tame that dog.

Oh yeah. And I remember Jimmy.

I think that's kind of funny that Kenny remembers I talked to those dogs. I think a lot of dogs would do more if people would just talk to them more.

So Ken thought I was good at training dogs? I wasn't near as good as Vernon. I didn't have that talent. Vernon could teach them to do anything. Vernon had a way about him; he could train a dog to do ANYthing.

We had a little dog, just a little short dog. It was the family dog, didn't any of us claim a dog as our own, but Vernon trained him.

There was a family gathering there at the ranch. I don't remember the occasion, but a whole bunch of family came to visit, 50-60 people: Struves, Goebels. I remember Uncle George Struve was there.

Vernon had that dog doing tricks. The children were all out front playing leap frog. I can't remember the dog's name, but I'm going to call him Tippy. I believe his name was Tippy. Vernon said, "Tippy, go play leap frog with the children."

That dog went over there and got at the back of the line and jumped over every one of the children, one at a time. When he got to the front of the line, he knelt down just like the children to wait his turn.

I witnessed that, but I still don't believe it. Dogs aren't that smart, but I saw it happen. I still don't believe it.

We'd be out there in the corral. We had two donkeys. Vernon would tell that dog, "Tippy, go jump up on old Jack and ride him." So that dog would jump up on the donkey's back and ride him. Then Vernon would say, "Tippy, make him buck." He would put his legs on the donkey's neck, on each side, bite him on the neck, and make him buck!"

On the north side of the corral, we had a windbreak fence about six feet high. He could jump over our windbreak fence. He'd jump up on top and then jump over to the other side. Wasn't a very big dog, just a little short dog.

I didn't know there was any dog that intelligent.

Somebody stole that dog from us; I was about 15.

I think back over my life and I think we spend a real short time on this earth. It seems such a short time since I was a little kid.

I told you about my pet squirrel. I guess it was my favorite pet. You know, I was so young and it was very special. He'd sit on my shoulder.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Saturday, 26 May 2007

*[NOTE: Uncle Marco, Marco Bettis Fox, died on Saturday, 11 August 2007, at 7:00 AM in Lovington, Lea County, New Mexico.]

MORE RECOLLECTIONS

Kenny and Stevie, they came to visit us when we had Fox Mercantile. Somebody came along peddling roasted peanuts. I bought some to sell in the store. That evening Stevie was filling his pockets with roasted peanuts, as much as they would hold. His mother asked him if he paid for those peanuts. "Why, no. Uncle George paid for them this morning." He thought it would be stupid to pay for something twice. Of course I didn't mind him taking all the peanuts he wanted.

I had shingles when I must have been 88. Got to where I couldn't think at all. They were going to renew my license, I was 89, but I told them I wouldn't be driving anymore. Then I got to where I could think again and I could have driven, but I didn't go down to apply for a new license.

In my lifetime of driving, I only paid one driving ticket. Doing 35 in a 30 mile zone, east of Cloudcroft. There was just a hungry cop in there. Crooked mountain road. I told him I lived in Colorado and all my driving was mountain driving. Cost me \$12, I think. One thing I CAN say, I never had a fender bender.

Did I ever tell you about the little rattlesnakes disappearing?

One time Vernon and I were moving some sheep. Rattlesnakes couldn't bite sheep very well because of the thick wool. There was this hole in the ground on the other side from our sheep. The snake went down into the hole, turned around and put its head up out of the hole. We saw all these little snakes about this long, 6-7 inches, around the hole.

I asked Vernon, "Did you see what I saw?" Vernon did; he saw it. Those snakes went right into the big snake's mouth. We killed it. Cut it open. There were seven little snakes inside of it.

That's the way they take care of them, I guess, when they're in danger. Very few people know snakes swaller their young – not very deep in the throat – to protect them.

One time I was taking sheep to the railroad, I think to Elkins (between Roswell and Clovis), about 78 miles from our place – two weeks on the drive. This was before they used trucks. I killed 58 rattlesnakes. There were a lot of rattlesnakes in the sand country.

We were really lucky. Not a one of us ever got snake bit.

I was walking one time at night, one of them bit me on the britches leg. I kicked it loose. Out by Cottonwood Grove. There was a spring in there. They changed the road so it doesn't go through there anymore.

We were out of groceries, so I went to get some. Thought it was three miles, must have been five. After I got some bacon and a few things, it was just pouring down rain. I walked back to the railroad. I had to cross the tracks. Had left my horse on the other side. It was pitch dark; I couldn't see anything. Walked up the tracks a ways, couldn't find my horse. Walked back. Found my horse. I got

to wondering if my horse would go home or go to the Cap. I didn't guide it, just let it go. Finally it stopped raining and I could see the campfire. I was really glad!

We were taking those sheep to Mr. Carr.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Saturday, 26 May 2007

EWALD

From hours of listening and some pointed questions, I can tell you that Uncle George has very few recollections of his brother Ewald, other than that he was there. They don't seem to have interacted much. Ewald was 10 years older (1902) than George (1912) and quite a different personality. George was 12 when Ewald got married.

The sibling of whom he seems to have the very fewest childhood recollections is Roland.

The “double wedding” was Christmas Eve 1924. Ewald and Ruby were both 22 years old when they got married.

Uncle George said one time he went down to Ingleside, Texas, to visit Ewald and Ruby. Their Uncle Rudolf Fuchs* (his mother's brother) and his wife Faye lived a short distance away. “They drank wine. I went over there every evening. I had a rut worn to their house about this deep (looked about 6-8 inches). Ewald never drank wine.”

One time he mentioned how the brothers (eight of them) approached the work that had to be done on the place. Interestingly, he did not mention the sisters, Carolina and Gertrude, in this context.

This is the way he told it:

- Ewald - worked outside
- Rudolph - only worked indoors
- Herman - did some of each
- Vernon - did some of each
- I (George) worked outdoors all the time
- Marion - did some housework
- Marco - never did much housework
- I don't remember too much about Roland.
- Rudolph and Vernon did a LOT of the housework.

When the email was read to him asking about his brother, Ewald, Uncle George looked as blank as any other time the subject of Ewald has come up. “I just don't remember enough about Ewald to be able to tell any stories about him. He was always so different from the rest of our family.

One thing: “I don't think Ewald ate chicken much, so this might not have been Ewald, but it seems like it was. Mama cooked up a bunch of chickens. They were there on the table with the gizzards on top. Ewald reached for a gizzard with his fingers and two other people reached for gizzards with a fork. So there was Ewald with a fork stuck in his hand. I believe it was Ewald, but it might have been somebody else.”

—

*Yes, Grossmama's maiden name was Fuchs and her married name was Fuchs. She and Grosspapa were 4th cousins.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Sunday, 27 May 2007

ON HERBERT DAY

Herbert Day was the strongest man I ever saw!

One time Marvin Struve drove up in his little Willis car. Herbert Day looked at it and couldn't help wondering, "Is that a car or a toy?" He picked up the front of it, turned it all the way around, and it had five people in it.

One time I was going to break some land with a tractor. We had to take the diesel with us; tractors ran on diesel. We had a pump for the 55 gallon drum to pump the diesel into the tractor. We had four 55 gallon drums of diesel. I was looking around, trying to figure out how we were going to load those drums.

Herbert Day hollered, "Get out of the way!" He picked up one of those drums and put it right up on that wagon. Loaded all four of them that way.

I never knew anybody else who could do that.

Herbert Day was quite a character!

They had a wheat crop at Olton, Texas. There came a hail storm. All the farms around were damaged, but he wasn't touched. All the farmers collected insurance from the government. Herbert Day got this idea, "Mick, let's go to town." Got a gallon of whiskey and went to the insurance agent. Got him drunk.

Now they had moved some turkeys on the road, tromped the wheat pretty bad.

The way they figured damage for insurance: They'd throw their hat out, then measure a square, one foot by one foot. Count the stalks in the square. The agent counted about 60% damage.

Herbert collected about \$600 insurance — for no hail damage at all. I thought it was a little crooked. The turkeys tromped a hundred foot or so along the road, but from the road it looked like it was all damaged.

His neighbor's whole field was wiped out. He collected more insurance than his neighbor did. I never said anything to anybody about it; I figured that was his business. I thought he had to be a little crooked.

Herbert Day and Ernest and I, we went to a dance. Carolina and Gertrude stayed home. I saw Herbert Day take a girl out to the car. I never told Gertrude. He was running around with other women.

When Herbert Day and Gertrude separated, she took the girl (Elaine) and he took the boy (Rusty). We never saw Rusty after that. Herbert turned him against us. I remember one time we went to see them and Herbert had Rusty hiding out some place. We never saw him.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Sunday, 27 May 2007

THOUGHTS AT BREAKFAST

Dear family,

Keep those e-mails coming. Uncle George's family truly is his life. He savors the memories of each of you. When your name is said, he takes awhile, reflecting, until he has you clear in his mind. It is just thrilling to see the love on his face as he thinks about you. I confess to a lot of teary eyes.

This morning at breakfast he thought about Annie, "John and Charlotte's daughter, she's had a lot of sickness in her life." Then he thought about Danny and we also talked about Jarod and Brad. "John's children live all over the place. My children all live in one place."

That got him talking about John: "At one time John laid these concrete blocks. He built a grocery store building, pretty big building, for a friend of mine. He said John could lay more blocks than anybody he ever saw. This fellow said it took two people carrying blocks for him. I think he said John laid sixteen hundred blocks in a day. Anyway, when he got through laying blocks, they were just straight and perfect."

After we got it straight that Barbara is Barbara Ellen, Ewalee's oldest girl, as contrasted to Barbara, his granddaughter, he spent some time thinking about her and the rest of Ewalee's family. He's glad you have a tender heart for your animals.

Still thinking about Ophelia and Carolina's family, he wondered,

"Did I ever tell you about Carolina's mother-in-law? Ernest Park's mother, she knew what was going on all time. Bedfast. She was bedfast.

"Ernest and his daddy, Mr. Park, were moving some cattle one time. The cattle were making a noise in the truck, open cab truck. Mr. Park was driving. He stuck his head out the window to see what was going on. Right then they hit a rough spot in the road or something and the cattle all shifted over to one side. Turned the truck over. The cab of the truck hit Mr. Park's neck and broke it.

"Right when it happened Mrs. Park told Carolina what happened, what was going on, and when they got the news, that's exactly what had happened.

"One time at Abernathy, I was at Carolina's. They had this little boy named Gene (Eugene). The mother-in-law was staying with them. Carolina left me there with her. She was upstairs in the east bedroom. She screamed. I went to see what was the matter, 'Gene cut his finger in the back yard and it's bleeding real bad.' I went out there and sure enough, he was really bleeding.

"I never knew anybody with that kind of ability the way she had it. I don't know what you call it.

"I've had some things happen in my mind that I can't explain.

"I used to have quite a few friends in Ruidoso. Here some time ago I got to thinking of two of them.

Every night when I'd go to bed I'd be thinking of these two people. Then I got a letter from Hollis and these two people had died.

“I remember after Mildred and I married I put some money in the bank, cash, two hundred and some dollars. A few days later I wrote a check for \$12. They turned it down. I went to the bank. They'd deposited my money in Roland's name. I guess we looked quite a bit alike. It was the only time in my life I wrote a hot check.

I probably just put the deposit slip in my pocket and didn't look at it.

“How many of your brothers and sisters are still alive?”

Among other things, this got Uncle George talking about Sherrill and Nettie, Annie Lee and young Earl, as well as Earl's father, Earl Harcrow.

“One time I worked as a car salesman. I sold Nettie's mother a new jeep. I remember they lived north of the Capitan Mountains.

“I was in a County Commissioner's meeting when Earl Harcrow died. I sure thought a lot of Earl. He was a County Commissioner.

“Sherrill was talking about being in some foreign country where a bunch of wild dogs attacked him. He managed to cut one of them's throat with his pocket knife. The rest of them ate the one he had killed and left him alone. Saved his life. I guess those dogs were just starving to death and running in packs.”

My best does not capture everything he relates. Just know how much you matter to him and everything you share keeps him thinking. That's what is important..

With love,
Sophora

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Sunday, 27 May 2007

MEMORIAL DAY 2007

When Uncle George's breakfast was on the table at 6:30 this morning, I asked, "Do you want your e-mail with breakfast? Or after breakfast?"

He grinned with anticipation, "Both."

So he had a leisurely hour and a half with his morning meal hearing from you and reminiscing. His face will reflect deep study for awhile and he often says, "I had forgotten that, but now I remember."

At lunch, however, he smiled, "I'll take it for dessert."

When it comes time for a eulogy, it will have already been done, and he has been and is being an active participant in it. How blessed he is with what all of you are sharing with him, with the opportunity for HIM to also remember those times which have meant so much to you. He has had some teary eyes, without comment, over some of the things you have shared.

This will be a composite response so I can get on with the notes. Actually there is quite a bit in the scribbles about his military service (Uncle George served in the Cavalry) and some about Uncle Vernon's. For the record, Uncle George was in the service "1 year, 1 month, 3 days, and 32 minutes." I commented that was very precise. He said, "Well, I might be off by a minute or two, but it's a number (of minutes) I made up and I'm sticking by it." He bought himself out – and that's another story.

He said, "That email makes me think some people enjoy the stories."

?They all do.

"I guess I used to be quite a story teller."

To "Stay well," he says, "I'm sure trying to. A feller doesn't want to die sick!"

Yes, Terry, given time to think about it, Uncle George remembers your first hunting trip. To the question, "How many times did Uncle George fire his rifle at that deer?" his face suddenly assumed that inscrutable, inimitable look of "pure innocence" and he said, "I don't remember." And then he said, and I quote, "Let's let him know he got that buck."

And he was off on a morning full of hunting stories.

"I remember one time we drove down a canyon on a narrow steep road. I had two buck deer, one on each fender. I met the game warden, but couldn't stop there. Drove on up to the top to stop. He asked, 'How many deer have you killed this season?'

"I know of one.

“I know of six.’

“I said, 'I must be a pretty good shot.’” He had no proof I had six.

“I remember one time Herman came to visit. He killed a little buck, put the tag on it, dragged it into camp. The tag came off. Going home he passed a game check. He wouldn't have had to, but he stopped. He explained to them about the tag. They fined him \$50. If I had lost a tag, I would have gone back to get it. That's the difference between Herman and me: I could walk back exactly where I'd been; Herman couldn't.

“One time a couple came to visit us. Mildred took the man; I took the lady. We took a real long walk. She had a jacket tied around her waist and when we were almost back she realized it was lost.

“I said, 'Well, I'll take you up to camp and then I'll go get it.

“She said, 'You can't. We walked all over those hills.’

“I can walk exactly where I've been.’ I walked down there about a mile and all of a sudden, there lays the coat.

“One time I was on the side of a mountain. There was a road below. Then there was a pass where you drove between two mountains. This one mountain, our camp was on the other side of it. Jumped a buck. He stopped way too far for me to get him, but I figured to fire a shot in the air to keep him going over toward where Papa and our bunch might get a shot at it. I fired that shot, at least 10 foot above him. Then I watched him through my scope. He just stood there. All of a sudden he started slowly laying down. I went over there. He was dead. That bullet dropped down and hit him through the heart.

“One time a couple came to visit us, last name of Gilbert. She was a good friend of Rudolph's, Irene Gilbert. The boy, well, he was older than I was, didn't have any legs, lost them in the war. She had been his nurse and then married him. He was in a wheelchair.

“He wanted to go hunting real bad so I took him. I knew a place we could get to. We wheeled that chair quite a ways. Sure enough a buck came by and he shot it. You never saw anybody so proud in your life!

“She was a real nice lady. I used to hear from Irene until I couldn't write anymore and then we lost contact. When he died, she said, 'I married for love the first time. Next time I'll marry for money.' She did. She married a man with a lot of money. She was really a sweet person.

“Did I ever tell you about those little deer on the Hale Ranch? About this high? The doe was about 18 inches. The buck had antlers with five points on each side. The rack was about this big (cup your hands into a small bowl). A buck and three doe. The tail stood straight up when they'd run; the tail about twice as wide as the buck. They call them fan tail deer. Very rare.

“I told the game warden about them. He didn't believe me. He said, “We don't have them here.” But they finally stayed up there until they saw them. Said they are very rare. Don't know how they got up there. There are a few of them somewhere in Arizona.

“I've led a pretty interesting life.

“I think the most interesting part of my life was when we had Fox Cave. I really enjoyed it; just seeing what you could do with customers. I made enough money off of Fox Cave that I'm still living off it. We sold out in 1956 or '57. When I lost my daughter, I lost interest.

“Right after we opened, I was up in Santa Fe and stopped in with one of the vendors I bought from for the grocery store in case he might have anything I could use. He had a bunch of knives. Said he needed to get rid of them because salesmen didn't like to carry knives because they were so heavy. Said he'd sell me the whole bunch for 25 cents apiece. He had \$900 and some dollars worth and I got them. I thought I had enough knives for the rest of my life. Before the month was out I had to order some more knives, just certain ones, you know. I resold those 25 cent knives for \$1.50 up to \$45.00 apiece. If they had an ivory handle, they sold for 45 dollars.

“Palisades. I lived there for the adventure. They didn't pay me much.”

Noting that he had email from Ewalee, Barbara Ellen, and Dana, he observed, “Robyn is the one in the accident. Haven't heard in a long time. Hope she's doing okay.”

He nodded in reflective agreement with Laura Sue's memories. They were good memories of good times for him, too. “She has a lot of good memories.” He thinks it was about 5 miles from the farm to Fox Cave.

He said, “I sure tried,” to train that wild dog.

And then it was nap time again.

With love,
Sophora

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Monday, 28 May 2007

A WANTED FUGITIVE

From Ken:

I'm sending this one to you and want to you to ask Uncle George if it rings a bell or stirs a memory. If he doesn't recall it, then just forget about it. But it might be interesting and then we can share it.

Ophelia wrote, "Once I remember Elaine scaring us all by telling us that Pretty Boy Floyd had arrived and was going to rob and steal some of us." That got me to thinking about something my dad once mentioned. Back around 1959 "The Untouchables" was one of the most popular shows on television. One evening we were watching an episode, and suddenly my dad exclaimed, "That's the guy that stayed on our ranch for several weeks!" He said this drifter stopped at the ranch looking for work, and Grosspapa hired him. After about three weeks he left, and not long after that Grosspapa saw a picture in the paper of a notorious gangster who had been on the run for months. It was that same guy who had been on the ranch.

I've been trying to remember who it was. I feel like it was Alvin Karpis, the last of the Public Enemies hunted by the F.B.I. I've read through his bio on the internet, and it says he disappeared from view for nine months in 1935.

See if Uncle George recalls anything like this.

From Uncle George:

I sure do.

That feller was sleeping upstairs with us. I don't recall just who was sleeping up there; we had four double beds, two in each room. I know I was, and Vernon and Roland, for sure.

I remember Mama and Papa went to town one day. He went upstairs and got his gun. Said he might kill all of us. I remember us kind of laughing at him. I thought he was just playing. I didn't know he was a gangster. I don't remember much else about him. I don't remember his name or what he called his self.

Then I remember seeing Pretty Boy Floyd in Tatum in a restaurant. Later I knew it was him because they had his picture out like they do. I believe there was a \$1,000 reward, dead or alive.

E-mail Tuesday, 29 May 2007

FUGITIVES IN TATUM

Breakfast, 30 May 2007

?What were those outlaws doing in Tatum?

Uncle George:

“It was a small town so they could hide out there. Could have been just passing through.

“I don't remember the name of the one at our place.

“Pretty Boy Floyd was there in a bar in Tatum. If you ask me, he wasn't very pretty.”

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Wednesday, 30 May 2007

OUTLAWS – THE REST OF THE STORY

By telecon today A.J. shared the rest of the outlaw story that he heard from Grosspapa (Albano John (Johannes) Fuchs) back there in Ruidoso. He agreed for me to type it up and send it out.

A.J. said:

Needing some help on the ranch, Grosspapa picked this guy up in town one day. He was there at the ranch with them for about three months. One day he was just gone.

It was after he left that the kids told Grosspapa about the gun incident. Grosspapa was absolutely sure he was a criminal and tried every way in the world to find out who he was. He talked to the sheriff and they made some calls, everything. Never found out anything. Grosspapa was worried about him coming back ... and bringing some friends with him. Because they never kept anything locked up, Grosspapa kept a loaded pistol right there with him all the time.

It was thought that Pretty Boy Floyd had a relative somewhere around Tatum, which is why he came there to hide out. Grosspapa thought they (PBF and the guy from the ranch) had probably arranged to meet there. Grosspapa really believed there was a connection between them.

