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With Anecdotes Amazing

By James David Strong

Today, for fun, most teenagers go to the movies or swim at public swimming pools, but in the early 1900's the teenagers had to swim in ponds or play baseball with balls made of twine. Sixty-nine years ago, my great-grandfather, Davey Hughes, did just that for fun.

His father came to the United States from Wales; his mother was from Missouri. But in 1901 they became Okies by coming to Western Oklahoma in a covered wagon.

Arriving first in Anthon, Oklahoma, and later moving eight miles north of Butler, the Hugheses made their living by farming.

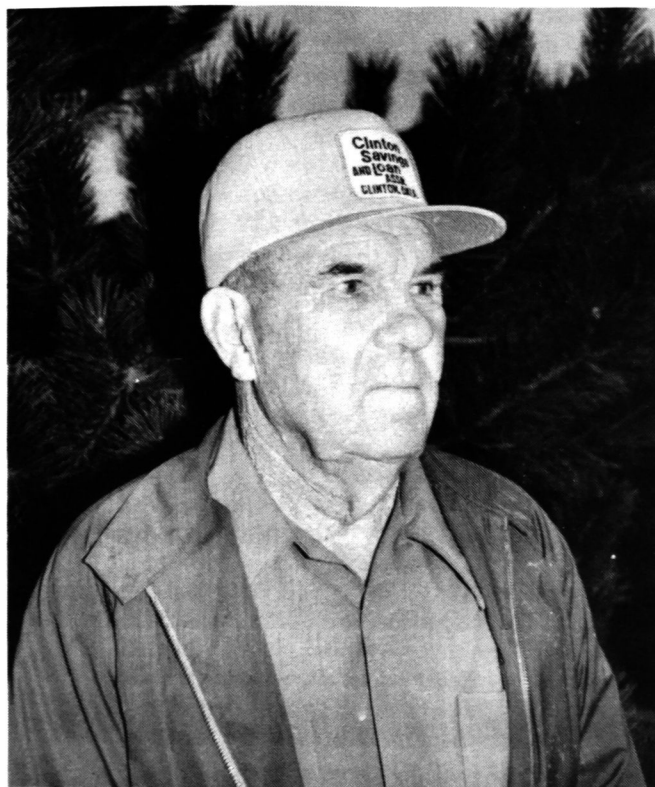
When my great-grandfather was a boy, his father had no tractor. All he had were horses, mules, and twelve children to help do the work. Grandpa started working in the fields at the age of eight or nine, cutting the wheat and plowing fields with horses, or hoeing the garden. On top of all this, he had to milk cows twice a day and take care of the other livestock.

He made his spending money by trapping furs, starting at the age of seven, and by helping neighbors thresh wheat.

He didn't get much of an education because he had to help the family make a living, but he really liked going to the one-room schoolhouse and learning the basics--reading, writing, arithmetic, and history--the six years he was allowed to attend. Education is important to him because he feels that he didn't have much of one.

When my great-grandfather was young, most of the kids liked having their fun by swimming in ponds and streams, playing baseball, having corn bin fights, and playing a game they called Banners. He said that he and his friends also rode broncos and cattle after dark when their parents couldn't see them.

In 1910, when he was six, the family rode in a buggy all night to Clinton to see the Ringling Brothers' Circus. "It cost about twenty-five cents to get in, I guess," Grandpa said, "but I kind of liked watching them get it set up more." That's what he remembers most about it, plus the family's spirited horses almost running away



Photograph by Dr. Park Lang




with them when they smelled the circus animals.

There have been many inventions in Great-grandpa's lifetime. His family had a telephone, crank-style, as far back as he can remember, and when he was a young boy, they got a radio. He rode on the "C-n-OW" or "Cow" railroad from Butler to Stafford, and he flew in a small plane to Dripping Springs. As a teenager, Great-grandpa got his first car—a Model T Roadster. To start it, he had to crank up the engine. He was married before he bought his first phonograph.

He married in 1929 just before the Great Depression and Dust Bowl Days. He bought a 320-acre farm for \$4000 after a while. But in the 1930's no one could get any credit. He had to sell his seventy head of cattle because the crops either burned up or blew away. He didn't get much for the cattle. Ten steers, for instance, sold for only a hundred dollars.

Speaking of the Dust Bowl, he said, "It was the worst stuff I ever saw. The dust got so thick that I couldn't see the roads when I was driving; and when the dust got in to our one-room house, we couldn't even tell the color of the tablecloth."

Today Great-grandpa lives in a modern home in Clinton, Oklahoma, sits in his easy chair watching baseball games on television, or takes care of a big garden. But when one of his grandchildren asks him, "Grandpa, what was it like when you were a boy?" he has a great wealth of information he loves to share. 



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