

# *On the Move*



By

*Mary Clark*



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*Moving to another school never bothered me. When they said, "Move," I immediately left all my friends mentally, and I was ready to meet new ones.*

*Somehow or another I always thought, "Well, you're born with your relatives. You keep in touch with the good friends you make at each school, and when you leave, you get rid of deadwood." The people you don't particularly care for, you don't miss anyway.*

—Mary Clark



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*You're like top seed—you just grow*

I was born in Tonganoxie, Kansas, which is about 40 miles from Kansas City. I went to many different schools, almost a different school every year. My schoolteachers never knew how to spell Tonganoxie, because they weren't familiar with that Indian name. Tonganoxie was where my father and grandfather had a slaughterhouse and a meat market. It's also where my younger sister was born.

We always lived on farms where we could grow corn. When I was a year old, my family moved to a northern Missouri town called Oregon where my little brother was born. We lived there a year-and-a-half and then we moved to Forrest City, Missouri, not far from Oregon—it was a hilly place.

By that time, I was about three-years-old and saw my first car. It was such a great thing because the car was going up the hill very slowly and we thought it was just a miracle to see something like that on the road.

When we left Forrest City and the hills, my father took some of the family and went ahead of my mother and the four smaller children. I was about four-years-old and the baby was three-weeks-old.

We took the train to Kansas City to the Union Station. It was new and the ladies' waiting room was filled, so there was no place for my mother and the four little kids to sit down. Finally, someone made a lady take her birdcage off a big round place they had built for women and children, so my mother could sit down with the baby. We spent all night in the station in Kansas City, and that's where I learned to skip on one

foot. It was a great night for me.

We took the train the next morning and started out for western Kansas, stopping in Newton. The station there was having trouble with the restroom and water was coming out into the street. My mother, with the luggage and the four kids, had a little trouble getting those children taken care of. Then we got on the train and went to a ranch in Holcomb, Kansas, on the border of Kansas and Colorado. There was just a barbed-wire fence between the city of Holcomb and our ranch, which was a long narrow ranch between the Arkansas River and the Santa Fe Railroad track. Just on the other side of the track the land started going up a little more toward Colorado. We called it a plateau.

The people who lived there were the Russians who brought sugar beets to Kansas. They couldn't speak English and we couldn't speak Russian, but we knew they were there. When I started to school in the first grade I was the only one who would talk to the Russian brother and sister at school. They wore funny clothes—long black skirts and other clothes that were strange to us. The first time I tried to talk to them the little girl said that her mother had gone to the fields the day before to hoe sugar beets. They cut the handles of the hoes to about two feet in length. The women wearing long black skirts worked on their knees hoeing sugar beets that were in long rows. The girl said that at noon her mama went in and cooked dinner, after that they went back to the field, but it wasn't long before the mother went back home and didn't come back until four o'clock. The reason she had been gone so long—she'd had a baby before coming back to finish hoeing

sugar beets. Anyway, I found that much out about the children. I've often wondered whatever happened to those two little Russian students.

To get to school, the children who lived farther away rode in a "kid" wagon, which had a tarp over it with boards on each side. Because our ranch adjoined the town, in the summer time or during warm weather, we always walked back and forth to school. In the winter we would take the wheels off the wagons, put sleigh-runners on, and we would be taken to school by a team of horses. Sometimes tumbleweeds would catch on the fences, and snowdrifts would cover them, and we'd go right over the fences—and that was the way we got to school. The children who rode the kid wagon had to get up at four o'clock in the morning to milk the cows before walking to where the "kid" wagon picked them up. In the evening when they got off the "kid" wagon they would walk home. Many times it would be nine o'clock by the time they got home. There were lots of coyotes there.

Our parents "wintered" longhorn steers from Texas. Cowboys would drive the wild cattle up from Texas and we'd feed them alfalfa pellets and straw from the haystacks. It was fun going out in the wintertime to see the cattle feed. From the wagon we threw the pellets to the ground and the cattle would come and start eating.

The hungry jackrabbits came next. They liked to eat the pellets, too. Then the coyotes would come. That's when the real excitement started! The cowboys always had their guns ready while the cattle and the jackrabbits and the coyotes were all having their

dinner—and it was quite exciting. When the cattle were fattened on the food over the winter, they would be driven to Garden City, Kansas, which was eight miles away. The cattle were put on railroad cars and shipped to Kansas City to be butchered and sent to the packinghouse.

We lived in Holcomb for four years and I was in the fourth grade when we left. One year the grasshoppers came and ate everything. We planted chaffer corn—I think they call it maize now—and a little corn, not much, and we had alfalfa. And that was about all the crops we had. We never grew wheat. There was one other disaster that caused us to leave. After the grasshoppers killed everything. Tragedy skipped a year; then we had Army worms. They came in and ate everything including the leaves off the trees. They were so thick, they crawled all over the house—you couldn't keep them out of the house. They even stopped the train because the tracks were so slick with those worms that it couldn't move. We had irrigation ditches, and, of course, the streams were all filled with the worms.

My father and grandfather decided that was enough of trying to cope with the weather and the pestilence in Western Kansas, so we moved to Arkansas again. We lived in several different places. I was in a different school almost every year, and sometimes it would be two schools in one year. Moving to another school never bothered me. When they said, "Move," I immediately left all my friends, mentally, and I was ready to meet new ones. Somehow or another I always thought, "Well, you're born with your relatives, you keep in

touch with the good friends you make at each school, and when you leave, you get rid of deadwood.” The people you don’t particularly care for, you don’t miss anyway.

We moved to the hill country in Arkansas near Paragould where we grew mostly corn and alfalfa. It had a horrible little country school. In fact, the schools there were all terrible.

Later we moved to Cardwell, Missouri, and my father had a little sawmill. We lived in the swamps on a farm, and that was fun. We hoed lots of cotton and then when the cotton was laid by, we ran the sawmill. So I was about 10 then. I worked on the carriage of the sawmill. My father and I ran the mill. I was the one who set the board an inch or two inches—then it would saw it off and we’d move back and I’d set it again. That’s the way we got rid of the logs.

In about 1800, that area was where a great earthquake passed through. It made lakes and many a huge cypress tree went down. Much of our lumber came from those downed trees. There were big cypress trees growing where we lived in the swamps, but we didn’t saw them down. In the dry weather when the water would go down, we would dig these cypress trees out of the mud and that’s where we got our timber to saw. Cypress never rots.

That was a fun time. My mother used to say, “You’re like top seed—you just grow.” We were free to do anything we wanted, so we played in the swamps. We had a little team of mules that would run away with us every day. They were hard to manage, but they

were always with us. We'd go out in the swamps and maybe be gone all day long, living on whatever was available—blackberries or dewberries or wild plums. We'd always take a little pan along and if we'd get somewhere near a neighbor's field, we'd get roasting ears, build a little fire, and have roasting ears. Or we'd catch crawdads in the streams and cook them—they are something like shrimp.

We lived very well in the swamps and we knew how to protect ourselves. We had two big collie dogs and they were wonderful. When we'd go into the blackberry bushes to pick blackberries, the dogs would bark sometimes. We knew all the dogs' barks. If there were a snake, we knew that from the bark. If it was a turtle, we knew it was a turtle. And there were times when the dogs would do some barking and come running back to us with their tails kind of between their legs—then we would know there was a bobcat near. About the same thing would happen, but the bark would be a little different, and we'd know the dogs had been near a moon-shiner's place. The moon-shiners always kept a gun around, so we never went close to them.

When we left the sawmill and the swamps, we moved to Paragould, Arkansas. We had a small farm with a great big spring where we got all our water. It was within walking distance to school and that's where I started to high school. I've forgotten how many acres, but it had a nice woods and lots of trees. In the fall when the persimmons were ripe, all of the kids from town would come out and we'd go possum hunting. We were never allowed to kill the possums, but our neighbor boy had a good dog that would tree them and

we would shake them out of the trees. Our parents told us if we would cut the tip of the possum's ear off and slit the other one, we'd know if we caught the same possum the next year. So that was a fun place to live.