Who was the relative?

According to Grosspapa, "Nobody ever found out." A.J. thinks Grosspapa may have known and thought it best not to say, even those many years later.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Thursday, 31 May 2007

ON DRINKING

When I asked Mildred to marry me, she said she wouldn't marry anybody who drank as much as I did.

I told her if she would marry me I would never have another drink. I haven't. I haven't had a drink of whiskey since I asked her to marry me.

I really didn't have a drinking problem, but sometimes I would drink a little more than I should. On Saturday night, go to town to a dance and drink a little.

Mildred and I have had a little wine together sometimes.

I never did care for beer, never did drink any.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Sunday, 27 May 2007

ON SMOKING

I think Michelle went out to have a smoke.

?Did you ever smoke?

I did for awhile. Probably smoked about a year. I was about 18. They started making me cough. One day I was riding my motorcycle. I think Herman bought it first, then I bought it off him. Another guy was riding behind me [on the same motorcycle]. We'd gone up into Kansas working the wheat harvest. Herbert Day's younger brother. I think his name was Bill, but I'm not positive. That's been a long time ago.

I reached into my shirt pocket and pulled out that pack of Camels and threw it away. He asked me, "What did you do?"

I told him, "I just quit smoking."

I never touched another cigarette. Most people have more trouble than that. That guy used to smoke around me and blow smoke in my face and everything he could think of to get me smoking again. I never did.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Wednesday, 20 June 2007

CARLSBAD CAVERNS

My cousin, Elroy Schnelle, lived down in Texas, talked German all time at home so when he'd come visit we'd talk German altogether.

We were about 18 or 19, went to Carlsbad Caverns. You had to walk down, no elevators like now. Three girls were there going down same time we were, listening to us talking German. Elroy told hem I was from Germany and couldn't speak a word of English. I'd touch one of those girls and point up there and tell her how pretty it was — in German. We all ate lunch together down in the cavern.

Elroy went to the bathroom. You should have heard those girls, what they were saying! They were planning to have sex with us. One of the girls said she didn't know how she could communicate with that one (me). Other one said, "I imagine if you just take off your clothes in front of him, he'll get the idea."

Back at the entrance where we had started, I said—in English, "Where are you girls from anyway?"

Those girls scattered like quail!

Elroy wasn't a bit happy.

I told him we couldn't stay with them at a motel or anything like that because I told Papa we'd be home that night. He had some sheep work that had to get done. When I told Papa something, he could count on it. Elroy wasn't like that.

I don't think Elroy ever forgave me for that.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Thursday, 21 June 2007

VERNON – FIRST GRADE

*Please note: Uncle George's name is Albano George, not George Albano.
Of the 10 siblings, George is 6th. Vernon is next younger than George.*

I think I told you about Vernon helping out in first grade?

There was a girl sitting in front of him with a big rising on the back of her neck, raised up there full of pus. Said it looked like it was about to burst.

Vernon got up and sharpened his pencil real sharp and poked it in that rising real quick. The girl screamed out.

Vernon said, "I know I helped her because the pus ran out and it looked better the next day."

I thought it was real nice that Vernon wanted to be helpful.

I haven't seen anybody with a rising like that in a long time, years. I used to have them on my arm. Had several, maybe two at a time. Might have been something we was eating.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Wednesday, 20 June 2007

MORE ON CARLSBAD CAVERNS

The first time I was in Carlsbad Caverns, I don't know how old I was and I don't know who was along, might have been Vernon, might have been Herman. Maybe Papa took us. Seems like Carlsbad Caverns was close to 90 miles or so from the ranch.

To go in, the first 100 feet or so was in a bucket and then a trail, trail wasn't very good. The only light was lanterns people carried. About every tenth person had a lantern. They had a lot of lanterns. You couldn't see as much with a lantern.

The trail was longer than it is now because they have built stairways and things and made short cuts.

You could see more after you could walk in. Nowadays they have elevators.

They had electric lights when I went with Elroy.

The first time I went in there they were hauling guano out of there. Those bats had probably been in there a million years.

We stayed in the afternoon and watched the bats coming out. Looked just like a cloud coming out of there.

One time when we were driving out of there, two mountain lions crossed the road in front of us. We stopped. They were about 20 feet from us. Weren't a bit afraid of us. I guess they saw people every day.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Friday, 22 June 2007

ON MOTORCYCLES

?Kei: How about asking uncle George what kind of motorcycle he had (make, model, year) and what became of it. Motorcyclists in those days were wild men — they had to be, the machines were beasts I recall that Grandfather Fuchs (Ewald) was reputed to have a motorcycle that Gran (Ruby) made him give up. Could uncle George shed any light on this?

The only motorcycle I ever had was a Harley Davidson, Model 74, 1929. I bought it off Herman or Ewald. I'm not sure which.

They bought them new, cost \$325. I bought mine off one of them. It sure might have been Ewald. I'm not sure what happened to the other one.

?Why did you ride Harley Davidsons?

They were the best ones built. I think they still are.

?You liked riding motorcycles?

I enjoyed it!

?Helmet?

I don't think I ever did. Later it was required by law, but not then.

One time Ernest Park ... They used to play. Had an old barn on the place they rented. There was a bunch of feed in there. So they cleaned out all that old feed and there was a motorcycle at the bottom of it, 1911 model Excelsior. It was belt driven instead of chain. My brother Ewald fixed it and rode it. Ewald was quite the mechanic.

Finally the motor got so it wouldn't run. One of Ewald's stupid brothers kept taking it up on the tank dam — push it up and coast down. Thought it would make it lighter, easier to push up the tank dam. Took a hammer and beat the motor plumb out of it.

?Which stupid brother?

[His thumb backed into his chest.] I never owned a bicycle. I was just learning how to balance myself. Stupidest thing I ever did. In time that motorcycle would have brought \$100,000 as an antique.

?How old were you?

Long time before I had a Harley. Young enough to be stupid, real stupid.

?How long did you ride a motorcycle?

Not long enough.

?How come you to give it up?

Stupidity. I should have kept riding.

?Were you still riding when you and Mildred got married?

No, gave it up long before then.

When I went to Kansas, Herbert Day's brother, Bill Day went with me. Those were Dust Bowl days. We went through a canyon, stopped there. Dust was 6-8 inches deep. It was so light you could take your hand and whip it all the way to the pavement. It didn't weigh hardly anything. It would just fly out of the way.

Haven't had those dust bowls in a long time. They learned how to take care of the land.

?You grew up on a horse. Which is easier to ride? A motorcycle? Or a horse?

They are nothing alike. A motorcycle was easy to ride. Motorcycles didn't buck with you.

One time I let it get away from me. I stopped to rest under some trees by a creek. I was half asleep. Left it in gear and it jumped off into the creek. There was a house about ... less than a quarter mile away. I crossed the creek and walked over to the house. There was a man there. Got a long heavy rope and pulled it out of the water.

I figured it wouldn't start after being wet like that, but when it dried off it started just fine.

After lunch when he went down for a nap, Michelle asked, "George, you're going to be 95 in three weeks. What would you like for your birthday?"

Without hesitation he answered, "A new motorcycle and the ability to ride it!"

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Thursday, 21 June 2007

REMEMBERING VERNON

Vernon was 2 years and 12 days younger than me.

I look back over life, seems like it was a very short time since I was a kid.

I think back to when I shot that chicken thief, doesn't seem like it's been too long.

We had a neighbor, lived across the lane. Every morning he'd drive his turkeys over into our grain field.

We had two little dogs about this high [little dogs!]. Papa would have Vernon and I drive the turkeys out of our grain field every day. One day one of the dogs took off running ahead of the turkeys. The other one herded a turkey tom over to him. They cornered that turkey. That one dog grabbed that turkey by the neck and killed it. Vernon and I hung that turkey on the fence in front of that neighbor's house. Never did have any more trouble after that.

It was the same fellow I shot later. He had a grain field of his own at the back of his house.

I always thought those dogs were pretty intelligent to figure it out.

One time Vernon and I were in a field south of the lane. We lived north of the lane. We were hoeing weeds. All of a sudden lightning started up all around us. We started running to get back home. All of a sudden Vernon turned a flip. Blood gushed out of his nose, but he wasn't hurt. We were running beside one another about 20 foot apart, but it didn't hurt me.

We had to cross three fences to get home. I was half afraid to cross fence, afraid lightning would strike along it.

Must have struck real close. If it had struck him, would have killed him.

We had this old Model T Ford. We had a box over the gas tank. Used it for a seat. I was driving and made a U-turn in the street. People started hollering. I turned around. Vernon wasn't there. He'd slid off the box. I was driving real slow, you know, whirled around. Didn't hurt him.

I was about 8 or 9 years old I started driving.

Vernon and I used to fight all the time, pretty often. I think as much for sport as anything. I never beat him in my life. I'd beat on him until I felt sorry for him and I'd quit. He'd say, "You can't beat me."

We used to entertain ourselves. No TV like nowadays. In German they called it *kleinspielling* [*Kleinspielen*], playing small. We used corn cobs for horses, rocks for fences and things, corn stalks,

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis

Silver City, New Mexico
Thursday, 21 June 2007

GOING TO SCHOOL

I didn't start to school until I was seven. At that time you had to be past seven years old to start first grade. Vernon was two years younger, but he started the year after I did. They had changed the law some way.

I couldn't talk English until I went to school. But the teacher was smarter than I was. At the end of the year she knew more German than I knew English.

I went to a little school called Center, southeast of our place, I don't know exactly how far, maybe three miles. There wasn't really a town there, just a school for the community. There was one teacher for all the grades. I wanted to marry my teacher; I was really serious. She was 58; I was 7. I don't remember her name, but she was a real sweet girl. They didn't have high school there, just grade school. I went there one year, then they closed the school down and I had to go to Abernathy. At Abernathy I think they had a room for every grade.

At Abernathy Papa hitched two horses on a buggy. Several children rode to school on our buggy. One of my aunts, Aunt Betty, lived there, had a corral. We left our buggy there in her corral and walked on to school.

I was walking along one time and all of a sudden there was a nickel. Little further on there was a dime and then two cents; 17 cents just laying on the ground. That was a bunch of money. It was plenty of money to do all my Christmas shopping — probably a bunch of all-day suckers.

During the winter time it gets pretty cold. Papa bought me a pair of shoes. I didn't tell the folks. I left the shoes in the buggy because my feet got too cold in shoes. They were really cold when your shoes would get wet.

We were well educated little children. A tablet cost a nickel. Vernon needed a tablet. Papa didn't have a nickel in his pocket so he gave Vernon a quarter. That worried Vernon. So as soon as he got to school he traded somebody that quarter for a nickel.

In second grade, right before Christmas the teacher asked all the children what they were getting for Christmas. They were all going on about all kinds of stuff. When it came my turn I said, "We're a real poor family and we probably won't have any Christmas."

On Christmas morning she drove her buggy out to our place with a box of oranges. Here we had oranges on the table. I always felt bad about it. She just laughed. She didn't want anyone to go without Christmas. Anyway, the teacher and Mama and Papa had a real good visit.

Papa had put up a beautiful tree. We had oranges, apples, all kinds of things. Papa built all kinds of little toys. He was really a handy man as far as building toys. He built me a wagon one time. I think that year he had bought me a wagon, one with a real long tongue.

?Why did you tell her you weren't going to have any Christmas?

Why did I do all kinds of devilment? I just did; I always did. I believe Vernon was worse than I was, if that's possible.

At the ranch we went to High Top School about four miles north and east of our ranch house, two or three miles from our property, on the Seth Austin Ranch. It was a one room school. Cleo Heidel [yes, this is our Aunt Cleo] taught there. She stayed at the ranch with us.

About 30 kids went to High Top School. School started at eight o'clock and we were always on time. Papa hitched two donkeys to a buggy; we rode a buggy to school because there were too many children to ride two donkeys. The other children rode donkeys so there were 11 burros at school. There was no school yard so we just turned them loose to graze. At four o'clock they'd be right there ready to take us home.

One day those burros played a trick on us. There was a flat dry lake about a quarter mile south of the schoolhouse. One afternoon when school let out at four o'clock we couldn't see a donkey anywhere. We didn't know how we were going to get home. We couldn't see them lying down in that flat lake. All of a sudden they all jumped up and come running! A donkey is a very intelligent animal.

Papa had to tear down that schoolhouse and rebuild it. The old building was about to fall down. They didn't use any new lumber to speak of, just rebuilt it, a little smaller than it was.

They had a preacher helping rebuild it, Brother Ringwall. He would say, "George, come help me hold this board up and I will speak to the Butler girls about you. Two-three times he said that. Then I said, "Brother Ringwall, why don't you go home and speak to your own daughters about me." He never did ask me to help him anymore. He had two daughters.

Brother Ringwall had one section of land. His neighbor had five sections. One day his neighbor found Brother Ringwall's cattle in his pasture. He went and asked him what they were doing there. Ringwall said, "The Good Lord told me to put them there because the grass is grazed out on my land."

Fellow told Ringwall, "Hell is going to be so full of preachers like you they'll have their feet hanging out the doors and windows." He really was a crook.

I went to High Top School one year. I didn't care for school and Papa needed help. That was the excuse anyway. Vernon finished school, but I was finished with school. I believe I was the only one that didn't finish high school. Anyway, I had less education than any of my brothers and sisters.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Friday, 22 June 2007

ON DISHONESTY

Note: To fully appreciate this you need to know what his parents did not — that Uncle George has extraordinarily extensive food allergies. He has never eaten a bean in his entire life. They make him sick. When he was a child it was believed he was a ‘picky eater’ because he WOULD NOT eat anything that made him feel bad. He still doesn’t, and has the most limited range of ‘safe’ foods imaginable. He is living proof that a person can live healthfully to a ripe old age without ever eating a vegetable, never. When he is feeling bad now, the first thing that A.J. and Betty examine is what unsuspected thing might have been in something he ate.

I was called Nixie because I wouldn’t eat anything — *nichts*. I ate a lot of cottage cheese growing up.

Every once in awhile I think about a time I was dishonest with my parents, I wasn’t truthful.

I think I was about four. Mama had fixed some green beans. They put about six of them on my plate. Papa said if I would eat those green beans he would make me a bow and arrow. The green beans disappeared off the plate and I got my bow and arrow. Later I threw those green beans away — out of my pocket.

They wanted me to do something I just couldn’t do, but I had to have a bow and arrow. I got them dishonestly. I felt bad, but I never did tell them.

I think about it because I have always tried to be honest with my parents, and with everybody else.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Friday, 22 June 2007

HUGS AND VEGETABLES

This morning after breakfast I told Uncle George that he had hugs from Ewalee, John, Jerry, Frances, Laura Sue, Annie T, Barbara and Barbara Ellen. He got the biggest grin and said, “That’s an awful lot of hugs. Maybe you ought to combine them into one big one. OR you could just spread them out all day.”

“I wonder why so many of them care so much for me.”

Because you love them.

“Yes, I do. I love them every one. I love them very, very much.”

“I had forgotten about Ewalee riding on Ewald’s motorcycle. I remember now.”

Mining my notes, there is another place where he said, “All I was known by was Nixie. They started that Nixie because I wouldn’t eat nichts—nothing.” But, it sounded like ‘nicht’ that time, too.

“I lived many years eating practically nothing but cottage cheese—kase butter. I did eat fruit: peaches, plums, grapes, nectarines, apples, apricots, berries. We didn’t have many berries, but after Mildred and I married I planted berries along the tank dam—blackberries, gooseberries, raspberries, dewberries (real prolific! I liked those dewberries a lot), a lot of strawberries.

“I planted some corn, Hastings Prolific, each stalk had eight ears on it, broke some new ground. I have never seen corn like that. I ate a lot of fresh corn.

“I used to eat fresh tomatoes [technically a fruit] out of the garden, but they got to where they didn’t agree with me any more.

“When they built that earthen dam, they dug out the dirt. Cattle stayed in there a lot, fertilized good. I planted strawberries. They grew real nice.

“We had 5 or 6 mulberry trees, one white. They taste good, but they draw flies real bad. When they are ripe, they fall on the ground and draw flies.

“We had a great big cottonwood. It got so high it was cutting off the windmill. So my father took out his 32:20 and trimmed that tree. Aimed at a limb, shot in the center first, then on one side and then the other.

“My mother said when they tried to feed me vegetables when I was a kid, they would just run out of my mouth. I never swallowed a drop of it.

“If they mashed them up I couldn’t tell you if they were green beans or squash or kohlrabi. They all taste exactly the same, ABSOLUTELY HORRIBLE. I just couldn’t force myself to eat them. They all taste like vegetables.

Some other things with the same horrible vegetable taste so they are therefore “vegetables” [this is not a definitive list]: “cantaloupe, honeydew, coconut, papaya, guava, mango, lemon, lime, grapefruit, bananas, and, nowadays, watermelon.”

“Pineapple is a fruit, not a vegetable,” he says.

“When I was a baby, Mama would give me mashed potato. I spit them out. The doctor told her, “He won’t live to be 20 if he doesn’t eat vegetables.” I can’t tell that doctor how long I’ve actually lived. He died first.

“After Mildred and I got married, she put some potato water in some bread she made. I didn’t know it was in there, but I got REALLY sick. Then she knew I really couldn’t eat that stuff. It wasn’t just my imagination.”

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Saturday, 23 June 2007

CHICKEN THIEF

After we moved to the ranch, I was down at Abernathy to take care of Herbert and Gertrude's chickens on their place there. I think they were out visiting Mama and Papa. Their chickens were still there close to Abernathy.

There was a guy there, called him Slick Wallace, attended church every Sunday. He was a thief.

I don't know if I told you, when we were still living at Abernathy Papa strung a wire across the orchard about this high off the ground (about a foot). If anybody ran into it, a bell would ring in the house.

One night the bell rang. Papa shot. He screamed out, took off running and left part of his clothes on the wire fence.

Herbert put a big, heavy 10 gauge shotgun next to the door. He told me if I heard chickens in the night to shoot like this (upward angle).

In the night I heard chickens squawking. That shotgun was heavy and I guess I didn't get it high enough. It was fully automatic, pulled off two shots before I got my finger off the trigger. He screamed out, got about as far as the flagpole out there, moaned and groaned. called out for help.

I didn't have a flashlight or anything and it was pitch dark so I stayed where I was. I think I even went to sleep. Next morning I found two bags of chickens he dropped when I shot – three chickens in each sack. They were in gunny sacks. Didn't seem to hurt them much. Anyway, there was quite a bit of blood on the ground.

I guess his boys, he had two boys – 16-18 somewhere in along there – must have come and got him. We heard he was in the hospital awhile and had some shot removed from his head.

I guess I was 16 or so. It was nerve wracking for a kid to hear him laying there groaning and moaning. I got pretty nervous thinking about him dying out there. Didn't even occur to me that the police might come check me out.

As far as I know he was the only person I ever shot. Shot a few in the service, but they were just dummies.

That time Papa shot him, he was stealing peaches. We had a tree that was just loaded. We let them tree-ripen, you know. Papa could hear the peaches falling into the bucket. He dropped his bucket and everything when Papa shot him.

He finally got killed. He was breaking into a person's house when they weren't home. They had a gun rigged in there to go off and he shot his self.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis

Silver City, New Mexico
Saturday, 23 June 2007

MARION AND THE CONTEST

Did I ever tell you about Marion winning a nationwide contest painting cards?

Shredded Wheat used to come in a box about so big, the biscuits were in 3-4 layers. Between each layer there was a card. Each card had a letter: A, B, C, There was a contest. Anybody that got cards with all the letters, painted them and sent them in to the company was entered in the contest.

All the neighbors kept cards. Finally, we had the whole alphabet. Marion painted them and sent them in. He was 10 or 12 years old.

First prize was \$100. Second prize was \$50.

They sent him a check for \$50. Second prize in the United States. We were all so proud. He was the worst disappointed kid you ever saw. He thought sure he would get \$100.

He bought a bicycle with the money. A bicycle cost less than \$50. I don't know what he did with the rest of the money. \$50 was a lot of money in those days.

Marion had quite a bit of talent as far as painting was concerned. I thought he was a real good painter. Rudolph was real good at painting, too.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Saturday, 23 June 2007

MY PET SQUIRREL

Down at Marble Falls, I was three or four. The river was up, there had been a flood. High water had washed part of the posts out of the water so my father was fixing fence. The fence went down to the river, but didn't cross the river. About 12-15 feet into the flooded river a tree was standing, a little tree about as big as my thumb, about five feet above the water. There was a little squirrel in the tree. Papa waded out, took off his coat, put the squirrel in the coat sleeve and tied it. He went ahead and fixed the fence and carried the squirrel home.

