

Memories of
Growing Up in Archer City

Karen Aulds

With all of the discussion regarding Daylight Savings Time, I often think of my childhood in Archer City! I may be the only person who loves Standard Time because it reminds me of one of my favorite childhood memories.

I grew up in the funeral home next door to King's Food Store. Whenever the time changed and it would start getting dark earlier, it meant that "Charlie King's Christmas trees" would be arriving soon! He would line the sidewalk in front of the store with the trees. I would have the best "Christmas tree fort" for several weeks! I would hide in my Christmas tree fort and watch the customers, and let my imagination take me on many fun adventures!

To this day, when our clocks "fall backwards," I think of Charlie King, King's Food Store, and many wonderful Christmas seasons!

Shirley Luig Babbitt

In my viewpoint, there is nothing more special than growing up in a small town like AC . There were always jobs for kids if you were serious about working. I babysat, cleaned houses, worked at the movie theater and the drugstore. I learned good work ethics that stuck with me all my life. I learned so much about people in general.

Gary Beesinger

My memories of growing up in Archer City are a distinct part of my life. My parents separated and during the divorce that followed, I moved from Crowell to Archer City to live with my mother, two brothers and my grandparents' family at age eight. We stayed there until I was about 14 years old when my mother moved to her own house in Archer. However, she had previously met and started dating Benny King, otherwise known as 'Kingfish' who owned the local Fina service station. Prior to meeting Mom and starting to date her, Benny had some bad luck. His wife had died of cancer. Also, his house had burned down but he couldn't slow down as he had a family he had to provide for and part of his extra income came from being hired to call home plate at ballgames. After Benny's first wife died, he and Mom were married and it wasn't long until we lived in a different house in town and I now had a step-brother and a step sister to live with in addition to my two brothers. It was a small house but it was home.

One of the things I remember most about this time was getting to play summer league baseball with my friends and classmates. I remember playing for Horany's Department store. We wore red jerseys and I played first base. I tried pitching a little but I wasn't really a great pitcher. I guess what made it fun was that Benny was doing the home plate umpiring and the league had volunteers to call first and third base. I thought that Benny would show a little favoritism to me but boy was I wrong when he didn't. He would laugh and tell me that if I had hit the ball, it had to be fair or out and there wouldn't be any doubt! That is the kind of man that Benny King was. He became more of a father to me than I could imagine.

Benny was a hard-working man who took a lot of 'disagreements' from parents but he never got mad and everyone I know was always so appreciative of him. He spent many a night at the ball field and then came home and tried to live a normal life for an hour or so and then the next day he started the same old thing. I loved little league baseball but I especially loved Benny King for many reasons.

Jim Black

I remember playing records and pretending to be a DJ on my cheap walkie talkie which only had a range of ¼ mile. My only listeners were my friend Rickey Garlington and his younger sister Sharon who lived just across the alley.

A sixteen-year-old Brian McPherson singing and playing *Lodi* on his electric guitar in my bedroom one afternoon. To this day, that performance still outshines Credence Clearwater Revival's original rendition.

Lying in the middle of the football practice field near our house late one summer night with Allen Hamill and having an honest-to-goodness UFO pass over us. I still get goosebumps thinking about it.

Riding around in Gary Beesinger's old Oldsmobile listening to his 4-track tape player. The much improved 8-track version was available, but Gary couldn't afford one.

Riding around in Charles Luig's '56 Chevy with its vacuum-operated windshield wipers that would only work when he let off the gas. Rainstorms were quite an experience.

Riding around in Brian's black "Captain America". In was in that vehicle that I first heard Gary Puckett and the Union Gap sing *Young Girl*.

Riding around in my '63 Chevy with the grill painted black and a hole punched in the muffler. It sounded great, but passengers weren't too big on the fumes.

Watching movies at the Royal Theater. Thinking back, it seems they mostly showed movies starring Don Knotts or Bob Hope. I do, however, remember seeing *McClintock* and other John Wayne movies. And of course, *The Night Walker* starring Barbara Stanwick. That one had Charles, Gary and me walking home down the middle of the street, jumping at every little sound.

Playing summer baseball and getting plunked in the ribs by Holliday's Gary Whitehead and Windthrost's Danny Joe Schroeder on consecutive nights.

Charles' younger sister Karen referring to me, Charles and Gary as The Three Muskaqueers.

Sneaking into the swimming pool late at night and someone sitting buck naked on a stinging scorpion.

Spending summer nights in Robert Adams' storm cellar.

Gary and Rickey Garlington perched on the roof of our house holding a small egg incubator strung between strands of thread while I tried to capture at least one somewhat believable photo of a UFO.

Climbing the old water tower with Gary and Charles and just sitting there leaning against the rail, looking out over our hometown. It was a feeling I cherish to this day.

Great food and great selections on the jukebox at Troy's Drive-In.

Riding our bicycles to the Wildcatter to get a ten cent Brown Derbys. (A small cup of vanilla ice cream with chocolate syrup on it).

Browsing around Melvin Schlagel's hardware store that seemed to have one of everything.

Getting gas at Travis Nelson's Texaco.

Buying fireworks at Ben Buerger's firework stand.

Fishing late at night at the City Lake with Buster Boren.

Playing quarterback for the Green Horned Frogs in Biddy football. Our coach was John Bell. We couldn't have asked for a fairer, kinder, more understanding coach.

Riding on the back of Podunk's (Troy Wells Jr.) moped and Don Petty's Cushman.

Getting haircuts from James Trent and Ben Page. Mr. Trent was quick witted and so much fun to listen to. And I can still remember that gleaming straight-edge razor in Ben's wavering hand as he prepared to trim my sideburns. A scene scarier than any 1950s giant insect horror movie.

Spending weekends at my Grandma Mollie's house in Jacksboro. It was at the movie house there that I first saw the sci-fi classic *The Angry Red Planet*. I also remember Jacksboro was home to the vast majority of chiggers in North Texas. And they couldn't wait for me to visit.

Getting hooked in the back of the head by Allen Hamill with a fishing lure and being taken to the Clinic so Dr. Schlomach could cut it out.

Playing Spin the Bottle at my cousin Eddie Wright's house one summer evening and going into a dark bedroom with Kerry O'Keefe who was a grade above me. Some fifty years later, Kerry would in good fun refer to it as The Best Kiss Ever. I wouldn't know because I was so nervous at the time, I'm pretty sure I blacked out.

Working one summer on Gene Elledge's oil well pulling machine. He would drive the truck and I would drive his El Camino. It was hard, nasty work, but I enjoyed it greatly as he was

such a nice man. The following summer I hauled hay for C.T. McDaniel. That wasn't much fun as the barns we stacked the hay in were always about 170 degrees and full of wasps, centipedes and scorpions. The subsequent summer I traded those jobs in for one at the golf course, mowing and watering the fairways and greens. I thought I'd died and gone to Heaven.

Glenda Martin stopping by our house following my high school graduation, asking if I'd lost anything. She then handed me my high school diploma. The white envelope it was in had a district tire track across it. I guess I'd placed it on the roof of my car and then driven off with it there. Needless to say, that was pretty embarrassing.

Eating suppers at Charles' house with his mom, six sisters, Grandpa and Grandma (Willie and Blanche Wilhoit). Looking back, it felt like I was at the Waltons' supper table.

Sitting on the lower bunk bed at Gary's reading from his heralded collection of *True Detective* and *Famous Monsters of Hollywood* magazines.

Mowing grass all summer in the heat with Charles only to spend my hard earned money on a new lawn mower.

Going bowling with Charles, Gary and Myrle Metcalf in Myrle's car. The engine wasn't running too smoothly and we agreed the problem was the cheap gas Myrle was putting in it. Charles called it bumblebee piss.

Pranking the townspeople with an assortment of dummies, string strung across roadways, fake UFO's and such. Typically the instigators were me, Charles and Gary with occasional help from Brian, Allen, Myrle or Robert. One time we persuaded our friend Gary Miller to stagger down the street with his shirttail out, cap on sideways and a baseball bat slung over his shoulder. When a passerby stopped and asked if he needed a ride he would answer, "Yes." When asked where he was headed he would answer, "Home." When asked where home was he would answer, "State Hospital." He didn't receive a single ride. ☺

Competing in Coach Toby Wood's ingenious invention called The Battle Royale where we football players were all blindfolded and given one boxing glove while our other hand was tied behind our backs. We were then paraded into a makeshift ring before a cheering crowd at the old gymnasium during the Halloween Carnival. Last man standing wins. If I remember right, I luckily survived after being disqualified early on for delivering a low blow. I seem to remember Charles winning with Gary in the stands yelling instructions to him on where to throw his punches since he couldn't see.

Letting Karen Luig drive my car over Devil's Drop one night. She did so WAY too fast and we wound up crossing the narrow, wooden, one-lane bridge broadside. Luckily, no one was killed or injured. The only casualty was a missing brand new moon hubcap I had purchased earlier in the day at Treasure City. I'm not sure what I was thinking that night, but at sixteen a tight sweater and the soft glow of the dash light will do that to fella.

Magnificent fireworks wars with the Muellers (Mike, Mark and Jackie) who lived across the street from my house. One such battle resulted in a legendary bottle rocket being launched by Charles and myself using a five-foot piece of oilfield tubing as a bazooka. The rocket soared toward Mike, abruptly turned and shot skyward, and then, just as suddenly, reversed its course and dove downward, straight into the Mueller's fireplace chimney. A moment later, we all heard a muffled boom, signaling it had exploded in the living room where Jack and Pat were watching TV. Moments later, their dad appeared on the back porch covered in soot. Our fireworks war days were over.

I am going to finish with the two most memorable remembrances of my days of growing up in Archer.