We had a nice little stream that made a good swimming hole and a big tree with a grapevine. The town kids would come out and we'd swing out over the creek and drop in the swimming hole. We had lots of fun with our own swimming pool right there.

My father took a job in the summertime, but I don't remember now what he did. After his folks moved to St. Louis, he would go there and work in the wintertime. He wanted us to finish school in Paragould and then move to St. Louis.

*Sometimes our jobs didn't last long*

The last year I was in high school, the high school burned. The rest of the school year my sister and I went to St. Joseph, Missouri, to business school. I did house work to pay my way through business school and my sister had some other jobs. When I finished business school, I went to St. Louis where my folks were living. My father was working in a packinghouse and the whole family was together again. And we worked. It was during the Depression.

I got out of business school in 1929 and, of course, the crash had come. Everybody was out of work. It was pretty bad, but we had jobs in St. Louis, and even though sometimes our jobs wouldn't last long, we always seemed to get a job in factories or somewhere. St. Louis had a lot of manufacturing places.

My first job there was working in one of the largest hat manufacturing plants in the country. It was a six-story building and I loved the work. There was another girl my age, a colored man and then our boss. We worked together on the top floor. We were the ones who brought in all the materials to make the hats. Just the three of us were usually there because the boss was gone a lot of times. The trucks would bring all the ribbons and the straw. It was mostly imported stuff—beautiful materials that they used in hats then and we loved it.

Arthur, the colored man, who worked with us, was Muslim and he would tell us about his religion. I think he mixed a little voodoo with Muslim. We two 19-year-old girls would play tricks on him. We knew that in

voodoo if you made a circle around his feet, he couldn't move until that circle was broken. What that had to do with his religion or whatever it was, I don't know. But the boss would come up and the man would say, "Oh, here comes the boss." Or, we would see the boss, and he'd say, "Come on, kids, break that circle." He wouldn't move at all. Just at the last minute, one or the other of us would run our finger through the chalk bar and break circle and then he was free to go.

Another thing we did to Arthur was when the truck would come up to unload we would get a string or a ribbon or something and measure his feet, and one of us would innocently say, "Here's a measure of Arthur's feet. Tell the driver to drop it over the Mississippi River from the bridge." Arthur would beg us to not give that ribbon to the driver, please, because he didn't want to drown there.

We had a lot of fun in that job. We were good to Arthur because when the boss was gone and we weren't too busy, we would watch for the boss and protect Arthur. He'd go back in one of the bins and go to sleep. We guarded his naptime to make up for all the tricks we played on him.

The hat business began getting slower and slower, but there were many different companies in that big building. Many of them were Jewish merchants. After the people from Arkansas had looked at higher priced hats we always sent them to the cheapest store on another floor because we knew we could sell those old cheap hats after they'd seen the higher priced ones. It was quite a merchandizing setup. As far as I know, there isn't a hat manufacturer in St. Louis anymore.

I worked in several different shoe factories. We made nine dollars a week and we were happy with that. Then they began unionizing all of the stores there and we had no choice. The union people just came and told us we were going to be unionized. They told the boss they'd blow up the place if not. We had to start paying union dues and going to the meetings so I went and sat on the front row. They were telling us how they were going to give us lots of money. I asked how they were going to pay us full time when there weren't any hat orders. I was fired the next day. So that's the way the unions started in St. Louis. I think there's only one shoe factory there now, but it used to be filled with shoe factories.

I went to another shoe factory right across the street and got a job. There was a big six-story garment factory where they were making uniforms. We would get there early to watch the garment workers come in; after the guns from New York got there to start unionizing. These unionizers would pile bricks on every corner around that place. It was cold winter weather with dirty snow. There'd be a policeman standing there with the union people. As the streetcars let people off the streetcars, the unionizers would throw bricks at these people. The streetcar passengers would have to run inside to keep from being hit.

One day a woman was hit in the head with a brick and she fell on the ground. The unionizers tore her clothes off her and we watched her lying there in that dirty snow bank on the cold icy sidewalk—other people just walked around her. Finally another streetcar came and the workers took her inside. The policemen never

said a thing. That's the way the garment industry was organized in St. Louis.

A lot of companies began going broke. Some would call strikes and lay off their people. They'd take bankruptcy. I have trouble going to Sears yet. They would give a small company a nice, big order for garments or hats or shoes. Consequently, the small company would borrow money to buy the materials to manufacture these. Sears was very strict; the product had to be exactly the right color—they were always very particular. When the order was finished, the examiner would always find something wrong. It wasn't made right. It was the wrong color. The companies would go to extra trouble getting the best things for Sears, but Sears would always turn them down. They'd say, "Well, we'll pay you ten cents on the dollar." And the small companies would lose their businesses. So that's the way Sears became larger and the smaller businesses are no longer there. When I hear people talking about the unions...I saw it; I was there. And I lost jobs, so you have an idea of what I think of the unions.

*Russell came to town*

I was still working in the shoe factory when Russell Clark from Enterprise, Kansas came to town. He had been transferred from Kansas City to St. Louis while he was working for a milling company. Some of his friends where he worked, and I, belonged to a little Presbyterian Church. They invited him to Christian Endeavors. New Year's Eve that year was on Sunday so they brought him. Afterwards we all had parties to go to. My date and my sister and her date had a party at another place. The same people who invited Russell said to the rest of us, "Oh, come to our house after your party is over." So, we did.

When I was introduced to him, I looked at him and I thought, "You're the one I'm going to marry." He was six feet and six inches tall with big broad shoulders, dark hair, and dark eyes. I didn't think he was good-looking, but he just looked good inside—I knew he was a good person.

I went to the party with one of our crowd from Christian Endeavors and he wasn't a real serious date at all. Russell wanted to bring me home even though his hostess fixed him up a date with her divorced young sister from Kansas City. In those days a divorce was just terrible, and our little Presbyterian Church didn't believe in that at all. Even though Russell was from Enterprise, he still felt the same way. He was rather embarrassed to be fixed up with a girl who had been divorced—so he asked if he could take me home and I told him no because I was there with this other boy. But, Russell kept coming to church.

Our Christian Endeavors class had 80 members although our little church only had 360. The class always had a big party on George Washington's birthday and I was in charge of the social things. I wanted to sell him a ticket to our party, and he said, "I will buy a ticket if I can bring you."

I told him, "Well, you'll have to come early because I am in charge of it and I have things to do before the party." So he came after me. We had a real nice time and he helped with the party. When he brought me home that night he asked if he could see me the next night and I said, "No. I have a date." I was dated up every night for two solid weeks.

When my date came the next night—Russell came, too. He was living in a rooming house. He'd eat his meal and come to our house after that. And when my date arrived, we would leave but Russell would stay there until we came home. He would leave when my date did.

Anyway, for two weeks he was there every single night, and he met all the boys that I was going with—mostly it was boys who weren't serious, but they all liked to dance. I always said I'd never marry a man who didn't dance at least five nights a week. When the two weeks were up, I didn't have another date ahead after that. There was no use making a date when Russell was going to be sitting there every night.

A time or two, while he was waiting for me, he'd take one of my sisters to a ball game or a show, but he'd be there to meet my date and tell my date goodbye, then Russell would leave, too. So I never made another date

and Russell was still there every night. He loved coming to our house. My mother would be getting dinner and, of course, he'd already eaten, but he loved to sit in the kitchen. My little sister was only two-and-one-half-years-old when I first started going with him and he loved all these kids. He'd sit there in the kitchen with his legs stretched out. My mother, after several months that we had gone together, said, "I wish you'd marry him. I'm so tired of jumping over his legs trying to get dinner ready."

The kids would run through the place and Russell just loved all that noise and racket and all the commotion going around our house. Then he was transferred back to Kansas City. We were getting pretty friendly and really liked each other. He was a basketball star in high school and then he refereed. In high school Russell refereed for Dr. Brinkley, the gland man, and he would get paid for that, but not his other high school refereeing. Dr. Brinkley would pay him \$50 a night to referee a basketball game, and that was big money. When he was transferred back to Kansas City, we were talking marriage, but he was only making \$70 a month. We just could not figure out how to get married and live on \$70 a month. So for about a year and half, Russell worked in Kansas City. Then he got a raise to \$80 a month, and we set a wedding date.

