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About the Cover: Ellen Thompson spent the first nine years of her life on the OB Ranch near Dos Cabezas. In 1934, she was all set for summer with a warm weather haircut and friends Bobby the barn cat and Trixie the dog. (This photo and all others in this issue are courtesy Ellen T. Quimby.)

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A FEW YEARS ON THE OB RANCH

1927 TO 1936

By Ellen Thompson Quimby

This memo is written at the urging of Alex. S. Thompson and Leila Johnson. If I had realized how difficult it would be to dredge up all the memories and put them in some sort of order, I'd have suggested they read a few chapters of Little House on the Prairie instead.

This is also written for our children and grandchildren and anyone else who might be interested in rural life in the 1920s and '30s. Times were different, but there was a lot of fun to be had.

For those who don't know the people I am talking about, Grandpa was my father, Alex. J. Thompson, Jr., called Alex, and Mamo is Maryan G. Thompson Stidham. Mamo got her nickname from her first grandchild, Chuck Quimby, when he was learning to talk. That usually easygoing baby was so set on the name he had given her that she has been Mamo to several generations in the family and who knows how many neighbors and their children.

Before we get into the events of our life at the OB, let's have a small history lesson. There was no electricity, so there were no electric lights or refrigerators or fans or hundreds of things we take for granted now.

There was no natural gas and all the stoves I remember used wood for their heat. There were no sewers, or even septic tanks, and every home had its outhouse, even in the town of Dos Cabezas. (At least part of Douglas and Willcox had sewers or septic systems.)

None of the roads were paved, except in the larger towns like Douglas and Willcox. The county ran graders over the main routes two or three times a year in a losing battle to keep them navigable.

Quite a few people had no radio or telephone and kept up to date on current events with their trips to town and visits with neighbors. Actually, in 1928, for the nation as a whole, fewer than one family in five had a radio.

There was also no rural mail delivery, so anyone who got any mail had to pick it up at the post office in town. At least we didn't have to ride horseback into town, unless the car broke down.

Pioneer days weren't so very long ago after all, were they?

The town of Dos Cabezas lies in a dip between Dos Cabezas Mountain and its foothills. To the west is a cut in the foothills, which is IT draw, also known as Ewell Springs, a stage stop on the Butterfield stage route. John and Grace Thompson lived there, with their children, Frances and Jack. East of Dos Cabezas is another cut in the foothills, which is OB draw. This is where we lived.

I was told that OB stood for O'Brien and IT for Indian Territory. Who O'Brien was no one seems to know because the house was the "old Waughtel place" when Grandpa and Mamo and I, at one month old, moved there from our original homestead. The house we moved into was over 50 years old at the time, which would put its construction in the 1870s. It is still there, lived in by ranch employees.

Our house was made of adobe, built on a hill with a big wash running below it. The house was "L" shaped with two bedrooms, pantry and kitchen against the

hillside. Propped up on stilts, the living room and a small room which was probably meant for a parlor headed out over the slope toward the wash. A covered porch, or veranda, ran around all of the house but the hillside of the kitchen wing and the end of the second bedroom. A big cellar was under the downhill wing.

For some reason, there was no direct access to the kitchen from the bedrooms. You had to go out on the veranda and in the living room door to get from a bedroom to the kitchen. Grandpa eventually knocked a doorway in the pantry wall to give better access. There were no built-in closets or kitchen cupboards, which was normal for houses of that era. Grandpa built cupboard-like closets in the two bedrooms. Kitchen cupboards were "store-bought."

When we first moved in, the tank which was assumed to be our water supply proved to contain only rain water and run-off from the hill. Since there was a good well up the creek which supplied piped water to cattle tanks below the barn, Grandpa tapped into that supply and ran a line into the yard near the kitchen door. That was our water supply. There was no running water in the house.

In sunny weather, hot water was easily gotten by laying a hose in the sun and letting it get hot. In bad weather the tea kettle on the kitchen stove did the job. Baths were taken in a No. 2 washtub in the kitchen.

In 1933 or 1934, Grandpa bored a hole through the adobe and put a tap in the kitchen. Of course, there were no drains to dispose of used water. One simply took the basin or tub out the door and dumped it on whatever looked like it needed a drink. Soapy water was used to keep down the dust on the paths.

Heat in cold weather came from the very nice wood range in the kitchen and a pot-bellied stove in the living room. There was no heat in the bedrooms, but the thick adobe walls helped keep some warmth in during cold weather and made things a little more comfortable in the summer. We spent a lot of time in hot weather on the breezy, comfortable veranda.

The outhouse was outside the fenced yard, near the chicken coop and up the hill. In cases of emergency or at night, there was the usual chamber pot in the bedroom. It's just as well the original water supply was not usable because it was frighteningly near both the outhouse and the chicken yard.



The yard fenced in an acre or more. We had a number of trees, most of which I don't remember. There was a big black walnut, a chinaberry (fun to climb) and a pomegranate bush. Pomegranates make good jelly and their juicy fruit is tasty and sweet, if a little hard to get at. Black walnuts are the most delicious nuts in the world!

We had a honeysuckle vine that climbed up onto the veranda and perfumed the whole area. There were also castor bean plants and the kitchen garden. There was no lawn and quite a bit of the yard was just let go to native weeds and wildflowers.

Our house was never locked, no matter how long we might be gone. Most of the outside doors did have the old fashioned locks, with a key about three inches long, but the front door that opened into the living room did not even have a keyhole. In spite of that, nothing was ever stolen.

The big barn was a bit south of the house and down nearer the creek. It held salt blocks for the cattle and hay and cotton seed cake for feeding the cattle in bad years. It was fun to jump into the loose hay and come up looking like a scarecrow. The hay



Climbing a fruit tree in the yard was just one of the many fun things to do on the OB Ranch.

was scratchy but it smelled so good! Cotton seed cake was good to munch on now and then. A lean-to shed and wood corral attached to the barn were used to hold the milk cows and their calves when they weren't out grazing in their pasture.

North of the well, in the horse pasture, there were some large rings of rocks — not stacked, just rocks in a ring. It must have been an Indian camp or town, because there were lots of pottery pieces to be found. Pottery pieces were scattered all down our little canyon and arrowheads were lying on the ground in the hills.

Our house had a dozen or so metates (grinding stones) lining the front walk and they must have come from that camp area. The pottery pieces were all small, mostly brick red, and sometimes with white or black lines on them. They were all too small to tell what kind of designs the lines were supposed to be.

Now there are very strict laws about collecting Indian artifacts, but then these things were on our own property and they were ours to do with as we wanted. I wouldn't advise going out hunting for Indian camps today.

Our living room had a day bed, a couple of leather-upholstered easy chairs, a

round clawfoot dining table and chairs, and Mamo's baby grand piano. In the winter a pot-bellied stove was set up for heating. It was taken down for the warm months. Three good-sized Navajo rugs were on the wood floor.

Once I was playing on the biggest of the Navajo rugs, setting out blocks along the geometric pattern to make houses, barns and fences. Suddenly a mouse and half a dozen half-grown mice popped out of a tiny crack in the baseboard behind Mamo's piano. Something had frightened them into the bright light of day and they scooted across the room right in front of me.

Without thinking, I lunged at them and caught one! Its fur was soft and silky, but I didn't hold it for more than a second because that little thing bit me. I let go and it scampered across the room after the rest. They disappeared into another almost invisible crack between floor and wall on the other side of the room. I don't think I told my parents about that episode because it's a bit embarrassing to be bullied by a three-inch-long mouse.