I believe Charles and I were fifth-graders when this memory transpired. In short, he and I didn't really like each other back then. So much so that it was decided one day that we would settle our differences behind Ruby's Grocery after school. So there we were. Surrounded by a group of classmates and curious onlookers. Fists held high, circling each other. I don't remember a single punch being thrown. Mostly we were just trash talking when Charles looked over my shoulder toward the street and his eyes grew wide. Then, from behind me I heard, "*I'm gonna tell Mother!*" I turned and spotted Karen scurrying down the street, petticoat rustling as she ran. Suddenly Charles had ahold of my shirt. "Come on, let's go!" he said.

"What? Where?" I asked.

"My house. I need you to come home with me and tell my mother that we weren't fighting because she won't believe me."

"You're kidding," I said.

"No, I'm not. You coming?"

I thought for a moment, then shrugged my shoulders and said, "Let's go." And that, as they say, was the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

This last memory is one of Gary running the hurdles at a junior high track meet our seventh grade year. You'll find my telling of it in my novel, *River Season*, but I am going to recount again it here because of the lasting effect it's had on me. Here goes.

Our junior high track team was waiting on the bus when Coach Ray climbed in and said, "Okay, guys listen up. Some of the teams can't make it today, so we're going to help out. This means most of you will have an extra event or two." He read them off, and then added, "Oh yeah, Beesinger, you're running the hundred-and-ten-yard low hurdles."

The bus exploded with laughter. "All right! Go get 'em, Porky!"

"Sir?"

"You're running the low hurdles. You *can* run, can't you?"

"Yessir. But I've never run any *hurdles*."

"You'll love 'em."

More laughter.

I knew Gary could run, but he was certainly better suited to what he normally did—which was throw the shotput and discus (although not very far).

"Oh, one other thing," Coach added. "They're giving out ribbons today—to the first three finishers in each event."

A cheer went up throughout the bus.

Gary grabbed my arm. "Did you hear that? They're giving out ribbons!"

The drive from Archer City to Holliday is roughly twenty miles, and he didn't say another word the whole way. He just stared out the window.

When we arrived, he and I jogged off by ourselves to loosen up. We found an old hurdle and set it up. I offered what advice I could. "Okay, you're right-handed, so you'll probably want to lead with your left foot. Try that and see." He backed up, took a run, and made it over. He jumped a few more. "You're all set," I said.

When it was time, Charles walked over next to me. "How's he gonna do?" he asked.

"We're fixin' to find out," I said.

The gun went off, and he actually held his own to the first hurdle.

Then it happened. He stuttered his steps at the last instant, jumped awkwardly, and hit the hurdle hard. He crashed to the ground, but got back up and took off again. There was no hesitation in his step at the second hurdle, but he jumped too soon. Another fall. He got back up.

Now hopelessly behind, he jumped late at the third and went down hard again. Still, he got back up. The other runners were nearly finished, and he was all but alone on the track. By now, he'd caught the crowd's attention.

"Hey, get a load of *this* guy!"

"Hey, shorty, you're supposed to jump *over* those things!"

Reaching the last hurdle, he hadn't cleared a single one and had taken quite a beating. Now, totally exhausted, he paused and then attempted to fling himself over it more like a high jumper. There was a final loud crash, and he went down in a heap.

The finish line was now congested with runners and judges, and most never even noticed as he slowly pulled himself up and started toward them. The few that saw him seemed to stare and wonder where he had come from and what he was doing. Many of the spectators, however, having followed his odyssey, were near tears with laughter. He crossed the finish line and disappeared into the maze of people.

Charles and I looked everywhere for him. Later, we found him in the parking lot, sitting alone in the back of the bus.

"You okay?" I asked as we sat down beside him.

He nodded.

"What happened?"

"I don't know," he said. "I just got to that first hurdle and couldn't remember which foot to lead with. After that, nothing went right."

"Damn, look at you!" Charles exclaimed.

Gary's elbows and knees were badly scraped and bleeding. Each one a bright red badge of courage.

"Doesn't that hurt?"

He raised one arm and examined an elbow. He hadn't even noticed. Even his chin was skinned and bleeding.

"I'm sorry," he said. "The last thing I wanted to do was to embarrass you guys and the rest of the team."

"Why didn't you just quit?" Charles asked.

He looked out the window and stared into the distance. His eyes filled with tears.

“Because I kept thinking that if I could just somehow get over that next hurdle, I might still get a ribbon.”

I believe it was this moment that cemented the feelings the three of us had for each other. Feelings that have lasted for over sixty years.

George Eustace

Many young people in the 1950's and 1960's worked for various family businesses in Archer City. Most were not paid positions. I worked with my father on the Joy Graham ranch near Anarene, and later assisted him with slaughtering cattle when he worked for my uncle, J.W. Covington. The slaughter house was a small block building west of the rodeo grounds. The butcher shop/locker plant was behind Heard's Department Store.

In the third grade I was hanging out on the sidewalk in front of the City Barber Shop (Jess Goodwin?) next to the Royal Theater with my bicycle. The sidewalk was and still is wide. A boy slightly older than me named Donald Dugan was the shoeshine boy in the barber shop. He came out on a break and said he could do a doughnut on the sidewalk with my bike. He went to the corner at the west end of the sidewalk and started pedaling really fast towards the barber shop. When he was in front of the barber shop, he slammed on the brake and twisted the handlebars to make a round tire skid mark on the side walk. There was not enough room and he slammed into the plate glass window (no safety glass in those days) causing a large shard of glass to fall and slice his upper right arm down to the bone.

My cousin, Charles “Coondog” Covington was a barber in the shop. He asked if I needed a job. I said yes although I did not know much about properly shining shoes. I recall earning \$0.75 (\$0.25/shine.) My first business lunch was a Frostie Root Beer and a pecan August fried pie down at Press Hudson's Grocery Store. I only lasted that one day for obvious reasons.

Tommie Eustace

Living on a ranch near the Anarene Country Store and Post Office, I recall Archer City as the place to attend school. The town also seemed to offer all the customer service and goods required for the necessities of life. Three automotive dealerships. Supermarket on the north side of the Archer County Courthouse square. At least five service stations were located near the square. The subsequently semi-famous Royal Theatre offered movies to watch as entertainment. The local bank served citizens and various businesses which included a hardware store, The Spur Hotel, Holder's Jewelry Store, City Drug, a food market, as well as two barber shops and other service businesses.

The Courthouse was a focal point since my grandfather, Thomas Clark Eustace, served as its custodian for years. Once he purchased a tamale for me from a cart which served customers on the courthouse's expansive lawn. Once I entered the courthouse with my older brother and father. Dad wanted his sons to understand how justice worked in a trial setting. The case being presented was a mature woman from Wichita Falls who charged a young man, late teenager of thereabouts, with rape. Dad could not remove my brother and me from the courtroom fast enough. I recall Dad was somewhat skeptical about the likely professional females asserting such a claim.

What I remember most is the Archer Hospital. Doctor Smitson, an osteopath, served locals with convenient medical care. He delivered my younger sister, who was a breach baby, with difficulty and success. I recall my Aunt Lillian stating she did not think mother and baby would survive the process of birth.

On three occasions Doctor Smitson treated me for medical services. He removed a long wood splinter from my left hand. The splinter entered the center of my palm and protruded between my fore and middle fingers. The second visit was providing antibiotics to treat severe infections on my hips which football pads caused by rubbing my flesh. Also, Doctor Smitson removed a shotgun pellet from my left forearm which penetrated about a quarter inch. The injury developed from a fellow hunter who fired at a covey of quail which flushed as we walked near a metal clad barn.

The most memorable service provided by Doctor Smitson was to treat my horse, Pront, for founder during an Archer County Rodeo. Whatever shot was administered resulted in my

horse promptly responding. Dad kept Pront standing in the cattle loading shoot all night after we returned to the ranch.

The annual rodeo was a much-anticipated event for a ranch kid. Riding my horse in the downtown parade and grand entry were exciting experiences, an enjoyable break to the hard work of ranch life. The unique rodeo event which I remember most was Uncle J.W. Covington and wife, Lillian, riding their horses in a group of riders who presented a square dance performance on horseback. They were dressed fancifully in western wear.

Stories of older boys seemed to have known fun, perhaps, activities. A group of high school boys climbed the fence to decorate the football field which also provided the arena for the rodeo. During a rush to leave the field as law enforcement approached, my cousin, Charles “Coondog” Covington’s senior ring hung on top of the fence which severely injured his finger. Coondog had a reputation, while he was a young teenager, of gambling at poker with some of the older men in town. He spent most of his life gambling as a livelihood while working at various jobs including short-term barber and automobile salesman as well as a brief tenure as manager of a northeast New Mexico ranch. And late in life, his involvement in the management of a dice game, Coondog was well known to Wichita Falls area law enforcement agencies.

On another occasion, boys locked the gate while a local sheriff’s deputy and his female companion were enjoying an ongoing, regular routine, date. She was the local attendant at the hamburger drive-in. Supposedly, she sought countryside relaxation after her shift ended with the shop’s closure.

Georgene Abercrombie Goforth

It was June and I believe the year was 1964. Many of us were able to get our driver’s licenses at an early age. My good friend Renee Mayes and I had just finished our freshman year of high school and were on our way to the first rodeo of the summer. Renee’s mother had generously allowed us to drive the family car that Thursday afternoon to the rodeo in a neighboring town. Renee and I were talking about being in a rut and wanting to do something exciting and out-of-

the-ordinary. That meant doing something wicked but it wouldn't be too sinful because at our age we were really pretty innocent and clueless compared to other kids we knew.