Papa built a box, a little cage for him to sleep in, and told me that was my squirrel. So I'd peel pecans and take them out to him and feed him in the cage. After a few days I'd take him out and play with him.

I had some hard shell pecans. He would drop a pecan in my hand. I would crack it open and give it back to him. I'd talk to him all the time. I would say, "Get me another 'nuss'." I was talking German. He didn't know English.

I learned real young I could set those little pecans on end and hit them with a little hammer I had. I set them on a flat rock I had. The sides would split out(wards) and you could peel them real easy. I'd give them to the squirrel and he could peel them and eat them.

He would sit on my lap and climb up on my shoulder. The rest of the children couldn't touch him. I remember I had a little suit that had black and white checkers on it, little small checkers.

After a few days I left the cage open all time. It got to where he'd go down to the river in the daytime. At night he would come back. I'd feed him a few more pecans. He would sleep in his cage at night. I continued feeding him and playing with him. He would crawl around and around on me and sit up on my shoulder. He had a name, but it has slipped my mind. I could call him by name and he'd come to me.

Little squirrel wouldn't go to Herman or Vernon or Caroline or any of them.

I would say, "Get me another 'nuss'." He'd go get a pecan and put it in my hand.

I told my father. Papa couldn't hardly believe he would bring pecans, so he sat out on the porch and watched it. Papa said, "I saw it happen, but I still don't believe it. Animals are not that smart."

I probably had him about a year. He brought me a lot of love.

Then we moved out of that country. We were going to move to Abernathy. I forgot to close the cage up. When we got ready to leave, the squirrel was at the river. We had to leave that day. I imagine Papa was glad not to have to cart that squirrel to Abernathy.

?How did you feel leaving your squirrel?

Uncle George traced a line with his finger down each cheek and his eyes looked very sad, “Tears ran out of my eyes.”

Another day on being asked the favorite pet he ever had, his answer was, “My squirrel.”

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Saturday, 23 June 2007

CHECKERED SUIT

[E-mail from Ken]

I just read Uncle George's wonderful recollection about that squirrel. In it he mentions that as a child he had a checkered suit. In the picture of the Fuchs kids taken at their house in Marble Falls in 1915, George is wearing that suit.

I remember that there were a couple of squirrels that lived in the big woodpile behind George and Mildred's house in Ruidoso, and George would talk to them and feed them nuts out of his hand.

Here's my hug for the day, Uncle George.

===

Thanks, Ken!!!

What a delight your photographs were to Uncle George. Tammy described them for him. He was really touched. He had the biggest smile when he said, "That suit was my favorite."

I put together the squirrel story from several pieces given to me months apart. That sentence about the checkered suit had been mentioned only once and it didn't seem to really go anywhere. I was tempted not to deal with it, but these are Uncle George's stories and I am doing my best to be true to his memories and give them his voice. Who knew the joy it would ultimately bring him. I have to tell you I cried. So did Tammy.

Last night at his suppertime I told him I had put together the squirrel story and needed to read it so he could correct it. He said, "My pet squirrel." He looked a little anxious, but after I read it he smiled and said, "Perfect." He added, "That's a good squirrel story and the best part about it, it's all true."

He doesn't mind correcting. After all, he's a story teller! When he hears his own story back, he will sometimes say, "People aren't going to know . . .," and we fix it.

Tammy gave him the hug from Kenny. Uncle George hears the word 'Kenny' better than he hears 'Ken.' He laughed and said to her, "Thanks Kenny." Cracked her up. They had the biggest laugh together. On a good day Uncle George is just as full of mischief as ever.

With love,
Sophora

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Saturday, 23 June 2007

HORSE COLLARS

I was about 7 or 8. Everybody in the family was sick, real sick. I don't know what kind of sickness we had. Papa was sick. Herman was sick. Ewald was gone somewheres. Papa and Mama both were sick in bed. I was sick. Everybody was sick, but Rudi.

The doctor was going to leave some medicine with Uncle Ben at the store. There at Abernathy Uncle Ben Struve had a big grocery store, Uncle Fritz Struve had a hardware store, and they had a dry goods store all under one roof, same building. Arno Struve is Uncle Fritz's son. He wasn't really our uncle, but we called him uncle.

Rudi had to go to town and get the medicine and some supplies. Rudi didn't know a thing about horses. He never worked anywhere except in the house. He never worked in the fields. He helped Mother with the cooking and things. I doubt that Rudi ever rode a horse in his life.

He hitched two horses up to the buggy, we called it a hack. It had four wheels and a tongue like a wagon. It was real light weight. He forgot to put horse collars on the horses. He put hames directly around their necks.

Hames are made out of wood and iron. They go on the horse collar, not on the horse's neck. You put the horse collar on first, hames go over it. There's kind of groove in it for the hames to fit, to pull the trace chains – the chains that hook to the wagon, part of the harness.

Uncle Ben Struve came out there and saw those horses without collars. He knew the horses would be bleeding before they got home. He went in the store and got horse collars and put them on the horses.

Uncle Ben Struve, he laughed every time he thought about Rudi hooking up those horses and not putting horse collars on them.

Not too many people use horse collars any more, they use tractors and things instead.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Sunday, 24 June 2007

MOTORCYCLE WRECK

?Do you recall hitting a cow on a motorcycle?

Yes, I do. I had a feller on behind me, Earl Sartin. Close to Artesia, between Artesia and Carlsbad. I was going about 80 miles an hour.

It was a half-grown Jersey heifer. Whenever I hit her, she was running across the road toward the west so I tried to go east of her. She whirled around and I couldn't miss her.

One of her hind legs just flew off. It killed her. I was going so fast it didn't hurt us. Warped the frame a little. I rode it quite a long time before we had it fixed.

She was inside a lane and there shouldn't have been any cattle in there. I wouldn't have known where to look for the owner.

If we'd been going 50 mile an hour it might have wrecked us, but we were going so fast we just went right on through.

The front wheel locked and I had to take a fender off.

Used to, highways had a lot of dips in them. I hit her right down in the bottom of one of those dips. Dropped down about 200 feet and went back up. Probably took those dips out by now.

Tell Hollis if he drives through there he might see the hind leg of a cow; that heifer's leg flew plumb off.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Sunday, 24 June 2007

OPHELIA IS BORN

Since Ophelia was born in 1928, George was 16 years old for this adventure.

One time Ernest Park and Caroline had a little ranch. Ophelia was going to be born at our house so they came over to our place and stayed awhile. Ernest brought his sheep, too, to our ranch.

After Ophelia was born he asked me to move his sheep back to their place. Their place was about 25 miles south and east of Papa's place.

I was supposed to stop at a little store to get groceries. I don't remember the name of the store. There was a school and a store there, about 5 or 6 miles from their house. The sheep were starting to run off so I didn't get any groceries. I was riding Lightning, kind of a roan color, mostly red, but he had a little white mixed in.

I didn't get there until after dark. It was completely dark, with a storm coming in. The corral was about a half mile from the pasture where I put the sheep. I took the bridle off my horse, I was riding bareback, and turned my horse loose in the corral. The corral had two gates, the one on the other side was open. I didn't know it. My horse ran out.

A storm was blowing in, a blizzard, one of the worst blizzards ever was there. I walked through the grapevines over to the house. They lived in an old adobe house with a wood cook stove.

I could hear somebody walking inside, thumping noise, thump, (pause), thump, (pause), thump, (pause). Sounded like somebody with a wooden leg. I was afraid. There was a man lived around there with a wooden leg that had lost his mind, crazy, completely crazy. I thought he was in the house. I don't think I would have gone in there if my horse hadn't run off.

I am hearing this man, my horse ran off, and a blizzard coming in.

I didn't have any matches, no light. I knew where they kept matches. I knew where the cook stove was; I found it in the dark. When I was looking for the matches, I kept talking to that crazy man. I found the matches. I struck a match.

It was a badger, had a trap on one foot. Scared him. He jumped out a broken window.

Blizzard coming in, no groceries, horse gone. I wasn't worried. Young people don't worry.

About 11:00 o'clock I heard someone hollering. Ernest. He'd gotten worried. He thought I had groceries. His horse ran off, too.

Next day we found some cornmeal with bugs in it. We cooked some of it and ate it anyway. We were there in that blizzard for three days with no food. We got pretty hungry. It got really cold.

Ernest had some pigs. Neighbor there was coming in once a week to feed his pigs. The neighbor

didn't show up because he knew that Ernest was supposed to be there that day. We killed one of those pigs and ate it.

It was quite an experience for a young guy. I really appreciated the fact that Ernest came over. I don't know what I would have done by myself. I don't remember what happened when the blizzard was over, but my horse came back to get something to eat.

All of that is part of remembering when Ophelia was born. Carolina and the baby were still there at the ranch.

I always thought a lot of Carolina and Ernest, both, and all their family.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Sunday, 24 June 2007

THE BLACK IRON POT

From Sophora. This is for my grandchildren: Steele (6), Maya (10), Taarna (11), Zazil (12).

My precious grandchildren,

This week I am in Silver City, New Mexico, with Uncle George. In the old days Silver City was a silver mining town. A.J. and Betty live outside of town. You remember it's kind of mountainous, rolling hill country, and there are canyons around.

Every morning at 6:00 o'clock and every afternoon at 4:00, I feed the birds and rabbits for A.J. – in the front and in the back of the house. I was very surprised at first to open the back garage door and here come the bunnies, running TO me. The quail zip away just far enough to be out of bird-seed-tossing range. Some of the rabbits hunker down low to the ground in the feeding zone just in case any bird seed might land on them. The birds and cottontail rabbits all have breakfast and supper together. Jackrabbits aren't welcome here. The quail get very aggressive and run jackrabbits off. Jackrabbits are a lot bigger than cottontail rabbits and have very big ears.

A.J. put an extra-large, 17 inch, flower pot saucer in the embrace of the elk antlers on the front deck railing so Uncle George can see the birds when he sits in the sun room and another on the deck railing in back so Uncle George can see the birds when he sits at the table for breakfast, lunch and dinner. What is amazing is that although Uncle George can hardly see anything any more, he can see birds and rabbits and, sometimes, rain and snow. He can't see fine detail so he can't identify birds except by their behaviors and shapes. Quail are very distinctive. Oily black sunflower seeds go in the deck rail dishes and, oh my, how the quail love those seeds!

There are beautiful birds of all kinds. Some small sparrow-like birds with fiery red breasts, some larger birds with blue backs and tails, some soft satiny gray birds, but none of the little black birds that were here in winter.

The other evening three little birds the size of sparrows came motoring up the steep driveway. I thought to myself, how odd, those sparrows are running along just as quail do. Then I looked again and, oh my goodness, they WERE quail. I guess they were teenagers because mama was nowhere around. Their top knots were just beginning to crest.

The next evening about the same time, here came a mama with a whole covey of babies – at least 15. Mama stood guard about 18 inches away while the babies pecked around under the rose bushes there under the deck railing.

The next evening about the same time, here came two mamas, each with a covey of babies. The same one with about 15 (baby quail don't stay still long enough to count them) and the other with about 11 babies. Apparently, aunt quail will flock more or less together. Although they were right together, the baby sets were distinctly separate.

That evening there were baby quail all over the bird feeder so obviously they could fly already.

The other morning I saw even deer across the canyon.

On a mountain beyond one bedroom window one can see the “W” for Western New Mexico University and out the other bedroom window one can see the butte with the rock formation, Kneeling Nun, at its base.

Beside the driveway outside the garage sits Uncle George and Aunt Mildred’s big black iron kettle, a lot like, but not exactly like, the one your Gran (my mother, your great-grandmother Ruby) used to make soap in on an open fire out back of our house. Its legs sat on rocks for a hearth. Gran also used that kettle to heat water to do the wash. I helped Gran make soap many times. I am sure your great-aunts Ewalee and Laura Sue did, too.

We also helped with the wash EVERY time. Washing was a job and it took just about all day, too. You couldn’t wash just any old day you felt like it. It couldn’t be windy on account of the fire and it couldn’t be rainy. A nice calm sunny day was a good wash day so the clothes could all dry on the line and be brought in and folded before night.

And wash day couldn’t be Sunday. Your Gran did not wash clothes or make soap on Sunday.

I am sure Uncle George’s black iron kettle was used exactly the same way.

Question for John, Jerry, Hollis: How many gallons did that kettle hold? Uncle George doesn’t remember how many gallons this one held.

I was drafting this letter with my pencil at the table this morning sitting quietly while Uncle George was having breakfast, my pencil and notebook ready for any stories he might have. When I asked how many gallons the black iron kettle held, Uncle George told me some things I never knew before.

Here is what he said:

“Do you know the history of that pot? My mother and father got that pot for a wedding gift. It’s kind of a treasure. They were probably married in 1900-1901. Ewald was born in 1902.

“I made many a pot of soap in it. I was their soap man.

“First I put in so many gallons of water, I don’t remember how many. I remember I put in 6 cans of lye. We used old bacon rinds and any fat.

“One time there at Abernathy I had put the lye in and was putting in the bacon rinds. Our little dog jumped over into it. Papa grabbed him out of there quick and threw him into the water tank. That dog lived several years, but he never had a hair on his legs or his belly after that.”

?How old were you when you started making soap?

“I was old enough to make soap. That’s all I remember. [They moved from Abernathy when George was 14.] I don’t remember Herman or Rudolph or Gertrude or Caroline ever making any soap. Rudolph wouldn’t have known how to make soap. That was outdoors. He worked in the house.”

A.J has beautiful orange-flowered trumpet vines growing on a trellis in back. We both love trumpet vines because there were so many at Grossmama and Grosspapa’s ranch when we were children. We would pick the deep-throated blossoms and put one on each finger so we had trumpet flower hands. Our fingers often wore trumpet vine pollen and we loved to sip the bit of nectar at the base of the blossom. Red-orange trumpet vine blossoms are wonderful toys.

An interesting new thing about Uncle George’s diet, that is part of some of the normal end-of-life changes, is an increased need/desire for sugar. It is easier to digest to get the needed energy. He has a big spoonful of sugar on his bowl of morning peaches, at lunch he often has dessert first, and for the last three nights he only wanted vanilla ice cream with his bread for supper. Uncle George eats bread for every meal.

Michelle has been making bread from Aunt Mildred’s recipe that Auntie O/your mother sent. She and Tammy were already making homemade bread for Uncle George but it wasn’t turning out the best so Michelle and I had a bread making day. She said, “Oh, now I get it. I see what this dough is supposed to be doing.” It turned out nice.

Uncle George said Aunt Mildred learned to make biscuits from her father and she learned to make ‘light bread’ from Mama (Grossmama) after they married. Light bread is yeast raised bread. The recipe Octavia sent is light bread.

Well, my dear ones, I need to get busy.

With love,
Grandmother / Sophora
Tuesday, 26 June 2007

BREAKFAST THOUGHTS

A.J. and Betty buying groceries for Jo reminds me of when Ewald and Ruby moved into the Wynan place. This was a few years after they were married. She bought \$20 worth of groceries. I thought: Ewald will never be able to afford that woman. Twenty dollars was a lot of money.

Mildred and I lived in that Wynan house. We moved it to the place I bought there, the Worden place. I bought the Warren place, east of Papa's, from Vernon.

Ewald and Ruby married at Abernathy (December 1924) before we moved to the ranch (1926). Mr. Wynan lived there a year or two after we moved to the ranch.

I remember Ruby had a sister (Myra) who wasn't all there. Her mind wasn't just right. The Barricks lived north of us there at Abernathy.

[Note from Sophora: After horrendous birth defects were found to be caused by thalidomide, which was prescribed for morning sickness in pregnancy, Grandmother Barrick (Ruey Sophora Sherrill Barrick) told me she had begun to think about that. When Myra was a baby and Grandmother was just pregnant with Hilburn, they were really sick with flu or something and the druggist gave them some really strong medicine called Oxydene (sp). Hilburn was born without a thumb on one hand and Myra did not develop properly mentally. That was the only time they ever used that medicine.]

I remember when Ewald lived there northwest of Abernathy, had a neighbor lived west of him. They had a son in service. His wife and daughter got in the car to go to Abernathy, turned the car over, killed them both. Ewald went over to visit with him. He told Ewald, "All I have to live for is my son." They notified his son about the mother and sister's deaths. He got into a jeep to go to headquarters to get a way home, turned the jeep over, killed his-self. I guess the neighbor died with grief, I don't know. That's about as sad a story as I ever heard.

I remember Ruby had several brothers: Clayton, Hilburn, L.D. and Milton. Anyway, L.D. went off somewhere and got him a job. Hilburn came to one of the Fuchs reunions one time. Hilburn married a girl, Wava, I went to school with. I was staying there with Herbert and Gertrude west of Plainview, a little bit north, 4 or 5 miles from Olton. Little school there. I stayed with them several summers. I went to school there one time, I think nine months. I don't remember what grade.

I remember Papa and I went deer hunting southwest of Hope, New Mexico. Anyway, Papa was standing on the side of a hill. There was a bunch of brush right there. All of a sudden a deer run into the brush. He shot. Then it ran out the other side. He shot again. He went out there to dress it out. Heard something in the brush. Went in to check. He'd killed both of them, one running in, one running out. He thought he'd only killed one. They were about the same size.

I collected my antlers. When we moved from Ruidoso I counted 52. I didn't want to move them, gave them to some of the neighbors.

I think that if all drugs were legal, there would be less addicts. When it was illegal to sell whiskey there were more drunks than there have ever been.

I knew a preacher real well there at Tatum. He had two boys and one girl. I thought a lot of the girl. He told me one time he would never let his boys take a drink of whiskey. I used to see them in town every Saturday night drunker than a skunk.

Papa never told us we couldn't drink. He didn't raise any drunks. I used to drink a little on the weekends.

I remember something. I knew a girl named Hudgins, don't remember her first name. Real cute girl, slim built, real good dancer. I would dance with her a lot. I didn't correspond with her or anything. While I was in the service I thought I would look her up when I got out. Maybe marry her. Ran into her after I got out. She weighed about 250 pounds. She had just bloomed right out.

Her sister, Juanita, I think her name was, married Herman Epperson. They married about the same time as Herman and Cleo. They were good friends.

I had about decided I would never get married — until I met Mildred.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Tuesday, 26 June 2007

ON BEARS AND DOGS

Hi Mom,

I have a question for Uncle George. The kids are going camping in the mountains with Conan this coming weekend. Since I'm such a lily livered, tenderfoot, city girl, I'm worrying about predators and my children. The mountains are full of berries and, therefore, bears (Conan has been to this meadow) and the Mexican Wolf has been re-introduced. I want to know if Uncle George has some advice for camping with such predators. They are thinking of taking a dog. Does a person camping around wolves take a dog or NOT take a dog? Does it matter either way? If for some reason, Uncle George has some scary stories about this subject, could you wait until Tuesday to tell me?

I will be keeping busy so as to ward of too much worry. I really would have preferred to not be a city girl but my parents didn't ask me.

BIG LONG SQUEEZY HUGS FOR UNCLE GEORGE,

Toby

From Uncle George:

It never bothered me to camp where there were bears. I remember one time we were camping. We were about 40 foot from our tent, had a campfire going. A bear came there, went in the tent, looked around, cam out again and left. Bears don't usually give much trouble.

I don't think a dog would make it any safer because the wolf and the bear have no fear of the dog. A dog wouldn't make it any less safe. I don't think I would take a dog. I think they attract the bear. That's just my own idea. I don't know if it's true or not.

Tell Toby, if a bear comes up, you just run your hand down his throat, grab hold of his tail, tum him inside out, and he'll go the other way.

We lived 18 summers right among the bear and had no fear of them. And we had a dog.

Up there at Palisades Mildred's niece, Deena Dickenson, was going to take some garbage to the garbage pit we had. It was pretty deep. I told her she might see a bear. She was red headed and freckled face; she came running back as fast as she could go, "There was two of them."

I told her, "Well, let's go back and look at them." She went with me.

They don't use a garbage pit there any more. County leaves a truck there to put the garbage in.

A bear come up to our car at Yellowstone Park. One of the boys, I don't remember which one, got his camera out to take a picture out of one window. Another bear came around to the opposite window and touched him on the arm. Whoever was driving ... Papa was sitting in the driver's seat, all of a sudden looked and there was this bear with his face in the window. Vernon was with us.

At Yellowstone Park, bear have no fear of humans there.