*I have two dollars and 43 cents. How much do you have?*

Russell had a deal with his old secretary that I could type out a message free on the office equipment that had some kind of hook up to the office in Kansas City. And that's the way he proposed to me. He wrote me that he'd been raised to \$80 a month and he asked me to set the date. I made my wedding dress, and we were married in our church on the thirteenth of June 1936. All of our friends were there, and they all came to my parents' house afterwards for the cake and the regular things. Then all of them followed us to the train station at midnight.

Russell managed to save enough money to pay train fare from St. Louis to Kansas City after the wedding for both of us and to rent a \$30 a month apartment. It was big night. We hadn't been on the train very long when he said, "How much money do you have?"

I said, "I have two dollars and 43 cents. How much do you have?" He had two dollars and 60 some cents—he was a little wealthier than I was. So we got to Kansas City, got off at the train station, and went up to the Harvey House. I had a cup of tea and a donut and Russell had a glass of milk and a donut—that was our wedding breakfast.

We went to our apartment and I was so thrilled with it. It was actually one big room with a little tiny kitchen and a little dinette in the corner, and a bath. We had a fairly good-sized closet. You opened the closet doors and rolled out your bed. It had a little mattress about three inches thick. Russell weighed 278 pounds

at that time. Anyway, the bed unfolded and we would fold it up every morning with the mattress in it. We lived there seven months on \$80 a month.

Russell had to pay a dollar-and-a-quarter a week streetcar fare because he didn't have a car and I had five dollars a week for groceries and all the incidentals such as soap and other things you have to have for daily living. For the first meal I cooked, I got some spaghetti. I think I had tomatoes with it or something. I had a can of tuna and one or two little things like that. I was used to cooking for eleven people, so the first meal, I cooked spaghetti for eleven people. We couldn't afford to throw it away, so we ate that spaghetti until it was all gone. We'd add a little bit of this and a little bit of that.

But we were lucky. Russ was like a child to Uncle Ralph and Aunt Maple who owned the big milling company where Russell worked. They were our next-door neighbors. At one time, it was the fourth largest milling company in the United States. They didn't have any children. When Russ and his sisters would go to school affairs at night, they would say, "Now don't wake your father up. You just come to our house when your party is over and go to bed." So my husband had been reared that way and really had two homes. Russ' boss was born and reared at Enterprise, Kansas also and were next-door neighbors to Russ' mother and father.

Russell's father was a dentist in Enterprise. He was crippled, but he practiced dentistry on crutches for sixteen years. His mother was a schoolteacher, and they were all very smart people. All the recreation they

had was playing bridge, so they were good at it. My husband was living with that all the time, so when somebody was a dummy or had to get up from the table a little bit, they'd say, "Russell, take my hand and play it." He did that from the time he was 8-years-old.

When his boss and his wife, who lived in the most expensive, luxurious apartment on the Plaza in Kansas City, had the flour buyers coming from New York, they would invite us to their apartment for my husband to play bridge. The flour buyers all seemed to like to play bridge and his wife loved to cook, so that worked out. His wife and I would just sit and visit—that was nice. When the mill owner and his wife would go to Enterprise, where they lived in a big house, they'd say, "You kids come and live in our apartment." It was cooler there because they had plenty of fans, and we didn't have a fan or air conditioning in our little apartment.

The owners' home in Enterprise was much more comfortable than the apartment. They had two Buick Roadmaster cars. They only needed one car to go to Enterprise, and because we didn't have a car, they'd say, "You kids can have our car and you could come and stay in our apartment while we're in Enterprise." The wife also had a pantry filled with expensive Wolferman's food. "Just help yourself to everything." They had tickets to all the affairs, the symphony, all the shows, and everything. They were getting older at that time, up near their late 70s, and they didn't want to go to those things, so we got the tickets. The seats were right behind Pendergast (the political boss) and the mayor of Kansas City.

So, on an \$80-a-month salary and the lowest one on the totem pole, Russell was just working in the bookkeeping department. There were all the officers of the company and there was a might of jealousy there. So we'd been married seven months when Russell's boss, Uncle Ralph, got sick. The first thing the officers did was to fire my husband. They were just worried because we got so much attention while they were never even invited to dinner. So, there Russ was with one month's salary—a check for \$80.

***We didn't have penny in the bank on a job***

But one of our friends worked for a trade magazine about flour. In one issue, there was an ad about a man, W. Lee O'Daniel, who sold flour over the radio to Piedras Negras, Mexico, which was right across the Rio Grande River from Eagle Pass, Texas. He put five programs a day on the radio. It was illegal to power the radio signal up to go farther than it was suppose to, but at midnight the Mexicans would turn up the power. O'Daniel moved his business from Fort Worth where he was buying his flour from the mills there. He had it sacked with his name on it—Hill Billy Flour, W. Lee O'Daniel.

My husband's friend wrote these people and said he knew somebody who would be excellent for that job. They told them what a terrific bookkeeper Russ was and how smart he was.

W. Lee said, "Well, bring him down or send him down." We didn't have train fare, but one of the men who worked in the milling company where my husband had worked was a much older fellow; he only had a fourth grade education, while a lot of the other men were college graduates—and because of their education, they thought they were smart, and they looked down on Charlie. Now, Charlie was a terrific flour salesman from Caldwell, Kansas. He was buying some old dust bowl land around there, but it was being blown away. Everyone was always making fun of him. My husband had known Charlie all his life. Russell had worked in Enterprise and had been around the milling company from the time he was a little kid. He had always wanted to be president of the mill—he lived

next door to Uncle Ralph, the owner. He had even borrowed \$400 from Uncle Ralph to go to K-State. He had gone almost up to graduation time with only one more thesis to write, but he said he was ready to go to work. He said that they wouldn't read those things anyway—besides, he had to make some money.

So, he'd quit college and gone to work for the mill. He had a tough time with the salary he was making and he hadn't started paying the money for school back. Russ and I hadn't been married very long when I reminded him about \$400 that he owed Uncle Ralph, even though he had never asked for it and it was never mentioned. I told Russ we were going to start paying it back; \$5 every two weeks. But he was embarrassed to take \$5 to his boss every two weeks, so I said, "I'll do it." And the next time we were invited to their house, we went—and I said, "Uncle Ralph, Russ owes you \$400 for school. We should start paying that back. And we're going to pay you \$5 every two weeks." When we started repaying the loan, he thought it was really funny. He went to the office and told everybody how that little old dumb girl from St. Louis, who hadn't even finished high school had told him how she was going to pay back the loan. It got all over the company, which was a gossip. They all knew about it, and they got a big kick out of it, but I was determined.

Well, old Charlie was taking all that in, so when it came time for us to go to Texas and we didn't have money enough to go down there to take the job, Russ asked Charlie to borrow enough money for the train fare. Charlie said, "I've never loaned anybody a penny except two old-maid schoolteachers at Caldwell, but

I'm going to let you borrow this \$50 on the condition that Mary signs for it." (He always believed, whatever you borrow, even if it's a nickel, you sign a contract, so we both signed the contract.) He said, "If she signs it, I know I'll get it back."

It was the first of the year in 1937, and it was cold when we got on the train in Kansas City. We changed trains at Denison, Texas, and it was getting a little warmer. When we got to San Antonio, a man told us that we'd have to take a cab to the other station. On the ride there, he told us if the weather wasn't so cold, he'd take us by his house and show us his roses; but instead, he took us to the other train station where we got on a rickety old train that was really uncomfortable. We stopped about four o'clock in the morning and got on another train that looked like one of those old cars that ran on tracks into the towns. It was so desolate, as far as we could see in that great big Texas sky—and here was this little old place by the side of the road. The next train was in even worse condition—it was an older and longer one—full of vegetables and other things. There was a Mexican woman with her little boy sitting on the train. We asked a man how long it would be until the train would be ready to leave, and he told us to go inside for a cup of coffee and some eggs and he'd call us when it was time. So we went in and had a good breakfast in that little old dumpy place. Later, as we were boarding the train, the man we'd talked with asked if we'd had a good breakfast. He'd sat there all that time and waited for us.