I'm not sure who saw them first, but Renee picked up one of her father's cigars that just happened to be on the car dash. It was one of those huge brown cigars that seemed to be as big around as my arm. We decided smoking, especially a cigar, would be pretty darn wicked. Even though the two of us shared it, by the time we arrived at the rodeo grounds, we were truly 'green around the gills'. We were supposed to join the rest of the club for lunch. The adults in our group noticed that we looked a little under the weather but had no idea that such good little girls would have been up to such mischief. As you might have guessed, neither of us ever smoked again. I doubt Renee ever told anyone about the cigar. I know I didn't.

Those of us who grew up in small town America during the 50's and 60's know that you had to make your own entertainment—and sometimes people got creative. One hot summer night in June of my junior year in high-school, I was home alone watching TV when I heard a knock at the door. Danny Brewer and Joe David Cameron were standing outside the door. Both of these guys were classmates and well known for pulling pranks. I invited them in and asked what they were doing. After chatting for a few minutes, Danny asked me if I would like to have an ice cream sandwich. Since it was a hot night and it sounded good, I said yes and they brought in several—one for each of us. The sandwiches had gotten a little soft so I put them in the freezer to harden up. I was curious about them showing up in the middle of the night with ice cream, so I asked them where they had purchased them. Back then, the places that sold that kind of food had closed long before they showed up at my door. They looked at each other and started laughing and told me they had broken into the cafeteria at the school and taken them. Since I only lived about a block from the high school, I guess that's why they came to see me. I think I scolded them and asked if they were afraid they would get caught. Again, they laughed at me and said I was the only one who knew about it. And you better not tell anyone!

Finally, Joe David suggested I get them out of the freezer. I gave one to each of them and started unwrapping mine. I didn't, however, notice that they were just sitting there watching me. I took a bite and started chewing when I suddenly realized that there was something terribly wrong with my ice cream sandwich. My mouth was on fire and they were rolling on the floor laughing. I spit it out very quickly and asked them what was wrong with my ice cream. When they finally stopped laughing, Joe David said he had inserted some tiny, very hot peppers in

mine. As far as I know, neither of them got in trouble--for that anyway. And I didn't tell anyone until now.

Growing up in the 50's in Archer, there wasn't much for us to do other than the movie theater. We frequently made our own fun because that was what people used to do. Since it was a small community, everyone knew each other, which meant they knew your family and anything I did my parents often knew long before I made it home. If I got lost or needed something, there was a helping hand to assist me along the way. The day after school was out for the summer my daddy hired someone to bring my horse in from the winter pasture. That day was always an exciting time for me, but that morning I woke up with the mumps. I had to wait several long days before I could begin my summer vacation with my horse.

Early one morning when I was about 10 years old, I took my gentle bay gelding, Bill, out for a day of exploring. He was a tall lanky nondescript horse with a dark brown coat, black mane, tail and stockings. Originally he had been trained to run in horse races but since he never made the grade, he was purchased by my father at an auction. I didn't know anyone else in town who had a horse so I had to entertain myself, and I was getting bored with all the usual places. That day I decided to try someplace new. To do that I had to cross the only major four lane highway that went through our small town. Too bad I didn't know anyone who had a horse to ride with me and keep me out of harm's way. Since my father had told me I was not to cross that road, I sat there studying the traffic flow a long time before I got brave enough to across it. The attraction of discovering unexplored territory was greater than getting in trouble and away we went. The McKinney mansion was to my right on one side of the highway and A. J Morris's house was across the highway. Normally I was a good girl and did whatever my daddy told me to do. After several false starts we finally made it across the highway. We traveled down one dirt road after another as we explored this virgin terrain. Along the way, I stopped and visited with strangers who seemed to know me, ate green plums and peaches off trees, and halted now and then to watch cows and horses grazing in their pastures.

It was a fun day. However, I unknowingly chose to ride Bill under a clothes line wire that was stretched across an unoccupied lot. Since I was riding fast through what I thought was a vacant lot, I not only failed to see the wire but the speed with which my neck connected with it led to a quicker and more painful dismount than I had ever experienced. When the thin wire bit into my neck with a surprising amount of force, it caused me to lose control of my muscles. As I

began to freefall through the air in what felt like slow motion, I watched the horse continue to race along without me and noticed the dirt flying up around me as I hit the ground. Some people claim that your whole life flashes before your eyes when you are in an accident, but I don't recall that happening. Maybe at that age of my life, I wasn't old enough to have a sufficient amount of past history to have a flashback. I landed hard on my butt--dazed and struggling to catch my breath while my horse decided to make a hasty retreat home--all by himself. In order to get back home, Bill had to cross that busy four lane highway without anyone looking out for him. I think God must have been watching over both of us that day. I wonder what my parents thought when they saw the rider less animal run to the barn. When I was finally able to stand, I started walking even though I had no idea where I was or how to find my way home. Luckily for me, a kind man driving along the country lane spotted this dirty, dazed kid walking down the middle of the road. Stopping beside me, he not only observed the nasty gash on my neck but he also recognized me because, as he said, "You look just like your daddy." He loaded me in his truck and delivered me to my anxious parents. Fortunately for me, my guardian angel was riding along with me. And no, I did not stop riding my horse.

Rhonda Hoggins Hester

During the summer of 1971, my parents went on a five-day vacation and my Dad left strict instructions to absolutely not drive my car to Wichita Falls while they gone. And my Dad meant what he said.

Every night, friends would meet at King's Grocery Store parking lot to chat and then make the drag down to McKinneys, to the red light, to the Wildcatter, and back to King's. Of course back then, gas was about 30 cents a gallon.

When my parents returned, my Dad yelled "You're grounded! I told you not to go out of town in that car." Little did I know he had clocked my mileage and said I drove that Mustang 250 miles in five days and I never left Archer City! I don't think he ever believed that I didn't drive that car to Wichita. How many miles did you drive "making the drag"? So blessed to have grown up in our little town!

Mary Ballowe Heydon

ANCIENT HISTORY

Our family came to Archer City about 1909. My great-grandparents (George and Maggie Ballowe) started out around Beebe, Arkansas, but George got caught stealing horses. He was given a choice of being hung or leaving the state. Packing up his family of himself, Maggie, and their two surviving of 15 children, he headed to Texas in a covered wagon. My grandfather Ernest (aka Pete) Ballowe, and his wife Mary married in 1906 in Ferris, Texas, and ended up in Archer City about 1908 with two babies. They worked the ranch owned by S.E. Humphrey that was north of town. Ernest worked the ranch and Mary cooked for the hands.

Ernest was a brick mason by trade and soon got a job working in town. His sister Catherine (Kate) and her husband Hugh Akin joined them in Archer City. Hugh and Kate bought a home west across the street from the old jail where Hugh set up a blacksmith shop. It was immediately north of where the Royal Theater is now. He made friends with the sheriff and worked out an arrangement that when the sheriff shut down a still, he'd bring the liquor to Hugh to destroy. Hugh did this after secreting some for his personal use. Hugh had a terrible temper, and when he got mad, he'd pick up the anvil and throw it. It took two men to set it back up. Kate was a nurse, and I suppose she worked for whatever doctor was in the hospital around then.

Ernest did brick work in many houses around Archer City, and he bought a two-room house just north of where Blackjack Street meets Center Street today. On that corner once stood an abandoned gas and service station. Ernest added a kitchen to their house, and they had an outhouse. They raised their six children there – five boys and one girl who was named for her aunt Kate. Young Catherine was outnumbered by brothers, so she learned to stand up for herself and built a sense of humor at the same time. All the kids attended Archer City school and walked the 1½ miles there and back each day. Ernest retired around 1940.

One by one the children grew up and left Archer City, but my father Don, the youngest, remained. When World War II started, he was drafted and served in the Pacific area. He met and married an Australian girl named Corale who had a daughter Jeanine by her first marriage. They were on their honeymoon when the bombs were dropped on Japan. He got an extra month of

honeymoon before having to return to the States, and my brother Douglas was born nine months later. When Don got home, he bought the abandoned gas station by his parents. It had a building, and in the back was a barn-like shop. He bought some abandoned oil lease shacks and put it all together to make a three-room home. It may have started out with an outhouse, but he added a bathroom at some point.

Corale arrived in Archer City in November 1946, on one of the coldest winters they could remember. She had sailed for months from Brisbane, Australia, with three-year old, a newborn, and their luggage. They took a train from the west coast and missed the train transfer in Denver, so she arrived a day later, exhausted in body and spirit. When she saw the shack of a house, she wanted to turn around and go back to Australia. But she stayed. Corale wanted to fit in to the family and sought advice from her sister-in-law Catherine about how to decorate for Christmas. Catherine was not going to miss out on such a great opportunity for a joke. She told Corale that Americans always put a red light bulb in the front porch light. Corale walked to town and got the light and put it in the fixture. Don was working for Shamburger Lumber Company, and when he got home from work that night – there was the red light!! (For those of you who don't know, this meant this was a place to come for a prostitute.) Corale learned quickly not to trust Catherine's advice!

Settling in to Archer City was difficult for Corale, and many people thought she was stuck up. She was just shy and reserved. Don told her to just be friendlier. One day Corale was walking home from town and a man offered her a ride. She accepted, but on the way home, the man made advances. So she decided that was enough friendliness and never accepted any more rides. It was only a mile to town after all.

When Jeanine turned 6, she was enrolled in Archer City elementary school, the same as all the Ballowe kids. Then a letter came from the Immigration Department that Jeanine was an illegal alien and was to be deported! When the Army had helped Corale get her paperwork and passport, they neglected to do so for three-year-old Jeanine, an Australian citizen. Douglas only needed his birth certificate because he was the son of a U.S. citizen born abroad. This required a trip to Dallas before the immigration judge who had a choice of deporting a 6-year-old, or a 6-year-old and mother, or just granting the girl proper immigration papers. Fortunately, the judge used common sense, issued her the proper papers, and Jeanine had no more problems after that.

