

A STORY OF A LONG TIME AGO (The following story was written in 1957)

It was taken from letters sent to me by my father, William Aaron Jones, of his experiences in South Texas and how he came to be there. My father and mother, Maude Myrtle Smith Jones, made the long trip from Mills county to South Texas with Grandpa and Grandma Smith and lived as neighbors to them when they all arrived there.)

[Grandpa Smith=Ben Smith] [Bud=Evan Wilson Smith]

[Note: since Aaron Jones's son choose to honor his father's writing without editing I did not change much - just adding some periods and commas. Bonnie Ann-1993]

3:40 am. May 14, 1957

"I am awakened and opened the west door of my shack and I looked up at the beautiful moon shining in the beautiful west and I tell you I thought it was the prettiest view I ever saw in my life, so bright and clear and I wondered if it was shining that beautiful over you in California. I tell you, I had to pray and thank God for this beautiful pretty moon, I can't get over you wanting me to fix up some kind of a record of a long time ago. I commenced once before to try and make a record of the past but I found out there was more to it than I had any idea but I beleive I will try and write a story of it now.

Lots of times here at my shack I will think of you all and I will cry like a whipped dog. I have been that way all the time, used to when I was in the oil fields, I batched and lived cheap as I could and send poor little Mama my checks so she could but our little children clothing and food so they could go to school and I am glad I did. I was young and stout, it didn't hurt me.

Yes, I slept on the frozen ground a few nights and on some toe sacks for thirty day until I reached the oilfields, then I found work and the trouble ended pretty soon and I got me some writing materials and written to my Norma Lee and times looked better, that was in 1929. It was my birthday the day I left Mama and it was pouring down rain and I blew out to the oil filed. I had no coat or money nor no place to go so the cops picked me up and told me where I could find food and shelter and it hurt me so bad. Child I tell you, I cryed drops of blood and that all happened November 5, 1929 - and it was cold and raining and I had no coat or anything else.

I am sending you the clipping from the Carriza Springs County paper just to let you know about our old long ago home county. I get so lonesome sometimes I could yelp like one of them poor looking coyotes. I get lonesome to hear one on the old lonesome coyotes howl. I guess our old home place will be an oil field some of these times they are going to drill in about two miles of our old lonesome home where I used to carry you children to school in a wagon through the mud and water and go after you all in the afternoon and MaMa had the biggest job of all, getting you ready - and I think so many times about our little darling Thelmar ---she is lying in her little sweet grave. Me and Lois looked for it but we couldn't find it for sure. The surroundings looked natural but that row is filed out to the fence west. I wish I could see there again. I think of it so often and have my crys all by myself. Mr and Mrs Obune [name not clear on my copy so I may have miscopied it-

1993 BAS] has a little baby buried just west of Thelmars little grave but they are not straight. Well, darling child its by gone days but I never will forget them sweet precious days. I take the Carrizo Springs paper but you no all the news now is news, Since we left thir (1926) all them McCarleys are died and the Poters or all gone nothing doesn't look natural anymore but I love the poor old horn frogs that live there.

I get so lonesome sometimes and sit down and cry my eyes out. I have hid out and cryed about us leaving thire like we did on that little old ford car made into a pick-up. We left everyting we had to speak of thire to be carried off by anybody that wanted it. I no you little children didn't realize it but I sure did and I have hid out and cryed about it because we left like we did.

Of course I am telling you I couldn't have did anything work than leaving our little home. That it cost somewhere round \$2000 in money that we had all worked for. We first made a \$2,000 down payment on the little onion farm of 40 acres and we owned 100 acres out in the sand, we didn't owe a dime on it so we lost it. I have cryed and cryed about it but of course it is gone.

I had a map of Valley Wells made out far as I no and a whirlwind came by and I left this map on the table and it lef here in that whirlwind. I wish we had a map of that county, I tell you I can't help it but I love that sweet county.

Your grandfather, Mr. Smith, he was a fine old Man, he did his best to get me and Mama Myrtle a piece of land down in South Texas and he did, him and Mama Smith, they was fine people. Everyone has to see other places - just like me and Mama did when we all moved to Southern Texas as we did in 1906. We all bought land thire but it was a new county and it was a thinly settled county and we shure had a hard time getting started off - thire was coyotes, Opsoms, pole cats, badgers, rattlesnakes by thousands and me and Mama had a little camp out in the woods, or brush. We was 19 miles west of Cotulla and Carriza Springs was our county seat. I killed high as fifteen rattlesnakes in one day. Coyotes were so plentiful sometimes we wouldn't take time to kill them. I here from our old stomping ground, threw the little county paper, they are talking of putting a dam in that river near us when we all was living in Dimmit county.

