



10-15-1987

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Recommended Citation

Blaylock, Mabry G. (1987) "The Blaylocks of Nine Mile Creek," *Westview*: Vol. 7 : Iss. 1 , Article 12.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol7/iss1/12>

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Illustration by Valerie Caulkins Graybill



The Blaylocks of Nine Mile Creek

By Mabry G. Blaylock

Charles (Charlie J. Blaylock — 1890-1951), the third son of Jefferson Davis Blaylock and Nancy Ray Blaylock, farmed practically all his life. He married Dollie (Doll) Blaylock (1906-), eldest daughter of Isom Fletcher Blaylock and Clifford Hyde Blaylock, all from Gilmer County, Georgia, on December 31, 1921. Survival and conservation were the dominant themes of Charlie's life. Neighborliness and a desire for an education for herself and her two sons have characterized the life of Dollie, a talented and resourceful workaholic. The couple spent all but three years of their married life on land crossed by the Nine Mile Creek in Section 19-17-21 in Roger Mills County, where their son Dallin Morris was born February 15, 1923, and their son Mabry Gene was born April 17, 1927.

Charlie grew up in Northwestern Georgia when survival skills were passed on primarily from father to son and from mother to daughter. From his father he learned how to farm, to work cattle, to butcher, to make sorghum molasses, to carpenter, and to do other jobs on the farm. With the guidance of their father, he and his brother Newton Dell Blaylock acquired adjoining farms on the Nine Mile Creek, where they produced alfalfa and Johnson grass hay, corn, cotton, broomcorn, and sorghum and raised cattle and hogs and kept cows for milk and cream.

Before marriage, Charlie served briefly in the Army at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, where he almost died of

influenza during the flu epidemic of 1918-1919. The years immediately following World War I were relatively prosperous for agriculture; but the late 20's and 30's were disastrous for farm owners, though less so than for sharecroppers and even less so for most urban workers. So Nine Mile Creek families were reluctant to leave during the period and some new ones moved in. With his efforts and Dollie's resourcefulness, the family not only survived on the farm but added to it more land that relatives and neighbors wanted to sell, seeding most of the small fields back to grass and grazing the rest with care. To better farm the expanded acreage, Charlie purchased a two-row Ferguson Ford tractor, the first in the county, about 1938 and switched from plowing with a team to plowing with a tractor.

After suffering a light stroke in 1949, he relied more and more on Dollie's work on and help in managing the farm. His sons, Morris and Mabry, continued to help as much as school would allow until Mabry was accidentally shot in the spine in December 1941 and Morris joined the Naval Air Corps in 1943. After the difficult years of World War II, Charlie and Dollie sold most of their livestock and bought a house in Norman so that Mabry could attend the University of Oklahoma in a wheelchair. Charlie loved the farm so much that he spent much of his last three years on the farm, then rented by Mack Mullins, his brother-in-law.

Charlie died in 1951 of a heart attack, his life probably shortened by flu, which damaged his heart during his Army days.

In the years before 1941, especially in addition to the usual household duties, Dollie had a large garden, canned hundreds of jars of vegetables and fruits on a Home Comfort wood-burning stove each summer, cooked for hired hands, raised hundreds of chickens and turkeys, produced pedigreed White Leghorn eggs for a hatchery in Elk City, hatched eggs for neighbors, sewed for family and relatives, cured pork for the winter, and plowed with the tractor after Charlie had a stroke, and even found time to paint some pictures. She was indeed the key to the financial survival of the Blaylock farm when many families felt forced to leave because of drought and the Depression.