There was a café in Archer City just north of the main intersection, which I think was the Cozy Café. My aunt Catherine and her sister-in-law Mildred worked there for a while. The brick building is still there with “café” on the side, but it is the Lone Star Guest Accommodations now on Google maps. I think it was owned by one of the Knox family members, but that was 70 years ago. My mother stopped by there one day with my brother Douglas who was still a baby in diapers. She had him sitting on the counter when he peed, and the owner just wiped it up with a towel and said it wasn’t the first time a baby had peed on the counter.

When Don and Corale first lived in Archer City, the hospital was run by Dr. Alexander. He sold out to Dr. Harold Smitson who did about everything from colds and flu to setting broken bones. He did cholecystectomy (gall bladder) on my grandmother. Some of his patients could pay in cash, and others paid in barter. My parents were among the latter. When Corale was in labor with me, I was breech, and Dr. Smitson had quite a time delivering me. For this he was paid one wooden fishing boat. My father got the wood from the lumber yard cheap and built the boat in the shop on the back of their property. I was always sickly with asthma, and my parents paid cash when they could but otherwise paid in vegetables and poultry. Dr. Smitson gave them a credit of 50 cents for each dressed duck.

Don got a job with L.T. Burns Oil Company as a roustabout. He worked so hard that when a lease became available in 1952, he was offered the job to run it. It was on the north MacGregor lease off the Jentsch Road in the northeast part of Archer County. (By the way, oil was \$3 a barrel in 1952.) The company moved the family to a farm house rented from the Vogtsberger family. Jeanine and Douglas were bussed from there to Wichita Falls schools. I joined them when I started first grade.

What does all this long narrative have to do with living in Archer City? That’s where the real story begins.

ADVENTURES IN THE BIG CITY OF ARCHER CITY

Our family would go most Sundays to the Christian Church in Archer City. Then we’d go to Ernest and Mary’s house for lunch. During the summer, Douglas and I would spend a week with them, and our parents would pick us up next Sunday. Our grandfather would walk to town every day for their mail and to get groceries. (Their mail box number was 63.) We would tag along and really enjoy being in the CITY, considering our the Vogtsberger house we lived in was way

off in the country. We walked past abandoned gas stations with the pumps removed and only the frontage remaining. There were so many houses and lots of people! There were cars everywhere, and stores and big buildings. One year Douglas and I saw an ad in a magazine about how you can order boxes of greeting cards and sell them to make money. My parents knew this was a bunch of bull, but they were willing to let us learn lessons the hard way. We eagerly took the boxes to big Archer City and went door to door from Blackjack Street to downtown trying to sell them. We sold zero, but we learned big lesson.

Our grandfather took us into the Court House and showed us the amazing displays there. Then he took us into the records office and showed us how to look up things like property records, weddings, births, and deaths. I think that was the first “ping” on my radar to do genealogy. I thought it was fascinating. Our family was listed in the records!

We’d stop at the Lucky Dollar grocery store where we couldn’t buy much because we never had much money. There was sometimes enough money to buy a candy bar for a nickel.

My grandparents opened bank accounts for Douglas and me at the bank in Archer City - First State Bank? I think the most my account would have had was \$30. I went to the bank after I graduated to draw out the money, but the account had been closed long ago. When accounts are dormant for a year, the money is escheated to the State. This may have been what happened to it, but it could also have been that the account was in my name “Mary Ballowe” which was the same name as my grandmother. The bank may have just rolled the money into my grandparents’ account. (You can check yourself to see if there are any accounts in your name. Google “unclaimed property” for the states you have lived in, and you may be surprised to find an uncashed payroll check or utility deposit or some other funds. If you do, there is a procedure to collect it on the websites.)

On time we were watching a game show on TV that ended up with the host drawing a post card out of a big bin of cards, and the lucky one drawn won a big prize. Douglas and I pooled our allowances and our grandfather took us to the post office to buy postcards. We entered a lot of postcards for the drawing. We waited for them to let us know we won, but, sadly, the letter never came.

We didn’t live far from the Archer cemetery, and once in a while, we would walk there and visit our deceased family members’ tombstones. I was surprised to see “S.E. Humphrey” included among our stones. He was the man who hired my grandparents for his ranch so many

years ago. S.E. had served in the War Between the States (Confederate Army). He had been given a pocket New Testament, and my grandmother gave it to me. I still have it.

My parents kept their house at Blackjack Street and rented it out. I think they were still making the mortgage payments of \$15 a month. This was a disaster when the D***s (name withheld) family moved in. They had a hard-luck story of how they didn't have the rent money that month. This went on for some months. Then one day my parents saw empty beer bottles in the house and told them to get out. They did – and they took the brass door knobs anything they could haul. After that my father told his brother Harry and his wife Mildred they could live there. After they left some years later, my father told the county they could have it for back taxes. Both that house and my grandparents' home were torn down, and now other people own the properties.

Don could do most of the car repairs himself, but from time to time he needed professional help. That's when he went to Walsh Brothers. They ran their shop on the northwest corner of the main intersection, and there is a wonderful monument for them today. I recall their lift was outside, and perhaps under a tin roof. This was okay in fair weather, but can you imagine what it would be like working there in a blue norther? It is said there is nothing between Texas and the north wind but a barbed wire fence, and the gate is down on it.

SCHOOL DAYS

Archer County learned there were about 30 Archer County students attending Wichita Falls schools a half hour away, and the per capita money the state would pay was going to Wichita Falls. This would never do. The school board said we had to attend Archer City schools, so when I started 7th grade, we were bussed an hour through the county, on Jacksboro Highway, and on farm roads to school. Mr. Priebe was our driver for as long as I can remember. He picked up Debby Jentsch and then us, and then all the others (MacGregor, Stedman, Sternadell, DeShazo, etc.). The big kids sat in the back, and the guys tormented poor Mr. Priebe until he stopped the bus and offered to let them walk home. One wet winter day the bus got stuck on a farm road. Mr. Priebe had to get the farmer to pull us out with a tractor, and we finally got to school in time for lunch. We were picked up before sunrise for the long ride in. Did you know that on cold winter days, fresh cow piles had steam coming off them? I did most of my homework on the bus.

Most of my school memories are in Jim Black's book "Through These Halls." There should be a special section for senior trips. One way to make money was to drive around and pick up glass soda bottles for the deposit (2 cents, I think), and coat hangers for which the cleaners would give us 5 cents. Sandra Bracy and I went on such an excursion. She had a driver's license and access to a car, but I had neither. We must have used a lot of gas, but I suppose her parents paid for that. Gas might have been about 15 cents a gallon then. Each week we sold spirit ribbons for 10 cents each. I recall that homecoming stickers were 25 cents.

In junior high, there was a spelling bee contest, and I was one of the finalists who got to sit on the stage and compete. I was so nervous that when I was given the word "divide", I spelled it "d-e-v-i-d-e." Oh, the humiliation of having to sit down and suffer such shame while the others continued until there was a winner.

One year our class was having some kind of event that required posters. A friend took me to the building that housed the Archer County News to buy poster paint and other supplies. What a wonderful surprise it was to learn that such supplies were available there. At that time, it was further west on Main Street. I think the building is now Koala Tea Thrift on the latest Google maps.

In our junior year, we got to pick out senior rings. The catch was that they all had to be the same design. We settled on a design and a yellow stone. It cost a whopping \$35!!! I don't know how my parents paid for it, but they did. (My husband and I had a robbery at our house, and the thief stole that ring – the only thing he took that was irreplaceable. I still have regrets.)

SENIOR TRIP

Our trip was a bus ride to California. We sat wherever we wanted on the bus, but at night the guys had to sleep on one side of the aisle and the girls on the other. No sleeping together!

We stopped at El Paso and walked over the bridge to visit Juarez. Some of us visited a glass-blowing factory. Then it was time to cross the bridge back into the U.S. Our entry into the U.S. required that we declare our citizenship and pay 10 cents.

Coach McCown was our chaperone, and he was also our tour guide. As we crossed Arizona, he said the country used to be more geologically active. He said the land still has some rumblings, and "If you put your hand on the bus window, you can feel the pane." Of course, I

thought he meant “pain” and had my hand on the window. Another time he said something about a Caribbean island woman who had helped him on a previous trip, but he couldn’t remember the name of the island. Everyone offered names of the islands, but none of them were the right one. Then one of the guys offered, “Jamaica?” Coach McCown responded, “No, I didn’t get fresh with her at all.”

We stopped at Las Vegas, but those of us who weren’t 18 couldn’t gamble. I gave Joyce Hornady, our other chaperone, 15 cents to put in the slot machines for me, and she gave me back my winnings of 25 cents. I always boast that I left Los Vegas a winner. I didn’t know what Knott’s Berry Farm was – I thought it was a farm! Disneyland was a fantastic adventure for a country girl like me. We stopped at an authentic Mexican restaurant and had a meal that was so spicy it practically cauterized our throats.

We stayed at motels that had a swimming pool. (It was my first time staying in a motel.) I couldn’t swim, but I accidently ended up in the deep end and discovered – SHOCK – I can swim after all! Life is good!

On the way back from California, we stopped at the Grand Canyon. By this time, we were all very tired, so it was just a case of pulling up to the lookout point and saying, “Here’s the Grand Canyon.” So we said “yup” and got back on the bus. No one wanted the seat in front of the toilet because the seat backs wouldn’t go down. So I had both seats to myself and slept most of the way back to Archer City.