I have been to Yellowstone quite a few times. I've been there in the wintertime snowmobiling.

I don't remember the name of the town, north end of the Park, some little town, we stayed the night. While we were there a big bull elk walked right down the middle of the street.

We went up there to see the hot springs. Saw a lot of buffalo.

One thing I remember about Yellowstone in winter, we came by a big hill, it was snowing, the whole hill was steaming. Ground was hot.

We saw a lot of white swan up there.

One time in the winter we went up to Yellowstone. We stayed in there in a place called Jackson Hole, Wyoming, right near where they have a feed ground where they feed elk in the wintertime. We rode the feed wagon, I think Herman and I. Anyway we saw more elk than I've ever seen in my life.

One thing that's real pretty is the Grand Teton Mountains. Around those mountains there's a lake. We saw a lot of moose.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Tuesday, 26 June 2007

PAPA WAS A LEGEND

People just can't believe the stories about my father's shooting. If the right person had known Papa he would have been written up as one of the best experts in the world. I was a pretty fair shot, but Papa was so good I felt like a poor shot. Papa was a legend. I was proud of my father.

One time some fellow was visiting from California, I don't remember who. We went for a walk on the section. Jackrabbit jumped up running like anything. Papa shot it. Papa said, "I usually hit 'em in the head." He whispered to me, "I hope no more jump." One of them jumped up. Papa shot it straight through the head.

There was a shooting match in Austin, Texas. They were shooting clay pigeons with shotguns. It cost \$2 to enter. If they won, first prize was \$50. Papa walked up there with his \$2. They told him, no, he couldn't enter. They said he was an expert and this match was for amateurs. He asked them, "Could I use my .22?" Well, sure; so they let him enter. He brought home the \$50.

Years later Herman was in San Antone in a restaurant eating lunch. He heard some fellows talking about some guy being such a good shot. Another guy was listening and said, "You guys don't even know what a good shot is." He told the story about that match in Austin. Herman didn't tell them, "That was my father."

Papa was unbelievable. We used .22s. Ammunition was not as expensive. A box of ammo then was 19 cents.

He was absolutely the best shot at moving targets. One time walking in the pasture we flushed 17 jackrabbits. Papa fired 17 shots. He killed 17 jackrabbits, every one of them running. Sounds impossible, but I was walking with him and know it's true. I could hit 17 if they were sitting still.

We use to throw these little hard shell pecans up in the air. He would shoot and burst them. We threw them up 20 feet, maybe 30 feet. He would say, "Throw three." We would throw three. He would fire three shots, burst all three. He would say, "Throw four. If he fired four shots, he hit four. Sometimes we didn't throw them high enough for him to fire four shots before they hit the ground. I never did see him miss one with a shot he fired.

Most fellows, you'd throw big tin cans into the air and they couldn't hit one.

One time there at Ruidoso there was a place for shooting, had a bank behind it. At a low place in the bank they ran a silhouette of a deer across back there. Papa entered the match. Shot one, didn't win. Shot again, didn't win. So I asked one of the guys about it. He said Papa was hitting the neck, the bulls-eye was in the belly. I told Papa the bulls-eye was right in the middle of the belly. He said, "Pshaw. Who ever heard of shooting a deer in the belly?" He fired three more shots, won three turkeys. He said, "We might as well go home. We've got all the turkeys we need."

We were hunting one time after Mildred and I were married. Those little condensed milk cans have a soldered dot in the center of a circle. We put up a bunch of them on a rail fence at about 30 feet. I shot. Next Papa shot, hit closer, about the width of a bullet. He did that three times: every time I shot, he hit the width of a bullet closer. Then he laughed, "Put up 10 cans." He shot right through the center of all 10. He was just teasing me the first time.

I went hunting with Papa one time. He felt sick. We'd been there a day and we had spent the night. He wanted to go home; he was feeling sick. I went out and saw some fresh wild turkey tracks. We loaded up our camping gear and started home. We got about fifty yards and I stopped. Papa said, "What are you stopping for?" "I want to show you something." I showed him those wild turkey tracks. Papa said, "You go up that canyon, I'll take this one." He got well so fast I got tickled. He came back pretty soon with two wild turkeys. Most turkeys he ever shot were shot in the neck.

Papa was left handed. He shot a gun left handed. Seems like some of the children were about half-way left handed, but I don't remember who. Papa couldn't use a bolt action gun, which is right handed. He used pump gun and lever action. He had a pump .22 and .32-20.

I used a bolt action. I bought it new, made in 1950 I think, at Bonnell Hardware. Kiel Bonnell ordered it special. It is still in use. Nekoda is using it.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Wednesday, 27 June 2007

ANIMALS

One time we had a little white dog. He would chase guineas, they would fly on the house. There was a ladder, he climbed up on the house, they flew. He jumped off. They went over to the windmill. Dog climbed up about 30 feet, they flew. He jumped off. Like to killed him.

We had donkeys when we were going to school. We had two donkeys, four of us going to school. We hooked those two donkeys to this buggy thing. On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday they were standing there with their heads over the fence. On weekends when Vernon and I would ride those donkeys, they were nowhere to be found, couldn't find them. On Monday morning they were standing there with their heads over the fence. My father said donkeys aren't that smart to know the day of the week. I think donkeys are real smart animals.

Elroy had a pet deer. Doe deer had caught itself in the fence, ripped one leg off. It had a baby. He took it home, raised it on a nipple. He had a blanket for it on the floor in front of the TV. That deer watched TV. It was housebroke, female. It stayed in the house just like a pet dog. He fixed a door in his kitchen it could open and let itself in and out. Elroy kept it until it died.

I've known several people who had a deer for a pet.

When we lived there at Palisades, I had a little squirrel, several, would come up and sit in my lap and let me feed them. I didn't make them pets when they were babies. I just would feed them there on the porch. When Mildred would come out of the house, they would run off.

One time Uncle Alfred had a squirrel that would come in the house. He would feed it. The squirrel got in the screen door, caught his tail, stripped all the hide off, just bare bone. Tail fell off. Lived like that a long time.

Ralph Brown, pilot there at Ruidoso, flew a little bi-plane. He had a little farm at Plainview, Texas. He had some cats ran around the place at Ruidoso. He flew up to Plainview one day. When he got there one of the cats was on one of the wings, crouched there hanging on. He couldn't believe that cat made it. He put it inside the plane, took it back home to Ruidoso.

That same Ralph Brown was flying north of Santa Fe one day. There were two little kids 3-4 years old playing in a wash, in a canyon. It had been raining up above and there was eight foot of water coming down that canyon. He did everything in the world to get their attention to get them out of there, but they would just laugh and wave. He couldn't land anywhere and he couldn't have got to them anyway. Sure bothered him. Never did know what happened to them.

There at Palisades a pack rat got in our cabin one winter. He did all kinds of crazy things. He put a bunch of things in the bath tub: commode brush, two or three saucers, dishes, wood stove burner cover, lifter. Dragged a stewer up a steep staircase.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis

Silver City, New Mexico
Thursday, 28 June 2007

BUTCHER BIRDS

There at Abernathy we had a pair of guineas. They nested. They had a nest in the neighbor's field. There were 32 eggs in the nest. A short time before we moved to New Mexico, this guinea came in, had 32 babies with her.

Papa fixed a box for them in the wagon. I fed and watered them.

At the ranch some kind of bird, butcher bird, would catch the young guineas. We raised three of them. Butcher birds would hang them on the fence. After they spoiled, they would eat them. I haven't seen any butcher birds in years.

A butcher bird is a little bit like a mocking bird, but a little different, and different color, gray color, kind of a large beak, dark on their head.

I think they are found nowhere else except around Tatum there.

BLUE QUAIL

Blue quail grow bigger than the quail around here. Out at the ranch we used to eat a lot of them. I built a trap for them, trap over a trench, finest trap I ever saw. When we had a mess of about 12, Mama would cook them. I would just eat one. All we ever cooked was the breast, there was not much meat on their legs. Seems like, if my memory serves me right, Ewald didn't eat them. He didn't eat chicken, either.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Thursday, 28 June 2007

REPLYING TO STEELE

It turns out that Steele is as difficult for Uncle George's ear to discern as Ken. Although many of us are accustomed to Ken being Kenny, Steely instead of Steele would not help. Anyway, I finally said, the metal, steel. Uncle George got it, "Oh yeah, Steele." He remembers Steele, "cute little boy, came to see us there at Gila with his sister." Said I, it is Toby's mother's maiden name.

Said Uncle George, "I was named for my father and my mother, Albano and Georginia — Albano George. Called them A.J. and Gini. Mama was also called Georgia.

Our daughter Georgia Ruth was name for my mother and Mildred's mother, Georgia and Ruth.

"Hi Uncle George,

"This is Steele. I liked your story about your pet squirrel and I'm going to use my money from my allowance and my yard sale to get one for myself. I wish I knew your squirrel's name. I want a squirrel that will sit on my shoulder too. My mom doesn't want me to get little, furry prey because our dogs and cats will want to kill it. did that ever happen on your farm to someone?"

We didn't have cats. Our dogs did not bother our pets. I don't remember a dog at Marble Falls.

"How many dogs did you have in your whole life?"

I have no idea. Any dogs we had at home were the family dogs, not mine.

"I remember being at your house in Gila and we fed the horse across the street apples from your apple trees. I remember having vanilla ice cream with lots of chocolate syrup. That was yummy."

I'm glad you had a good time.

"I'm sorry that your little dog didn't get hair on his legs and tummy again after jumping in that pot. I'm happy he lived. What was that little dog's name. Your papa was really fast to get him out of there."

I don't think the dog made a sound. I can't remember his name.

"I send you hugs, Uncle George. I love you.
Love, Steele"

(With a tender smile) Thank you, Steele.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Friday, 29 June 2007

REPLYING TO ZAZIL AND MAYA

“Thank you for the story about the squirrel.” I’m glad you enjoyed it.

“We’re sorry you had to leave your squirrel behind.” I have been thinking about that. I sure missed him, but I think maybe Papa was right to leave him. He might have died there on the plains without the river and the pecan trees where he knew how to take care of himself.

“Was he a baby when you got him?” He was. He was very young.

“How old were you when you started to shoot?” You’ve asked a very good question that I don’t know that I can answer. I believe I was shooting when we left Marble Falls (about 6 years old). I know I was shooting prairie dogs and things there at Abernathy when I was 8 or so.

“You’re a good storyteller. We enjoy listening to your stories.” Thank you (with a big pleased smile).

“We love you.” I love you, too.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Thursday, 28 June 2007

THE RANCH

There at Abernathy, six miles east, the farm we had was 640 acres, a section. The ranch in Lea County (New Mexico) was 7 section. It was a straight across swap, they traded even, the farm for the ranch. No money changed hands. Dad wasn't a farmer. He enjoyed that ranching — mostly sheep, a few cattle, a few milk cows. Sheep had certain kinds of grass they wouldn't eat.

Rabbits eat a lot of grass that is needed for the sheep. Ten rabbits eat as much grass as one sheep. We shot them to keep them from getting too thick. You can eat rabbits when they are young, not more than three-quarter grown. Full grown jackrabbits don't taste good.

I was about 14 when we moved to the ranch.

After we'd been at the ranch about two years, Papa was going to be in Abernathy. He had a wooden box full of arrowheads that had been picked up at Marble Falls. Forgot and left them in the attic. The man hadn't found them, but wouldn't let Papa have them. Said, "I traded fair and square." Perfect arrowheads. My older brothers and sisters found most of them.

Places we had there at the ranch besides Papa's:

Hickey Place, 320 acres = Herman

Warren Place, 320 acres = Vernon

Worden Place (Seth Austin), 640 acres = George

Wynan Place = part of Papa's ranch, moved the house from the Wynan Place to George's Place (the apricot tree(s) were at the Wynan place, not taken care of, some died)

Teague Place = leased it the whole time we were there, was south of Papa's

I introduced Dutch Craddock to Anna Mana, Elsie and later to Neoma (Aunt Anna and Uncle Ben's daughter, whom he married). I thought he was a better man than he was. He started running around with other women. He had a brother named John, worked there with us awhile. His brother Frank married one of Steve Struve's girls.

Neoma and Dutch bought 9 sections south of us. They couldn't make the payments and eventually lost it. After Neoma got sick and after they separated, I think she went to work cooking at a school. I wanted to go see her, but I heard she didn't even recognize people, so I never did go.

Back in the '30s there were Dust Bowl storms. Was a west wind for three days. All of a sudden it quit. In the north we saw it coming in, dark like it was night. Rained and blew dust. Water just ran off into the lakes. Had a lot of surface lakes there on the ranch. Got so dark the chickens all went to bed. Worst one I ever saw. They'd last 48 hours or so, sometimes less. Dust storms come in from the west. They were caused by farmers breaking up their land and not taking care of it.

I was in Kansas on a motorcycle during dust bowl times. Dust about 8-10 inches deep some places. You could slap your hand down in it, drive right through it. It would spread just like water. Wasn't like sand at all. Really unusual dust. Had those dust bowl storms for several years.

On the ranch it got about 2-3 inches deep. Rainwater wouldn't go through it. Where we were you could grow crops. Down where it originated, they couldn't grow anything.

One of Mildred's sisters' husband was a county judge, lived out by Seminole (Texas). They couldn't open the front door for the sand one time. Sand had seeped under the door, seven inches inside the house. Had to go around to another side of the house to get in. Sandstorm, not dust bowl.

We had a neighbor there on the ranch. He might have been exaggerating a little, anyway he said down in the sand country the rattlesnakes were as big around as a fence post and as long as a wagon tongue.

Old Westbrook, that exaggerated so much, he had a toothache so bad he had to go see a dentist. He had never ridden a motorcycle. Herman took him. He got on behind Herman. They got to McDonald, then Herman put it up to 80. Old Westbrook told Herman, "I wish you'd hurry."

Herman told him, "I'm going 80 miles an hour." "I didn't know you were going that fast. Th.. , th.. , th.. , that's fast enough."

When they got back I asked him, "Dentist pull your tooth? Said, "Pulled a whole hatful of teeth."

I remember one time they had a rodeo there at Prairie View close to Ernest and Caroline's place. Ernest and Carolina put up a hamburger stand. Ernest and I made hamburgers and sold them. Was an old fellow got drunk, wanted a hamburger, Coon Braslow, said, "I want a hamburger. I want the meat raw. I'm half coyote." Ernest made him a hamburger. He stood there and ate it raw. He got in his old car, "George, which way is home?" I pointed. He took off where I pointed, went right through the fence. He was just a little bit drunk.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Thursday, 28 June 2007

ABERNATHY

We moved to Abernathy in 1918, it was early Spring by the time we got there. We traveled by wagon. Had an old car we traveled in, too. It was a Ford touring car, black. All of them were black. We shipped all the horses, tools, and farm equipment by train to Lubbock.

People drove those cars down the street. People on horses and buggies would have trouble because of the cars.

When we moved those horses from Marble Falls to Abernathy, they wanted to go back home — 5-600 miles. They got out one day. We found them 18 miles away. They were going home; they knew which way to go.

We had an orchard with peaches. Somebody was robbing them at night. Dad was listening. He could hear some fruit falling in a bucket. He aimed to scare the guy, took a shot with the shotgun. Heard a scream. Wasn't anybody there in the morning. Didn't lose any more peaches. [This was Slick Wallace, chicken thief.]

My father was some kind of deputy sheriff there for awhile east of Abernathy. It was during Prohibition and there was a lot of bootlegging. Papa brought in some guy with a gallon of bootleg whiskey. Judge took a big swig and passed the jug around. When it was empty, he said, "Case dismissed for lack of evidence." Papa was real disappointed.

When we were living at Abernathy, one time I was chasing Vernon. He slammed the door in front of me. I slammed on my brakes and picked up a splinter in my foot — from those old wood floors that were just about wore out. They never could find anything. It got to hurting pretty bad. Took me to Lubbock to the doctor; he cut it open, but couldn't find anything. Then we went down to Marble Falls and I played in the river a lot. One day when I got out of the water there was something sticking out of my foot. I pulled out a piece of wood about an inch and a quarter long and a quarter inch wide. It had been there over a month.

When I was twelve years old I drove the car (Model T Ford, 1922 Sedan, 2 doors) to take the children to school. I picked up a couple of the neighbors. Seven of us rode in that car.

School discipline? I never misbehaved so I didn't get in trouble. I know I saw several of them standing in the corner.

In 1923 one of my uncles, Ben Struve, put in the first irrigation well in Hale County. It wasn't very deep.

Something I remember very well. After we moved to Abernathy, we kept getting the little Marble Falls newspaper that was for all the little towns around there. There was an ad for pecans, so much a hundred pounds, delivered price. Papa ordered 400 or 500 pounds, I think it was 500 pounds. They weren't going to deliver them to Abernathy. Papa told them, "You'd better deliver them because

that's what you advertised." The man did deliver them. Shipping cost every bit as much as the pecans.

Edmond Fuchs had a barber shop. He'd buy those different kinds of puzzles — three pieces of metal put together and if you work it right they come part. He said men would come into the shop and pick up those puzzles while they were waiting for the chair, work them awhile and finally put them down because they couldn't figure them out. Little kids would come in — 4 or 5 years old — pick them up and take them apart in just a few minutes. Said he saw it hundreds of times.

My dad had something wrong with his teeth and his gums. He went to the dentist at Hale Center, pulled 32 teeth, every tooth he had. He got in the car and drove home by his-self. Nowadays they pull one or two teeth and give you so much medication you couldn't drive. When they pulled his teeth, they made the impressions before his gums swelled up. He never could wear dentures very well.

I remember something about Abernathy. I don't know how many were sick, Mama, Papa, Ewald. Had flu or something real bad. Called the doctor. It was raining. Doctor did not know if he could get there. It was real muddy, the roads were bad. Ewald told him to put mud chains on his wheels. He put chains on his front wheels; it was a rear wheel drive car. I think Ewald and Herman changed them and put them on the rear wheels for him.

Uncle Ben Struve got a check in the mail from a fellow, \$240. Uncle Ben had some old bills in the basement. Twenty-two years earlier the fellow had charged something. I guess he was honest, just didn't have the money.

Sometime after we moved from Abernathy, they put in a skating rink, roller skating. Old fellow there, Bill Adkins, probably in his 80's, may have been as much as 90 years old. Had lost his wife and his daughter, didn't live there anymore. He'd come every Saturday night and watch them skate. One time the people that skated, they put skates on him, helped him around a few times, held him up on both sides. They helped him there awhile and pretty soon he said, "I think I've got it now." He took off, skated on one foot, skated backwards, skated every which a way. He was a better skater than any of the younger ones. Come to find out, he used to own a skating rink years ago. I didn't see it happen. Victor Struve was telling me about it.

When we lived east of Abernathy when I was a kid, it rained there more than it has since then. We raised good crops. Dry lakes were full of water. We had snows there so much we could walk right over the fences. It would freeze on top.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Friday, 29 June 2007

GERMAN AND ENGLISH

We always talked German at home because Mama couldn't hardly talk English. She could hardly talk English at all when Mildred and I got married. I told Mildred she might want to teach Mama English. She did. Mama learned real fast. By the time you (Sophora) knew her, she could speak English pretty good.

I learned English when I was about seven, when I went to school. Then I quit talking German altogether when I was real young, when I started working for other people. I think I still remember every word of it.

Dad always spoke good English. Papa went to college, learned English real good. He studied astronomy. At night time my father could look up at the stars and tell you what time of night it was. Out on a hunting trip, Papa could look up at the stars and tell you exactly what time it is. You could look at your watch. He would never be off ten minutes. Never did interest me much, to study stars and things.

Herman had some sheep pastured with a rancher down by Carlsbad. One day we went to a cafe down there to eat. Frenchman was there, another Frenchman came in, they spoke French. Two Mexican shepherders came in, spoke Spanish. Herman and I spoke German just to be different. In German I said to Herman, "That Mexican looks pretty stupid." In German that guy said, "Oh yeah? I have you know I read and write seven languages and I speak many more." He could understand what those Frenchmen were saying, too. Just a Mexican shepherder.

Carolina, in German it's Coleena. We called her Coleena. Gertrude is [sounds like] Yetroot. Herman is Hairman.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Friday, 29 June 2007

HORSES

When Ewald lived at Abernathy a horse came down the lane into his place. After a time, two-three weeks, nobody claimed it. We took it to the ranch. I don't remember how we got it there, but we didn't have a horse trailer. I broke it to ride.