We finally got into Eagle Pass about eight o'clock that morning. Eagle Pass was 75 percent Mexican. They hadn't done any building during the Depression—there was no place to live except for a two-story hotel, so we

checked into it. We called O'Daniel and then went to see who Russ was going to be working for.

We lived at the hotel several months—most of the people living there were people who were working at the radio station because they couldn't find another place to live either. The border patrol also lived there. I don't know where their homes were, but they were at the hotel most of the time. They were the ones going up and down the Rio Grande River, and just like today, there were illegal immigrants. The officers were always telling us about how many they caught and what they were smuggling. I don't remember what they were smuggling, I guess some kind of liquor because the country was dry then.

There was some kind of excitement going on most of the time. We had that big international bridge crossing from Eagle Pass to Piedras Negras, and at that time, Piedras Negras was one of the biggest towns on the border.

At the hotel there was always the border patrol with news for everybody who ate in the dining room. There was a fortune-teller who had five programs a day on the radio. He and his mother and his girlfriend lived there. There was another couple from the radio station that gave accordion lessons. The man would say, "Learn how to play this accordion." A dollar got you a book guaranteeing to teach you how to play the accordion.

And the fortune-teller? You sent your birthday and your address and ask what the baby was going to be, or where you should drill on your farm for oil, and the fortune-teller would send you back a little slip of paper telling you what was going to happen, or where it was

going to happen. Of course, he never read the letters that were sent; he hired 12 girls who had pigeon hole boxes with every date, and when people would send in the date of their birth, one of the girls would just pull out a slip with their fortune on it, put it in the mail and send it to them. And those people would pay a dollar for that. A lot of times they'd strike oil and send in a big lump sum of money.

W. Lee O'Daniel had a really good band and I still hear their recordings being played over the radio. He composed a lot of the music himself, like the "The Yellow Rose of Texas." There were 17 members in the band; they managed to live other places, but every night they were all some place playing, or on the radio. W. Lee was the only one who had a regular contract with the Mexican radio station. The rest of them just asked a dollar for whatever they were selling and then they'd split it with the Mexicans.

You weren't supposed to hitchhike because it was 40 miles from Eagle Pass to the first, little place like the one where we'd stopped for coffee that night on the train. Everything else was just scrub brush, flat country, and lots of mountain lions. It was too dangerous to hitchhike, but some of them slipped in anyway.

The fortuneteller had an old rickety car and that's how he, his mother and his girlfriend got to Eagle Pass. He told us in nine month's time he had cleared \$90,000.

There were two trains that came into Eagle Pass—one about noon and then one later in the afternoon. They'd put the mail in a truck and take it across to the Mexicans in Piedras Negras. The Mexican people who had the station and W. Lee's people would separate the money.

They'd take one dollar, and the other one would take the next one. I don't know how they kept it from being stolen. It was in just a plain old mail sack, and the truck bed would be full twice a day.

People would come down there; a few of them hitchhiked, but others had come in old cars that were just barely running. Once they hit it big, the first thing they'd do would be to buy a white Cadillac. The wives or girlfriends (especially the doctor's and the fortune-teller's) usually got a mink coat. It was warm down there but they got a white Cadillac and a mink coat! When all of them, whether they hitchhiked in, or came in an old car, got the big money, those were the first big purchases they made.

We finally got a small one-bedroom house with a very little kitchen, but it was a nice place right at the end of the International Bridge. We didn't have a car, so every evening we would walk across to the beautiful club that was at the other end of the bridge. The Mexicans had built a beautiful building there and they had beautiful shows with a different one every night. They had beautiful dances, good programs, and lovely musicals. It was really first class, and the food was wonderful, too. We'd get a five-course dinner for 32 cents American money. I never cooked while we lived there. Why cook? I couldn't even buy a pound of bacon for that price on our side of the river. We would eat dinner and then we'd walk over to this great big old railroad station that was being used for the broadcasts. They'd lined the walls with moving pads, and then they'd move them all around for different acoustical sounds. The windows were narrow, low to the floor, and all during the program, W. Lee O'Daniel's 17-piece band would be playing. The cowboys

all wore cowboy boots and the Mexican would come through the windows. They'd never come around to a door. The Mexicans and all their kids, and sometimes even their goat and their dog would all be there listening to the radio program. Then the shoeshine boys would come in, and while they were shining the band members' boots, the band would keep right on playing away. And that was our entertainment every night.

W. Lee O'Daniel lost his contract. The Mexicans wouldn't renew it; they wanted somebody who asked the listeners to send a dollar for a little songbook or whatever else they had for sale. They felt that they couldn't make money with a regular contract. No one had a contract except W. Lee. All the rest of them split every dollar that came in. They'd tell your fortune for a dollar, send a cowboy songbook for a dollar, or send you a little book that showed you how to learn to play an accordion—and all kinds of other junk.

When W. Lee couldn't get his contract renewed, he went back to Fort Worth and set up an office in his two-story home. We rented a nice apartment upstairs and we lived there about a year and celebrated our first anniversary. They were just wonderful to us.

W. Lee had been in business for three years at Eagle Pass, and his wife was the bookkeeper, but she didn't know a thing about it—he was getting lots of orders and making all kinds of money selling flour over the radio. She had the money in folders piled clear to the ceiling. While they were living there they had six rooms upstairs and a lady had a story down below, after we left the hotel we rented a room from this lady and shared the kitchen and the bath with her. We lived there until we found the

little house at the end of the road.

Russ had worked with W. Lee about a year in Fort Worth when one day a man came in; the mayor of Texas. He spent all afternoon. When he left W. Lee's office, W. Lee came out and asked my husband, "Do you know who that is?"

Russ said, "Yeah, Mayor."

Then W. Lee replied, "Well, he wants me to run for governor. What do you think about that?" Russ told him he thought he would win—and that he was turning in his resignation. W. Lee said, "You can't do that. I plan for you to run my business if I run for governor." But Russ said, "Nope. I don't want to get involved in Texas politics. I'm turning in my resignation." We left Texas and went back to Kansas City.

*Kansas City was worse than St. Louis*

My husband's uncle had two coal businesses: One was in Kansas City, Kansas, and one was in Kansas City, Missouri. My husband managed the one in Kansas City, Missouri. It was in the northern part of the city, a tough area that was quite hilly and woody, but just across the road and up the mountain from his office. Quite often, in those days (that was about 1938), there was a lot of crime going on in that place. Tom Pendergast, the big political boss, was in his prime and going full steam. Many times my husband would go to the office and hear that somebody had been found up in the woods, striped naked, tied to a tree and shot. Everyone knew that somewhere along the way Pendergast was definitely—well, he ran the city.

It was during this time that my husband was working for the coal people. It was still the depression and lots of people would buy their coal by the bushel because they couldn't afford to buy more at one time, and usually they'd charge it—and they couldn't get it paid until summer when they'd quit burning coal and not have to buy it. Anyway, Russ went to sell coal to the purchaser of coal for Kansas City and, of course, it was all controlled by Pendergast—he had all the public buildings, the schools and all kinds of businesses tied up. They had to buy coal through him. The purchasing man was Harry Truman. They called him a “judge,” but he wasn't a judge; he was just a purchasing man for the Pendergast political machine. Russ went in, introduced himself and told him that he'd like to sell him some coal. Now Russ' uncle handled the best quality coal and at a fair price, while the Pendergast group was buying old stuff that polluted the air and it was the cheapest stuff they could

get. Truman said, "Well, Mr. Clark, you know, before we go any farther, I get a fifty cent a ton cutback on all the coal." Russ told him, "I don't give cutbacks. We have the best coal at the best price and it's what should be bought for the schools and the hospitals and everything. This smoke-producing soft coal is polluting the whole city. I'm selling the best quality at the best deal." But Truman persisted, "I get fifty cent a ton cutback." So Russ told him, "Then I won't buy it from or sell it to you because I do not give cutbacks. And I don't deal with crooked politicians. I'm not interested in dealing with you." Truman said, "Well, you needn't call on me anymore." And Russ replied, "I'll be very happy not to call on the kind of man that you are. I don't do business that way." He walked out and that was the last time he had any conversation with Harry Truman. And Russ never voted for him.