GRADUATION

We had to rent our cap and gowns. We got fitted for them and wore them proudly for our Baccalaureate and graduation day. I was surprised to be valedictorian and was told I had to give a speech. I had no idea about what to write, so the office gave me samples of previous speeches. I thought I could just use them, so memorized parts and delivered the speech in a voice that (I hope) was so low that no one could hear me. For being valedictorian, I received a gift subscription to Readers Digest and two free semesters of tuition to the college of my choice. In 1967, full-time tuition to Midwestern was \$50, so it meant \$100 to me. In contrast, the students who excelled in sports got a four-year ride to their colleges. I always felt short-changed somehow.

Senior girls also received a little cedar box by Lane from Riley Furniture Company in Wichita Falls. It was to encourage us to buy a hope chest from them. I never bought the hope chest, but I still have the box.

AFTER SCHOOL

Douglas graduated in 1964, and I graduated in 1967. We still continued to visit our grandmother, our grandfather having passed in 1963. She remained in the same home until she ended up in the Archer Nursing Home. They hadn't paid taxes on the property for years, so the County took the property for back taxes.

Douglas and I would go every Saturday to the matinee at the Royal Theater. One year the owner decided to raffle off an old car, 1940's I think. Each week for several weeks movie-goers were given a ticket to write their name on and put it in the collection. The rule was you had to be present to win. When the big day came, the first name or two were people who weren't present. Then they called my brother's name, and he won the car! It was a very old car with a standard transmission. Douglas drove it for a while until he got something better. I learned how to drive with that car and finally got my driver's license.

Douglas and I moved away but returned almost every year to visit our folks. Our visits home always included a visit to Archer City with our mother, my father passing away in 1989. Hugh and Kate's house was bulldozed and is now a parking lot for a bank. The Royal Theater burned down. The State Championship sign stayed up for many years, but now it seems to be missing. The veterans' memorial wall is very impressive, and my father has two bricks in the walkway. The old variety store on the main square became a thrift shop.

Long ago the Archer Hospital had been converted into an office building and then perhaps some other use. It is still there, but I don't know what it is used for now. I had spent a few nights in the room on the upper left corner when I was so sick with asthma. That might have been the room my mother occupied after delivering me.

The Lucky Dollar was now Booked Up. We had an excellent time going through the Booked Up stores to shop. We found a book we wanted to buy and were told we had to take it to another Booked Up store down the street, we were surprised that people were trusted to pay. We stopped at another Booked Up to browse before ending up at the one that collected the money. I subscribe to the Archer County News and was pleased to hear Chip and Joanne Gaines were

going to do something with one of the stores, but then it was a big disappointment to learn they changed their minds.

I watch “The Last Picture Show” from time to time just because it is home. There’s a scene where Sonny and Jacy are at the jail. As the camera is on Jacy, you can see Hugh and Kate’s house in the background. I also watched “Texasville,” but I never liked it. When I come across it again, I fast-forward to the scenes that show the town.

I went back to Archer City in 2017 for our 50th high school reunion with a celebration by the Archer lake. It is sad to know so many of my classmates have passed on. My husband and I enjoyed the celebration and a tour of the city. We did not visit the new school because it was not MY school. My mother had joined my father in 2006, so I have no more reason to return to Archer. However, I still miss it, and it is still “home.”

In 2023, our son made a cross-country trip and stopped in at Archer City. He happened to go to the thrift store on the square, and the clerk there turned out to be a distant cousin. There had been other Ballowe’s who lived in Archer City. Small world, indeed.

Jim Lewis

During my time in Archer City many of our first cars had standard transmissions. And no one ever heard of locking your car. Half the time we just left the keys in the ignition. So there were lots of occasions where if someone stayed late after school when they walked out to go home their car would be gone. Again, it never occurred to anybody that their car had been stolen. They just knew they had been pranked. So they would have to enlist a friend to drive them around the back streets until they found where their car had been left. And, oh my God, in Archer City that could sometimes take as long as ten minutes.

The Story of Archer City

The funny, touching and endearing stories Jim has collected here paint a vivid and colorful portrait of life through our unique experiences in this dusty little spot in the universe. But I

would like to tell the story of Archer City, or at least my story of Archer City. I'm not trying to present a history of defining moments, or the influences of ranchers and cowboys, oilmen and roughnecks, or merchants and misfits. My story of Archer City can only be told from the rear view mirror and it has only been revealed to me through the clear lens of time.

I haven't lived there in over 50 years and the overwhelming majority of citizens I have never met. But this is what I know. There are people from Archer City that I haven't seen in decades and people that I only communicate with on rare occasions. But for some unexplainable reason there is a bond there, a bond that transcends. It transcends time and distance and it has no respect for status or any of the things that this world deems important. It is a bond of realization, a realization that the collective 'us' who happened to be thrown together in a brief moment in time and in the unfathomable march forward of all things, were formed by the interactions that make up a significant part of who each of us is even today. It is a bond that can no more be removed than a heart or a brain. No matter where I have gone, no matter how I've changed, no matter the personal highs or lows, the bond is unshakeable and the genuine respect and admiration for the people who are the elements of that bond will be a part of me forever.

None of us can have true lifelong friends unless those friends have always, always been a part of us. Anyway, that's my story of Archer City.

Don Linscott

I loved AC and am very appreciative of the education and guidance I received from my teachers from the first grade through my senior year in 1964.

One of my earliest memories was as a second grade student in Mrs. Nash's class. I arrived early one day and as I walked up the sidewalk to the "new" elementary building, I saw a couple of first graders waiting to get in. Walking up the sidewalk behind me was Mr. Hopkins, the school principal. He was a bit on the hefty side. At least, that's how I recall him. In a misguided attempt to show off in front of the first-graders, I welcomed Mr. Hopkins with, "Good morning,

Fatso." After which, he promptly applied two firm blows which left me, not only with a sore behind, but a memory that has lasted a lifetime.

Debie Martin

Summers on the Court House Lawn

Growing up in a small town in Texas afforded many opportunities not available for the masses. Entertaining ourselves was as essential as protecting ourselves. And, as typical of local personalities and intellect we rarely missed the chance to combine those needs.

The Volunteer Fire Department and Auxiliary were critical elements of our community. My Grandfather, Uncle, Father, and Mother were members, and I thought of myself as an appendage. Fire seasons were scary and exhausting times, and I still remember when classmates lost homes or acreage to fires. Knowing that it was your relatives and friends who responded and held the line provided a healthy perspective.

To provide safe and effective fire response, the volunteers practiced using the equipment and most current techniques. During the summer months, thoughts turned to the annual, regional fire convention and the contests involved. For some, football and basketball were what kindled the spirit, but for many of us those fire convention contests vied for that spot.

Preparing for the contests provided me, and many others, our favorite summer evening entertainment. About dusk we would gather on the Court House lawn to watch the competitor's train. There were three main events: water polo, 6-person relay, and 3-person relay.

The men and the women team each practiced. The road on the east side of the Court House from the Royal to the old post office was closed and the equipment was assembled. To practice water polo two teams were formed and once the water was turned on at the pump, the excitement began. Watching the expertise needed to move that metal ball to the goal was mesmerizing. Now, if you were not lucky enough to enjoy this event, I should inform you that it

was equally dangerous as the other dearly loved small town sports. Water at the pressure used could cause serious injury and running and maneuvering on wet ground were daunting feats.

The relay events were also fun to watch and as I got older, I was sometimes allowed to participate on one of the women runs. This was thrilling and free entertainment for many of my childhood years and I think of it every time I drive that little section of road.

Convention was the focus of all the hard work, and it too took on a vacation/sporting event life of its own. Once a year all the regional fire departments and auxiliaries gathered at the designated, hosting small town to learn the latest about fighting fires and equipment and to compete for the trophies. It was an all-day event with exhibits and door prizes and visiting. The competitions were the main event. It was the best of times when we went home triumphant and with no serious injuries. The last agenda item was always a great meal.

I should point out that later in life, when I attempted to share this experience with *contemporaries*, I learned that water polo had a totally different meaning to them.

Jack Mueller

OH MY GOSH. Where does a guy begin? Let's see . . .

Thunder Chicken. A new super hero dressed in long handle underwear, work boots, headphones, a pair of upside down aviator sunglasses, wielding a golf club as a sword. (out of courtesy, he shall remain nameless. ☺)

The time Richard Wingo threw a huge snowball thru the windshield of Jim Bob Crowley's pickup.

Someone (I'm told it was me) throwing a huge water balloon through an open window of Joe Stults' El Camino, ruining that week's edition of the Archer County News which as it was headed to the printer.

All the firework battles.

Filling balloons up with the gas valve in our house and tying a paper tail to them and lighting it on fire and letting it go, trying to get it to blow up over the school.

Sled riding on an old car hood behind Gary Beesinger's Maverick and getting thrown off.
Someone breaking the light fixture in their bedroom trying to crack a whip inside their house (again not mentioning any names).
I could go on and on.

Ronnie Nelson

The year I graduated from high school, Jerry Morrison and I decided we wanted to be rodeo cowboys. I entered the bareback bronc riding in Archer City under my name as did Jerry. I was thrown off but would not let go of the rigging, whereas my head was hanging down under the horse whose hooves almost kicked me in the head. My parents were watching the rodeo from the roof of our house, which was just east of the arena. Neither knew I was riding and had a "fit" when my name was called. Needless to say, I got into trouble as did my big brother, Travis, who was a member of the rodeo association and helped me enter by signing my release as I was too young to enter without my parents' permission.