Across the creek from the well was an adobe house with a wooden porch. House and porch were all crumbling. Maybe it was built too close to the creek and floods helped to undermine it. Was it the OB homestead? I don't know. At any rate, there was a huge fig tree growing in what was once the yard of that house.

When the figs were ripe, Uncle John and family would come over and we all picked figs. Some watched for snakes crawling from under the sagging porch, while others climbed the tree or pulled down branches to pick the fruit. Believe it or not the figs tasted pretty good as an addition to diets that didn't have a lot of variety.

There was also a small tree growing on the flood plain below our canyon that had large purple figs. It never had very many but there were very good. I have no idea what kind of fig it was or where it came from. There was no trace of a building near it or any sign of other plantings.

Fresh milk and vegetables were kept in an open box on stilts. Burlap sacks covered it and were anchored in a pan of water. The evaporating water kept the food cool. The legs of the cooler stood in tin cans filled with water to keep ants, crickets and assorted other bugs from crawling up to the food. A little thing like this was not used for leftovers. What we didn't eat at a meal was usually given to the dogs, cats and chickens.

We did have a good-sized chest-type ice box which held 100 pounds of ice. Once or maybe twice a year we got a big piece of ice and had a ball until it was gone. Ice cream! Lemonade! Iced tea for the grownups and really cold milk. It was wonderful to have chilled food.

When we made ice cream, I would sit on top of the freezer until the cream got so stiff that my little weight couldn't hold the job and an absolutely perfect can of ice cream was ready to be devoured. The ice cream was usually vanilla, but sometimes we had peaches or strawberries to add to it, and I seem to remember some wonderful stuff with chopped black walnuts.



Speaking of ice cream, our two milk cows were Jerseys that gave very rich milk and lots of it. The milk from the younger cow was so rich that I believe it is why I don't care for milk now. We didn't have a separator, which whirls the cream out of the milk, but Mamo skimmed every bit of cream off and the milk was still rich.

We had butter, buttermilk and cottage cheese and had some left to take into town



At age two, one of Ellen's first home chores was churning butter.

and to feed to the dogs and cats. One of the first home chores I remember enjoying was cranking the churn and watching the clumps of butter form. Of course, Mamo had to take over when the butter got too thick for a three- or four-year-old to handle.

We did get a vacation from milk and milk products about once a year when the cows found a patch of wild onions. Onion flavored milk could curl your hair — or straighten it if it was already curly. Even the dogs and cats didn't like it. The calves didn't seem to mind so they got to drink all they could hold and got fat until mama cow got the onions out of her system.

My experts in edible plants were my cousins, Frances and Jack. Aunt Grace always had a good sized garden with the plentiful supply of water from the springs, but they ate few vegetables at meals. The answer to this poser is that Frances and Jack would grab the salt shaker and head for the garden whenever they felt like it. They probably kept it picked pretty clean.

Little cousin me would tag along when I was there and eat what they did. Raw turnips are every bit as good as radishes and lots better than cooked ones. Why aren't they ever served raw?

Laundry was taken care of in three tubs and a scrub board along with a clothes line to hang things on. Tub No. 1 was hot water and soap carved in slices from a bar. This was soap, not detergent, and in hard water such as ours it took a lot of soap and scrubbing on the board to get things clean.

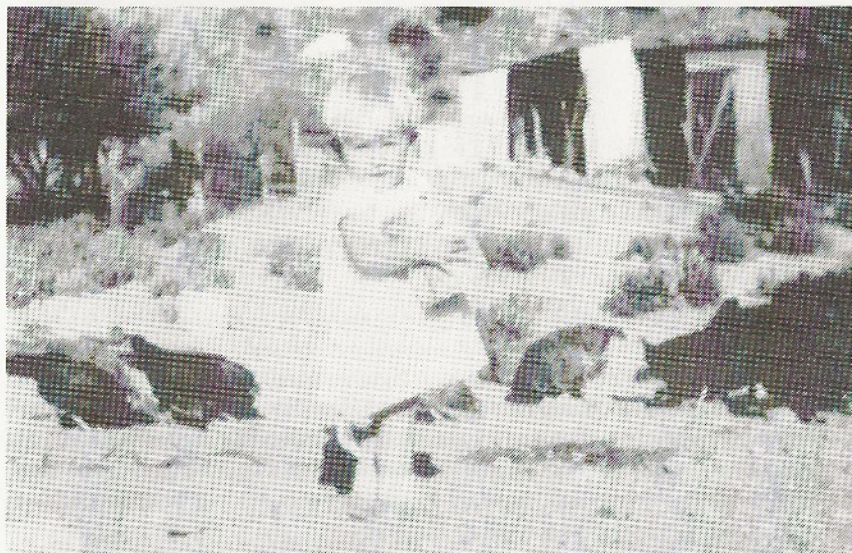
Tub No. 2 rinsed the soap and No. 3 had blueing in the water to finish getting the soap out and help make the whites look whiter. Mamo wrung the laundry by hand

but there were women who had hand-cranked wringers.

Before we left the ranch there were gas-powered washing machines that did away with the scrub board. The wringer, as I remember it, was a vicious thing that could take a hand as well as a piece of laundry.

Shirts and dresses were starched and ironed. Irons were heated on top of the wood stove. A detachable handle picked up the iron. It was used and put back on the stove when it got cool. In the meantime, another iron would be heating. I had a toy iron, detachable handle and all, about ¼ the size of a real one. Anyone who has not ironed starched ruffles on a cotton blouse with a sad iron in summer cannot possibly appreciate today's wash-and-wear fabrics.

We had a flock of chickens — Rhode Island Reds, I believe — and it was fun to scatter the feed for them. It was also fun to help Mamo gather the eggs. Once in a while, though, there would be a "broody" hen who wanted to raise a clutch of chicks and who considered our egg gathering a form of kidnapping. Angry hens have sharp beaks and claws and I always beat a hasty retreat to let Mamo battle over who was going to have possession of the eggs.



Feeding the chickens and collecting eggs was fun, unless there was a broody hen.

Everyone who had a well with enough water had a garden. At one time or another we grew green and yellow snap beans, peas, red and yellow tomatoes, radishes, onions and carrots. Some people in Dos Cabezas grew corn. No one that I remember grew squash, a native vegetable, and I don't know why.

The garden gave us a change from canned vegetables and they always tasted better. Other vegetables were bought in small amounts when we went to town (no refrigeration to keep things very long). Some women canned excess garden produce but there was always a chance of food poisoning, so we ate what we had and didn't try to keep it for later.

There were some small orchards in the valley and we had apples, cherries and

peaches in season. Farmers on the road to Douglas grew corn and we always tried to get some on the trip home.

Lighting at night was usually by kerosene lamps. We had gas lanterns that gave more light, but the gas and mantles were expensive so they were saved for special occasions. No one stayed up to read at night. The light was too dim and everyone was too tired.

We didn't really eat a lot of beef. As I remember, Grandpa butchered once a year. Since the meat would not keep too long without refrigeration, it must have been shared and then we got some when a neighbor butchered. We didn't have all that much beef, but we had plenty of chickens and eggs.

As with milk, eggs were often in over-supply. Mamo took some to Dos Cabezas. With more she cooked up a kind of corn pone for the animals, using the excess milk, whey, bacon and meat drippings with corn meal and tossing in the eggs, shells and all. This was beaten up and baked like corn bread. Dogs and cats seemed to like it.

I did too. I don't know if Mamo knew, but I would bully the animals into giving me a bite every now and then. It tasted better than regular corn bread.