I will say we've had worse politicians since then though.

When we lived there in the apartment it was so hot in the summer that we'd all go downstairs and sit outside on the benches, politicians would come along—campaigning, and ask if we were Republican or Democrat, and, of course, everybody all over town always said they were Democrats because Harry was a big Pendergast man. If the people said they were Republicans, they might have the lights or windows broken out of their car the next day. Nobody dared to go against the mob. Kansas City was tough. The red light district was wide open and so was the gambling. Kansas City was worse than St. Louis. St. Louis had crooked politicians, but not like the Pendergast bunch. They weren't nearly as ruthless as the Kansas City people.

*It was interesting and I never minded waiting—whether it was hot or cold*

Anyway, my husband left that office and for a time he sold furnaces, then we went to St. Louis thinking he could get a job. The milling company where he'd worked before wanted to hire him back, but one of the employees told him that he'd always be the boy next door and the people he'd have working under him would always be jealous. He told Russ that he'd find something better and that he should forget about the milling business.

At that time, my sister-in-law's father had an excellent job with the Lessenware Rope Company. It was a marvelous company, and my mother said, "Russ, why don't you go over there and apply for a job?" And that's what he did. He applied with a German guy, who hired him on the spot—and gave him eight states for his territory. We were living in Kansas City and we had the eight states around there. They furnished him a four-door Roadmaster Buick car, and paid him about \$150 a month, which was a big salary then. He traveled most of the time and I went with him because we had no children. It was lots of fun. He called on the coalmines and zinc mines in Oklahoma, and Army bases were being built up then—the war was just beginning, so we got in on all of that. When they let a contract for an airport to be built (this was Boeing), why my husband was always up at six o'clock in the morning, and as soon as the first tractor-driver pulled in, he'd follow him to sell him wire rope. Along with the army bases, we were still calling on a lot of the mines in Arkansas and Missouri and Oklahoma, where there were zinc mines, plus other metals.

Kansas had Big Bertha, a great piece of machinery that could take out half a hillside. My husband didn't believe in walking any place he could drive a car. And those strip mines were deep, but we'd drive the car through them and almost take off the tail pipe getting down in the bottom of the mine just so he didn't have to walk; then he'd have to go and climb up on Big Bertha! I'm sure that a lot of my gray hairs were from watching him way up in the air going across Big Bertha. He'd climbed up across the pit to look where the thing was scooping out the side of an Oklahoma mountain. He never fell off; and somehow we always managed to get out of those mines. It was all pretty scary, but very exciting.

The air bases and Army camps began building up and we started traveling to even more of them. We had a lot of interesting experiences. There was a big Army base and airfield in Nebraska, just acres and acres—and at that time it was just as hot as could be, about 100 degrees, and not a tree or anything else that could be used for protection from the heat within miles. They wouldn't let me go with my husband—he always had to have a badge, and sometimes I'd get to wear one and sometimes I wouldn't. They were being very careful. So on this hot day in Nebraska, he followed the first tractor into the airbase and I had to stand outside; the only thing I had for shade was a fence post, so I sat in the shade of that fence post and listened to the birds and crickets from about one in the afternoon until almost 5:30. The first concession truck finally came by with a load of Cokes—and it was hot, too, but that was the best Coke I ever had. I was about to die of thirst. However, it was interesting and I never minded waiting—whether it

was hot or cold.

One night before I began to drive, we stopped to call on a man who was just beginning to build one of these big bases on our way to Kansas City. It was after our evening meal, and this man was raising mink—he took all evening to tell my husband how he raised mink. It was eleven o'clock at night and very cold, but I was too scared to start the engine, so I nearly froze. But when Russ got back to the car, I got to hear all about mink, and what it took to raise them. So there were hot times and cold times.

There were ammunition dumps that no one knew anything about, airbases and camps, and in all of those states they were being built up very fast. Once they got the project started, it didn't take them very long to finish it. And then soldiers began coming in by trainloads.

One time I was in St. Louis visiting my family while my husband stayed in Kansas City, I got on the train that had come from the East, loaded with soldiers, the only place there was room for another person was between the cars. They couldn't even shut the doors. Just inside the car I was nearest, there were three soldiers sleeping on the men's bathroom floor. You couldn't even get down the aisle. So, I stood up between those cars, and it was terrible—there were snow banks on each side. Even between the cars was crowded with soldiers, and they were so tired. I had a Samson bag, a hardcover bag. One boy was so tired, he was about to pass out, so I told him to sit down on my bag. I stood up all the way from St. Louis to Kansas City between the cars.

None of us ate on the train because we didn't know where the food was—and nobody brought any to us, so

we didn't have anything to eat that whole day. When we finally got to Kansas City, my husband met me and we got on another train full of soldiers. We were told that there were no stops until the train got to Wichita, so we all ordered box lunches before we left Kansas City. At Emporia, the train stopped and the college kids got off for some kind of holiday. When they saw the men with the carts bringing the lunches, they grabbed them off the carts and took them all and ate them without paying, so we ended up without to eat that whole day! We finally got to Wichita, and hadn't had anything to eat since morning.

*Traveling was not easy in those days*

One of the places where soldiers were fed was Newton, Kansas, and another place was Hutchinson, Kansas. Those were places where they had only one table reserved for civilians. When the boys would get off the train, they'd go into the station and take up all the rest of the dining room. Many times, I've eaten with a whole trainload of soldiers, and I'd be the only woman. The other people would stay away since they knew there would only be one table set up for civilians.

The camps were finally built, and the boys were in, and everything was moving along. It was a very busy time.

One of our big stops was at Fort Smith, Arkansas. Camp Chaffey, I think was the name of the base. It was a big camp and it had heavy artillery—tanks and big guns and all kinds of things like that. We were there with 27,000 soldiers.

We'd usually stayed at the Golden Hotel, and we'd try to time our arrival as they were finishing setting up their wonderful buffet and just beginning to serve the food. One night after the boys got there, we went in to eat and there was not one single bite of food in the hotel. We started driving around town to find something to eat, but everything, even the filling stations and those little hamburger places were out of food.

Finally, about ten o'clock, we found a little grocery store where we got a pack of sugar-free gum and little stale pack of crackers, and that's all the food that was in town. So we really had a big meal that day!

Some of the soldiers would eat their meals out at camp two or three miles out of town; they had buses to take

them back and forth—and sometimes, they'd eat at camp and then come to town and eat everything in sight, so we had to get there early.

Any place near the camps, if we were there at mealtime, they always asked us to eat—we'd go through the line with all of the soldiers. Hutchinson was an airbase, and there were usually around 20,000 boys there. We seemed to spend more time at Fort Chaffey and Hutchinson. And we'd eat with all those soldiers quite often. It was very different and interesting.

When I'd go down the line with the metal tray divided in little sections, a couple boys in front of me would be dipping up the food, and they'd slam that food on the soldiers' trays and be just terrible—but then when I came along with my tray, they'd be so careful. They'd put my food in each section and keep everything separated. I knew they had been trying to scare me when I was watching the way they were dipping up food for their buddies, because they'd have that little mischievous glint in their eyes.

When the camps were going full force we'd have to park behind the kitchen. They'd be breaking eggs in a metal barrel, and they'd take up four eggs in each hand, squeeze them and all the eggs would come out in the barrel. I've often wondered how they could squeeze four eggs at a time in each hand—they never told me their secret, but they'd laugh and say, "Not a shell in there!" Later, when we'd be go back, they'd be peeling potatoes. They'd get that knife and just start cutting, and about a third of the potatoes would be on the peels in the garbage. They got a kick out of showing us how they did their cooking. It was fun going through the lines when

they were eating, and it was fun eating with them in those camps.