The next day I was working at Travis's gas station when a few of the cowboys, who were also members of the rodeo association, came into the station talking about the performance the night before. They needed to find someone to ride saddle bronc for the last night of the rodeo. It was stated that they only had two riders for the saddle bronc and needed two more but would settle for one more. The cowboys consisted of John Bell, Gene Bell, Cecil Fletcher, Bill Gage and Travis. Bill Gage suggested Jerry and I ride but it would not cost us the entrance fee as the ride would be exhibition rides. My parents had just "chewed me out", when I got home the night before, and "forbid" me to ever do anything like that again. Cecil said that Ronnie Nelson did not need to ride, I could ride under another name and my parents would never be the wiser. I believe it was either Cecil or Gene that had a regulation saddle I could borrow.

My parents always watched the rodeo from the roof of our garage apartment because our property was next to the rodeo arena. With the distance from our property and the bucking chutes they could not see who the person was on the horse, and I would not get into trouble. That is when Jack Archer from Archer City was born. My dad had a cousin from Fort Worth coming to

visit and go to the rodeo for that night's performance, and I did not know they were going to watch the performance from the bleachers.

When I got to the arena that night, Adrian Parker, the rodeo producer, had set me up on a horse that was the #3 horse in his string. Cecil Fletcher, Gene Bell, Bill Gage and Travis were there to put me on the horse. They set me on the horse and had me "screw my hat down" and the chute was opened. The horse came out bucking in a straight line down the arena. Everything was going as well as possible when about halfway down I opened my right hand and dropped the reins. The horse then stepped on the reins and rolled over end-over-end, landing on his side, me still in the saddle and under the horse. My parents and my dad's cousin were in the stands watching this wreck when my mother stood up and yelled "I hope the horse isn't hurt". At this time, Travis and Cecil jumped off the chutes and ran for Jack Archer who was under the 1200 lb. horse. My dad then said, "Why is Travis out in the arena". My parents found out why Travis was in the arena and he smoothed things over between my parents and I. My parents then decided they could not stop me from riding in rodeos if I wanted to ride.

I tried my hand at bareback and saddle bronc that summer without much luck until April the next year when some friends I was traveling with from Wichita Falls paid my entrance fee of \$7.00 for the bull riding (I had already paid the \$7.00 for the bareback and \$7.00 saddle bronc myself) at a rodeo in Comanche, Oklahoma where I was lucky and won first place on the first bull I had ever ridden and won \$116.00 for the bull, \$90.00 for second place saddle bronc and \$200.00 FOR "ALL AROUND COWBOY", three belt buckles and a trophy.

At the time of this writing this all took place 63 years ago today.

This next memory will be a little about the fight but mostly it is about some things which happened years later. I will mention some names but not all of them.

THE BIG FIGHT AT TROY'S DRIVE-IN

The reason for the fight is of no consequence. The fact that two from Archer fought with the group from Wichita is. One of the boys from Archer was my friend who for years but had wanted to "whoop my ass". This was his chance. The other from Archer wanted to "whoop" Roddy Oliver and this was his chance. Some called this the "Football boys fight at Troy's". There was another from Archer, but he did not participate in the fight as he watched from across

the street. Everyone was to be high school boys but that was not the case as I was to find out later.

As the fight was to take place at Troy's Drive Inn, the "football boys" were at the drive-in when the Wichita boys pulled up and parked across the street. When they got out of their cars a lot of name-calling started. Names were called out by the Wichita boys as to tell who they were going to "whoop". My name was called out by whom I thought would be calling my name. Roddy's name was called by the person wanting to "whoop" his ass.

Barry Morrison and Barney Oliver were standing beside and a little behind me, one on the left and one on the right when the Wichita boys ran across the street. The one headed for me was screaming like a Banshee. As he reached me, Barry and Barney both grabbed me by the shoulders pulled me behind them and stepped out with their fists aimed at the other's face and connected. That boys feet flew up in the air and he hit the ground like a "sack of potatoes". He was out like a light for the duration. The one calling for Roddy got him, and the fight was on. That fight, I am told, lasted the whole time.

I was told, later, that the one who got Tommy Eustace was a "Golden Gloves" champ. Which I found out later was true. Years later I was a Sargent for the Texas Department of Corrections at the Clemens Unit in Brazoria and had taken a bus load of prisoners to the Texas Prison Rodeo in Huntsville. When I went into the Officers' Dinning to have lunch, an inmate set a glass of tea in front of me. I did not look up at the inmate, so he moved the glass away from me and then moved it back. When I finally looked up he said "Anything I can get you, Boss Nelson"? I looked at him and said, "No thanks, Gary". This was, he told me, the person who fought Tommy Eustace. He was out of high school at the time of the fight and a Golden Gloves champ.

During the fight, another boy from Wichita grabbed me and we started throwing fists at each other. This boy was my age and redheaded like me. The fight turned out to be fairly good but both had cuts and bruises. This fight would be nothing to talk about except for something that happened years later.

In 1992 I was working for Jacobs Engineering in Houston. We were engineering a job in New York. My supervisor was a man named Troy Elroy whom I sat in front of. One day Troy was talking about all the "TUFF" boys he was raised with. We can all talk about the "tuff" boys we were raised with no matter where we were raised. I was not in the conversation, so I did not

pay that much attention until he mentioned two names. I listened a little closer after that. Then he mentioned a few more names of boys he had run with. I then turned around and said to Troy, “Do you know someone named Jay Lavender and another guy named Gary Collier?”. He said “Yes. How do you know them?”. I said, “You’re from Wichita Falls and I’m from Archer City and you are right, those boys you named were “TUFF”.

Troy then asked me if I knew anything about a fight that had taken place somewhere in Archer at a Drive-in. I told him I heard about a gang fight some years ago. He named the boys from Archer that had asked his brother and him along with some of his friends to go whoop up on the football boys in Archer. He said he did not know anyone from Archer, but said he would go with them because his brother was a friend of the guy from Archer that had stayed in the car across the street from the fight.

Troy wanted to know who the redheaded guy was from Archer that was in the fight. He said he picked the redheaded guy because he looked easy, but as it turned out he was not so easy. I played dumb, which is not hard for me. You see, my hair was red until I went to Cambridge Mass. in 1988 where I was manager of an engineering firm. My hair turned white in three years.

As I stated I played dumb because he was my boss, and I had only been on the job for a month. I never told Troy I was the redhead, but I believe he figured it out about a year later. Troy tried to lay me off but his boss, Norman Gassett, moved me to the same position Troy had and gave me three projects of my own. Three years later Troy was working for me. I stayed with Jacobs Engineering for 12 years as a Design Coordinator.

Isn't it funny how someone's life will catch up with them?

Greg Osborne

Room to Roam: An Archer City Childhood

I grew up at 502 South Oak in Archer City, Texas, where the weather could change without warning, the streets were easy to roam, and the stars at night seemed to go on forever. For the

first thirteen years of my life, that city block felt like a world of its own. At times there must have been more than twenty school-aged children nearby, and the school was only two blocks away—close enough to walk, close enough to ride my bike, and close enough to make childhood feel safe, active, and wide open to adventure. What follows is not a perfect memory of events from 1954 to 1968, but a grateful reflection on the people, places, routines, and small-town freedoms that shaped me by the time I was a teenager. Archer City gave me family, faith, imagination, independence, and a lasting affection for Texas towns where everybody knew your name—and sometimes your business too.

My mother, Modena Strawn Osborne, also grew up in Archer City, and her parents and much of her family still lived there when I was growing up. The Strawn family was centered on West Pecan Street, with grandparents, aunts, and uncles close by on the same block, the cemetery not far away, and plenty of places for a bored child to explore. After church on Sundays, we often gathered for a potluck lunch at Essie “Mama” and Jesse “Papa” Strawn’s house with cousins, extended family, and a few neighbors. In the evenings, when we visited my grandparents, my brothers Coby and Kirk and I often found them on the front porch stringing and shelling beans from the garden, predicting the weather from natural signs, and telling long tales that made us laugh or stare in wonder. Uncle Bill and Aunt Velma Robertson, whom we pronounced “Aint,” delivered the newspaper every morning to every house in Archer City. Uncle Charlie and Aint Grace Stewart also lived near my grandparents. She worked at Heard’s Department Store. They seemed to know everyone’s business, and in Archer City, that was almost expected: everybody seemed to know everything about everybody. Later, when I lived in San Antonio, I experienced the unfamiliar comfort of anonymity, at least for a few years. Some of Mother’s siblings moved back to Archer City after retirement, including G.M. Strawn and one of the twins, Launell. The other twin, Juanell, raised her family in Denton. Launell’s daughter Penny Roberts also came and raised a family in A.C. My uncle J.C. Strawn and his wife Jean served as Archer County Judge. Uncle Clinton was the sheriff in Glen Rose, Texas. Several cousins graduated from Archer City High School and became respected members of their new communities.

There were memorable rodeos, parades, and a Volunteer Fire Department water cannon competition. First Baptist Church was central to our lives, and Mother was the organist. She played for Vacation Bible School—with Kool-Aid, cookies, and “My Best Friend is Jesus”—as

well as Sunday school, Sunday morning and evening services, Training Union, Wednesday night services, revivals, weddings, and funerals. When she played the organ, my middle brother Coby and I were often on the front pew so she could keep an eye on us. Occasionally, we would get to cutting up and Mom would give us “the eye”. If we really pushed it, she would stop playing suddenly and we knew we had crossed the line of no return. Mom taught piano lessons to many young people in A. C. back in the 1960s and worked at the county courthouse before I was born. Every now and then, my father Clarence Osborne found fishing on a Sunday as spiritually satisfying as going to church, it seemed, and maybe more so if catching. I learned from him about fishing and enjoying the outdoors. With a little family help one summer in a city-wide tournament, I won first prize for biggest fish.