John and Grace Thompson had gotten a telephone at the IT, and in 1932 Grandpa decided we needed one too in order to keep up with the Thompson brothers' cattle business. They put in an extension over the hills from the John Thompson phone using poles tied to fence posts where possible. These were certainly not telephone poles that you see now. They were just the longest and straightest poles they could find and some of them were neither long nor straight.

The telephone was a box on the wall with the speaker jutting out the front, the ear piece hanging on one side and the crank to ring with on the other. We did have a telephone number through the Willcox exchange, but for local calls anyone would just crank out one long and three short rings to get the Thompson number.

Of course, this was a party line and probably nearly everyone who had a phone in the Dos Cabezas area was on the same line. Private calls were not a big consideration since nearly everyone could listen in.

In spite of the lack of instant communication, "talkin' politics" was a favorite way to pass the time of day. Hoover and Roosevelt were raked over the coals. The hi-jinks, shenanigans and downright illegalities of state and local politicians drew some heated arguments, depending on whose toe got stepped on or how many tax dollars went into a big new car or house. When I listened in on these confabs, it seemed to me that politicians were never, ever to be trusted.

One regular visitor to the OB was the Watkins man. His route was all the ranches in the area he could get to in his car. About twice a year, he would pull up with the car fixed like a show room, full of spices, flavorings, food coloring and small kitchen appliances. Watkins vanilla was the best ever and the spices seemed fresher than those from the stores in town. He was always full of news and gossip and it was a real treat when he came by.

We moved into the OB in time for Christmas, just before I was two months old. I was far too young to know what was going on, but Mamo and Grandpa thought they should do something for Christmas. So they got a papier mâché Santa Claus about eight inches high. Santa was hollow so he could be filled with candy or small trinkets. He had a bright red suit with white trim, pink cheeks and a snowy beard.

Now Santa's suit is faded to a dusty rose, his cheeks and beard are almost the same off-white color and his cap has acquired a dent, but he still presides over our family Christmases.

In July, 1930, we were excited by the coming visit of Grandpa's oldest brother, Ed, and his wife, Elsie. They had not met Mamo or me, and they would also be visiting Uncle John and family and Grandma Thompson. About 10 days before they were due to arrive, I woke up in the middle of the night crying, saying, "Aunt Elsie's dead!" Mamo and Grandpa finally got me back to sleep and life went on as usual at the ranch. When they finally went in to Dos Cabezas to pick up the mail, there was a telegram from Uncle Ed in the mailbox saying that Aunt Elsie had indeed died.

We learned later that she had had an infected tooth pulled, which resulted in blood poisoning. That happened long before the days of antibiotics. I do not remember the dream, or whatever it was, but I do remember the uproar the telegram caused when the folks realized that my crying in the night had been true. Some people claim there is a form of telepathy called crisis apparition caused by intense emotional concentration. Is this what happened? I do not know.

As an only child on a ranch, I was alone much of the time, except for parents, but the days were not lonely. There were plenty of things to play with and explore and wonder at. I enjoyed playing with friends when they came to visit or when we went to town, but it never bothered me to go back to the ranch and my own amusements.

In a way, it made me seem older than I was because listening to grownups when they talked about ranch conditions or politics or just gossiped gave me a wider background of information than most children who are involved with playmates. When the grownup talk got too deep or uninteresting, there were always my toys and pets to play with.

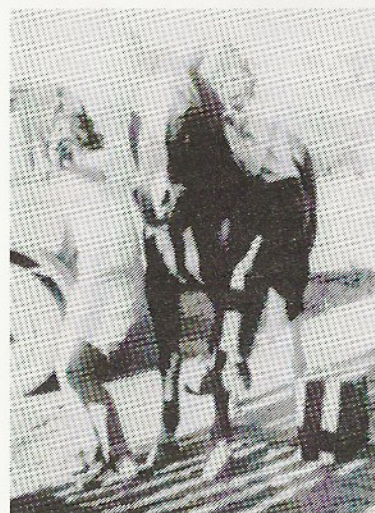
Mamo and I went for lots of walks, gathering wild flowers and looking for arrowheads and pieces of pottery. Sometimes we walked into Dos Cabezas to visit friends. Once in a while Grandpa would bring home cottontail babies for me to see and then take them back where he found them (or so he said). I made friends with the milk cows' calves, and even managed to ride one of them until it figured out how to buck me off. Grandpa got stuck reading the Sunday comics to me and said I had to go to school to learn to read myself. I took him more or less seriously and started reading the "funnies" as soon as I could sound out the words.



One of my fondest memories is of my three best friends — a German Shepherd dog, a gray and white barn cat and a gorgeously colored bantam rooster. Mamo would set up a little table in the yard and the four of us would have a tea party. They all submitted to the mauling of a little kid with great patience, sat at the table with me and made up for the lack of neighbors to socialize with.

Tex was a regular ranch dog, busy with keeping his area clear of unwanted animals and people, but he also took on the job of baby sitter for me and wood hauler for grandpa. Whenever Grandpa brought in an armful of wood for the stove, Rex would pick up the biggest chunk he could carry and take it to the kitchen door. We tried to get him to bring it inside, but the house was not his domain and he would not do it.

Bobby was also a regular ranch cat, needed to keep the dozens of different gnawing, digging, munching critters at bay. But while most ranch cats don't much



Rex was always good for some serious conversation, top photo. The ultimate kids' horse, Baldy, isn't bothered by Jack and Frances Thompson hanging on him nor their masks, middle photo. Dick, the banty rooster with an ostrich-sized ego, posed with cousins Ellen and Jack Thompson.



like their humans, Bobby was a rather friendly guy, for a cat. Mother cat and all their kittens were so wild we never knew how many there were. Bobby evidently was bitten by a rattler once. He had a hugely swollen face for a few days and sat hunched up in the yard. He recovered and went back to his job as ranch cat.

Little Dick was a very irregular ranch rooster. His feathers were iridescent green, orange and brown. When the standard-sized roosters crowed to tell the sun to come up in their tenor voices, a soprano voice told the chicken yard that bantams could wake the world too.

Like lots of birds, the little hen was much plainer than her gaudy mate. Her feathers were brown with white edging. She couldn't be bothered with making friends with humans, being much too busy laying dozens of quarter-sized eggs and raising an occasional brood of cricket-sized chicks.

Dick had an ego big enough for an ostrich. He thought he was king of the world. This really made it easy to approach his royal highness, pick him up, carry him around and put him down to hunt seeds and bugs when I wanted to play with something else. After all, royalty should be carried around to be admired.

I also had a horse, Baldy, who was a semi-retired cow horse, about 20 years old. He was used as a cutting horse at roundups and he could run with the best of them if he had to, but Baldy was getting old. He could do all that but he'd really rather not. He was a good kid's horse, though. He would stand still while Frances, Jack and I, and maybe two or three other kids climbed under his belly, down his legs and hung on his name and tail. When the ranch was sold, he was retired completely and turned loose to graze.

Don't think the dogs and cats got a free meal from us, even though they got our leftovers. The dogs worked on coyotes, stray dogs, skunks, rabbits and other animals in conjunction with the cats. Cats kept down mice, rats and rabbits and were pretty good at keeping snakes under control. They earned their keep.

In spite of the cats, we had snakes and up to a point they were welcome. They feasted on the mice, which would have overrun the place without them. From what my parents told me, they liked the narrow part of our cellar for their dens. Maybe that was just a tale to keep me out of the cellar, but at any rate I never crawled back in there to see.