We were in Fort Smith, Arkansas when the soldiers began leaving that camp. My husband had gone to bed early and all of a sudden, I heard this tremendous roar. It was like a distant thunder and I wondered if we were going to get a rain. After awhile the roar got louder, so I got up and looked out the window. We were on the second floor where we had a good view of the street, and there came staff cars with their full packs and the flags waving at nine o'clock at night. The cars with all the staff and the brig passed, then the regular soldiers and the trucks came by, and finally the tanks and the big heavy artillery. The roar was almost deafening. I sat up all night and watched 27,000 men leave the camp.

The next morning while I was still in bed (after my husband had left for the day), there was a knock on the door. When I opened it, there stood a young captain with a six pack of Cokes. He asked, "Would you take these Cokes and celebrate the birth of my twin boys last night?" He explained that he'd had to leave to go to Illinois just before they were born. He wanted to celebrate, but he couldn't take the time—so he wanted me to take the Cokes and celebrate the birth of his babies for him. I told him that I'd love to! I asked if he'd named his babies, but he said that he'd had to hurry off. I took the Cokes and enjoyed them.

But seeing all those soldiers leave, and those trucks and the tanks, and all that heavy artillery pulling out—well, I've often wondered if that young captain ever got to see his twin babies. I'll never forget how impressive it was to see so many soldiers. Later we found out they

were on their way to New Orleans to be sent for D-Day overseas. It was a sad experience.

The next day the town was so empty—no soldiers, but we could have everything we wanted to eat—yet, it was sad to know they were gone and to think how some of them may never come back. It was a sad time and a fun time.

I always enjoyed being around the camps, to see the way they were built, how quickly they were built, and to meet some of the people who were running the camps. We ran into some real characters. Some were so funny and it was fun just to watch them. A lot of them hadn't had jobs for a year because of the depression.

One fellow was pretty tricky. He was from St. Louis and he hadn't worked for years, but he had gone to college so he had a job there, and all the salesmen like we were traveled to these camps so we knew all the tricks of the people who were working for the government. But this one fellow, he had a girlfriend in St. Louis and he was stationed at Hutchinson, where he had another girlfriend. He'd always hint around for us to take him to dinner. He'd say, "After dinner, maybe we can go to your room and talk something over." Well, all the salesmen knew what he was wanting because it was dry then, and he knew someone would come along with some liquor, and if he got up to the room he could have some to drink. Or he'd get on our phone and spend the whole evening talking to the girlfriend in St. Louis while the girlfriend in Hutchinson would be listening.

There were lots of tricky people like that around and the salesmen finally got smart and learned who they were and what things they would pull. We'd watch out

for them and say something like, “Oh it’s so comfortable here in the lobby. There just aren’t enough chairs in our room for all of us to visit.” And of course, no drinks were being served there, so the poor guy wouldn’t stay very long. It was an interesting way to learn about characters—and about character. And we found ways of getting rid of people like that.

*It hadn't been making any money for four or five years*

After a while the war began to heat up, the bases started to empty and we found that some of our customers in Omaha had a business in Wichita, but it hadn't been making any money for four or five years. The owners had a couple of young fellows running it because their two sons, were in the service, so they'd decided to sell it.

Well, we hadn't had any money until my husband received an \$8,000 bonus for Christmas...It was wonderful. It was like a million dollars now, and it came at a time when we had less than a hundred dollars in our checking account. Russ said, "That business in Wichita, I'd sure love to buy that."

So I told him, "Why don't you offer them your bonus money and see if they'll let you pay it out."

He said, "They've lost money for four years. And we might lose ours, too."

Well, I told him that he was smart enough to do it right, and we'd never had \$8,000 before—so even if we lost it, we wouldn't miss it. I said, "Let's go for it," and we did.

He talked to the owners and set it up so we could pay it out—and it was amazing. It didn't take very long. So we moved to Wichita and began making country elevators—those little wooden elevators could be seen all over Kansas, but they were going out of style so fast that the previous owner had had to take on other kinds of manufacturing. He was building heavier machinery because they were building places to manufacture airplanes, and people were coming into Wichita by the

dozens.

So my husband began making larger machinery and we moved our business to a bigger place just a couple of blocks away. Then we began calling on the aircraft plants. He took on the heavy construction, and later, when the airplane business got too big, he took on machine tools. Of course, he already had the type of tools to build houses, so that made us the only company of that type to have three businesses under the same roof.

We had different salesmen (it was altogether a different type of selling than many of us were used to, so it took a different kind of salesmen to do that). We had to have a different kind of mechanic (for the heavy construction like the tractors and the big boom machinery to get up high on big buildings, and then the machine tools took engineers). And finally it all began to be successful.

The aircraft companies had computers, and Coleman was getting ready to install theirs, so my husband decided to get a computer for our business. Everyone said, "You shouldn't do that." They thought it was impossible to have the type of business we had on computers. But my husband was determined. He said, "I'm going to get one, and I'll figure it out."

One of my sisters in St. Louis had gone to the first computer schools they had when the war began to get more advanced. She had worked on these computers, so she moved to Wichita and went to work for my husband. At the time Coleman was having theirs installed, we were installing ours. The men who were installing those computers had never installed them before since there'd never been that kind of business to use them. We were

lucky that my sister was here because she had learned how to wire them up and how to help install them. She worked at Coleman—helped install theirs, and then she helped install ours. After we got ours up and running, all the distributors in the country and the friends we'd met at the conventions came to see what we were doing. They came to see our computer—and to learn how to use it. And now, of course, everybody has them. We were pretty advanced for our time. Sam Marcus at the meat market had the next one in town. So learning about computers was another thing that happened during that period that was interesting and exciting.

My husband had an inner ear problem so we could never fly because he'd get sick. The few times he'd tried, he was sick for a week afterwards; so we traveled by train or car. We had the whole state of Kansas, plus the machine tool business in Oklahoma to cover, and there was a lot of traveling for our salesmen to do, so we bought a twin engine Beech plane for our salesmen to use, but neither Russ nor I ever used it.

He used to tell me to take the plane, go to Kansas City, and have lunch with my mother, but I never had the heart to go because he loved to travel, too. I knew he'd be sitting home thinking that he could have gone, and that he could have stood the pain. So I stayed home and I'm glad I did, but it was really a nice plane. It was an Army surplus plane with nine seats, and it had never been used. The army had several of them for their officers, and the seats were all upholstered. My husband bought three, sold two of them, and kept one for our salesmen.

Then came the time when he wasn't feeling well, we sold the business and he was without an office for a

week. But he always had to have something to sell. I used to tell him that he'd sell me if he could get anything out of me—however, that's one sale he never made.

We'd sold the business without an attorney and one of our customers from Chicago said, "I don't know how you could sell a business like that without an attorney."

Russ said, "Well, I told the people that if someone wanted to buy it, I wanted to sell it under one condition—that nobody would know it but his wife and my wife, and if I heard a whisper of it before it was sold, the deal was off." So no one knew about it until the deal was over, and he called all 87 of our employees in, and that's when they knew that they had a new boss.

Wheeler Kelly said, "You sold that business without a lawyer. We have people coming in here and wanting to buy real estate and insurance and everything else, and we don't have a soul who can go in a factory and sell anything without an attorney. Why don't you take an office down here and work for us?"

Russ told him, "One thing—when I feel like it, I'll work. I want straight commission. You pay the overhead, and I'll work." So he worked with them here in Wichita for four-and-one-half-years and loved it!

After he started there, our friend in Chicago told Russ that he couldn't imagine him selling our business without an attorney. He asked him to sell his business also. This was the same friend who invented a machine that vibrates concrete mix, so that a worker doesn't have to get on his knees to smooth it out. My husband worked out a deal with him, and sold that company, too. In Tennessee, he sold a pencil factory, and then he sold several small businesses around—filling stations, etc.

*At one time we were working a chicken operation in Shelbyville, Tennessee*

We'd driven there to look at a business that was for sale. After we'd gotten there and checked into the motel, Russ called the owners, who invited us to their beautiful house for dinner. Shelbyville, Tennessee, had never had a shot fired in it during the Civil War—that seems unbelievable. They had their old antebellum house filled with antiques. His wife and I got along fine. She was head of the board of Andrew Jackson's home, the Hermitage. She asked if I liked museums and I told her, "I love them."