Our little farm that we walked away from and actually didn't get a cent for, Charley Rasmussen, owns it now.

When me and Mama first went thire we had a dry spill thire that lasted 18 months. Cattle ate prickly pare to some extent for their water and mesquat beans was their food in the summer time. That is them dry years we used to have. When me and Mama first went there we was very green about the ways of everything. Everything thire would get fat on prickly pare apples and mesquite beans - and they tasted fairly good to mankind a few pieces of dried venison sure did taste fine, or a bunch of dried meat of some kind, no difference what kind it was, and in the winter time the wild ducks would come to that county by the thousands. When something would scare them up out of the water the noise of their wings would sound like a shower of rain. There would be so many fly up all at

once in one bunch. No Joking. I have saw so many fly up all at once there would be a roaring sound like a shower of rain. We went fishing in the lake many a time and caught enough fish in two drags for thirty-two familes that lived at the Morgan Williams settlement.

Ben Smith and Mama Smith, they came to Texas in about 1895...[see Ben Smith page for this],.

I am going to try and draw a map of the Morg Williams Ranch Coujnty but six months after your grandpaw Smith went down thire the whole county of Dimmit was being surveyed by the railroad company as the land companys gave the RR company 1,000,000 acres to build the R.R. threw thire otherwise they had to do something of this kind to advertise this land to cause a sale for thir land.

Land was awful cheap at that time, about \$.10 per acre and it is the finest land I ever saw so your grandpaw Smith had found out about this county and when me and Mama married, he wanted to spread out so he went and made a trip by train to see this Dimmit county. The railroad only came to Cotulla so he hired a horse and buggy and Mr. Smith drove out to the Morg. Williams ranch and he bought 640 acres, paid \$3.00 per acre cash on the spot. So he came back and sold me and Mama 100 acres for \$4.00 per acre so that is how come me and Mama to land in South Texas.

So we all started out on the trip to South Texas - a 400 mile trip - Grandpaw and Grandmaw Smith and Mama and myself and Mama's sister Jessie and Uncle Bud. Me and Mama had a covered wagon government made. We had more fun. Your Aunt Jessie was 10 years old and she was one of the finest little girls I ever saw.

She and Bud were kids at that time. We were all foolish about Jessie but we didn't call her by her name Jessie, we called her babe and she knew everything that was going on. Especially when we was traveling going south to get rich was her by word on the trip.

When we all moved to the county at first we had our wagons and horses. Me and Mama had two mules, Kit and Jiney, and a big red horse tied on the back and Grandpaw Smith had four mules and a hack and a wagon. The make of my and Mama's wagon was a 2 3/4 inch Studebaker and Grandpaw Smith's was a 3 inch Capital wagon. Capitol was the brand of it as Ford or Chevrolet or Dodge and sutch. Me and Mama's was ahead of Grandpay and Mama Smith most of the time but late in the afternnon, we would all be tired of riding in the wagons and the rough dusty roads, also so at night Aunt Jessie would begin to get tired of riding in the old rough wagons so when whe would be at supper out on the ground, Jesse would have to tell what happened that day when we was traveling to South Texas "to get rich" she would say to our visitors at camp.

That saying she would repeat. Of course it would keep us laughing and that was the way she was, the funniest child I ever saw or heard of, and Bud would try and tease her but he couldn't get very far with Jessie. She called Mama Myrtle's name - Mate. She sure was a working little girl.

One evening one of our little calves was sick and of course, Jessie, she had to examine the little calf so we opened the little calf's mouth and of course, there was a long bone in its throat and Jessie looked in and saw the bone and she says "weight" and she reached in and pulled the bone out, and of course we all was surprised too at her running her arm into an animal's throat after a little bone it had been chewing on.

We were on the trip twenty days and nights. Oh, it was an awful trip but we finally arrived at the Morgan Williams settlement, April 26, 1906. Me and Mama lived in a camp for six months or more when we settled in Dimmet county, Texas, five miles from Valley Wells at the Morg. Williams settlement and your Grandpaw and Grandmama did to, until we could get some kind of a house build. We camped right out in the brush and slept in the wagons and cooked on a fire.

The coyotes would come up to our camp. We hauled our water on a Sled and two barrels from the lake. Kit and Jiney pulled the sled that me and Bud had built.