In spite of the arduous work at home, Dollie managed to participate in community affairs. She was one of only three women to serve on the Nine Mile School Board during the years 1916-1947, elected at the age of 26 for a three-year term — not because she sought the position but because she was willing and the voters thought she was able to serve. She also served a number of years as president of the Nine Mile Home Demonstration Club, at whose meetings neighbor women learned about nutrition, gardening, sewing, and other aspects of homemaking taught by the Roger Mills County

home demonstration agent and also shared with one another homemaking experiences. Placing a high value on education, she encouraged her sons to excel in school and to aspire to attend college; and in 1940 Morris was chosen as salutatorian of his high-school graduation class, and Mabry was chosen valedictorian of his three-member Nine Mile eighth grade class! During this period, Dollie's home was often the meeting place for relatives and neighbors to share holiday meals and to spend Sunday afternoons.

After Mabry became paralyzed in 1941, Dollie had to add nursing skills to her other abilities. Eight weeks after his injury, one of Mabry's physicians at Children's Hospital in Oklahoma City had dismissed him from the hospital, commenting that he thought Mabry didn't have long to live and felt that he would be happier at home. Without his and his mother's strong religious faith, the doctor would have been right. Dollie obtained nutrition and medical books and nursed him back to reasonably good health with the help of Cheyenne Chiropractor G. A. Reimer. Three years after his injury, although his neurosurgeon said that Mabry would never walk again except possibly with crutches, Dollie strongly encouraged Mabry to finish his high-school education by correspondence study.

Mabry did so and received his diploma with the Hammon High School Class of 1947. After spending most of the following year in Crippled Children's Hospital for surgery and rehabilitation, he enrolled in the University of Oklahoma. His parents had, at a considerable sacrifice, sold most of their livestock, retaining the land, and moved to Norman. Bolstered with scholarship funds and income from his mother's boarding students and cooking at a University kitchen, he was elected to the honorary fraternity of Phi Beta Kappa as a junior. He graduated third among some fifteen hundred Arts and Sciences students in 1952 with a B.A. in Letters; and hoping to teach in college, he received his M.A. in Spanish in 1953. One of the first wheelchair students to attend O.U., he helped prove that such students could succeed in college, especially with an extensive reading background of books from the Carnegie Library in Elk City and self-disciplining correspondence study!

Encountering a prejudice toward

hiring teachers bound to a wheelchair, a prejudice since greatly diminished, he gave up plans to seek a doctorate and accepted a coveted University of Oklahoma Press fellowship for a year of work and training in editing and publishing. During the year he worked nine hours a week at night as a tutor for the O.U. Athletic Department. Unable to find employment either in teaching or publishing in the summer of 1954, he continued working for the Department another year at night and started tutoring college and high-school students at home. In 1955, he began tutoring almost exclusively at home. He has been recognized as a professional tutor in articles in the NORMAN TRANSCRIPT, the O.U. student paper, the OKLAHOMA DAILY, and in articles in the SUNDAY OKLAHOMAN in 1977 and 1983. Perhaps the only career professional tutor (he knows of no other), he was a subject of biographical record in the 1986-1987 edition of WHO'S WHO IN THE SOUTH AND SOUTHWEST and was named in the 1986-1987 edition of WHO'S WHO IN AMERICA. Having tutored over three thousand students thus far, he has proved that sometimes at least where there's the will, there's a way—provided there's a great deal of help and encouragement from others.

Without the help of his mother, in particular, his honors would never have been achieved. To help Mabry get through college and get started tutoring, she not only kept students and worked at the University but also worked nine years as a civilian employee of the Norman Naval Training Center. After they moved in 1959 to a house especially designed for his tutoring and his handicap, she did nearly all the work to establish a beautiful yard. Beginning in the middle 60's, she worked some twelve years as general contractor to build houses while serving as nurse, cook, housekeeper, shopper, yard person, and good neighbor. Talented, resourceful, optimistic, a woman of great faith, a believer in the seemingly impossible!

Morris, in the meantime, after training in the Naval Air Corps, served as a radar bombardier with a patrol-bomber squad in the Atlantic and Caribbean, enrolled in Panhandle A & M at Goodwell, and graduated from Oklahoma A & M (now OSU) in 1950. He had been active in a number of agricultural clubs, including the Flying Aggies, and was listed in WHO'S WHO



Morris's graduation day. January 1950.