She promised to pick me up the next morning to take me to The Hermitage. She and her friend came by, picked me up in a brand new Rolls Royce, the first one I'd ever seen, let alone rode in—and off we went to The Hermitage. Because they were both on the board, they took me to all the little corners and showed me the most interesting things. Then they said, "You're one of us." (I'd lived in the South and my mother's folks had all come from there). I spoke the same way they did, with my cotton-picking language, so they invited me to the homes of some of their other friends. We'd drive right up and park in front those beautiful houses and we'd walk right on in without knocking or anything. They'd open the door, and yell, "Lily Mae, we're bringing a friend up to see your house." The lady (it seemed as though she was always upstairs) would yell, "Just come on in and help yourself." Then they'd show me around their friend's house, open closets, and show me their little things. Then the woman would come down—it was all just fine Southern hospitality.

However, let's go back to our first night in Shelbyville and our dinner at that fantastic home. They had a maid who had been with them all her life and she set the most gorgeous table. Everything was silver, except for the cups and saucers that were china. Even the drinking glasses were silver. There were these beautiful birds, so I asked if they were Dorothy Dowtey birds, and she told me they were. Well, Dorothy Dowtey had just died; and I had been trying to start a collection of those birds. There I was, sitting in that beautiful home, eating that wonderful food, and looking at those rare Dorothy Dowtey birds on the table—I was almost afraid to chew. Of course, they didn't realize the birds were so rare, because they'd had theirs for such a long time. They didn't know the price of those birds had just gone up because Dorothy Dowtey died. Later, they went to Sotheby's in New York and purchased a beautiful china cabinet to store the Dorothy Dowtey birds. The next time we were there, we were eating on some birds that were a lot less valuable.

The owners wanted \$8 million for the chicken business because it was such a large operation. Everything was timed right down to the minute. They'd order thousands of eggs, then the farmers would pick them up and take them to their farms to be incubated. When they were right at the minute of hatching, another group of farmers would bring the chickens in to a big factory. At the factory, they would put the little chickens on a conveyor belt and have the tips of their bills cut off to keep them from killing each other. After that, another group of farmers took the chickens to give them a special kind of feed to fatten them. After a certain amount of time, the chickens were loaded onto a truck and sent to New York

to be readied for freezing. We had that deal almost closed—they were right up to the final closing, but we had to go home for a couple of weeks. In the meantime, we were going to look at a 43,000-acre ranch that was also for sale.

Several days later, I was getting things together for our trip back to Tennessee. Russ had picked up some sandwiches for us—and after we'd eaten, he said, "Oh, I feel so good!" (He was a diabetic and he very seldom felt well.) He said, "I feel so good today, better than I've felt in ages." Then he went out to play tennis. After playing two sets of doubles, his insulin had worn off, so he ate two sundaes and ordered a third one. He loved ice cream, but before the third one was served, he was dead of a massive cerebral hemorrhage right there in the ice cream place. He was gone immediately. He was almost 52 years old, and we hadn't been married quite 28 years.

*This was 1965; and I began my life as a widow*

My husband had never been able to sail or fly because of his health, so after he was gone, I began taking trips. But before that could happen, I had to get through the four and one-half years of probate court. Russ was still in the business of building at the time of his death. He'd been working with another company, plus he was still buying property—some of that wasn't paid for. So I was left with a lot of property, but with very little money to pay for it because of all the taxes that had to be paid on our businesses. Some money was put in a charitable trust; I got the interest from that, but half of our money went for those taxes. I had a \$200,000 insurance policy, which was a most wonderful thing. One of our good friends had insisted that my husband take it out, so I had that, but there was about \$500,000 worth of property that I had to pay for, and that sure didn't leave me much of a bank account. For a while I struggled financially. However, Russ had also bought some stock in a company.

A man in Tulsa had invented some machinery that would hook up to the big ready-mix tractor and dump out the concrete. The man didn't have any money so he told my husband, "If you'll buy some stock in my company, I'll buy the machinery from you to build it." That's how the deal was made. I don't remember how many shares he bought, but at the time it was a dollar a share and whenever it got to three dollars a share, we'd sell enough to pay our taxes that year.

So I had that, but I don't remember how much there was—I do know that it wasn't much because the man at the bank said, "Sell it." The lawyer and everybody else told me to sell, because it was such a new company that

nobody knew anything about.

I told them, “I know the man who owns the company and I know what he has, so I’m not selling.” And I didn’t—even though I didn’t know one thing about stocks. I couldn’t even read a stock report! Russ had always added an allowance in my checkbook, and that’s all I knew about finances. Everyone told me how dumb I was for not selling that stock because it wasn’t worth holding onto.

I kept it about a year and a half when it finally went up—and then they began talking about a merger. I didn’t even know what a merger was! But even then, the broker said, “It’s no good, and you’d better take the money now.”

Well, I was silly enough to sell it at 14 ½. I made \$27,000 clear; and I thought, “What a wonderful way to make money,” especially when I needed it so badly. I didn’t know how to do anything, but scrub floors. From then on, I began learning about the stock market. I subscribed to the Wall Street Journal, and to Baron’s, Babson’s, and to a lot of different investment magazines and bulletins—and for 15 years I didn’t read anything except stock things. The broker would say, “I got a good tip from New York. Just came in, and you ought to buy some shares of .... I told him that I’d heard about that big tip, too. I’d read about it a couple of weeks before he’d even mentioned it; so I wondered why I even needed him—that’s when I decided to go out on my own. I’ve been out there ever since. I had what was left of the \$27,000, and I was getting the payment on our business, which was around \$2,000 a month. I started educating the bank, telling them I didn’t need them either. I got very interested in stocks; and then I began to travel.

*When the Rose Society began going places, I began traveling, too*

I joined the American Rose Society shortly after my husband's death. Although he and I had traveled to a lot of conventions and other places for business, we hadn't done any traveling for pleasure. So when the Rose Society began going places, I began traveling, too. The society was in the process of moving from Illinois to Shreveport, Louisiana. A Shreveport family had donated 125 acres for the society to build a new national garden; so we began working on that and going to conventions. Then every two years we'd have a foreign international convention. I did quite a bit of traveling that way. The first trip I took was to Australia, and then to New Zealand. Eventually, I ended up going to Australia again and to New Zealand two more times. I love New Zealand. I've been to Germany and England several times, and to Hawaii eight times.

I also joined the National Horticulture Convention Society. For the rose conventions and rose meetings we would usually go to homes and parks, but with the horticulture society we'd go to the big estates, and even more parks and places. Every year they gave an award to the family or to the individual who had done the most for horticulture. We went to New York when David Rockefeller received the award and was the main speaker. We had our band and a big beautiful blue and white striped tent. Rockefeller gave the talk and showed slides of his childhood, along with those of his five siblings. He told us they had always liked gardening.

As children, they were given their own gardens, and were expected to plant and garden. He was in some of the

slides when he was about six years old. He was standing in his little knickerbockers and wearing a straw hat. It looked as if he were pouting. He said, "I was mad that day. The other kids had been given a larger plot of ground and I didn't like it." He told us how they all had to plant their own gardens, and that they ate the food they grew. He had planted peas and potatoes, and other vegetables, but he said, "I wasn't very successful one year because about every three days, I'd dig them up to see how they were doing." He didn't get to eat anything out of his garden that year.

He told us a lot about his family, about his life as a kid, and just how ordinary they were. Then he said, "Tomorrow, you're going to visit our estate. I'm sorry we can't have you in the house; we're redecorating. But we'll pull all the draperies back, so feel free to go up and look in the doors and the windows." Of course that's exactly what we did. I've forgotten how many hundreds of acres he had, but it was a huge estate. His brother, Nelson, had the land adjoining, but his widow wasn't as anxious to have people come and look at her place, so we didn't go over to that side.