It was not pleasant, twice that I remember, when Grandpa stepped out the kitchen door to go to the woodpile for firewood to cook breakfast and came foot to face with a rattlesnake. The first time the snake was just outside the kitchen door. The next time it was on the steps down from the porch. Each time the snake got shot. They weren't protected then and they were too dangerous to have near the house.

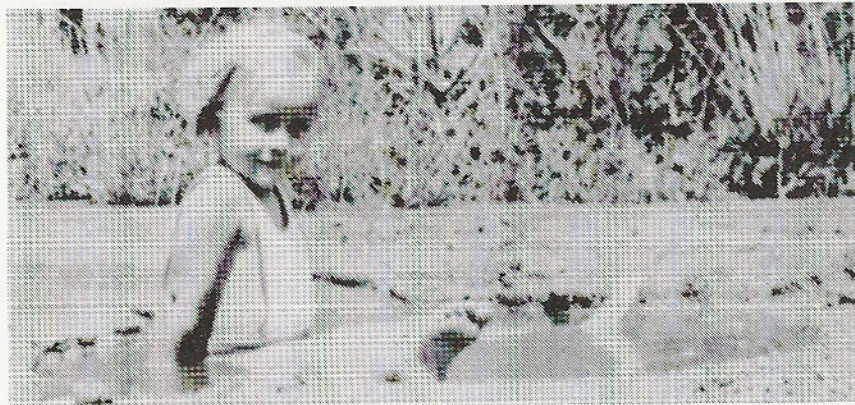
I learned as a small child to be alert, watch where you put your hands and feet, and listen for that rattle! We also had bullsnares, kingsnakes, garter snakes and racers — more about them later — which are very helpful in spite of an occasional stolen egg.

When Rex died (probably from poisoned coyote bait set out by a neighboring rancher), we tried out other dogs and came up with Trixie, who looked like a cross between a Pomeranian and a dachshund. She was actually a better mouser than the cats — or did she just brag about it more?

Once when Grandpa was cleaning out the barn to get ready for fresh hay and cottonseed, she danced back and forth to the house until Mamo and I followed her to the barn. She had a dozen or so mice neatly laid in a row outside the barn door.

She seemed to want us to know that she was a hard working dog who was helping to clean out the barn too.

After a good rainy season, the spring up the creek at our well would have enough water to trickle down the wash that ran in front of our house. When that happened, Grandpa or Mamo would dig a small depression in the sand and I would have my own wading pool until the dry times came again. There were several big boulders of granite and conglomerate rock up to eight feet high scattered up the wash toward the Dos Cabezas Mountain. One was close to the house and it was fascinating to watch the water from a good storm rolling down the wash, hitting the rock and throwing waves and spray several feet above the top of the rock. The roar of a rampaging desert wash is entirely different from the sound of mountain streams or even rivers.



In the summer of 1932, Ellen's own personal wading pool was dug in the wash that ran near the OB house.

The road to our house crossed the wash and even ran up it for some way, so after every storm there was the problem of redoing things to get down one bank and up the other side. The road was just two ruts across a couple of large pastures until it met the county road, now State Highway 186, that ran through Dos Cabezas. Sometimes the ruts would get too deep for even the high centered 1927 cars to navigate and another set of tracks would be started.

We had a friend, Carl Grusendorf, who drove the grader on the county roads. If Mr. Grusendorf were in our area, he would drive the grader, blade down, over our road to have a home-cooked meal at noon. This didn't happen very often, and the smashing out of the ruts never lasted too long, but we really appreciated it while we could.

The first car I remember riding in was a 1927 Buick, which would go almost anywhere once you got it started. There were throttle and choke switches which had to be set just so and it had a crank to start it. Occasionally the crank would backfire. I remember Grandpa jumping back out of the way but the crank never got him. There were a few broken bones caused by not moving fast enough when one of those old cars backfired.

I would ride with Grandpa to put out salt and to check the windmills and water tanks. He showed me a crack in the ground toward the southern end of our ranch that was caused by the 1887 earthquake. Once we found a barn owl in the housing of a windmill a long way from the trees they were supposed to like. Grandpa talked about good feed and what was poisonous, such as loco weed and jimson weed. I felt very grown up, riding with Grandpa and having him talk to me about range conditions.

All this riding around took place when I was quite small and the roads were wherever Grandpa wanted to go. We followed cow paths or pasture fences or made our own paths. I stood with my feet braced on the seat and hooked my arms over the back. I don't remember ever falling, even though things got very bumpy. It probably wouldn't have hurt much to fall anyhow because we rarely went over five miles an hour.

Ranch cars took a beating and during the Depression one made the thing go or else. The brakes on the Buick were shot and gas was 10 cents a gallon, so to save money when Grandpa drove to Dos Cabezas he would get to a small rise east of town, turn off the ignition, put the car in neutral and coast to a stop in front of the post office without using the brakes. He must have worked pretty hard at figuring the exact place on that hill to let the car take us the rest of the way into town.

Electrical storms were not to be taken lightly, and still aren't. The strikes and thunder meant rain on the way, but we also lost a few head of cattle over the years and the lightning could start fires. Our house was in a small canyon, so most of the strikes hit up on the hills. One strike did hit the kitchen chimney while we were all in the kitchen. The noise was deafening and we all held our breath, but there was no one hurt and the house wasn't on fire.

Range fires, generally started by lightning, were truly frightening. I remember the glow of one coming up over the hill near our house and wondering if we would have to get away and what would happen to the livestock, house, pets and belongings. Of course the fire was stopped in time, but my imagination surely got a workout for a while.

When there was a fire, every available man turned out with shovels and sacks to fight it. There was no water and it was a matter of smothering the fire and digging fire lines that, maybe, it could not cross. The only man-caused fire I remember was from a camp fire. Some boys from Dos Cabezas were playing at being pioneers and they went off and left their camp fire burning. Current opinions of child abuse notwithstanding, when the parents found out what caused the fire the boys didn't sit comfortably for several days.

Let's turn from being frightened to just plain scared. It was the summer of 1932, the night was warm and doors and windows were open although they had screens to keep out the bugs. Sometime during the night I climbed out of bed to use the chamber pot. I took one or two steps and something went whizzzzzz right in front of my toes. The next thing I remember, I was standing in the middle of the bed, screaming like a banshee, "Something moved!!!"

Of course, my parents came running. Mamo beat Grandpa to the door, then stopped to see what had scared me. Grandpa nearly ran over the top of her and they came flying into the room. They thought I had just seen a toy on the floor or some such thing, but when I refused to get out of the middle of the bed they searched the

room and found a red racer snake curled up at the far end. Grandpa got rid of the snake and I guess we eventually went back to sleep.

There had been a small hole in the door screen and the snake came through it. For quite a long time after that I would not go to bed until my room was searched. The screen was patched, but there might be another way for a snake to get in and I didn't want any more surprises. Snakes are interesting critters but not on a dark and moonless night when you're four years old and half asleep.

There was often a sound in the night that was vaguely like the engine of a well pump — chug chug chug — in the distance, sometimes going on for half an hour or until it put me to sleep. The catch was that none of the nearby wells had motors. They were all drawn by windmills. No one knew what it was.

After 50 or so years of occasionally remembering and wondering about that lonely night sound, my son Bill mentioned hearing it and being told it was a type of whippoorwill, called Ridgeway's Whippoorwill. The bird is found mostly in Mexico and occasionally in Guadalupe Canyon in extreme southeastern Arizona, according to the experts. I'm pretty sure they were not rare in the foothills of the Dos Cabezas mountains.