Mr. Alston, Dutch Craddock and another fellow. They had nine horses needed to be broke in. Dutch told me, "You have to break three of them. I picked the wildest. I broke all three, never bucked with me.

One time Dutch was gone. He had a stud horse with one crippled foot. I rode that horse and brought the sheep in. Dutch came in. He told me that as far as he knew I was the only person ever rode that horse.

It was something unusual. Horses wouldn't buck with me.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Friday, 29 June 2007

MARBLE FALLS

We lived on the east side of the Colorado River. There was a big bend in it. There was a natural tunnel. The tunnel closed itself up again naturally after it had flowed under for about two years.

We had a pecan farm on the Colorado River. The river curved in a big circle called Colorado Bend. We lived inside the circle. The river was a boundary on one side of Papa's place, the Little Colorado River.

There was a mountain entirely within Papa's property. We had a mountain in our pasture, kinda two mountains together with a valley between.

My mother's father, Fritz Fuchs, grafted those pecan trees and improved the pecans. I've forgotten the name he gave them. They're a popular pecan now. The name Western Schley keeps coming to my mind, but I'm not positive that's what he called them. I wish I remembered for sure the name of those pecans, but I don't. I know years later they were real popular. That's where he started, on Papa's place. Little pecan trees would come up and he'd replant them. He grafted onto that root system. I don't know where he got his stock to start with. Anyway, they were a real good pecan, middle sized, not too hard shell.

There is a house south of our house about a mile, built by some of our forefathers, owned by Krumm. There was a five-story house on a place south of us. Later became a museum. I've forgotten the people's name. Had a basement and four stories above.

I was born in town, I think. Vernon was born out in the country, on the farm.

We moved into town. I think I was two. My father bought a place in town so the children could go to school.

I was two years old when we moved out of town, about the time Vernon was born.

[Recorder's note: The three paragraphs above, when transcribed from notes taken at different times, seemed to be in error. Asked about the seeming conflict, Uncle George said, "You're asking me about things when I was just 2 or 3 years old. We moved back and forth. Papa bought a place in town so the older children could go to school. We lived there during the school year. I remember the house in town had a basement where Mama and Papa did the washing. Upstairs in the bathroom we had a chute we could stick our dirty clothes in. They'd fall down there to the basement. We might have just lived there one year. I don't remember exactly."]

After awhile Papa built a school for the children on the country place, a little building outside our house. Papa hired a teacher to come in and teach all the children around. All grades in one room. All the neighborhood children came. Eloise Crosby was the teacher. She was the famous roper Bob Crosby's sister. They lived close to Roswell. She stayed in our house. It was a two story house we lived in.

From our place we could see a mountain. We called it Granite Mountain. They used the granite for tombstones and all kinds of things.

Something I think was unusual: I liked to play with dolls when I was a kid. I still like to play with nice looking dolls. I remember I had a doll. Papa made me leave it at Marble Falls. He said I was getting too old to play with dolls. I know it was pretty good sized.

One time there were some mountain lions, two of them. One of my uncles with two hounds came there and went hunting for them on the first little mountain, Big Castle Mountain. There was a cave there, lions ran into the cave. My uncle could walk into it. He kept siccing his dogs on the lions. All of a sudden it was real quiet. He heard one of his dogs panting. He lit a match. It wasn't one of his dogs! There were two lion about four feet from him. The dogs were outside the cave!

There on the river at Marble Falls, there was a rock in the river, big rock, 40 foot by 40 foot, stuck out 40-50 feet into the river. River went around it except when it was high, then it went over it. Herman was about five-six years old at the time. He could swim and dive and swim under water like a fish. We had an uncle or some kinfolk come to visit. We went down to the river. Herman stripped off his clothes and jumped off on the south side of that rock. The visitor couldn't see Herman, hollered, "He didn't come up, didn't come up." He jumped in with all his clothes on. Couldn't find Herman. Kept coming up, "I can't find him." Herman swam around that rock under water and came up behind him. Stood there laughing. Papa saw it, he knew what was going on. Papa didn't say anything.

Herman could really swim good from the time he was two years old, maybe younger. I never did learn to swim. I nearly drowned when I was real little and developed a fear of the water.

One of my grandfathers, maybe it was my mother's grandfather, they wore money belts back then. Money wasn't in bills then, was either gold or silver. He was crossing the river when it was low. All of a sudden the river came up real high, eight feet of water came down because they had a bunch of rain up stream. He was wearing a money belt, his life savings. He just about drowned. Twice he reached up to take off the money belt, and tried one more time to get across. He made it, just about drowned.

I remember we had a neighbor lived about one and a half miles from us, black man that had been a slave. We called him Uncle Bill. He was blind, totally blind. Dad would visit him, felt sorry for him. Then we moved to Abernathy. When we went back, we had to go right by his place. Papa stopped there to see him and before Papa said anything he called out, "Hello, Mr. Fuchs." Papa asked him, "How in the world did you know it was me?" Said, "I would know that old Ford anywhere."

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Friday, 29 June 2007

MORE VERNON

Vernon and I were always real close. We'd get into a fight. I would whip him until I felt sorry for him. "Are you whipped yet?" "No, you can't whip me." I'd whip him until I felt sorry for him and give up.

We were always full of devilment, destructive devilment, Vernon and I.

When Herbert Day was courting Gertrude, we stretched a wire across the front gate. He had a Ford car that had a top on it. We attached wire to the front seat, over the top, to the front wheel. When he backed up it tore the top off.

Herbert and Gertrude lived at Olton on a farm. I lived up there with them awhile and went to school up there.

We had an old bulldog, Tige. Some salesman came up in a brand new car. The way it was painted the bulldog could see his reflection. We sicced the bulldog onto that car. He scratched all the paint off while the salesman was in there visiting with Papa.

If he got a spanking, Vernon wouldn't cry. If I got a spanking, the first lick I would cry out, screaming. I explained to Vernon that he'd get off easier if he would cry. He wouldn't do it.

Papa didn't spank us but a very few times, but my mother did.

I remember Vernon going to Morenci. Worked in the mines out there. You say he took Roland's car? [Ken thought he did.] I guess it was Vernon. I wouldn't swear to it, but I don't know.

When Roland was killed, I don't know how bad his car was wrecked. I had bought Vernon's place and I was over there working and one of our neighbors came over and told me about it, a fellow named Bill Anderson.

When I was about 8 years old Papa hired four neighbor girls to hoe weeds out of the field, wasn't cotton, some other crop. I told them, "You girls are really a good bunch of hoe-ers." They started snickering and laughing. One of them asked me, "George do you know what a brassiere is?" I didn't. Vernon spoke up and said, "Ain't nothing but a tit masher." He knew more than I did.

One time at the ranch, Vernon and I were hauling feed, bundled feed, out of the field. We had a big wide wagon. When we got home we would stack the feed into a big stack. One bundle had a rattlesnake in it. We went ahead and filled the wagon. When we got home, we got one of us on each end with a pitchfork. We wouldn't get on that wagon. Vernon was throwing it off. I was stacking it. Usually did it by hand. That time we used pitchforks. Never did find the snake. Must have fell off the wagon.

One time, before they used trucks, I was taking sheep to the railroad, I think to Elkins, about 70 miles from our place. We killed 57 rattlesnakes. There were a lot of snakes in the sand country. We were

lucky.

I was walking one time at night. One of them bit me on the britches leg. I kicked it loose.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Friday, 29 June 2007

THE SERVICE

When Herman signed up to get into the Air Force, there at Hobbs, I went with him. They turned me down—eyesight and hearing. I decided I would wait for them to draft me. They never did. I signed up later. I didn't expect Vernon to go with me, but he said, "I'll just go with you." It was during peace time.

I went off and joined the service. 1935. I was 22 years old. Wasn't in any war. I joined at Fort Bliss, El Paso. I stayed there at Fort Bliss all the time I was in the service. I just served in the Cavalry. We were in "A" Troop of 8th Cavalry.

Vernon joined the service same time I did, was in the service with me for awhile. Papa needed him on the ranch. He wrote a letter. Papa got him out through the help of the Red Cross. Vernon got discharged early; he wasn't in there very long.

Right after we went into the service, maybe a week, we went out to the rifle range. I made the second highest score at Fort Bliss. The First Sergeant beat me.

Possible score was 250 with a rifle.

- First Sergeant White made 249
- George made 248
- Vernon made 245.

Vernon hit the wrong target or he would have made 250. Was one of those ranges with all kinds of grass and weeds. Range started at 100 yards on up to 900. We were shooting at all kinds of ranges. I don't remember just how far it was, the round he hit the wrong one, I think 900. He couldn't see the number on the target for the weeds so Vernon hit somebody else's target, right beside his. He hit a bulls-eye anyway even if it was the wrong target. Was not in the rules of the range so it didn't count.

In the service I used bolt action, made in 1917 or along in there somewhere. Rifles had adjustable sights. They were old rifles, they weren't new. Used in 1918, I think.

Vernon said, "This old gun sights — set it at 900 yards, then you could use it at 100 yards." They were the guns they used in WWI. They might have even used them in the War between the North and the South. They were really old.

Later on we went out on the pistol range. I made the highest score at Fort Bliss and I had never shot a pistol. I just couldn't believe every time I shot I shot the bulls-eye. Part of this shooting was on horseback, had to keep the horse in a gallop. Each person had 28 shots. I hadn't practiced any. The First Sergeant hit 27 bulls-eyes. Said to me, "Let's see you beat that."

"No problem, Sarge. I can beat you without practice." I shot 28 bulls-eyes. I wasn't bragging, just telling facts. The pistols we were using were 45s, Colts, I think. I was a pretty fair shot. There at Fort Bliss shooting with a pistol, I had the best score with a pistol. Vernon wasn't there anymore for the pistol.

They wanted to send me to camp for expert rifle and pistol shots. Only one person ever beat me with a rifle. Would have been two. Vernon hit a bulls-eye — wrong target.

When I was in the Army one time the target flopped. I hit every bulls-eye. People I was with never hit one.

I didn't like the service because we didn't have enough to do. I was used to working. I did a lot of work because I wanted to. I couldn't stand standing around not doing much. In the cavalry, all we did was ride horses. I took care of the horses.

After I was there awhile I clipped the horses for them. Keep them cool in the summer. Clipping horses is real dangerous. I put shoes on horses.

One thing I was able to do, not another man there could do it. I had something most people don't have. There was a number branded on the neck of each horse, 110 head, each one into its own stall. I knew every horse's name within two or three days. I could name every horse without looking the number up. Some of them never did learn their names.

We got in 30 new horses, kinda half broken. They had me ride them. They had this chute, circular. Had jumps about 2 1/2 feet, close to 3 feet. The way they rode them, I wasn't much interested. I got them broken.

They had these little old saddles. You'd be surprised how many of those guys fell off on those jumps. They had those recruits ride about a month before they put them over jumps. I could just stay with the horse. I didn't even bounce on the saddle or anything. After all, I rode horses all my life.

When I first went there they gave me a horse. I had ridden him six months or so. New officer came in, picked my horse to ride. That horse threw him nine times. I really admired him. He'd just dust off his clothes and get back on. The horse finally gave up. He went ahead and rode him. I had to get another one.

I remember why that Sergeant 'Happy' and I became such good friends. When I joined there were 30 new recruits. Sergeant lined us up. I was at the end of the line. He asked about our riding experience. Some of the recruits in front of me told the funniest stories about the riding they'd done. When it got to me, I said, "I'm sorry, Sergeant. I've never been on a horse in my life." I had put the saddle blanket crosswise and stood on the wrong side of the horse.

Sergeant 'Happy' Heinrich, he was real nice about it. Nicest fellow. Said, "That's okay." Helped me with everything. By the time we rode for a couple of miles, two of those cowboys fell off. We rode another mile or so and the sergeant rode up beside me and said, "Fuchs, you damn liar, you." He knew I had been riding most of my life. We became real good friends after that, from then on, over me kidding him. I went out to his house and visited him and his wife. That wasn't done, you know. Name of 'Happy' Heinrich; he could talk a little German.

He called me “Big Fuchs” and Vernon “Little Fuchs.” I don’t remember how long Vernon stayed in there, but it wasn’t very long.

We went over into Juarez, Mexico, walked, went by car or street car to the border. What did we do over there? A lot of things I would rather not tell. Boys that age looking for women.

One old fellow, Sergeant Dirk, met him in the bar one time. Crazy drunk. One of our top sergeants. I wanted to get him back. We took the last street car. Sergeant said, “George, who’s that dancing with our women?” Wasn’t our women. Next afternoon I saw him — beat up, one eye shut, two teeth missing. “You should see the other two guys.”

We went on maneuvers over to Marfa, Texas – Presidio. Were paid in cash with no place to spend it. One time ‘Happy’ had \$5,000. I told him, “Let’s go to the Post Office. Send it to your wife to pay off your place.” We got about 200 yards. He stopped, “There’s a lot of money there yet.” Pretty soon he come to me, “Fuchs, let me borrow \$20.” I lent him \$20. Pretty soon he come to me and said, “Let’s go to the Post Office.” He sent her \$3,500.

That gambling is something that gets in your blood. Once you get started, can’t hardly quit. I never let it get to me that bad, but some people just keep going to Las Vegas once a month and lose all their money.

Seven thousand men on maneuvers, all down there on horseback. Supplies brought in on trucks. They’d get us up at 4:00 o’clock in the morning, feed us a little breakfast, give us one canteen of water, no lunch, all of us on horseback. Had us ride until 4:00 PM or so. Just to see. They kept hauling guys off to medical, to the hospital; they drank all of their water in the first hour. Could have sold my canteen of water for \$10. I took a little of it after 4:00 o’clock in the afternoon. Come to a stock tank, guys jumped in. I was raised different out on a ranch. Didn’t need water. Didn’t bother me at all to go without water.

I remember when we went out on maneuvers. We were issued 50 rounds of ammo. We’d be shooting at some targets. Back at camp we had to clean our rifle before we could eat. Mine was always clean first; I got my gun clean right quick because I never fired a shot. I dug in the ground a little and ejected my ammo. Buried it, it hadn’t been fired.

Pay was \$21 a month. I made \$5 extra from the first month because I made expert marksman. Mine was \$26. I was the only one made \$26. They took out for laundry, housekeeping, and such — \$2 for dishwashing. Ended up about \$17.

I sent home \$1,520 while I was in the service. My father was opposed to gambling. He asked where I got all that money. I told him I loaned my money at GOOD interest.

Played a lot of Black Jack. I had a partner from Philippines. His father was in the military. He was a card shark. I never caught him at his tricks. He handled the cards; I handled the money. One time I had 78 cents. An hour and a half later, pitching dice, I had \$87.

I was smart enough to be lucky, real lucky with money. Loaned a lot of it out. Made quite a bit of it in the service. A.J. did, too.

I loaned out a lot of money. They'd pay me \$10 for \$5. A.J. did that, too, in the service, loaned out a lot of money. He had a big Indian partner, would pick 'em up and slam 'em down a few times. No trouble collecting.

One thing you could do: about the 20th, loan somebody \$10, payday they'd pay you \$20 — double your money. They wanted to go to town so bad. Wanted to go to town to see a girl.

One day I made enough in a poker game to buy myself out — \$220. Bought myself out of the service for \$120. Won it in a Black Jack game. I won more than that one night. I was in the service 1 year, 1 month, 3 days, and 32 minutes — as close as I can figure out, 1935-1936.

We used to play this card game, Knock Poker, where you dealt cards around. One that ended up with the highest number in his hand would win the pot. One time the guy on my left had four kings, so he said, "I got this hand beat." I had three aces. He said four kings beats three aces. I said, "Four aces beat four kings." He said, "You've only got three aces." I said, "There's the fourth one — on the stack face down — it was my turn to draw. It was an ace. He tore his cards in half and never played cards with me again.

One time it was about 100-115 degrees, hot. I was working in the stable. A horse pawed a fellow. They take their front foot and attack them. Lieutenant Colonel drove up. I saluted him and told him, "Sir, there's a fellow in there, horse pawed him. I need you to help me." He just sat there, "You need to get you some help." I told him, "I need help right now, right this minute." He got out of his car and helped me.

Horse pawed him on the side of the face. He was in the hospital quite awhile, cheekbone broken. He'd have just died pretty quick, laying out there in that hot sun. It gets real hot in El Paso. Only time I ever asked one of those high ranking officers to do anything. Only two of us there at the corral. I think they were out on the shooting range or something.

One time we were riding about 4 miles from post, having a sham battle. They ran two groups together, into each other. Two horses ran together. A friend, real good friend also from Lovington, had his leg broken in two places. Big shot officer rode up, "Any of the horses hurt?" Makes you think, they sure don't think much of their men. I rode in and got an ambulance.

One of the horses was hurt. Had a gun sticking in his belly. The horse died. As long as I was there, they didn't have any more sham battles.

When I was in the service, one time a Mexican fellow transferred into our unit. Smelled like he hadn't had a bath in a month. Bunch of us took him and scrubbed him up, with brushes like you'd scrub the floor. From that day forward we'd just say, "Julio, it's time for a bath." He'd get in there and take one. He was clean.

Vernon's best friend there in the service, one time was down at the south end of El Paso. They were supposed to go to some dance. He got cut up bad, entrails hanging out. His daddy got out there. Rode to the hospital in the north of El Paso. Held his entrails in. They had not cut any guts. He was two months in the hospital, came out okay. He couldn't tell Vernon because Vernon was already out.

Best part of the service? When I got out! Bought myself out for \$120. I was used to working all my life. They were just too lazy. From Fort Bliss, I went to work on the ranch, my father's ranch, different jobs at different ranches. Never did make any money.

I was well pleased when they okayed a place in the National Cemetery for Mildred and I on account of my service.

Recorded August 2006-June 2007 by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Transcribed Wednesday, 4 July 2007

SHEEP MAN

I was known as kind of a sheep man. I'd get \$50 a month working on ranches. Regular hands got \$30. I helped in lambing season on several ranches. We sheared them in the spring. Take lambs in the fall to the railroad.

One time I was moving sheep past Cottonwood Grove, me and two other fellows. They've changed the road now. There's a spring in there. We were about out of groceries. I rode over to where there was a little store, about 5 or 6 miles. After I got bacon and a few things it was just pouring down rain. I walked back to the railroad. Had to cross the tracks, had left my horse on the other side. It was pitch dark; I couldn't see a thing. I got to wondering if my horse would go to the camp or go home. It was about 15 miles home. I just let him take the lead. When it stopped raining I could see the campfire. I was really glad. That horse, I would just leave him behind the sheep, drop the reins. He'd graze. Never did run off.

We were taking those sheep to Mr. Carr. When we moved to the ranch, he let Papa have a bunch on halves. After so many years we took him his original bunch.

Mr. Carr bought a ranch 60 miles northwest of Clovis, up at Melrose. He sent a chuck wagon down there, the driver knew the way to go. He wanted to hire someone to move the sheep. Papa told Mr. Carr I would deliver them, "Put George in charge."

Mr. Carr was kinda against it because I was so young. "He's just a kid." I was 17 years old. Papa told him I had a lot of experience, "He can do as good as anybody."

It was 125 miles over to his ranch. He wanted those sheep moved in 10 days. I told him, "I won't move them that fast." It was the fall of the year and if I drove them that fast they would lose weight. "If I take my time I will get them there in as good a shape as they are in now." He told me, "Okay, use your own judgment."

He offered me a dollar and a quarter a day to move those sheep, 760 sheep. When we got there, we had 765, five more than when we started. I took 23 days to move them; they looked better when we got there than when they started. When you get there with more than 100%, they pay more. He gave me a dollar and a half a day. Since my helper, Neal Childers, my neighbor, had been such a help to me I asked Mr. Carr to pay him a dollar and a quarter. And he did.

We rode horseback home, took three days. We'd stop and let our horses graze when we found good grass.

Dad sold 2,000 head to another rancher, Mr. Cox.

One time I was moving sheep; I was about 16. We were passing through ranches with several hundred sections. A man rode up, had two cowboys with him. First he jumped on the chuck wagon driver. "Who's in charge here?"

We were five miles from his house; it was 15 miles to go around his place — three times as far. Would be 1 1/2 miles on through his property; one mile forward, four miles back.

I told him I was in charge. I stood up to him. After while he said, “Go on through. When you finish this job, come by my ranch and I’ll give you a job.”

I didn’t tell him, I don’t want the job. I don’t want to work for a man that would come jump on a kid moving his sheep 5 miles from his house. Ranchers ought to get along.

Saw him in Tatum years later. He asked me again if I wanted a job. I told him, “No, I’m busy.” I think because I had nerve enough to argue with him.