David had just built a big Japanese garden; I think it was six acres. I talked with the man who had designed and built it, and he said, "The Rockefellers are the most wonderful people who are easy to work for. I hope I never have to work for anybody else." He told how he had laid out the garden design, but that Mr. and Mrs. Rockefeller were both gardeners and knew what they wanted, so he laid it out to make sure it would fit in the area they wanted it to be. Money was certainly no problem, and overall, they allowed him to use his own ideas. It was a very fine time. We visited all the gardens around New

York.

The last trip I went on with the horticulture society was after I moved to Larkfield Place, a retirement community in Wichita, Kansas. We went to Washington DC, to the DuPont's estates—a lot of DuPonts live around there. Then, from Washington DC, we went down to Longwood Gardens; that's one of the most famous gardens in the country. I've been there several times with other groups. We went to Winterther, another big DuPont estate where people can go through the mansion and around the grounds. There was a DuPont lady who was getting the award that year—she owned 380 acres. They're all big estates of around 300 acres.

It's quite mountainous in that part of the country. I'd sprained my ankle and I was just barely able to walk around. Another lady had her foot in a cast, so we decided instead of walking up all the paths around the mountains, we'd just stay around the house and look at the gardens.

While the others were taking off down the path and around the mountain, Mrs. DuPont, a lady of about 75, came out to inquire why we were staying behind. When we told her, she said, "I'll get my husband's golf cart." She told us that her husband loved to play golf, but that it was too far to go to the public course, so he had bought the land right down at the foot of the hill and built his own golf course. And from the house, you could look down over their golf course. She got his golf cart and all three of us got in it and started off down the paths.

One group was just ahead of us a little distance, and I was so embarrassed passing all my friends in the golf cart with Mrs. Du Pont. She took us all around the

mountains and to a lot of other places where the others didn't get to go. She knew the names of all the grasses, the trees, and she knew everything by their botanical names.

She had little wooden boxes all along the paths where she'd leave notes for the men who were working in the gardens. She told us about the plants she'd picked up in a foreign country and planted because she wanted them to spread out and cover that side of the mountain. She took us to a place where there was the prettiest little pond and a nice wooden bench. The house was up quite a distance, but we could still see it.

She said, "In the summertime I love to bring my cocktail down here so I can sit here, look at this little pond, and just enjoy myself." She told us that she'd had the pond made only about two feet deep because she brought her grandchildren there to play on the little boat. She said, "They think it's deep. They get in there and think they're really doing something dangerous."

She told us that all the DuPonts were farmers in the Netherlands, except one nephew who was an artist. The previous summer she'd given a lawn party and everyone wanted him to sketch pictures. He said, "I'll do a painting of my aunt, but it's going to be in the nude."

She said, "Just imagine these saggy breasts and wrinkled face being in the nude; being a painting." So we all laughed about that. Finally we followed the rest of the crowd back up to the house.

We never knew whom we might meet, but they were all members of the super rich crowd—the elite, living on those beautiful huge estates. I never saw one woman with her fingernails all polished or her hair all done up

or with a lot of makeup. They all had on slacks, and every one of them told us how they loved to work in the yard, living very normal, ordinary lives. But there was a funny thing about those people. They'd say, "Well, this land was so and so's, but then we bought it and added on." They knew their neighbors—who was old and who had no children—and they had an eye on their land; every one of them. The name of the game was "Buying up the land around them." Mrs. DuPont told us that an elderly man had owned the land where her husband decided to build his golf course, and one of the other DuPont's wanted it, but she and her husband beat them to it.

*I went on opera tours at least once a year*

I loved going to New York. I went on opera tours at least once a year, and those were always interesting because we also went to many other places, too. I've been to the opera twice in Dallas, once in San Francisco and once in Denver. In New York, we usually stayed in small hotels that had been renovated. They were expensive, but very elegant—very nice. We'd go to some of the most expensive restaurants because in a group, we got better rates. There was always something to do: plays, museums, and then the last night at the Met, they always had an elegant dinner with the chandelier and red carpet. There were tables for the tour people and there was always one of the group's staff at each table—that's where we really got acquainted with each other. We heard about the trips they were planning and the other places they had been.

When they dedicated the first Opera in the Round in Denver, they took us to the home of a family that had lived in Japan for several years after the war. They had just built a new house completely Japanese. We had dinner at their house and learned they even did their cooking like the Japanese. It was delicious and very interesting.

The last opera I attended, a couple of years ago, was in Dallas. After the opera was over two ladies invited us to their apartment. They were two sisters: One was 93-years-old, (She had a large ranch that she operated herself), the other was 83-years-old, (She was the first executive in the Exxon Oil Company) and she'd married one of the executives in that company. We had dinner with them. I sat by the 83-year-old, and she told me she'd

been born near Galveston, Texas and that her father was a cotton farmer. I told her that I'd been reared in the South, too, and that I knew all about cotton farming.

She said, "My sister wanted to learn to dance and she talked my mother into letting her go to New York to take lessons for a year, but when she didn't come home, Mother sent me after her. I didn't go back home either. I found a job at \$15 a week in New York with the Standard Oil Company; it's Exxon now. I wasn't about to go back to picking cotton. When Mother came after us, she stayed for 30 years."

After they returned to Dallas, they got this large apartment that used to be part of a big home remodeled into a hotel. When the tour people had dinner, every thing they were served was grown in Texas: the lovely steak, the black-eyed peas, the sweet potatoes, the corn, every thing that went into the tossed salad, the avocados, and the makings of the cherry pie. It was a huge dinner and so delicious. When I told her how good the steak was, she told me that it was buffalo, which was a typical Texas dinner.

The younger sister said that she had been to 100 operas with the Daly Thorp Opera Tour Group and that the following week they were going to entertain Pavarotti, and there would be 40 people in this same apartment for dinner.

*I've had a lot of interesting and exciting experiences*

Those trips were just wonderful, but I don't believe I'll get to go on many more of them. My touring days are about over. The last one I took was a 2-day trip last week to Ponca City, Oklahoma to the Marlen Mansion. I love those little trips, too. I think from now on, I'm just going to take little 2-day trips or short over-night trips with the people from here at Larksfield Place. I've been to Branson with them, and I hope to go to again.

Some outstanding trips were on the Royal Dutch lines. One was a Christmas cruise through the Panama Canal, and also a Tricycle Music Cruise around the world. We boarded the QE II at Fort Lauderdale, went through the Canal around to Los Angeles. There were six people from the classical musical: a pianist and a singer from Canada, all outstanding classical people with Victor Borge filling in. That was quite a trip, all the way from Fort Lauderdale to around and through the Canal and up to Los Angeles. The cruise ship was 13 stories high, four football-fields long, and took 82,000 gallons of oil a day to run it. I never did find the way to my room without a map. It was so big, but everything was done so well, and there was so much to do on that ship. I saw it when it made its first voyage from England to New York; we just happened to be there. It seemed like everybody was going down to see the QE II. I thought, "Oh, it would be wonderful to take a trip on that ship," never dreaming that I would get to take one, especially one that long and with the classical music—or that we would have dinner.

We all ate dinner at seven o'clock in the evening. After we were finished eating, we'd go up to the top deck to the

concert room for about an hour and a half. We'd be entertained by whoever was performing: a violinist, or a pianist. Then we'd go down to the next floor where there was a very good orchestra. It was a big band, like the ones we used to have. There would be a regular floorshow with a different show every night—all with beautiful costumes. There were 15 men whose jobs were to dance with all the ladies who didn't have partners. And I love to dance. These men were young men to older gray-haired men; they were all very nice, very polite, and we all wore formal clothes with these men in tuxes. It was very elegant. There's a completely different kind of atmosphere when you're with a group like that and they're all dressed nicely. It just makes for a wonderful trip. There were cards games and all kinds of programs and speeches. In fact, one fellow who gave a speech was related to the man who wrote the book, *Hawaii*, telling all about the islands when he first moved there—and he was in the process of writing another book at the time of this trip. I have his first book, but I haven't looked for the other one, so I don't know if it's on the market yet.

I've had a lot of interesting and exciting experiences, and although I'm not planning those kinds of adventures in the future, I am going to be enjoying the shorter trips that I get to take with our Larksfeld Place group.