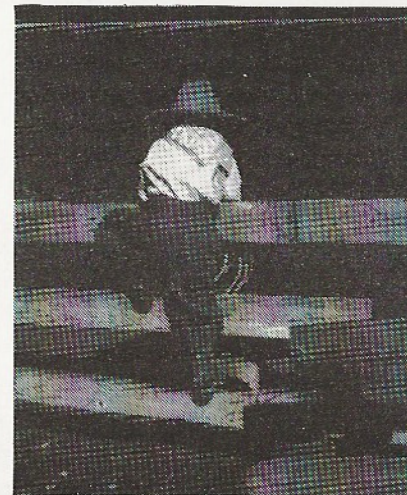
Another bird call from the OB still has me baffled. It was on the same pitch as the last two coos of a mourning dove, with the emphasis on the last coo. It was also much louder than any dove call I have ever heard. The little OB canyon was shaped in such away that it did have a tendency to amplify sounds, but surely not as much as that emphatic call. I heard it only during the day. Has anyone any clues? I'd really like to know what kind of bird it was.

I loved roundup times, with the heat and dust and the cowboys and horses and ropes and cattle. It was also a very frustrating time because I was too small to be a part of it. Frances and Jack were riding by the time they were eight and taking an active part in the roundups by the time they were 10 or 12. I was small for my age and we left the ranch before I was nine, so I never got to be a part of the excitement.

I did try to help Mamo with feeding the roundup crew. Forget what you've read about butchering a steer and having steak and beans. The entree was piles of bacon and scrambled eggs and there were never any complaints.

Probably the closest horse to quarter horse configuration we had was Spider.

He was small, close-coupled and of a nasty disposition. He always bucked first thing in the morning and more often than not he threw his rider. He must have had a soft spot in his horsey heart for Frances because she could get on him, let him do a couple of crow hops and ride off as if he were a child's pony.



Cowgirl Ellen at the OB.

Other children came to play at the ranch occasionally. I saw my cousins Frances and Jack fairly frequently and in 1933 Grandpa's brother, Sul, came to Dos Cabezas with his wife, Mary, and four children, Betty, Dick, Don and Bob. The Thompsons were quite a contingent in the Dos Cabezas school.

I played with Eleanor Stewart and Robert Kirby and with Edith and Nell White and Frank Bean, among others. People did quite a bit of visiting, since there were no TVs to keep them home and no movies within 20 or so miles. We had picnics, taffy pulls, sewing bees and neighborhood dances instead.

There was an old frame building in Dos Cabezas that had been an opera house (honest!) in the days when the mines were booming. People had dances there once in a while. They brought the whole family and put the little ones to bed on benches around the walls. Without electricity there was no sound amplification, but it was still noisy enough to make it hard to go to sleep.

At least once the old opera house was turned into a movie theater and we saw a silent movie. I guess the equipment ran on batteries because I can't imagine anyone going to the expense and trouble of hauling a generator around the country to show a jerky one-reel movie. Anyhow, I don't remember the name of the show but it was the first movie I ever saw.

The filling station in Dos Cabezas sold candy, gum and soda pop and when I went with Grandpa to get gas he would give me a penny to spend. Once, when I bought a piece of candy and handed over my penny the clerk said, "That's an Indian Head penny. It's probably worth two cents."

So, naturally, I figured I had hit a gold mine and told him, "Well, give me two pieces of candy." He and Grandpa laughed and Grandpa said, "No, it's just a penny, and you only get one piece of candy." Don't try to explain the value of money to a kid who has been gypped out of a piece of candy. I boycotted that filling station for a long time.

At Christmas time, Grandpa would cut a pine tree in the Chiricahuas (the Dos Cabezas had mostly been cut early for use in bracing the mine shafts). The tree was usually big enough to touch the ceiling in the living room, which I believe was about 10 feet high.

Mamo saved the silver foil wrapping from a type of fruit candy and made silver icicles to hang from the tree. There were beautifully painted decorations in odd shapes — two looked like hot air balloons — and tiny horns that really whistled. Instead of today's colored lights, little candles about twice the size of birthday cake candles were put in little clips on the branches. The candles were mostly for looks and were only lit for a short time. The danger of fire was too great if a draft should blow the flame onto a twig. The tree did look magnificent, though, with the candles' glow shining on the silver of the icicles.

One year I found Mamo's stash of Christmas presents and checked out all the toys and goodies. That sort of ruined Christmas day for me and I decided it really wasn't worth it to know the answer to a secret beforehand.

Mamo and Grandpa did most of their ordinary shopping in Dos Cabezas at Kirby's store or in Willcox for things Kirby's didn't carry. Kirby's had a sign that said, "WE HAVE IT OR WE WILL GET IT OR IT IS NOT MADE," but it might take a while to get it.

A couple of times a year, we piled into the 1927 Buick and headed out the 95 miles to Douglas. Most of the time we took the graded road to Willcox and down through the Kansas Settlement to what was Route 666 before it was recently renumbered to 191.

The Kansas Settlement road was unpaved, of course, but the county did run a grader over it every so often. It was nearly always washboarded, but who wanted to go more than 25 miles an hour anyway?

During and after storms, that road was a different story. It turned to a slimy clay, as slick as glass, and if the driver could keep the car on the road he still had to fight the ruts from cars that had skidded along before him. The road could look like the tracks of bumper cars at a carnival. It was not at all unusual to see where someone had slid off and wound up in a farmer's field. Just before the road entered Route 191, the soil changed and it was much smoother going the rest of the way to Douglas.

Once in a while, Grandpa would leave our house and cut across pastures. From our house we went south, skirting draws and following only a few ruts and cattle trails. There were no gates in the fences, but there were places where the wire could be let down. When the car passed, the wire was replaced and on we went, bumping over grass clumps and around agave and prickly pear.

This do-it-yourself road joined Route 191 east of the Kansas Settlement road. I have no idea who owned the land we were bouncing over, aside from our own. Grandpa always knew where the piece of fence was to let down and we always wound up where we were supposed to be. I was always impressed that he should know where in the world we were.

It must have been in the fall of 1931 that Grandpa broke his ankle. The local ranchers had sold some cattle and they drove the herds to Willcox. The cattle were loaded on trains taking them to feed lots and everyone was feeling good at getting some money for their hard work.

They were on horseback, ready to ride home, laughing and joking, literally "horsing around." Grandpa's horse brushed another one and both shied away, but Grandpa's foot was caught in the other horse's stirrup rigging. It wasn't too bad a break and after a couple of weeks on crutches he went to a walking cast.

Grandpa could drive a car with his walking cast, so we made our semi-annual trip to Douglas. On the way home, we came in the back way, across barbed wire fences and along cattle trails. Out in the middle of nowhere our old Buick quit! Grandpa left Mamo and me in the car and walked 20 miles with his healing ankle to Uncle John's place at the IT. It was late afternoon when the car broke down and he walked all night, getting to John's at about 5 a.m.

Mamo and I were near a cattle tank, but the water was green with algae, full of water bugs, drowned bees and wasps and the cattle were coming in to drink and bed down for the night. If we'd been stuck there for days we probably wouldn't have cared, but at the moment we passed up the water supply.

There were canned goods in the supplies we were taking home, but no can opener. The only things readily available for eating were a box of saltine crackers and a bottle of Welch's concentrated grape juice, and as a four-year-old usually is, I was hungry. That's what I had for supper, but the weird combination didn't set too well — I lost it.