One time, before they used trucks, I was taking sheep to the railroad, I think to Elkins, between Roswell and Clovis, about 75 miles from our place. I would take two weeks or more, drive them real slow to not lose weight. We killed 57 rattlesnakes. There were a lot of snakes in the sand country. We were lucky.

I was walking one time at night. One of them (rattlesnakes) bit me on the britches leg. I kicked it loose.

One time Elroy Schnelle, he’s two years younger than I am, we were going along moving some sheep. Elroy Schnelle was driving the chuck wagon. We passed a farm house. Elroy stuck his head out of the chicken house window. Elroy said, “George, how many of these do you think I ought to get?” The people weren’t home. I told him, “We don’t want to take any of them. Leave them alone.”

One time I was riding along in the sand country, weeds about this high (4 feet) solid with trails. Rained a lot that year. My horse got jumpy. Coyote about 4 feet behind us in the weeds. Horse started jumping. Suddenly I saw the coyote in front of the horse. I kicked my horse and the coyote jumped out in the weeds. Didn’t see him any more.

With my helper, Childers, I would take sheep to Elkins, between Roswell and Clovis, about 75 miles, 20 some-odd days. Put 10-12 herds together, 1,700 to 2,000 sheep. Every night build a corral, net wire, steel posts, let them graze. Take it down every morning.

Papa hired shearers. Hired a crew, mostly Mexican from Mexico, fourteen shearers. They wouldn’t work without lunch. Mama cooked for them. They would take a whole loaf of bread or a whole hunk of meat, one guy. That got Mama upset. She learned she had to cut everything up.

The man with the machine got paid. Paid them 11 cents a head. Shearers got 6 or 7 cents a head of that.

I’ve wondered how my father made enough money to raise that many kids.

My father borrowed \$250 to pay for feed. Man owned the store got worried he wouldn’t get his money. When we took the wool in, the man owned the store wouldn’t get out of the way. Another guy paid Papa’s check and said, “Get out of our way.”

I could shear 75 sheep in a day, 9 cents a head, 7-12 pounds of wool per sheep. Big bucks probably shear 20 pounds. I think one time I sheared 140.

One time I was moving sheep, come a blizzard. My horse's eyelids froze shut. Had to stop and turn around to let his eyes thaw out. I wore a felt hat with little holes. Got so cold I nearly froze. Couldn't go in the house when I got there. Just stayed there on the porch for 30-40 minutes to get out of the wind. Would just burn in the house. Worst blizzard I was ever in.

Another time I was moving sheep. I went to sleep; I was real tired. Blizzard came in. Nose froze. Ears got about an inch thick, tops hung down.

One time I was moving a big herd. Came to a place had a big pond of water. They were growing sweet potatoes. Found the rancher in the barn. He hollered, "Shut that door." Air was cooler in the barn. Told him my sheep needed a drink. He wanted us to go on by, "Can they fly?" "I've never seen any of them fly." "Oh, bring them on." Little over a thousand head."

I moved a many a herd of sheep.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis

Silver City, New Mexico

Transcribed Friday, 6 July 2007

COLLEGE

I went to school, the college there in Denton, North Texas State Teachers College. Went on my motorcycle. They said I couldn't enter because I didn't have a high school diploma. I told them I would come in without one and leave without one. They said that's not the way college worked. Rudolph worked there and talked to them so they let me attend.

I was interested mostly in mathematics. One of my professors said I understood mathematics better than anybody he ever saw. I didn't know algebra.

I worked for a lady there, Mrs. Wright, took care of her yard for my meals. Slept over at Rudolph's. Made enough for two meals a day, breakfast and supper. I took care of Rudolph's yard, too.

She ran a girls' boarding house, largest boarding house there. Between semesters, she had me cleaning up the boarding house. I thought there wasn't anybody there; I thought it was empty. There was a bathroom at the end of the hall. All of a sudden a girl came down the hall, not wearing a thing except a towel over her shoulder. She saw me and just kept coming. She walked right by me and said, "Pardon me." I said, "That's okay." I kept mopping there a long time, but she never did come back.

That heat nearly killed me. I was losing a pound, pound and a half every day. Lost 38 pounds in 30 days while I was down there. I had to get out of that heat. Denton gets really hot.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis

Silver City, New Mexico

Transcribed Friday, 6 July 2007

GEORGE MET AND MARRIED MILDRED

As Lila, a dear, dear friend of Mildred's and an equally dear friend of George's — from the Palisades, was printing the George stories yesterday, she remembered him telling how he met Mildred and how he asked her to marry him. "P.S. George, tell it for me just one more time ... please."

With this request, Uncle George looked very wise and said, "Well, I'm not telling everything. I'm keeping some of it to myself."

?The memories are really special, huh?

With a tender look, he replied, "That's right. That's exactly right."

"I should start a few years before I met Mildred. I was about 17; we didn't marry until we were nearly 25 years old.

I was considered quite a sheep man; I had quite a reputation for being able to take care of sheep. All the ranchers around would bring their sheep to our ranch, 10-12 herds. We would put them together into one herd and I would take them to the railroad. The size of the herd would always be different, anywhere from 1,200 to 2,000, something like that.

There would be one man driving the chuck wagon and one man on a horse to help me. You don't want sheep to lose weight on the drive. If they do, it cuts down on their value, you won't get as much for them. You can't rush them. When I drove sheep they didn't lose weight. Every night we built a corral, net wire, steel posts, and let them graze. I took them about 75 miles, 20 some odd days, to a little town called Elkins, between Roswell and Clovis.

Then all the ranchers would meet us there and separate out their sheep to sell them. Somebody, usually one of the ranchers, would do the cooking for everybody.

This time Tom Taylor, rancher from Lamey—he had about 25 head—was doing the cooking and, I mean, he made good biscuits! I said, 'Mr. Taylor, do you have any daughters?'

'Sure do. I have three daughters.'

'Can any of them cook biscuits like this?'

‘All of them can.’

‘One of these days I’m going to marry one of them.’ He never forgot that and after Mildred and I were married, he would remind me of it every once in awhile.

Anyway, I went to work for this woman rancher, Mary H. Stansell. She lived in town; she was in insurance; she had lost her husband. Her ranch was 8 miles west of Lovington. I had a reputation for being able to take care of sheep. She had a herd of sheep and needed somebody in lambing season. She paid me \$50 a month, high wages for those days. A regular hand got \$25/month.

Mildred Taylor was already working there, doing the cooking. That’s where I met her, spent about 40 days eating her good biscuits and things she cooked. I was thinking, ‘I’d like to have a cook like that.’ I took her to one dance. She was a good dancer.

We were eating breakfast one morning, just the two of us.

‘Let’s go to town tonight and get married.’

Mildred said, ‘Do you mean that?’

‘If I didn’t mean it, I wouldn’t have said it.’

We were engaged about 10 hours. When we got off work, we went to town — Lovington. Mildred knew the county clerk and the minister and had made arrangements for the County Clerk to come in and take care of the license. We went to the Methodist Church to get married. Mildred was a strong Methodist. The woman rancher came to church as a witness.

I had \$2; Mildred had \$12. I married her for her money.

Honeymoon? We stayed in town that night with Mrs. Stansell and went back to work the next morning.

We lived in the main ranch house as long as we were there since the rancher lived in town. We worked there 30 more days until lambing season was over. The rancher didn’t need me anymore since she had a regular hand she only had to pay \$25/month.

I didn’t know I was going to get married. All of a sudden I decided I would. If I had it to do over I would do the same thing. She was a good woman. I married the most wonderful woman in the

world! And she sure could make good biscuits!

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis

Silver City, New Mexico

Tuesday, 27 February 2007

RANCHING WITH MILDRED

After lambing season on that lady rancher's place, Mildred and I, we spent a short time at the ranch with my folks.

I owned an old car when Mildred and I married, Model A Ford coupe. Paid \$50 for it before I went to the service. One thing I can say, never in my life made a car payment. Paid cash. I would buy a new car when the ash tray got full. I don't even smoke.

I had bought that 640 acres plus Vernon's 320 acres. What we used for money, I don't know.

One thing I did after Mildred and I got married, I trapped skunks. I trapped lots and lots of skunks. Sold them in Lovington for 50 cents each. They shipped them somewhere for \$1.50 each.

We did lots of things. Sold butter, pats of butter, eggs. Never did get in debt really. Nowadays everybody owes for everything. When I came here [to Gila] I paid cash for the place, paid cash for the place next door. One year I bought and sold 13 pieces of property.

The Wynan place was 320 acres ($\frac{1}{2}$ section). We moved that two-room house from there onto a piece of land I'd bought (the Worden place).

The Wynan place had peach trees. We canned over a thousand #2- $\frac{1}{2}$ cans of peaches. We just ate them. There were apricot trees there, too.

Mrs. Wynan had a daughter and lived about 17 miles north and west of where we lived. Only way they traveled was horse and buggy. Mr. Wynan bought him a little feed grinder. Used a team of horses to run it, went round and round. One day there by himself, he caught two fingers in the grinder. The folks were in town. Was a blizzard. He cut his two fingers off, got on a horse and rode to town.

I bought 640 acres (the Worden place) from Seth Austin, 240 acres deeded, the rest state lease land. The deal was to pay down nothing and pay it out when I can. I worked for that rancher. He had ten sections. After so many years I got pretty far behind, \$750. He got to fussing at me.

I was telling a BIG rancher, June Tulk's brother. He said, "Sell your sheep. Cut you out a herd of mine." I told him, "I can't pay you now." He said, "We'll worry about that later." Sheep sold \$11 a head. Nice young ones for \$7 a head. Nice man. He was married. We used to have dances at our ranch, my father and mother. He would always attend.

Austin kinda went crazy. He'd be peeking in people's windows at night. They'd catch him. Just lost his mind.

The Warren place was 320 acres, $\frac{1}{2}$ section. Had a pretty nice home on it. Had a little pasture. Had a little field they used to grow things. Had a big garden. Papa helped Vernon buy it. He never lived on it. It was two miles to the east, kinda northeast, of the boundary line, about four miles from the

ranch house.

Mr. Warren had died and Mrs. Warren lived there with one of her nieces. Some kinfolk, uncle or something, lived in a separate little half dugout place behind the house.

Mildred and I lived there awhile after we bought it from Vernon. Ewald lived on the Warren place for awhile. I sold the Warren place when we moved to Ruidoso.

Dura Austin joined the Warren place on the north side. He had 5 sections. When Mildred and I were first married, I helped him put up a windmill and different things.

South of the Teague section, I had bought a section of land down there, the Worden place: 640 acres, 220 of the acres patented land, the rest leased land. I built a barn and corrals and chicken houses. I built a yard fence, planted trees, had a big garden, had sheep there.

Papa bought the ranch between us and the Warren place, Hickey place, leased it. When I was there I ran sheep on it.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Transcribed Sunday, 8 July 2007

MORE ON BOUNTY HUNTING

The only animal I ever killed for money was skunks. When Mildred and I were first married and lived there south of the ranch on the Teague Place I had to make a living some way. I could work for one of the neighbors for a dollar a day. Skunk pelts would bring about 58 cents apiece. So I trapped skunks. I would usually get two or three in one day. The most I ever got in a day was 13. There for awhile one pelt would bring about a dollar and a half.

I trapped them in steel traps. I'd shoot them and let them spray themselves out and then take them to the house to skin them. I would put the hides on a stretcher to dry them.

It's a poor way to make a living. People didn't have welfare and food stamps. You made a living any way you could.

In the garden skunks will eat melons, watermelon and cantaloupe, tomatoes and cucumbers, all kinds of things. When I was gardening I used live traps to catch skunks. I would just pick them up and drown them in a tub of water. A skunk won't ever spray when they are drowned. When I stopped gardening, I stopped catching skunks. Didn't need to anymore.

There at Gila when I had skunks, I caught them in live traps. I never shot any. Didn't want to upset the neighbors with the spray. Drowned them. Didn't skin them out. Just buried them.

I wasn't ever sprayed by a skunk.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis

Silver City, New Mexico

Tuesday, 28 August 2007

MOVE TO THE MOUNTAINS – RUIDOSO

After I was married and had two children, I got deathly allergic to something there at the ranch. I would go to bed at night and couldn't breathe. Sheep and vegetation. Went to Ruidoso and felt good. I told Mildred, "We're moving here." We moved to the mountains so I could breathe.

Ewald asked me how I was going to make a living. "I have no idea, but I saw a lot of people around there that didn't look hungry."

I gave a check for the place and didn't have any money in the bank. I went to borrow the money, "I don't have any collateral." That lady rancher helped us buy the place in Ruidoso.

When we were moving to Ruidoso, went through Cloudcroft and Alamogordo. Bright moonlight night. We just slept out on the ground in a bedroll there, between Alamogordo and Tularosa. The two children slept in the back the station wagon. I woke up in the night. There was a coyote nose within two inches of my nose. As soon as I moved he took off. Curious. Closest I've ever been to a live coyote. Could have been his breath what woke me up, STRONG breath.

We moved to Ruidoso about 1945. Bought a little farm from Cecil Harland for \$4,200, 9 acres behind Biscuit Hill. Biscuit Hill wasn't there then.

Behind our house there was another little house with two rooms. There was a chicken house, a barn for a milk cow, one milk cow, 9 acres or something like that. Took one horse up there, young horse, just got him broke good. Didn't have any use for him there. Sold everything out at the ranch.

Funny part about it was, Mildred and I moved up there. The very next day, Mama and Papa drove up. Mother never went back to the ranch. They stayed in the little house in the back there.

Crops had already been planted there on the place when we bought it. I remember when Papa and Mama were harvesting the cabbage, cutting it and putting it in crocks to make sauerkraut, Papa cut one cabbage and a gold piece fell out, fell out of the cabbage. I don't remember if it was a ten dollar or twenty dollar gold piece.

It was a good move for me because I felt better and we made a little money there.

Then we sold the farm and bought Hollywood Inn for \$10,000. It was completely crazy; we sold it out in pieces, made \$60,000 of stuff off of it.

One year I bought and sold 13 pieces of property, made a profit on all of them. One piece I bought as a favor to man had cancer. Paid him as much as I could; only made \$200 on that one.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis

Silver City, New Mexico

Transcribed Friday, 6 July 2007

FOX MERCANTILE

I never did have any problem with credit, people paying their bills. I know Stout and Long, the other two grocery/mercantile businesses there in Green Tree, had a lot of problems. I didn't give everybody credit. One time a fellow got behind \$230, stuccoed my house and worked for me until it was paid off.

When we sold out a Mexican came from Capitan, paid every dime he owed me, \$2-\$3 hundred dollars.

Had a fellow come in one time wanted credit. I told him, "I don't know you." Fellow said, "Back in Oklahoma they know me; they wouldn't give me credit." I went ahead and sold to him on credit. He always paid me.

One time Mildred and I were coming in late from a show or something. Fellow came right up to the car window. When he did he was looking right down my gun barrel. He put his hands up quick and said, "Mr. Fuchs, where did that come from?" "That's for me to know." He wanted to borrow \$5 for whiskey. I gave it to him. He paid me next morning.

One time in front of the grocery store some people were loading their groceries. Left a sack on the trunk. Sack full of money. I chased that car nine miles before I caught up with them. They had a boy born with a crippled foot. They'd been saving all those years to have it operated on. \$13 thousand dollars in that sack. I was always glad I did that, because that's the way I live.

One time there was a truck load of Mexicans, 30 or 40 of them. There was one old man in the bunch. Dropped a sack of money there in front of the store. All of them turned over their wages to the old man. They had been in Arizona working. There were thousands of dollars in that sack. When I gave it to him the old man kept saying, "Mucho bueno, hombre," tears running down his cheeks. Couldn't speak English. Young man explained it to me. At the end of harvest, when they got home, they divided it equally.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis

Silver City, New Mexico

Transcribed Friday, 6 July 2007

FOX CAVE

Best move we ever made was when we leased that Fox Cave. Went in debt quite a bit to do it. One thing I did in the beginning, I bought expensive counters. I bought limed oak counters, real nice ones, 8 foot long, 2 shelves. I told Mildred, "Expensive merchandise in cheap counters cheapens it. Average merchandise in expensive counters increases its value." It sure worked out that way. Cheap merchandise on nice counters sells better than good merchandise on cheap counters.

I was up in Santa Fe one time, stopped in to see one of my distributors, sold knives. He wanted to sell out. I bought \$900 and some dollars worth of knives at 25 cents each. Thought I had enough knives for the rest of my life. We resold them for \$1.50 to \$45.00 each. Before the month was out I had to order some more knives — certain ones, you know.

One year I paid \$3,500 income tax. If I had turned it all in, would have been \$6,000.

I had a fellow working with me that really knew how to merchandise stuff. We bought a bunch of 15 cent fans, three styles. Sold them for \$1.25, \$1.50, and \$1.95 each.

I've been all over. Up in Canada, Calgary. Pretty far west, north up the coast. East coast, New York City. Mildred and I took Kate up there, stayed a week, doing quite a bit of buying. Went directly into the big stores. That's when we had Fox Cave. Went in one store, bought knives, pocket knives, all kinds of knives. In the U.S. we were their number one customer. We had a counter 8 foot long, 3 shelves in it, side by side, 147 different styles.

People don't know it, but mass display sells. If I'd have had a dozen knives, they wouldn't have bought any. Max helped. He was good at merchandise.

One time I had some pictures of desert scenes. Big fat boy was looking at them, "How much for that picture?" I didn't pay much attention to him and just said, "It's pretty expensive," and went about my business. He asked me again. I told him the same thing. Third time, I figured he was about ready, "\$35." To prove he had the money, he bought three of them. People are like that.

They changed the highway. I was real fortunate. Governor Ed Mechem came down, "Let you in on a little secret. They're going to put the highway on the other side of the river, change the course of the river. Maybe you can sell out." I sure did appreciate it, because it happened just like he said.

Man that owned the place, Bill Brim, him and his brother. He figured he could lease it out to somebody. His brother bought me out. When he took it over business went down, from \$3,000 a day to \$600. They put up signs, "If you break me you've bought me."

Somebody break something, I would say, "Aw, forget it. Anybody can have an accident." You build a business with attitude. Those people will come back and buy something.

When we took Kate, David and little Rudi to New York, we stayed another week after they left. We went up into the arm of the Statue of Liberty. We went to the top of the Empire State Building. You

could really see the town. We went to some place, I forgot what it was called, you could put a nickel in, open the door, and get your sandwich — looked like a post office with boxes.

Went to the wholesaler, I think he was a Jew, we bought knives from. Went in and introduced ourselves. “Mr. Fuchs, I want to know what you do with all these knives. In these United States, you’re my number one customer.” He took me and Mildred to lunch, to a German restaurant. They even talked German in there.

I sold more knives than anybody in the country. Eight foot counter, completely full of knives, no two alike. Paid 15 cents to \$5.00 for them. Sold them for \$1.95 to \$35. Had such a stock, any one sold, we’d just reach down, get another one and replace it. We made quite a bit of money in that store. Fellow we sold it to went broke.

I think we sold more knives than anything else, but we sold an awful lot of salt and pepper shakers.

In New York we went to shows, we went to more than one. Radio City Music Hall and watched the Rockettes dance, Mildred and I did after Kate and them were gone.

I had an Exxon credit card. They didn’t have Exxon gas in the eastern states. Had some brand of gas I’d never seen, don’t sell it in the West. They accepted my credit card at every station. I never got a bill for that gas. Haven’t got a bill yet.

One time at Fox Cave were quite a few customers. Big old skunk walked in the door. I told everybody to be real quiet. After awhile it walked back out the door. If it had sprayed in there, really would have messed it up.

I think the most interesting part of my life was when we had Fox Cave. I really enjoyed it. Just seeing what you could do with customers.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis

Silver City, New Mexico

Transcribed Friday, 6 July 2007

FRANCES AND FOX CAVE

[Frances, Your sweet brother is going to LOVE this!]

Having his email with breakfast this morning, Uncle George had a big smile when he said, “I remember. I don't remember the snake, but I remember one day, business was a little slow. Those two girls went out at the road, pulled up their britches legs — like they needed sex. They were just playing, but I got after them finally.

“I enjoyed having Frances work for us. She was real good!

“Peter Hurd drew us the picture of the fox we used. He was quite an artist. We had it copyrighted in the state. I had a bunch of those foxes. I had a big one made up for the front of the store. Had a dozen or two smaller ones along the highway in both directions.