Me and Mama build a house 14 by 15 and we sure liked it...[see Ben Smith's notes].

We bought 100 acres of the prettiest land in Texas. That was a pretty county down there and there was so many fine cattle there and land was cheap. We agreed to pay Mr. Smith \$3.00 per acre, that is what he paid for it, but he finally went back on his first offer and we had to pay him \$5.00 per acre but I didn't care. I wanted it anyway. I got out and got me a job pumping water for a company at Cotulla in La Salle county and me and Mama moved over to Harris Lake. Me and Mama was just kids when we moved to that county. Mama didn't like it but I did, lots of wild game of all kinds quail, kill deer, wild hogs, deer, coyotes by the thousands, them havolene hogs was a funny kind of a hog and they are actually a dangerous animal - me and Bud hunted them havolenes and they killed two of Bud's dogs there in the maize field.

Me and Mama lived there at Harris Lake two years. We was just 5 miles west of Cotulla the county seat. Eva Mae was born while we lived there on November 25, 1908 at Harris Lake. I was running an irrigation pump, them was old time days a long time ago. We could hear the coyotes howling at night time there. I sure did love that county and Mama was so dear to me. Them was sweet days. I had to work hard but I was awful stout in every way so it didn't hurt me a bit.

We soon moved to the Woodward Rancho 15 miles from Cotulla and 5 miles from Woodward where we had 15 head of cattle, 100 chickens, 4 mules, 2 horses, and hogs and a spauldin hack and 2 studebaker wagons. That was in the years 1910 when Norma Lee was born on October 19, I worked at the gin at Woodward them days and saved my money to pay Mr. Smith for my 100 acres of red sandy land.

Woodward was a very small place, one dry goods store and a cotton gin and several old houses, etc. The first car I ever saw was there on the Woodward ranch - the first auto-big buggy wheels on it and the steering gear was a large handle stuck out to one side and it

poped, like a firecracker, when it exhausted. We all thought it was a fine machine. The doctor come out to our house in it, that was the night Lois was born on February 19, 1912.

Also the awfulest sandstorm I ever saw hit our house that night. Lois was only a few hours old. The sand piled up so high that our cattle walked over barb wire fences and went to the timber to get out of the high winds. The house was a large one and I was scared so bad I didn't no what to do and I waded up clothing and put under Mama's bed posts so it wouldn't shake her bed so and the storm lasted three days and nights. We had our troubles to let me tell you that county was new and very thinly settled.

In 1915 a terrible gulf storm hit that contry and the wind and rain beat against the old hobby house, that's where we lived then and the wind blew our house off the blocks. Me and some of the children was just getting up from having a case of German Measles and Thelmar was just a baby. Me and Mama piled up mattresses and anything we could find in way of bed clothing and piled it against the children, all in one bed. It was an awful night and next morning, our cotton was tore to pieces. We was over 100 miles from the Gulf of Mexico at that place.

I thanked your Grandpaw Smith for discovering sutch a country - that pretty red sand and so many kinds of game, 100,000 of the blue quail and Bob Whites and wild ducks and wild geese in the winter time. Grandpaw and Mama Smith sacrificed so mutch to get us kids in a thinly settled county at that time it was all owned by the IGN Railroad Company and the land had been leased to cattlement, otherwise ranchmen and it commenced to sell. They surveyed it all off in one mile square sections and Mr. Smith bought one of them, cost \$1,930 for 640 acres.

Robert Leroy and and Harold Llewellyn was born on the little onion farm and little Thelma and Irene Agness was born on the Hobby place where we moved from the Morg William settlement. I was so glad to get the 100 acres paid for to Grandpaw Smith and move back to it. About 1913, Mr Smith and Mrs Smith traded thire 540 acres in on a place up near Carizzo and 5 miles west of Carizzo

Springs but it proved to be a bad trade. The deep whie sand was so hard for a feller to walk in it that he sold it and traded for a new fangled auto and all the Smith's Aunt Jessis, Uncle Bud, Grandpaw and your Grandmaw took out to east Texas and moved to Lufkin. Their place there is a big oil field now and they just started to build a two million dollar oil refinery thire. Your grandpaw Smith really knew good rich land when he saw it and that was at Carizzo Springs near that lake. I think it was the Espantasy lake. I sure did love that county down there. I wish I was back there again in good old Dimmit county. I do wish I was down there sitting by a little brush fire along side that little Nueces river rather than be here in the old place at McGregor with that old cold Central Texas wind whispering around the corner of my little shck and lonesome ain't

[this seems to have been cut off at the end]