That night was chilly, but not freezing. I cuddled against Mamo and went to sleep. I hope she got some sleep too. When Uncle John came to our rescue at 7 or 8 o'clock the next morning, I was still groggy with sleep and hardly remember being

bundled into his car and taken home. Whatever it was that broke on the old Buick, it must have been fixed rather easily. Grandpa drove it home, and we had it for another three years.

Our doctor was in Douglas, wonderful Dr. Collins. The doctor in Willcox was drunk a good deal of the time, or so said local gossip, so when someone was sick enough to worry about there was the 95 mile trip to Douglas.

I had a problem with infected tonsils, long before sulfa drugs and antibiotics were discovered. There would be a sudden high temperature and a few times I was unconscious. The folks would load me into the car and head for Douglas as fast as the car and the roads would let them. The only thing Dr. Collins could do was to swab my throat with a strong solution of mercurochrome and hope for the best.

The practice of medicine must have been very frustrating then. I was not the only child with this problem. Before there was a way of controlling infection, tonsillitis was almost as common as the common cold.

When I was five, the folks decided I had to have my tonsils out. At that point in medical technology, it was the only thing to do since I often was sick. My cousin Frances had had hers out. I saw her eating Jell-O and heard her say her throat was a little sore, but she was going to have some ice cream. Mamo and Grandpa said it was going to be done, and I agreed — sort of. I wanted the Jell-O and ice cream.

Now patients are sedated beforehand and every care is taken not to frighten a child excessively. Then I was put into a nightgown, laid on the operating table and the ether mask was clamped to my face. I suddenly realized they were going to start operating and, from what I've been told, I went berserk. I remember fighting the mask and the stink of the ether. I was told I tore the uniform off the nurse who was holding me down.

To make matters worse, the Jell-O and ice cream didn't taste right, and when Mamo gave me scrambled eggs they tasted of ether. It was a long time before I could eat eggs without tasting that stuff. Ether isn't used now, thank goodness, because it makes one very sick to one's stomach. Throwing up with a very sore throat is no fun.

Even though this was a very nasty experience, I am grateful for it. I've been more healthy than lots of people ever since. I'm also mildly surprised that no one I know of died from a tonsillectomy without antibiotics or transfusions or all the monitoring. One child, I believe it was cousin Jack Thompson, did have quite a time with excessive bleeding and took quite a while to recover.

Optional operations such as this were always timed to avoid the polio season and if there was a chance of an outbreak the operation was postponed. Polio was a killer and to have a child in a weakened condition was asking for trouble. There were polio cases in Cochise County, but to the best of my knowledge the folks around Dos Cabezas were spared.

Typhoid fever was a periodic problem, and no wonder. In Dos Cabezas, wells were where water was found and outhouses were convenient to the houses. People did die from typhoid, but so far as I remember, no one I knew did. Whenever an epidemic hit, Mamo boiled all the water we used from our well, even though we were 2½ miles from town and our well was on a different drainage.

After I started to school, there were plenty of interesting illnesses to bring home — German measles, chicken pox, whooping cough and scarlet fever. Not all the families in Dos Cabezas were well acquainted with personal hygiene, so two or three

times I also brought home head lice. Mamo took care of those little animals with a good shampooing in kerosene! The treatment worked but it was not very pleasant.

I didn't intend to be mean about the lack of cleanliness in some children. Not every family had their own well and hauling water without a car or wagon for a family of six or eight must have been an awful job. In dry years, some wells went dry. One spring the school well got so low that the teachers would draw a bucket of water at noon and the children would line up with cups made from tablet paper to get a cupful of water.

Dos Cabezas School had three rooms for eight grades and a "beginner" grade primarily for the Mexican children who spoke little English. When I was there, none of the teachers spoke Spanish. So for some children their first year was a matter of picking up the new language from listening to the teacher and children on the playground. Most of the Mexican children seem to have gotten at least the basics by the time they started to read "See Dick run. Run, Dick, run."

There were about 45 children in the nine classes. About 45% were Anglos. The rest were the families of the Mexican miners who were stranded in Dos Cabezas when the mine shutdown, plus a few Mexican ranchers and cowboy families.

Most of the children walked to school, up to 1½ miles or so. Grandpa drove me



The beginner, first and second grade class at Dos Cabezas School in 1933, teacher Miss Minnie Hudson. Ellen Thompson is fourth from left in the bottom row. Nell White and Virginia Flick are on her right.

in and the children from Mascot, the mine up on the mountain, were driven to school. There was no school bus, even to high school in Willcox 17 miles away. If anyone wanted to go to high school, they had to figure out how to get there on their own. No one had to go really long distance to get an elementary education because there were one and two-room schools scattered around the county wherever there were children who needed them.

The Dos Cabezas school house was a wood frame building with beginner through second grades having the largest room. This was where school parties were held. There was a steeple with a bell that was rung at 8:30 to let the town know the kids had better be on their way. School started at 9 a.m. with a single DONG from the bell.

A lot of the kids were there before 8:30 begging the teachers to let them ring the bell, again at noon and at 3 p.m. The bell was rung by pulling a rope which swung the bell. When the bell swung back, the rope could actually pull you up in the air, which was the whole point of it for the volunteer bell ringers. It must have been a pretty heavy bell, although it didn't lift the teachers off their feet.

There was a small two or three-room "teacherage" on the school grounds. I believe it was made of adobe. One or two of the teachers lived there. The principal, who taught grades six through eight, could afford a nicer house in Townsite.

Townsite was up the hill from the school, toward the mountain itself, and had some rather nice houses originally built for the hoped-for population explosion when the mine struck it rich. The mine shut down and Townsite was almost deserted, so I imagine the principal of the school had almost as little housing expense as the teachers living on the school grounds.

My first teacher was Minnie Hudson, a sister of Aunt Grace Thompson. I had known her forever and had called her Aunt Minnie since I learned to talk. Now all of a sudden, she was to be called Miss Hudson and was to be treated with the respect due a school teacher. That was quite an adjustment to make and I had a bit of a tussle with names and attitudes before I got it figured out.

The school had a big play yard, three swings and a seesaw, so when the upper grades were playing softball or basketball we younger ones had something to do. The girls played jacks, and if you didn't have a ball or any jacks, you just used little rocks. It was still fun, but it took a lot more speed and coordination. We also played hopscotch, using pieces of glass for the markers. Dos Cabezas was littered with glass pieces, but all in all it was surprisingly neat.

There were lots of special occasions at school. At Halloween we had an evening party, with masks, dunking for apples and prizes for various games. All that was a vain attempt at keeping the older children from turning over outhouses and putting fence gates on the owners' roofs.

We had a pageant at Thanksgiving with costumes made from crepe paper. A party at Christmas was when sacks of candy and fruit were handed out and the whole town came to sign carols. On Valentine's Day, everyone got cards. A lot of them were homemade because there was no money to buy them.

The whole town also turned out for Easter with a mammoth egg hunt. Every family contributed eggs if they could. If not, there were other folks like us with an abundance of eggs to make up the difference.

We had a special ceremony for Flag Day and planted a tree on Arbor Day. Occasionally the tree even survived for a few years. When there was so little in the

way of entertainment, these special occasions were looked forward to eagerly and were the high spots of the school year.

When I started school, I made friends with more children and Mamo and Grandpa would leave me to play with them every so often. There were dolls to play with but generally we played outside.

Games of marbles were popular. One game with marbles was played more or less like croquet with little cups dug where the wickets would be. The idea was to shoot your marble into each hole around the course and to thwack the opponents' marbles into the sand wash or the chicken coop or mesquite tree so they couldn't get around first.