AMONG STUDENTS IN AMERICAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES.

After graduation, he became an agriculture instructor for veterans in McCook, Nebraska. Later he worked for the Soil Conservation Service in Norman and for three years for Swift and Company in Fort Worth grading and marketing meat products. Then he joined the Bureau of Indian Affairs in land management in Durant and worked later for the Bureau in Lindsay and Nowata.

In January, 1965, a few months after the devastating earthquake in Anchorage, he drove to Haines, Alaska, and shipped his car to Juneau to help the Bureau increase Eskimo income from reindeer products, having been chosen because of his background in agronomy and meats. During his five years in Alaska, he repeatedly checked the reindeer herds and slaughter facilities on Nunivak Island, helped establish the first reindeer herd on Hagemester Island, increased the marketing of reindeer products, particularly to the Japanese, in large part by helping to bring about the first federally inspected slaughter facilities for reindeer, initiated the first palatability and nutritional

studies of reindeer meat, and, not least, met his future wife, Elizabeth Blunn, in Juneau.

Elizabeth, daughter of Mrs. and Dr. Cecil Blunn, then a professor of animal genetics at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, had obtained degrees in English and Social Work, had worked as a social worker in Nebraska, as a School Social Worker for the Colorado Jefferson County Public Schools, and as a School Social Worker for the Bureau of Indian Affairs at Juneau. She continued to work for the Bureau for six months after marrying Morris in Lincoln, Nebraska, on December 27, 1969.

She resigned when Morris transferred to Oregon to work with the Warm Springs Indians' Tribal Council as a range conservationalist. There he helped to establish range units to control more effectively stocking rates. In part to get closer to Oklahoma, he accepted in 1977 a position with the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Flagstaff, Arizona, out of which office he worked with the Navajos and Hopis on grass seeding and grazing problems. In 1980 he took early retirement from the

Bureau and moved to Weatherford, Oklahoma, so that his daughters Amy Marie (Jody — b. January 3, 1973) and Myra Louise (b. November 17, 1975) could attend excellent schools and he could work on and manage the Blaylock farm on Nine Mile Creek. In the meantime, Elizabeth has busied herself with rearing her two daughters, volunteering for school and community affairs, serving the local Episcopal Church, playing the cello with the college symphony, and occasionally helping Morris work cattle.

Morris is still active in the Society for Range Management, an international organization. The Society in its magazines has published his articles on 4-H activities of Warm Springs youth, an article translated into Spanish by Mabry, on reindeer in Alaska, on buffalo, on "The First Hundred Years of the Alexander Ranch," a ranch on the Upper Washita, near Allison, Texas, well known for its show Herefords and as a source for quality bulls, and "The Then and Now of Cheyenne-Arapaho Country," an article on conservation on the Blaylock land. Both Jody and Myra have begun to take an active


interest in the land whose stewardship responsibility will one day be theirs. Morris teaches them, out on the farm, conservation, respect for the land, and the care of cattle and horses. Both have taken private music lessons. Interested in reading from an early age, they reflect the Blaylock and Blunn emphasis on learning and school and perform in school well above their age levels.

Thus, our land heritage, abused or cherished, becomes the responsibility of the survivors. Our cultural heritage, neglected or enhanced, will continue in the minds and hands of those whom we teach and influence. Values and principles learned in the rural schools and neighborhoods of Western Oklahoma live on. ♣


MABRY G. BLAYLOCK grew up on a farm near Hammon, Oklahoma. Subject of biographical record in Marquis' WHO'S WHO IN THE SOUTH AND SOUTHWEST (Twentieth Edition, 1986-1987), he has a B.A. in Letters and an M.A. in Spanish from OU. A paraplegic since he was fourteen, he tutors in Norman.



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