“When I sold out to Brimm I tried to sell him that copyright. He wouldn't buy it. I told him, 'Okay, then I'm taking my foxes.' I think that was one reason he went broke. I had kinda got crosswise with him when he decided to put up that cafe in part of our parking lot. I didn't want him to do it, but he did it anyway.

“I later used that fox from the front of the building. I bought some apartments there east of Durango. They were call 'Mutt's Huts,' I used the sign I took off the Cave and called them 'Fox Huts.' Left it there when I sold it. Never did use the smaller ones, just left them laying up there somewhere.

“One day at Fox Cave, there were a bunch of customers, when all of a sudden a skunk walked in. I told everybody to to be real quiet, 'Don't panic, just stand still.' I kinda walked toward him and he turned around an walked out. He could have made a real mess in there.

“One time a fellow walked in. I said, 'I know you from somewhere. Then I remembered his name and everything. We went to school together in second grade in Abernathy, Texas. He finally remembered it and we had quite a visit. He was so amazed I remembered him.

E-mail Tuesday, 29 May 2007

FOREST SERVICE

I had a crazy dream last night. Somebody hauled a little mule for me to ride. They had a bunch of horses, drove the horses, hauled the mule. I didn't know the people. Didn't even know the mule.

One job, where I was paid by someone other than myself since Mildred and I got married, was working for the government, Forest Service. I'm glad I did because I draw retirement. That retirement sure comes in handy.

I worked temporary there in Ruidoso. Then in Colorado I wanted to work for them; they wanted to hire me on. At that time the age limit for full-time permanent hires was 50 years. I hired on at age 49 years, 11 months, and 28 days.

In Forest Service in Ruidoso, one thing I did, took my pickup and checked all the camps — fire danger. Checked out road conditions, built trails.

Working for the Forest Service there in Colorado wilderness, I built a bridge over a canyon. It was north and east of Pagosa Springs, West Fork side stream that runs in East Fork. It's 120 feet across, perfect arch, camber, 65 feet to the bottom of the canyon. Built of 2x6's, longest board is 6 feet. We hauled in the lumber with mules. Used a long cross cut saw.

My boss wanted this done and didn't have any idea how to do it. Just told me to do it. So I did it, removed the evidence, and didn't tell him how I did it. Told him, "That's for me to know." I dropped this big aspen tree across there, built over it, then cut it out when I was done and let it float down the river. He never did know how I did it.

Another crew were supposed to build a 12 foot bridge. Boss wanted a camber in it. Said, "I can't tell you how to do it. You'll have to ask George."

I used to be quite a builder for them. One summer I built five bridges.

One time we had to haul in with mules. Walk in on Monday, come back on Friday. There's some private property, Hearst, in there. Built trail around it. One time a boy ran through, came running back white as a sheet. Bear.

One time we left our chain saw in our tent when I was working for the Forest Service we lived there in Durango. When we came back on Monday it was gone. I kinda guessed who it was. Five years later I was on a hunting trip. Went to a feller's camp that I knew. I had put a different type of screw in the exhaust system. "Orville [Arvel], I thought you said you didn't take that chain saw." "I didn't." I showed him that screw. "I guess maybe I did." I didn't ask him for it back. He was quite a crook.

Something you would never see in a thousand lifetimes. There's a trail 1/2 mile or more from it. On the east side of the river there's a bluff, rock pinnacle, maybe 200 foot. One day we saw this big rock falling over. Dammed the river, made quite a little lake. You should have heard the noise. It was 14

miles out of town. They heard it in Pagosa Springs.

I worked for the Forest Service fourteen years. In Colorado I built 167 cattle guards, I think it was. Built them all over the forest. I was known as the 'Cattle Guard Man.'

I built a whole bunch of small bridges, you know, trail bridges.

Where did I learn all this? (A tap on the head) I just figured it out.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis

Silver City, New Mexico

Transcribed Friday, 6 July 2007

POLITICS

When I ran for County Commissioner in Lincoln County the second term, I didn't do any electioneering, never gave a speech. I didn't really care. I figured if they wanted me in they'd vote for me. Otherwise, it didn't matter. I got the highest number of votes of anybody in the county except the Sheriff and he didn't even have an opponent. He had a few more votes than me.

I never understood why, but the governor of the State of New Mexico, Ed Mechem, used to come see me and ask my opinion on certain things. I thought that was quite an honor. Governor would call, ask my opinion. Even came to visit me in Fox Cave.

When I was on County Commission, Earl Harcrow was County Clerk. Nice young man. I knew he was not going to live when he went to the hospital.

One thing I wasn't very proud of. Governor appointed me as right-of-way appraiser. Three of us: Federal government, County government, State government – George Fuchs. When we were appraising land in front of Ewald's place when they were going to move the road, I handed it over to the other two. Ewald had that apple stand. No law says the road has to go by your business. I was disappointed they didn't pay him more than they did. I owned the land across from it. They paid me enough to make a road into it.

When I was on the County Commission, they gave away those commodities. Ewald never applied for them. I used to bring him some, cheese and stuff.

After that, Governor Mechem appointed me as a spot appraiser. Anywhere the state was taking some land, they sent me there to appraise it.

I served two terms as County Commissioner, all that are allowed. They wanted me to run for State Senate. I wouldn't run. Didn't want to be away from home and business.

You didn't write all that down, did you? People would think I was bragging.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis

Silver City, New Mexico

Transcribed Friday, 6 July 2007

HUNTING

I was the luckiest hunter there was. I killed an awful lot of deer through my lifetime.

One time Herman and Cleo were visiting. Herman and I went hunting. Herman said, "If you get a chance, get me one." Herman said, "I'll just walk up this canyon." George said, "I'll just sit right here." Pretty soon here come an elk right past me.

Papa went hunting southwest of Carlsbad. He killed five wild turkey. It was legal to kill one. We got two deer. Put a tarp down over the turkey. Put the deer on the tarp. Went right through the check stand. A.J. and Betty were living on the coast of Los Angeles. Took one of those turkeys out there and cooked it. Rudolph went with us.

I shot a lot of deer and elk. I usually tried to hit the heart, it's an easier target than the neck, larger part of the deer. I was afraid I would miss the neck. Papa always hit the neck at the base of the skull. Deer drop straight down when you hit them like that.

One time we were sleeping close to Cloudcroft. All of a sudden two bear were there right on top of our bed. As soon as I woke up, the bear took off. We just stayed right there. Papa had shot and wounded that same bear. A.J. might still have that bear rug.

Elroy Schnelle came to Ruidoso one time. We hunted for four days, didn't get a thing. He was going to leave on the fifth day after lunch. We were camped by a road. I told him, "While you fix lunch, I'll just sit down over here." I saw two bucks, fired two shots, killed both of them. Elroy said two shots sounded like one shot they were so close together. I was a pretty fair shot, but nothing like Papa.

One time east of Alto, while I was County Commissioner, eleven men worked for the State out of Santa Fe came to hunt with us — when I was working for the highway department. A.J. came up there to hunt with us. He killed 7 deer in one day. I hunted all day, didn't get a shot. A.J. filled all their tags. A.J. said, "You gut 'em out, I'll go get another one." I got a wild turkey that day — walked right up in front of me. A.J. was a real good shot.

Hunting, I killed one for Mildred several times. One year she killed two elk and I didn't get one. In all those years at Palisades I killed a lot of elk. Never got a big one. Mildred got a bigger one than I ever did.

One time Herman and Cleo and we went hunting in Arizona. Herman and I went to town after some groceries. Was a bread truck in front of us. Door came open, about 12 loaves of bread fell out. We stopped and picked it up. Got into camp and realized it was old bread we had picked up. We couldn't use any of it.

I think I told you Ewalee beat us shooting with a pistol.

Since I have been lying around thinking I might die any minute, I have been thinking it was wrong to kill all those deer and animals and things. Except house flies, they're such a pest. And scorpions.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Transcribed Friday, 6 July 2007

PALISADES

Quite a few bear there at Palisades. One morning we saw eleven.

Lyla had a bear in her cabin. One of them crawled in through her kitchen window — small one. She didn't see him, he was in her bedroom.

One cabin west of there had a problem. I loaned him a gun. He said, "I think I shot a bear. Game warden came up. Bear broke the glass in the outside door, then opened the door some way. I told him, "Next one that comes in the house, I'll shoot"

At Palisades I probably could have killed a dozen bear, but I didn't do it.

There were a lot of moles up there. There'd be snow. They would make tunnels under the snow, on top of the ground.

We nearly got snowed in that last year. I really got scared. I was afraid I couldn't get back up there where Mildred was.

We tried to stay at Palisades until the end of hunting season. They started having three hunting seasons. I finally told the owners we wouldn't stay for that last season.

They have it better now. They have a phone up there.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis

Silver City, New Mexico

Transcribed Saturday, 7 July 2007

GEORGE

We moved to Abernathy in 1918, before I was 6 years old. Uncle Ben Struve lived on a farm about 2 miles south. Charlie Goethe and Aunt Olga lived up there. Victor Struve, Marvin and Arthur's brother, and I had the same birthday. I was older.

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I used to track things when I was real young. One day my dad sent me to town with two mules for the auction block. I sold them, but I bought a horse. One of those mules had kind of a knot on one leg. Other one was so lazy he wouldn't work, but he looked pretty good. I just gave them the one that wouldn't sell. Papa was real disappointed. Said I should have brought the one with the knot on the leg back home. I bought the horse for a nickel. Papa was real disappointed about it, too. I was going to trade that horse to a neighbor for a good sized heifer. Vernon piped up, "He only paid a nickel for that horse." I sold him for 35 cents. It would have been good to have that heifer, worth 10 dollars.

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When I was at 15 I drove to Abernathy from the ranch. On the way back, I stopped in Lubbock and got gas. When I got back to the car I realized he had given me too much change, a dollar too much. I walked back and told the man, "You made a mistake and gave me an extra dollar. He said, "That'll help you remember it pays to be honest." That's how much he appreciated what I did. A dollar was a lot of money back then.

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When did I get my driver's license? When they required them. When I was young, didn't anybody have a license. They didn't require them.

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One time I was out looking for a job. I went up to this farm. Man said, "I need somebody RIGHT NOW." I told him, "I'll go get my clothes."

"We will be gone when you get back." Their mother was deathly sick.

I went to get my clothes. Just about didn't get back. Water was running in the draw. Threw my motorcycle down on its side. I had to go back 10-15 miles to a creek to another bridge. When I got back, the man was gone. I milked some cows, worked in the fields, took care of horses. I had to ask a neighbor which field was his. One field needed to be cultivated real bad. I hitched up some horses and worked there eight days. They got back about 9:00 o'clock at night. They paid me in cash, about two dollars a day.

It was a time you just couldn't get a job. Must have been in the '30s. I made money any way I could.

I rode my motorcycle into Plainview and got a job mowing lawns. Gasoline was 12 cents a gallon. One time in Fort Worth I bought gas for 9 cents a gallon. I was riding a motorcycle, couldn't buy very much.

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There at Milnesand, New Mexico, north of Tatum 50 miles. Come a blizzard in the Spring. I was working for two men, one of the said, "I'll just cut the fence. Haul them some feed." I told them, "Why don't you cut the fence and let them walk?"

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I built a lot of windmill towers. Neal Childers helped me put up a lot of windmill towers. Built them on the ground and raised them up. One time Childers came to help me. Had to dig deep holes, four foot, four of them. He dug the first hole. I dug three and finished first. I was digging in soft sand, he was digging in solid rock.

My father rigged up an outfit. We pumped two wells with one windmill.

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One time before I was married I kinda took a liking to a neighbor girl, a rancher, real nice looking girl, Zella Childers. One day a guy rode by to go see her. I followed. He tied his horse at the corral. I tied mine at the front gate and went on in to see her. Trouble is, she wanted to get married. I wasn't ready. I was about 19 or 20. I married the best woman in the world.

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My father had education, went to college, had a college degree, I think. He studied astronomy. I think I was the only one of ten children without an education. I might have made the most money. Herman did real well, too.

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Somebody was hauling quite a few children to Tatum to school. They had to come out to the ranch. Cost \$12 a month for Georgia. I had some cash, put \$200 in the bank. In the next couple of days I write that check for \$12. Bank turned it down. I went down to Lovington to see what was wrong. They had deposited my money in Roland's account. We looked quite a bit alike. Only time in my life I wrote a check that was turned down.

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One time in Del Norte, Colorado we met a couple of people. One of them said to me, "Fuchs?" I said, "Yes." "We have a bunch of neighbors look just like you." Hermann Fuchs' brother settled up north. Hermann Fuchs was Papa's father.

One of the boys, I think Marion, was signing up for the service. Some of the Struves said there was an officer looked just like my family. Never made a connection. They nearly wanted to call him Uncle A.J.

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I went into a bank there in Pagosa Springs. Bought a \$10K saving certificate, high interest. Told Mildred, "Let's get another \$10K." Put them in safety deposit. Few days later a man did some work for me — TV dish. Went to write him a check and found the check to the bank in my checkbook. I

asked him to take it to town for me. Next time I was in there the lady hugged my neck, "That would have really cost me." I hadn't even noticed it. That's the way our father raised us.

One time a group of us rode horseback all the way to the top of Mt. Baldy. Later A.J. and some boy rode their motorcycles up there.

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One time in the service we went over to Juarez to dance. We decided to leave and went outside. A couple of those Mexicans decided they wanted to fight. They weren't going to leave us alone. I took their heads, one in each hand and smacked them together. Sounded like cracking eggs. We left immediately. I never heard anything about it. I never told this to anybody before now; first time I told it. I figure the time has run out they can do anything about it. I was pretty strong, working on the ranch.

===

8 September 2006. Weighed 128 pounds with undershirt, shorts and socks; least I ever weighed. Got to where I weighed 147 with clothes. Weighed 162-168 most of my life. Most I ever weighed was 186, in the service, with nothing to do.

I have been very, very fortunate to live this long. I have practically never been sick.

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis

Silver City, New Mexico

Transcribed Sunday, 8 July 2007

ALBANO GEORGE FUCHS

Reference dates:

Born Marble Falls, Texas – 15 July 1912
 Move from Marble Falls to Abernathy, Texas - early Spring 1918
 Move from Abernathy to the ranch, Tatum/Lovington, New Mexico – 1926
 Military Service – 1935-1936
 Marry Mildred Taylor – 1 June 1937
 Move to Hondo Valley, New Mexico - June 1945
 Purchase Hollywood Inn Autumn 1945 (one winter only)
 Purchase Fox Mercantile, Green Tree/Palo Verde - Spring 1946
 Move to home in Ruidoso - 1950
 Sell Fox Mercantile / Lease Fox Cave - December 1952
 Open Fox Cave - February 1953
 Total Fox Cave 4 1/2 years, sell lease/merchandise - May 1957
 Move to Durango, Colorado – Spring 1961
 Move to Pagosa Springs, Colorado – 1977
 Move to Gila, New Mexico – 1995
 Move to Silver City, New Mexico – September 2006
 Next move, Fort Bayard, New Mexico
 [Died at Millie's Assisted Living, Silver City, New Mexico – 16 February 2008]

FAMILY

Papa and Mama:

- Albano John Fuchs (A.J.) 1877, March 1
 - Georginia Anna Fuchs (Gini) 1880, December 21
- Married 1901, May 1

Siblings:

- Ewald Herman 1902, March 20
- Gertrude Mercedes 1903, September 29
- Rudolph Albano 1905, November 23
- Caroline Theodora 1907, November 27
- Herman Fritz 1909, April 24
- Albano George 1912, July 15
- Vernon Ben 1914, July 27
- Roland Sigfried 1917, April 17
- Marco Bettis 1919, July 11
- Marion Julian 1919, July 11

Uncle Moritz Goebel had stomach cancer for three years when he died. Uncle Ben Struve said, “I hope when I die I don’t lay around and suffer for years.” The next day Uncle Ben walked out into his backyard and keeled over dead.

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Uncle George Struve, had a little farm and ranch west of Olton. Had a little dugout in the backyard.

He gave a dance and I drove down there. He introduced me to a girl, a real nice looking lady. I danced with that girl. I thought to get a date. At the end of the evening, the girl said, I better go get my kids. She was married to one of the musicians. He was quite a prankster.

My mother’s father, Fritz Fuchs, lived out there with them in that dugout the last few years of his life. They couldn’t have him in the house; he was filthy and he smelled horrible. But he was a very strong man and worked hard

He lived with us for awhile. Didn’t live in the house with us. Lived out in the shop back there. We’d take food to him. Couldn’t stand to have him in the house. He never took a bath.

He’d grow a garden and all kinds of things. Didn’t go with us to the ranch. Moved him to Uncle George Struve’s. They had that place for him and had work for him to do.

He was strong, grubbed sage. Smelled as strong, too! Never changed clothes. I don’t know if he ever took a bath in his life. His wife left him. I have an idea he was running around with other women is why she left him.

My mother’s father, when he was up in years — he died at 97 — was a dirty old man. Never changed clothes. He smelled, chewing tobacco down his front, had sex with pigs.

When we lived at Marble Falls the older boys would take him down to the river, take soap and give him a scrubbing.

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Mama’s brother Emil just had a heel. He was in a boat duck hunting. Shotgun went off, shot his foot off.

Emil’s children: Gilbert - oldest, Edith (Jennings), Olga Lou, Otto, Edmond – barber in Oklahoma, Rudolph and Bruno – twins, youngest. [The twins were actually Emil’s two youngest brothers.]

Edith Jennings had a baby. One time she was in the other room changing diaper, I opened the door. She tried to hide it. That little boy’s male organ was 6 inches when he was a month old. He wouldn’t ever go with girls. Committed suicide when he was 18-23 years old, somewhere in there. It was 26 inches.

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Mama's brother, Fritz Fuchs, they adopted a little girl. She rode to school with us. She married a man, I think named Alton somebody. They both, her and her husband, had Alzheimer's when they were really young, maybe 65.

===

I don't remember much about Christmas. That's all pretty much faded from my mind. We always had oranges and apples and nuts. Down there at Marble Falls Papa would cut a tree, cedar usually. A few times we just had part of an apple tree that had died.

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During World War II, Rudolph was an interpreter in the service. First they put him to work in a machine shop, truck mechanic. Found out he didn't know anything about it. While interpreting, he was in New York where they had a prison camp.

After he grew up Rudolph went to bed early — in the morning — and got up early — in the morning. I don't think he ever got more than 2 or 3 hours of sleep a night.

Rudolph was married to a real nice lady, Austa Parker. She finally had to quit him because he was bringing men in. Rudolph had a boyfriend even when he was married. She found out he was sleeping with other men. They were married about four years. He brought her out to the ranch one time.

I went on my motorcycle to visit Rudolph one time. Twelve of us on motorcycles. We traveled 85-90 miles an hour. At 2:00 AM I took off on a country road and stopped to see George and Olga Struve. Stayed a few days.

I did a lot of work for Rudolph. I went down there different times, put some frames on doors one time.

One time Rudolph gave us a bunch of iris bulbs. They all died.

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One time Papa needed a plow. He could get a plow for two dollars. Papa pulled out two silver dollars.

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One time Herman and I put up a bar to chin. Papa chinned up with one arm seven times, other arm seven times, without touching the ground. Papa was strong.

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Papa would take a washer with a hole that a bullet could just pass through, just bigger than a bullet. Paste an S&H Green Stamp over the hole, didn't want to waste a regular stamp. He'd shoot through the hole every time, with the hole in the Green Stamp to prove it. Never knew him to miss. Washer had to be tossed right, face on.

===

Ewalee was married to Mike. One time they were visiting us up there in Colorado. Mike brought a pistol. He was telling me what a good shot he was. He thought he was one of the best pistol shots in the world. He made a good score. I beat him a little. Then Ewalee came out there and beat me. I didn't even know she could shoot a pistol. I think it's just a talent that runs in the Fuchs family.

===

Cleo (Heidel) was a teacher. She was living at our house when she and Herman got married.

I don't remember what year, not long after Herman and Cleo married, he leased a little ranch west of Hobbs near Monument. He was moving some sheep. Had a team of horses hooked to a wagon, two or three horses. Unhooked the horses. Real hot day. Herman went to sleep under the wagon. Woke up. Rattlesnake under there with him, crawling across there. Herman couldn't jump up and get away. Snake made the decision. Herman didn't move. I sure would hate to get that close to a rattlesnake.

One time Herman was moving stuff into his house. Every time he would leave somebody would break in. When he talked to the Deputy Sheriff about it, they set it up like everybody was gone. Stayed all night. Nobody broke in. Deputy Sheriff was brother-in-law to the thief. I thought that was kinda funny. Herman found out who the man was doing the stealing — one of his neighbors. This was long before Fred was born.