One summer day in 1933 or '34, Grandpa dropped me off at White's to play while he went into Willcox to pick up supplies. The White kids had put together a pair of stilts from scrap lumber and I was learning how to use them. I was getting pretty good at it when a foot rest came loose and down I went on the nail that was holding it to the upright. It was a good sized nail and I wound up with a three-inch gash in my thigh. Mrs. White cleaned the cut, put me on a towel in her car and took me to Mamo at the OB. I bled freely all over her nice white towel all the way home.

Mamo cleaned the cut some more, then put iodine on it and pulled the sides together with bandage and adhesive tape. The iodine hurt worse than the gash itself but after a few days of limping I was running around as usual.

There seemed to be no question of heading to town for a tetanus shot. Maybe there was no such thing yet. The White's yard was well kept but kids, dogs, cats, chickens and an occasional cow or donkey wandered through. Oh well, I didn't get tetanus, only a three-inch scar that is hard to find after all these years.

Cuts, scrapes and bruises were just something to live with, but one boy from Mascot did get bitten by a rattlesnake. His parents got him to the hospital in time but it was touch and go. He was in the hospital for two or three weeks and was pale and wobbly even after he came back to school.

All children have to do something every so often that really puts them in the doghouse. Since I was alone much of the time, I missed opportunities to collaborate with friends in sending parents up the wall. This was fine with my folks, who thought they had an almost ideal child on their hands — until one day.

Virginia Flick was a year older than I, but at school we had become good friends. She was to come out to the OB to play one day, and we went in to town to pick her up along with some of her toys. Mamo and Grandpa left us to play at Flick's while they moseyed around town visiting friends.

Virginia grabbed the toys we wanted and we went out into the yard to wait impatiently. When no one showed up after what we considered plenty of time for adults to do their visiting, we started talking about walking to the ranch and meeting them there. Then we decided to do it.

The only problem with our plan was we decided to make a beeline over the foothills instead of taking the road through town. It was a shorter walk that way, but when Mamo and Grandpa came to pick us up, two little girls had vanished.

This was only a couple of years after Charles Lindberg's little boy had been kidnapped and killed and there had been a rash of grisly kidnappings. Mamo, Grandpa and the Flicks had the whole town looking for us. My frantic parents finally

went home to figure out what to do next and found us playing happily. We were proud of ourselves for making the hike, but we were beginning to wonder if anyone was going to come along to fix lunch.

My parents' reaction startled me and scared me into never trying that stunt again. From frantic worry, to surprise, to relief and then a slow burn to fairly well controlled anger, the range of emotions was more than I cared to call into play again if I could help it.



Grandpa had dropped out of school after the eighth grade, partly to help support his family during hard times and partly to avoid having to take Latin. That didn't stop him from being a member of the Dos Cabezas school board.

The board's job was to hire and fire teachers. But it was so hard to find a good teacher who could take the rural life that I don't believe one was ever fired.

Grandpa also joked, more or less, that it was his job during epidemics to check the rashes on kids' stomachs to see if they had measles, scarlet fever, poison ivy or what. Since the Cochise County school nurse came by about every six weeks, and she was all the medical help available at no charge, Grandpa and the other members of the board found themselves being the first line of defense against whatever epidemic showed up.

Scarlet fever meant that a big quarantine sign was posted on the house and no contact was allowed with other people for three weeks. Scarlet fever was a very serious childhood disease with quite a few deaths, plus complications of heart problems, deafness and nervous disorders (so-called St. Vitus' dance).

It is caused by a type of strep infection and is now taken care of by antibiotics. I had scarletina, a very mild case, but we were quarantined just the same. At the time it was the only way to limit the disease and my mild case could have passed on the full-blown infection to someone else.

My scarlet fever happened in the spring of the year I was in first grade. Mamo got a reader from school so I wouldn't be too far behind the class when I was allowed to return. When she took the book back to school, it was burned because of the fear that it could pass on the germs of scarlet fever.

Lots of clothes were made at home and Sears and Wards catalogues were often used. When a shopping trip meant an all-day jaunt to the nearest larger town, it was much easier to order from the catalogue. Clothes were patched, and stockings and socks were darned to get more wear out of them. When something was outgrown it was handed down to a smaller child. When clothing could no longer be repaired, it was cut up to make quilts or braided or hooked rugs. Grandma Thompson, Grandpa's mother, made beautiful hooked rugs.

As far as clothing went, boys' clothes were similar to today's jeans, bib overalls and work shirts. Zippers hadn't been invented, or at least weren't available, so everything was buttoned. Elastic didn't seem to be available either, so underwear was buttoned, hooked or tied.

In the winter, girls wore heavier dresses than in summer and long cotton or wool stockings to keep their legs warm. Those stockings were held up by a harness contraption with straps over the shoulders, a strap around the waist and leg straps with dangling garters to hook onto the stockings. If grown women had to put up with that, it's no wonder the flappers rolled their stockings and put rouge on their knees.



Ellen Thompson in the fall of 1929 with cousins Jack and Frances Thompson. Note the woolen leggings.

In cold weather, everyone also wore long johns with a buttoned up seat. It was interesting, getting the underwear legs down, the stockings up and the garter harness buttoned over all that even before you got into your real clothes.

Cold weather clothing was made of itchy wool. This isn't just a personal complaint because all the kids scratched and twitched until the weather warmed up enough to get rid of the wool.

Shoes were handed down when they were outgrown. I don't remember anyone coming to school barefoot. But a lot of the shoes were misshapen from many feet and the kids ran barefoot through sticker patches around home. I never got my feet tough enough for that, but Frances and Jack did. Those darn goatheads hurt!

We always had enough clothes and shoes, but Mamo passed mine on when outgrown through Kirby's store to people in town who needed them. Flour came in 100 pound sacks of printed cotton. One of my favorite dresses was made by Mamo from a flour sack printed with little violet flowers. For ranchers, times were tough but they had a few dollars, gardens, chickens, milk cows and beef to get by on. I don't know how some of the miners in Dos Cabezas kept from starving.

The Depression hit Dos Cabezas hard. The Mascot mine closed, except for a few people who were trying to look prosperous enough to sell it and get out. Most of the people in Dos Cabezas had either worked for the mine or made their living selling to mine and miners. A lot of them turned to prospecting or staked small claims that brought in a few dollars now and then.

The ranchers hired when they could for branding and shipping, but they were hard up too. Grandpa told me he made \$75 one year during the worst of it.

I imagine some people were on the edge of starvation when Dos Cabezas started a soup kitchen for the school children at lunch time. The women of the town took over a vacant store and anyone who had anything edible brought it to put in the kettles. Kirby's store donated vegetables that were starting to wilt and anyone who had beef or chickens donated meat. The results were sometimes strange, but the food was hot and nourishing.

The whole school trooped down to the store at lunch time for a big meal and I imagine it was the best meal, or maybe the only meal, a lot of the children got. I don't know, but Mamo is of the impression that the needy grownups came in and polished off whatever the kids left. I do remember there were lots of adults around when we finished and went back to school.

Unfortunately, the soup or stew always seemed to be very fatty and my family had never eaten very much rich stuff. It was very hard for me to take and I told my folks so. The upshot was that I started going to Grandpa Thompson's for lunch. She lived in Dos Cabezas, just down the hill from the school, and she was a good cook!