My Father belonged to a close-knit crew of truck drivers, technicians, mechanics, and field hands for the oil company L. T. Burns and later for his son Bobby M. Burns. The Burn’s family interests became part of my childhood landscape too: the Burn’s Christmas lights in Wichita Falls, Bobby showing his taxidermy and slides from African safaris at the American Legion Hall, Lake Kickapoo (the Burn’s lake house where we had family reunions), and trips to Possum Kingdom. Until recent years, we kept up some of the Strawn Reunions at the Community Center or Royal Theater with the folks at the Spur and the Lonesome Dove Hotels accommodating us well. I learned to drive by going with Dad when he drove a Burn’s truck to haul water from one field to another. At first, I got to push the gear stick from one gear to the next. Later, I would get to assist turning the steering wheel with dad keeping me from veering off.

Little League baseball was part practice, part community, and part adventure. I still remember the ice-cold water from the Igloo containers on the Burn’s trucks, filled with ice from their new ice machine and served in cone-shaped paper cups. There was nothing ever better on a 100-degree summer day in North Texas. We ran around town raising money for the baseball league and my Haigood and Campbell sponsored team by selling baseball pins. Archer was a dry county back then with no alcohol sales in town. I enjoyed going with a special uncle to get Colorado Cool-Aid as he called it, just for adults, on the Windthorst highway county line. I could get a Dr Pepper. There was delicious backyard mesquite-grilled barbecue on the weekend from a huge steel BBQ pit that had been welded by one of the Burn’s employees.

In elementary school, I went to Ruby's store for candy nearly every day. I remember waiting for the first Icee machine to start turning out the slushy sweet drink. Eventually I ended up with a mouth full of cavities that Dr. Hunt, the dentist in Olney, had to fill. Mother was sympathetic afterward, and we would get the best milkshake at the Olney pharmacy. On the eighteen-mile drive home, she let me pick up Coke bottles along the road to sell. Looking back, I sometimes wonder if those trips helped point me toward the dental profession. I designed my dental office in San Antonio with several treatment rooms and named them after towns in Texas. Of course, Archer City is there. along with other small towns like Comfort, Fredericksburg, Rockport, Bandera and Terlingua. Our office logo is "Big City Convenience, Small Town Care". Go figure. I am now using everything I learned to help pioneer a new area of dentistry called Dental Sleep Medicine. For longer than most dentists, I have been treating patients in South Texas that have obstructive sleep apnea and snoring.

The Royal Theater opened a window into a larger world for us: John Wayne, the Three Stooges, newsreels, popcorn smells, horror movies, and the strange scary thrill of walking home alone afterward in the dark. Some movies carried adult themes I did not fully understand at the time. Watching them in mixed company made me aware that childhood was "fixing to" change. Then there were summer nights sleeping under the stars on a cot in the backyard, card games and laughter among neighborhood parents, kids inventing games, too much television with too few channels, and bicycle rides all over town. I had older cousins that graduated high school from Archer City before I started school that were successful as teachers and businesspeople that put faith and family first. They were my role models. One Cousin Warren Robertson achieved success as an acting teacher in New York City to many of the famous celebrities of my lifetime. I remember seeing him in the 1960s on TV as a guest on the Johnny Carson Show. The stars lined up for him it seemed. I realized when I was young that the sky was the limit even if you are from a small town.

The 1964 state championship football team was so thrilling. Real life heroes! Pep rallies, spirit ribbons, the band playing at half time, watching the exhausting varsity practices and expecting this would be in my future. Then there was basketball or dodgeball in the old gym. I did get to play on the Junior High football team. I also marched in the band at half time. Larger high schools often limit you to one or the other. Later, I was blessed to play defensive safety on a high school football team that made it to the State Finals in Austin. My brothers and I lettered in

football, basketball and track. In college at Texas A&I University, I was a member of a team that won the NAIA National Championship in 1974. I suspect ten years earlier the football seed had been planted for me in Archer City.

Some of my clearest memories of growing up in Archer City are tied to ordinary things that now seem almost sacred: riding to Wichita Falls in the 1957 Chevy Bel Air my dad kept perfectly tuned and drove as fast as Mother would allow—though she had a heavy foot herself—and then, in 1965, feeling like we had entered the modern age when we bought a new Chevy Impala with air conditioning. Memories of eating Underwood’s barbecue, going to Kiddieland Park, roller skating, wandering through the Gibson and Giant stores. Back then every adult seemed to smoke cigarettes. A boy could get an education at the barber shop just by sitting among aging cowboys and businessmen while waiting for a flat-top haircut, then learn the hard way that a fresh haircut meant a sunburned head if you forgot to wear your cap. You knew it was time to go home in the evening when the fireflies—or lightning bugs—started flashing, and you knew the seriousness of weather when the noon siren, usually just a lunch signal, became a tornado warning and sent us down into the storm cellar, where the damp musty air and the flicker of a kerosene lantern made Mama Strawn’s jars of pickled beets and vegetables sparkle like treasures. I can still remember our telephone number: 2-3240, or Hopkins 2-3240 for long distance, which makes me laugh now, since I cannot seem to remember a single computer password. I remember running into the post office as a child to spin the dial on our mailbox lock to get the mail, seeing the first color television that showed up in town, and helping make homemade ice cream by chipping ice from a huge ice block and, when I was finally old enough, taking my turn at the crank. There were incredible loud and frequent sonic booms that rattled the walls of our house that were coming from Jets flying over from Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls before there were restrictions on the obnoxious shock waves.

Those memories remind me that small-town childhood was made not from grand events but from repeated rituals, familiar places, and the feeling that life was held together by family, weather, neighbors, simple machines, food, and a thousand small responsibilities that made a child feel both free and deeply rooted.

At the end of the seventh grade, Burn’s oil company transferred dad and our family to Portland, Texas on the Gulf Coast. It did bring mixed feelings. I was leaving Archer City, the Wildcats, and the people who had known me from birth. At the same time, the move promised

more opportunities, a larger school system, the beach, and maybe a broader view of the world. Looking back, I still wonder how much of my personality was formed in those first thirteen years in Archer City. I think the answer is: a great deal. In Portland, we bought the house of one of the coaches who was from Ingleside, the team we beat for state just a few years earlier. Small world, but he recognized I was from a competitive sports town which helped open the door to a good start in athletics for me and my brothers at our new school.

Moving away just before the filming of *The Last Picture Show* made me aware of both what I was leaving and what I was gaining. Larry McMurtry masterfully wrote about a much more dismal life in Archer City, describing it as a hard place to live and grow up, maybe even worse than Wichita Falls. And yet he returned later in life, and I'm told he wanted it known that he died in Archer City, even if he had died in Arizona. His complicated relationship with the town makes sense to me. A place can be limiting and still be formative; plain and ordinary to one person, beloved and unforgettable to another. Looking back, I believe Archer City may have been one of the best places I could have grown up in during those first thirteen years. It was not perfect, and no childhood is, but it gave me room to roam, people who cared, lessons of work and play, faith and family, competition and imagination. It gave me the confidence that comes from being known and the humility that comes from knowing everyone else is watching too. My parents were very proud of us three boys, our wives and children, and our business success; Coby and Kirk are retired Aggie Petroleum Engineers. We tried to balance a life of faith, family, and community. Larry McMurtry could write of Archer City as both emptiness and attachment, confinement and homecoming, exposing the paradoxes of a small town and the people who could both wound and hold one another. My own childhood knew those contradictions too, but its deeper truth was brighter: Archer City gave me not a last picture show, but a first sense of belonging, freedom, family, and possibility.

What I can still see and feel most clearly is the love: extended family, church family, dedicated teachers, compassionate doctors, compelling preachers, gifted classmates, and special neighbors. Some of that love came through kindness, some through correction, some through expectation, and some through the simple fact that people paid attention. I have intentionally not named so many special, unique people who influenced my young life because I would surely leave someone out. When my family returned to visit A.C., it was always a challenge to see everyone, and we always regretted missing someone.

In a small town, you were rarely invisible, and for a child that could be both uncomfortable and deeply reassuring. Growing up in Archer City also taught my brothers and me the value of imagination. We made up games, created adventures out of vacant lots and backyards, turned bicycles into transportation and freedom, and found entertainment in whatever the day offered. That kind of imagination served us well later. It taught us to see possibilities in ordinary places and to carry a small-town resourcefulness into a much larger world. If we were sometimes seen as ambitious, perhaps some of that came from growing up in a place that expected you to show up, compete, contribute, and be known. Archer City did not give us everything, but it gave us enough to begin: roots, resilience, confidence, memory, and a lasting love for small-town Texas.

Ace Reid

Scooters and Golf Cart

Driving out the back alley past the neighbors dogs as they chased me out the driveway. Driving the scooter all the way across town to either the Dollar General for some snacks and the occasional Xbox gift card (I didn't have a debit card yet) or the library to play games on their computers (would usually reinstall Roblox since they'd be removed every night), having to halfway walk the scooter back because the battery was giving out. Got tired of standing up all the time with the scooter, so I took the top half of an office chair and stuck it to the board (worked pretty well). Once used the scooter as a motor to spin the merry-go-round at the park, lucky nobody got hurt from how fast it spun. Since I didn't have a truck yet I was allowed to take out the family golf cart that had the AC high school sticker on the front. Would often drive the other students around, joking I'd make a taxi service of it (never happened). Since I had a job that got me out of class early and could get around quickly, I'd also bring people lunch if they asked.

Grocery Stores

Whenever I got the chance I'd always be going out to any of the three stores that were available: Lucky's, Oodles, or Dollar General. Lucky's was always good for a hot meal, though I'd always

spend a good bit on either the coin pushing machine or toy dispensers. I always counted on Oodles for any type of snack food, and I largely persisted off their chicken meals (along with whatever bagged snacks or bakery treats I'd get as well). And while I always got snacks from Dollar General as well, most of the time when I went there it was just so I could get an Xbox gift card (again, no debit card).

