

Memoirs of Walter Obenahus

I was born April 1, 1908, April Fool's Day, and needless to say, I was the recipient of many April Fool's jokes. At my birth my family consisted of Papa and Mama, Grandmother Obenhaus (papa's mother), and my 17-month-old sister Mary.

I remember a trundle bed that was pushed under our parents' bed, since we were pushing the little three-room house out at the seams. When Sister Millie came along two years later, it seemed destined that we would be blessed with a large family. Papa hitched the horses to the wagon and hauled lumber from Wichita Falls 65 miles away to build a new two-story house with plenty of room for our growing family. Being the oldest son, I had a room of my own off the back porch. The girls all slept upstairs and at night when they were giggling and talking, I would slip up and listen--it was mostly about boys!

Papa bought 320 acres of land for \$2.50 an acre in a mesquite pasture to be sure to have enough wood for fuel and for cooking. We always had a large woodpile and guess who got to be pretty good with a chopping ax.

For as long as I can remember, I loved to catch wild animals, build cages for them, and feed and tame them. I had a bad fall from the top of the smokehouse trying to catch two pigeons and still have a large scar in my eyebrow.

Most of my schooling was in German. With my mother's loving and patient help, I finally made it through Confirmation.

One of my chores was to keep the horses, to feed them, and to repair harnesses. In winter, when the tanks were frozen over, I had to pump water by hand for 24 horses and mules. I remember herding cattle on a horse all day long when I was about six years old so they could graze where there were no fences. We children were always kept busy on cold days. We would bundle up to keep warm and go to the corncrib to shuck com. There were so many of us it was like a com husking party.

When I was about 12 years old, I began trapping in our pasture and in the Waggoner Ranch for coyotes, badgers, possums, and even skunks. I would skin them, nail the hides to the barn to dry, and sell them. I sold enough to buy my own saddle and 22 rifle. Later I built a large pen and raised turkeys.

Papa had a threshing machine, and wheat harvest was always a busy time. We pitched bundles and cooked for the threshing crew. You could tell how good the harvest was by looking at the size of the haystacks in the pastures. Papa also had a hay bailer and when he bought the 900-acre river farm, I would have to go over there and "bach" from Monday until Friday to bail Johnson Grass for the cattle. Since I couldn't cook and since pork and beans were something new, Mama would send cases of beans so I could eat them from the can. To this day I don't eat pork and beans!

Papa was a butcher. Mama would put a sheet in the bed of the wagon. Then we put a corn fed beef in the wagon with another sheet over it to keep off the flies. We went from house to house in the community. The housewife would pick what part of the meat she wanted; the cheaper cuts were about 15 cents while the better cuts were 35 cents a pound.

I remember Mama's breaking her leg and carrying her to the house and how painful it was for her for years. I also remember our first two-seated surry with the fringe on top to go to church in style, our first Case car (then a Paige), our Ford car that was stolen and never heard from again and of course my first car--a Model- T Ford coupe--which I got when I was 18. I would take the sisters to Walther League parties, but I didn't mind because they would always find a boy to bring them home.

When I met Elsie, I knew she would be my wife someday, so with the money I saved I secretly bought a beautiful diamond ring, hid it in a can, and buried it under the house so the girls could not see it first. I gave it to her Christmas, 1928. We were engaged one year and on December 22, 1929, we had a beautiful wedding after the evening services at Zion Lutheran Church. The whole congregation stayed for the wedding. The Lord blessed us with three wonderful children--Harrold and Curtis were born during the Depression in 1931 and 1932; Marilyn, our baby girl, came eight years later.

If I had my life to live over, I'd probably do it the same way. The Lord blessed us bountifully all our lives and now with the wonderful promises of Jesus, we are looking forward to a more precious life eternally.

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<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~danielcollier/memoirs/walter.html>