===

Carolina and Gertrude both did inside work — had too many brothers. We had chickens. I think either Gertrude or Carolina gathered eggs.

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A.J. — Grosspapa shooting through the hole, just bigger than a bullet, covered with an S&H Green Stamp, in a washer tossed in the air. Had to toss them right, face on.

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Gertrude and Herbert had a little boy when they came from Abernathy to Tatum. Weyman. I think he was 3 1/2-4 years old. When they got to the ranch, he named every town they came to. He knew just where they lay.

Little boy took some kind of very contagious disease. I don't know just what it was. They put him in some kind of steel casket and sealed it. He was 4 or 5 when he died, I think 4.

Before he got sick, when he was in good health, he knew mathematics. He knew all his multiplication tables. Never been to school. He had an unusual mind for a child.

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Ernest and Carolina lived there at Abilene. Ernest liked to go squirrel hunting. I went down there, just going to be there on Sunday. Ernest said, "I don't shoot squirrels on Sunday." I shot two or three. Ernest said, "There's one!" "Where, I don't see it." Ernest said, "Hand me the gun." I never did tell

him I played a trick on him.

Remember Amelia Earhart, the pilot? When Ernest and Carolina lived at Round Rock, Texas, they had neighbors named Earhart, daughter named Amelia—not the pilot.

Before Ernest passed away, he lost one foot. He had diabetes. I got so tickled at him. He said, “If I had both feet I’d get married again.” He knew nobody would have him with one foot.

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Anna Manna had a boy. He was flying a plane around the house. Side slipped, crashed into the ground, killed him right there in front of him. Benny Joe. Showing off, got to going too slow.

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My mother had all those children and did a lot of work, but she stayed healthy as long as she lived. Her mind got a little bad, but she was in pretty good physical condition. Even there at the last she could run fast enough I couldn’t hardly keep up with her. One time there in Abilene we were walking to Carolina’s, started to rain. Mama started running, faster than I could, to get out of the rain.

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Uncle Alfred Schnelle had a grocery/hardware/gasoline/garage business. His store was “Handy Stop” between Fredericksburg and San Antone.

Uncle Alfred would come down to Fox Cave. He had a big time, selling stuff they didn’t need to people. He could really sell.

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The hardest thing I ever did in my life was to haul Papa to an insane asylum. Rudolph, Gertrude and I took him. We were driving up there and passed the sign, “Las Vegas.” Papa said, “Las Vegas, that’s where they take crazy people.” I thought maybe we were making a mistake. We stopped to have breakfast before we got to the place. Papa sat there and ate his napkin, chewed it up and ate the whole thing.

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[Recorder’s note: Of all the siblings, Roland was virtually never mentioned. Asked about this, Uncle George said he was never very close to Roland and didn’t remember much about Roland’s childhood. He recalled: “Roland married Avis Barrick, Ruby’s sister, and they lived there on the ranch until Roland was killed in the automobile accident near Lubbock, Texas, when he went to the doctor there when Eva LaVerne was just a baby. Roland had ‘sugar diabetes’ real bad. Then after she went to college, Avis married Woody Allen.”]

Recorded by Sophora Fuchs Davis
Silver City, New Mexico
Transcribed Sunday, 8 July 2007

A D D E N D A

WHO MOVED TO RUIDOSO, NM, AND WHEN?

By

George and Mildred Fuchs

With Everybody's Help

August 9, 2003

1. George & Mildred Fuchs Moved to the Harland property 1945

They had taken a vacation after lambing season in 1945. While they were spending the night at an old CC camp near Tularosa, NM, a coyote with his mouth wide open came within six inches of George's face. After they calmed down, Georgia Ruth and A.J. spent the rest of the night in the car with the doors locked. The next morning when they went on to Ruidoso, NM, George noticed that his eyes cleared up from hay fever for the first time in years. Therefore, he was ready to move to Ruidoso that day.

They moved from the Big House at the Lea County Ranch in McDonald, NM in May of 1945. George & Mildred bought Cecil & Louise Harland's place. Harland's son was Grady Harland. Grew a big garden that year including some cabbage, which was made into sauerkraut. They had chickens and sold eggs. The place came with a beehive. Grosspapa and Little A.J. stole the honey. The only causality was a bee sting to Little A.J. on the bottom of the foot. That fall they had more than eight inches of snow on the peach orchard while the leaves and peaches were still on the trees. They spent the whole day knocking the snow off the peach trees with a broom and picking peaches as fast as they could. They saved most of the peaches. The next morning they had a hard freeze. Mildred remembers a big buck came off the mountain every day during hunting season and lay in the front yard. George and Grosspapa did not go hunting that year. Georgia Ruth and some little girl from across the road went out each morning and caught the school bus to Stetson school.

2. Grossmama & Grosspapa Moved to former Harland property 1945

Two weeks after George and Mildred moved, they came for a visit and Grossmama never went back to the Ranch. Grosspapa moved them from Roland's house at the Ranch to Ruidoso, NM. They fixed up the tool shed and that is where Grossmama and Grosspapa lived until they bought Henry Hale's place. Grossmama invited all the kinfolks from the Abernathy area to come to Ruidoso for a visit. Mildred remembers there was 27 visitors in the month of June of 1945 including Aunt Anna, Aunt Betty and so on.

In 1953 & 1954 Frances spent the summer with Grossmama and Grosspapa. She helped them around the house and worked at Fox Cave, too. Gertrude Day moved from Oregon in with

Celebrating the life of

Mildred Taylor Fuchs

born 10/11/12 at Gomez, Texas
died 08/03/06 at Gila, New Mexico

At 10:00 AM on 7 August 2006, family and friends gathered outdoors at Fort Bayard National Cemetery on a quiet hillside under a cobalt sky of gathering clouds facing a panoramic view of the surrounding mountains green from recent rains. A canopy had been erected in a place with gravel underfoot and chairs neatly placed underneath.

The Taylor and Fuchs families, nieces and nephews, were about evenly represented and the company included friends from Gila as well, at a guess about 60 or 70 people altogether.

Barbara (Barbara Fox Parsons, George and Mildred's middle granddaughter) officiated. When asked today what stood out most in her mind about the day, my friend Joan said, "The tender, loving way Barbara attended to her grandfather." Those words really capture the essence of the service: it was about Mildred and for George.

In front and to one side there was a small stand holding a simple gold box with the cremains and a vase of wildflowers picked by Josie (who has helped George and Mildred these many weeks with household things) and roses from Mildred's garden.

In front on the other side there was placed an empty chair alongside Uncle George in his wheelchair, both facing the gathered company. Barbara stood next to him with her hand on her grandpa's shoulder and explained to us that each person who had anything to say or to read was to sit in the empty chair, which was on George's right side—the side with the hearing aid) and speak clearly so he could understand.

The effect of this arrangement resulted in unquestionably the most loving and beautiful funeral service it has ever been my privilege to witness!! Each person who came forward took George's hand and identified him- or herself to George and spoke to him loudly enough for everyone to hear. George was therefore an active participant and interspersed some thoughts of his own as we went along. Betty said today that they had talked about it and he definitely got most, but maybe not quite all, of it.

At one point George asked if we knew how long they had been engaged. Nobody did. He said they were both working at a ranch (which belonged to neither of their folks) and this particular day while they were having the noon meal George said to Mildred, "Let's go to town today and get married." She said, "Do you mean it?" He said, "I wouldn't have said it if I didn't mean it." Her response was something like, "All right, let's go." And they did. Sixty-nine years ago.

➤ Opening the service at 10:00 o'clock, Barbara told us that she had called her grandma every day without fail for three years, at 10:00 o'clock, and that on this day, too, at this time it felt

like she should be saying, “Hello, Grandma.’ Everybody in Gila knows me as ‘10:00 O’Clock Barbara’.”

- Betty read a Birthday Tribute to Mildred written about 25 years ago by John McAfee, one of the owners of Palisades now deceased, that so completely described the multi-faceted Mildred that all could identify with it. It might as easily have been written last week.
- Ruth (Ruth Martini, great-granddaughter) sang “Amazing Grace” and the rest of us were invited to hum along.
- Mary (Mary Martini, great-granddaughter) read a poem by Helen Steiner Rice.
- Georgia (Georgia Fox Martini, granddaughter) told about a “magic afghan” crocheted by Mildred that was late for Georgia and Alan’s wedding because when Mildred met Alan and looked “up and up and up” she realized it was not long enough. This seven-foot-long afghan of many bright colors continues to bring healing and restoration even now to those under the weather who rest under it.
- Barbara (Parsons) read a precious poem she had written to George and Mildred for their 69th wedding anniversary this year. A copy has been requested.
- Jo (George and Mildred’s youngest granddaughter) sent the message for Barbara to share that Grandma had taught her to walk. That tidy bun of Mildred’s was apparently taken down on every “wash day” and hung in a long braid all the way down her back all day long. The not yet walking baby Jo grabbed the braid, hung on, and walked easily wherever her grandma went. Mildred loved it.

There was a definite “bread thread” woven through the morning’s sharing. With no collaboration, every male person whose childhood connected with Mildred more than fondly remembered the dependably delicious homemade bread that smelled and tasted so good.

- Ken Fuchs (nephew) sent the longest reminiscence, effectively a beautiful time line, which was read by Nathan Fuchs (grand-nephew).
- Nathan shared memories of his own.
- Terry Fox (nephew) sent a bread lament, read by EreK Fuchs (nephew).
- EreK (grand-nephew) then admitted that after breakfast one day he had decked a guy (behind the barn or someplace private like that) named Cole, who was related to the owners at Palisades – older and bigger, who had had the audacity to claim the last biscuit.
- Hollis Fuchs (nephew) spoke about his relationship with Mildred and George and how special they are to him.
- Fred Fuchs (nephew) shared some thoughts without a lot of detail because he said his stories would repeat much of what had been spoken.

- Linda Fuchs (Hollis' wife) fondly remembered Mildred's passion for quilting and treasures some pieces of it. She related that Mildred had made a quilt for Linda's granddaughter Emma Fuchs (great-grandniece) from which Emma is inseparable. This quilt has been well loved and has greatly diminished in size over the years to just a few inches square. On this day, as always, it had accompanied Emma and was being kept safe in the pickup during the service.
- Buck Pruitt (nephew) spoke last. While in college he had lived in Durango when George and Mildred lived there, as well as being a teacher in Pagosa Springs during more of their Colorado years. Buck visited often and fondly remembered that wonderful bread!!! He, too, said his memories would reiterate much that had been already been spoken.
- Sophora Fuchs Davis (niece) opened and closed the service with prayer.

Following the service, A.J., Betty, Barbara and George went to the grave site for the interment. A single Tropicana rose from Mildred's garden was buried with her. Even with his poor eyesight, George observed and asked about the flowers blooming in the garden adjacent—a rose garden. "She will like that," he said. Mildred had always requested that she be buried in a rose garden. She very nearly is.

The gravestones in the cremation section are flat to the ground. Both their information will be on the same stone, one above the other, Mildred's at the top. Mildred's part will say, "Loving wife, mother, and grandmother." The official was concerned that there might not be room enough left to say much about George. A.J. assured him that was all right, "George won't ever see what is written about him. It only matters what it says about her."

Fort Bayard being near to Silver City and about 50 miles from Gila, it was suggested that after the service folks have lunch in Silver and come out to the house in Gila if they wanted to after George had had a chance to rest. This good idea had to be revised when George recommended they all go eat at Golden Corral before going home because "We're in town and we always eat at Golden Corral when we're in town." Some family members were gathered there and some good visiting took place.

When the family got back to Gila there was a deeply vivid, boldly bright rainbow arched all the way over the house. Very soon that rainbow was a double rainbow. Scott came running from next door and Josie called, "Mildred sent a rainbow!"

Attending from the Fuchs Fox family:

George Fuchs

A.J. & Betty Fox

Georgia & Alan, Mary, Ruth Martini

Barbara Parsons

Fred & Dorothy Fuchs

Hollis & Linda Fuchs

Erek, Evan, Emma, Ethan Fuchs

Nathan & Stacie, Nekoda, Randal Fuchs

Leon & Laura Sue Fuchs Kessinger

Jason & Angela Morris
Sophora Fuchs Davis

Sophora Fuchs Davis
8 August 2006

Whisper In Your Ear

You have taught me about our planet Earth
Together we've explored her, finding her great worth
You taught me to respect her and never let her down
Or I may end up living far underground

You have taught me about Hope
I cried, "But I am at the end of my rope!"
You said I must learn how to cope
To ride that horse until the end
And never give up, for life is a blend

You have taught me about Laughter
Hours spent playing endless games
Your telling of stories both old and new
I never tired of your wondrous muse

You have taught me about Love
I longed for a cross to hang about my neck
You had one crafted by an artist most skilled
And by your gift of love a void was filled

You have taught me about Life
Finding fun and avoiding strife
The fun in watching bread dough rise
And the clear light of dawn a shining prize

You have taught me about Silence
This lesson I abhorred, for it made no sense
You explained that only through silence can we hear
The buzz a hummingbird makes as she draws near
And if you are still, you will see her appear

You have taught me about Death
Golden rule in hand, you enjoy each breath
So that when your time on earth grows near
There is no fear, for you or those most dear
For it will come only as a whisper in your ear

~~BJ Fox~~

Memories of Mildred – and George

Today there is a large empty space in my heart as I fully realize that Aunt Mildred is no longer with us physically, but memories of her will always fill a special place in my mind and my heart. I remember so vividly those days in 1948 when my mom and dad moved us from Portland to Ruidoso. We stayed with George and Mildred at the Fox Mercantile at Greentree for a while until my dad had secured a job and we moved to a rental house in upper Ruidoso. We moved to Fort Worth the following year, but later that summer we returned to Greentree for a visit and again we stayed with George and Mildred at the Mercantile.

Every summer through 1958 we vacationed in Ruidoso, and that meant magical times staying with George and Mildred and playing with A. J. For some weird reason, Steve always referred to her as “Uncle Mildred.” She always got a kick out of hearing him say that, and for years, whenever we got together, we always greeted her as “Uncle Mildred.” By the early 1950s they had moved to Ruidoso and Fox Cave had replaced Fox Mercantile. Every visit there was special. But the summer visit of 1956 especially stands out in my memory.

A. J. as usual took us exploring, and he showed us how to ride trees across the Ruidoso River. He climbed to the top of a sapling along the river bank, began swaying, and as the treetop began arching across the river, he unhooked his feet and gently landed on his feet on the opposite bank. I climbed a tree, began swaying, then chickened out and climbed back down. Steve climbed up my tree, began swaying, but as the tree arched, he didn't let go with his feet and suddenly slid head first off the tree and plunged into the river. The water was just a couple of feet deep, but only Steve's chest and legs were visible, sticking straight up. A. J. immediately jumped in and pulled him out. There was a large gash on the top of Steve's head, and he was bleeding profusely. Then we walked him back up the hill to their house. Luckily, Mildred was there. She never got excited. She never lost her cool. She just got some towels, wrapped them around Steve's head, and then took him to a doctor. My mom and dad had gone shopping, and when they got back, all they found was a pile of bloody towels on Mildred's kitchen floor. Mother got hysterical, but Mildred called and explained that Steve was ok. He just had a few new stitches in his head to take home as souvenirs of our visit. I have always remembered how Mildred was in such control during unpleasant situations.

1959 was even more special for me because I got to spend the summer between my sophomore and junior years in high school in Ruidoso. I stayed with Mildred and George and worked with Aunt Gertrude at the Cree Meadows Golf Course Restaurant. George was a park ranger at that time and he took me to work every morning. In the evenings we watched TV together and Mildred always had a big bowl of popcorn to share. She was a great cook and made terrific bread. I remember one afternoon when I got home from work, Mildred was not there. I walked into the kitchen, and as usual, she had set a big bowl of bread dough on the open oven door and left it there to rise. And rise it did! The dough was all over the oven door and some had fallen down onto the floor. I knew how my mom would have reacted to such a “disaster” and I raced up the street to Aunt Joh's house where I was sure Mildred was enjoying her afternoon coffee. She saw the look of panic on my face and began laughing loudly. “Don't tell, me,” she said, “I'll bet the bread dough is on the floor.” Then she continued chatting with Aunt Joh and calmly finished her coffee. Again, I admired the way she handled a “crisis.”

After Grosspapa's funeral in 1960, George and Mildred moved to Durango, Colorado, and that meant more special vacation visits. We visited them in 1961 and again in 1963. They always took us to Silverton and Ouray, and we had grand adventures together. George took us to Mesa Verde, and that was better than a trip to Disneyland. In 1972, after Grossmama's funeral, Mother and I traveled up to Colorado, and again George and Mildred took us to Silverton and Ouray. By then I had an 8mm camera and recorded some of our trip on film. I treasure those brief moving images of them which are now available on a DVD. One day George took me back to Mesa Verde, and I was so impressed that he spent all that time just with me.

In 1975 and again in 1979 we visited them, this time in Pagosa Springs. Steve's son David had made both trips on the motorcycle with Dad, and both times there had been some misfortune. In 1975 David had got sick and Dad had to leave him up there for a couple of weeks. Of course he was feeling fine in a few days, and then he had George and Mildred all to himself. In 1979 George took my dad and a large group of people hiking up a mountain trail, and my dad slipped on some ice and broke his leg just below his hip. George hiked down the mountain to get help. I borrowed a motorcycle trailer and Mother and I drove up to Pagosa Springs to get Dad and David and the motorcycle. While Grandpa was in the hospital, George had taken David fishing every day. To this day he recalls those wonderful times he got to spend with George and Mildred.

In 2001 I began attending the family reunions again, and that year I took along my computer and a 19"-monitor to show old family pictures. I was unable to identify places and names in some of the pictures, but as always, Mildred's mind was sharp as a tack and she never hesitated to clarify who and what we were looking at. Two years ago Mildred and Orma and I were looking at some pictures of Georgia Ruth, A. J., and me taken at the Ranch in the spring of 1945. I commented that I thought we had gone down there so Dad could help Grosspapa with the shearing. "NO, it was the LAMBING season," she told me in no uncertain terms. And of course she was right.

"Uncle" Mildred, thank you, and you too, Uncle George, for all the wonderful times you both shared with all of us, your loving nieces and nephews. We'll never forget you. We'll love you forever.

Your nephew,

Kenny Fuchs
August 5, 2006

How Aunt Mildred Ruined My Taste For Bread

Terry L. Fox

August 8, 2006

I have many memories of my Aunt Mildred - her sharp wit and keen mind, her skill at the game of SKAT, her expertise with a hunting rifle, and her enduring love and companionship for my Uncle George.

However, there is one particular memory that stands out more than any other, and I remember it very distinctly to this day. In fact, I'm still a little mad at Aunt Mildred about it.

I was eleven years old at the time, and my family had taken one of its many trips to Ruidoso to visit Grossmama, Grosspapa, and my aunts, uncles, and cousins. On this visit several of us kids had spent the morning running around the mountains, playing in the river and having a great time. Aunt Mildred was in the house, and I could tell from the aroma wafting from the back door, that she was baking bread. Shortly before leaving for the Fox Cave, Aunt Mildred came out and handed each one of us kids a hot roll, fresh from the oven, adorned with a big dollop of melting butter.

I remember biting into that roll and thinking how wonderful it tasted. It was the best bread I had ever eaten. Fifty years later, it still is. Over the many years since that day, every time I've eaten bread I've felt a slight tinge of disappointment, even when I try the bread from one of these fancy "artisan bakeries" in northern California. I don't eat much bread anymore; it never is quite good enough. In an act of kindness that day, Aunt Mildred just ruined my taste for bread.

I will miss her very much, although I feel she and all of my aunts and uncles who have passed are with me every day.

Aunt Mildred's Bread

Put 2 1/2 C. luke warm water in large mixing bowl, sprinkle 1 pkg. or 2 tsp. dry yeast in and 2 T.Sp. sugar. Let set 10 min. (or until yeast is dissolved)

Add 1 [or 2] tsp. salt and 2 1/2 cups flour. Mix well, then add 2 T. sp. melted shortening, mix well. Add 3 cups flour. Stir until dough is smooth & will turn loose from sides of bowl. Cover & let rise until double. Do this twice.

Third time. Knead well & shape into (12 rolls & 2 loaves). Let rise until double or almost double. Heat oven to 350 & bake rolls (35 to 45 Min.) Continue baking loaves (they usually take 1 hr. baking). Makes 2 loaves

Sent by Octavia Davis
May 29, 2007