The Pool

Driving out to the public pool with the golf cart. Using whatever bills I had scrounged up to buy either an ice cream sandwich or Icee push pop on break, using my wet towel to keep me from burning myself when sitting on the sun-cooked metal railing or concrete, Picking off flower buds from trees in the front. Hanging right around the side on the bridge they had going across the small pond nearby, always seeing if my legs were long enough to scrape the pond algae off the water while sitting on the edge. Going right across every once in a while to the mini golf course, not necessarily to play seriously, but more so to goof off and "play it where it lies" whenever I'd hit it way off somewhere difficult.

The Golf Course

When I was younger, I remember being taken out to the big golf course a lot with Dad, having carried the memory of the distinct smell the country club building had at all times. Going out with the cart and practicing with my blue golf clubs, yet never really taking it seriously. For me, the course was more for general recreational use than anything, walking around the place to do anything but golf. In summer we'd take a back alley that led into a little alcove on the water tank where we'd go fishing. Sometimes I'd go hop the fence in our back pasture to go play in the big sand pit when I was very young. In winter everybody would go to golf course to sled, since the various slopes it had were the perfect spots for it.

Yard and Garage Sales

I was always looking for anything that would catch my eye (which was never the same, since things I've gotten range anywhere from musical keyboards to cooking utensils to mini massage chairs).

Doris McGregor Steinberger

I didn't come to Archer City ISD until I was in 2nd grade. But you wouldn't know it. I had friends from day 1. I will definitely say I made forever friends in the years to follow. People that are still friends today.

It is so difficult to pick out certain times that stood out to me. I am one of the crazy kids that loved school and the people around me.

The thing that absolutely means the most is that we all knew we were safe at any of our friends homes. All the parents of my friends loved us, watched out for us, and genuinely cared for us. I could be at Donna and Wayne Abshier's without Darla and still feel as if I belonged.

Living in the country, 25 miles to Archer City, there were many times I would stay in town with friends before ball games or band practice. Bully and Jean Campbell, Bobby and Janet Stubbs, Marshall and Gayle Peden, and Donna and Wayne Abshier probably all wondered if I had moved in I was at their homes so often. But that is how comfortable everyone made me feel. It was always an open door policy.

In elementary school we all love walking over to Ruby's for penny candy. Of course, with Arlina Campbell Jentsch being one of my very first friends in AC and Ruby being her Grandmother, I really had fun. After Ruby's, I believe it was the Copper Penny. We went there for cheeseburgers and brownies. I also loved going to Troy's with Arlina before Friday night football games.

Beginning in 3rd grade, Mr. Wallace and I would bet a quarter every year on the Texas Longhorns vs. Texas A&M football game. This all began when he came walking the hall of the elementary building and saw myself and Abby Abernathy standing in the hall for talking too much in Mrs. Wells' class. Mr. Wallace and I carried on this tradition for years.

Darla Abshier, Sherry Hoff Brown, and myself made the "most" of our high school years. Thank goodness we were not in the same grade or we would have been in TROUBLE.

One of my favorite memories was when Cyndi Schenk put the wooden spoon in the blender. We all heard some colorful "words" from Mrs. Hornady!

Cricket Neely Montgomery's mother Polly made the best brownies for all our bake sales. Although they never made the sale because I bought them every time. Cricket reminded me we took those brownies on our Senior trip to Florida. We sure couldn't get away with that now.

During our Senior English class, if you wanted to be in the school play the classes had to split between people in the play and people that were not. I was not. So I ended up in a class with all boys,

myself, and Cynthia Ashbrook. We had no air conditioning so the windows were up. All of a sudden we heard a commotion out front. Some boys from a neighboring school were bashing in the trunk of Rodney Hopkins's car. All the boys just ran out of class to the parking lot, so Cynthia and I went right behind them. Poor Mrs. Cage had NO idea what was going on.

One afternoon I walked out of school to see my car driving by with Chris Aulds and Abby Abernathy just laughing. So Darla and I hopped in Abby's car and the chase was on. As you can see, in 1979-80 we left the keys in our cars.

Our teachers were absolutely the best. Of course my favorite was Rachel Patterson. She was someone I could confide in. We remained friends until she passed away. In her English class we had to make a "slang" dictionary. Well, I may have added the word "hooker" to mine. She just laughed and shook her head. Although with her being my favorite teacher she still hit the ruler on my desk whenever I was turned around talking.

As I write this, more and more memories begin to flow. There were so many individuals I admired during my formative years. I hope I was the same to some of the younger kids.

Angie Jarrell Thompson

Here are a few of my memories:

Riding bicycles with neighborhood friends all over AC.

Walking to the gym on snowy days when school was closed.

Marching with the Wildcat Band in Austin for state in 1985 and getting to eat at The Magic Time Machine.

Tuesday night band practice going over our show many times on the practice field.

Cheerleading in the Drum in Austin for state for the boys basketball team in 1986 & 1987.

Walking to Curtis' for lunch during school.

Rolling houses with friends.

Rodeo Dances on hot summer nights.

Archer City 1st Baptist feeding us lunch one day every week.

Decorating the 3rd floor hall and lockers every week at ACHS.

Making signs for the pep rallies and halls on Sunday afternoons in the Old Gym.
Volleyball 2-a-days with Coach Becky Schrieber and Coach Kathy Zotz.
Basketball practice and Texas History with Coach Terry Wolf - we got extra points if we went to the football games on Friday nights.
American History with Coach Stan Davis - this was a fun class.
Math with Mrs. Cerise Wuthrich - excellent Math teacher.
Algebra and Geometry with Mr. Judd Gray - asking Mr. Gray to please give me a passing grade in Geometry so I could cheer. ☺
Biology with Mrs. Linda Gray - dissecting a fish, frog and fetal pig.
Debate Class with Mr. Bill Crowley - watched the Challenger Rocket blow up on TV in 9th grade in this class.
Homecoming was so much fun. Big mums with tons of ribbons down to our feet.

Denise Trent

Our little block consisted of the Trents, the Osbornes, the Martins, the Groves, the Luigs, and a few years later, the Abshiers.

During the early summer months, some of the parents would bring over lawn chairs to someone's house and visit while all of us kids would run around the neighborhood playing games until AFTER the street lights came on.

After we got our driver's licenses, summers would find us sitting at King's Grocery, Troy's Drive-In or Nelson's Texaco parking lots visiting with anyone that came by. Then we would have to go make a "drag" down to the McKinney's house, turn around and go to the red light, make a left to the Wildcatter, turn around back to the red light, turn right, and repeat....FOR HOURS!!! Kids today would think we were crazy or deprived!!

One winter when we were out of school for bad weather Mark Groves rigged up an old car hood behind his dually and pulled whoever wanted to ride on it down literally every street in

town. We cut wheelies at the baseball park and the school, up and down hills, and around corners on dirt roads....we had the best times!!! Sometimes I miss those days.

I am so blessed to have been raised in Archer City, America. Looking back, I wouldn't trade it for anything in this world.

Fred Tyler

Some of my best memories are of hanging out with my grandpa and his buddies listening to stories at Walsh Brothers gas station. The old spit and whittle group.

Karen Luig West

I often reflect on my youthful years growing up in Archer City and think about how lucky I was to grow up in such a special place. Archer was a place where you felt like you knew almost everyone. We had great neighbors and friends who supported each other. Looking back on some of the shenanigans we pulled, you would probably get arrested these days.

Becky Gholson and I at the age of 13 or 14 would walk to Troy's drive in and have a Coke. One day there was an older gentleman there—a regular cowboy about town who was there eating. Becky and I decided he might need company so we ran home and called a woman we thought might just be interested in this cowboy. We pretended to be him and asked her to join him at the drive in. We ran back to Troy's and waited. She showed up and we quickly scurried off hoping we had made a 'love connection.' Ha!

Several of the gals in my class - Syb, Diane, Rhonda, Jackie and others would make the drag and often sit in King's Grocery Store parking lot to visit others about town. We often rode around with Scottie Goforth and sometimes Troy Wells. I remember Troy talking about some

guy that had a cute girlfriend but was interested in someone else, and he'd say 'why would you want to go after hamburger when you got steak at the house.' I thought that was a good saying.

Another time while sitting in King's Parking lot, some of us visited with Gary Johnston. Loved his cool red and white 1960 Chevy Biscayne. Gary was about to leave AC to serve in the army. We never thought for one minute that would be the last time we'd see him as he died serving our country.

Several of us gals and guys would go to the City pool way after closing time and climb the fence and swim. But if we got too loud, a neighbor, Mary Jean Frodyma would call us in to the local police and they would come to check it out. We would see the headlights coming and hide under the steps in the shallow end and use straws to breathe through until he would leave.

One night I saying overnight with Becky who had an older sister and we were riding around with her and Jerry Paul Pittman. Probably around midnight, way past my curfew, we dared Jerry Paul to cut a donut under the red light. He took us up on that and I was scared to death! If my mom had known, I'd have been in so much trouble.

Many of us Archer High School gals and guys would like to go to dances in nearby Scotland. But mom didn't like me to go. I'm pretty sure she remembered going herself and knew there would be drinking going on. Luckily the Groves family, who lived across the street, had a son Mark that was a year younger than me, and mom trusted Mark to get me there and back home safely. Mark was a sweet young man. I got to go a couple of times with him.

I was lucky enough to have a brother, Charles, that I was able to be in on a shenanigan or two with him and Jim. I fondly recall the time they made a female dummy that they would put out in the street lying down with groceries all around her like she had fallen or gotten run over by someone.

My thanks to all who participated. If you would like to contribute to this compilation, send your memories to me at jblack1167@sbcglobal.net.

JB

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