It sounds terribly grim, and I imagine it was for lots of adults. Except for the very poorest and hungriest of the children, the kids took it in stride. No one else had anything either, so why not go out and organize a game of Red Rover or Simon Says. The whole school would divide into teams, and away we would go. The big kids were really wonderful about letting the little ones in on the games and I, for one, had a ball.



When school was out in the spring of 1935, Mamo and I moved to Douglas to wait the birth of my brother, Alex. There was no way to wait at home until the last minute, with 95 miles to go over poor roads in a car that could break down at any minute. I took a box of toys to our apartment and prepared to adjust to city life.

The apartment was on the end of a six-apartment row, about 15 feet wide and 45 feet deep. There was a six-foot covered porch, living room, kitchen, bathroom and tiny bedroom sharing the width, back bedroom and out the back door. The back yard was a bare scrape and I believe there were storage buildings and garages at the back of the lot.

Inside, the apartment walls were calcimined, a type of whitewash and then speckled with varicolored paint. Speckling is what happens when you dip a brush in paint and run it over a screen. There were tiny dots of pink, blue, green and yellow in clumps all over the walls. I think this was supposed to be fashionable at the time.

At least we had an end apartment and some outside windows. The inner ones must have been gloomy caverns — but with speckling.

There weren't many children in the neighborhood and Mamo's friends were nearly all single school teachers, so I spent lots of time inside or on the little porch with my toys. I was heartily sick of that bunch of toys before I got to go home.

City life wasn't all that interesting. There were no pets to play with, no hills or rocks to climb, no sand washes to dig in, no wild flowers to admire, no pottery to find. I enjoyed being a country hick and was not much impressed with urban civilization.

When I was born, childbirth was treated like a terminal illness and mothers were not allowed out of bed for two weeks. Of course, after that it took them another six weeks to get their muscles working again. When Alex was born the doctors cautiously shortened the bed stay, but new mothers were still treated as invalids. Edythe Kirby Dorsey came to town to be the nurse, sleeping in the living room.

With all the confusion of a new baby brother, and having to get ready for another school year, I'm not sure of the sequence of events. I wound up at the ranch with Grandpa for a while and Mamo and Alex stayed in town. Maybe it was just to get me out of the way in Douglas, but I was surely glad to be home!

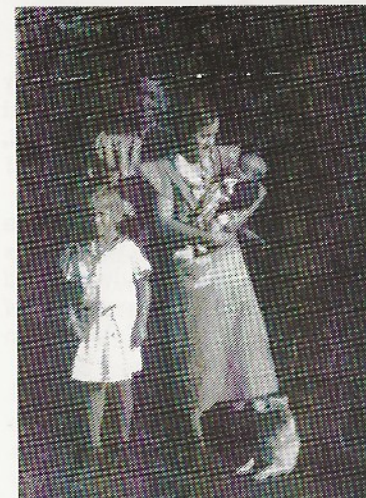
When school started, I was in third grade in a different room with a new teacher. It's too bad to say this, but Mrs. Bowla was a grouch! She did pound the multiplication tables into us; before she got through with us we could recite them in our sleep. Just about everything I learned in third grade was by rote, memorizing the lessons without having a chance to ask or figure out why.

Mrs. Bowla was an elderly widow. Today she would have been retired with a teacher's pension and/or Social Security, but in 1935 there was neither. She had to work or go to the county poor house. She must have been unhappy with her situation and it showed in her attitude.

The kids retaliated by seeing how many rules they could break without getting caught. We must have driven the woman to distraction, but from our point of view she asked for it. She lasted one year in the Dos Cabezas school system and I never heard what became of her.

During the 1935-36 school year, the Thompson brothers sold the ranch. It was agreed that the families would stay until school was out and then turn things over to the new owner. It was hard to think of leaving a place I had known all my life and loved so well. I'm afraid I spent a good deal of time moping around with a little black cloud trailing along over my head.

Move we did, though. Uncle John and family when to the Prescott area and we went to Douglas. The next chapter of this bunch of notes would show it is possible for a country hick to adjust to town life, and even learn to enjoy it. That chapter won't be written. It's up to someone else to describe town life as it was lived before World War II.



**Maryan and Alex Thompson
with their children Ellen and Alex.**

Reviews

"A Cowman's Wife" by Mary Kidder Rak. Texas State Historical Association, 2/306 Richardson Hall, Austin, TX 78712-9820, 1993. 301 pages, illustrations, index.

The past decade or so has seen an examination of women's varied roles in the west. This recently reissued volume is only one of a growing list of books about women's western experiences.

Mary Kidder married Charlie Rak in 1917 and two years later they bought the Old Camp Rucker Ranch. The couple and their ranch became familiar to many Cochise County residents and today they're still remembered by a good number.

In the early days of the Depression, Rak wrote "A Cowman's Wife" outlining her attempts to learn about the cattle business until she gained "a little of the supercilious attitude of the small boy who'd 'always know'd.'" She also wrote of the ranch wife's eternal struggle between keeping house and keeping ranch.

Indeed, life on a county cattle ranch today is remarkably similar to Rak's routine. The only discernable differences are today's ranchers don't fight wolves or screw worms.

"A Cowman's Wife" first appeared in 1934. Last year the Texas State Historical Association published it as part of the DeGolyer Library Cowboy and Ranch Life Series.

An introduction written by the late Sandra Myres graces the new edition. She was a history professor at the University of Texas in Arlington. Myres' introduction gives a full outline of Rak's life and places her firmly on the list of the few ranch women who wrote about their lives and times.

The only thing Cochise County residents may quibble about is Myres' assertion that the Rak ranch was 50 miles north of Douglas. It's really about 30, as the crow flies; but Myres undoubtedly went by the Raks' 50-mile drives into Douglas. The Raks traveled the road that goes toward Elfrida since Leslie Canyon Road didn't exist in the 1920s.

"A Cowman's Wife" was not Rak's first published piece, nor was it the last. In 1936, two years after "A Cowman's Wife" came out, "Mountain Cattle" was published. The further adventures of the Raks ends with their move to a ranch on the west side of King's Highway and a house now owned by the Park family.

Rak had two other books and various articles published. This literary career brought her considerable correspondence with other authors such as C.L. Sonnichson and Dane Coolidge. Indeed, the new book's frontispiece of Rak and her dog, Robles, is a photo taken by Coolidge.

For those who already have a copy of "Cowman's Wife," dig it out to read and enjoy again. For those who don't have an original copy, buy this reissuance and discover an authentic, loving look at Cochise County ranch life.

— Cindy Hayostek

"They Never Surrendered, Bronco Apaches of the Sierra Madre, 1890-1935" by Douglas V. Meed. Westernlore Press, P.O. Box 35305, Tucson, AZ 85740, 1993. 202 pages, 15 photos, bibliography, appendices, \$23.95.

When the Chiricahua Apache Reservation was abolished in 1876, an estimated 300 Chiricahuas quietly slipped away south for the Sierra Madre. About 325 of them were

started from Ft. Bowie for relocation at San Carlos. A few individuals drifted off from the column before it reached the Gila.

The bunch in Mexico was joined by Warm Springs Apaches in 1878 and by most of the rest of the Chiricahuas from Arizona in 1881. When Gen. George Crook, through delicate negotiation, enticed some 450 of them back to the White Mountains in 1883, it is likely that he left almost that many behind.

Geronimo went back to Mexico in '85 with 134 people. In March the following year, Crook came back from Cañon de los Embudos with 80, and six months later Lt. Gatewood talked in another three dozen. Twelve more were tallied when Mangus surrendered in Chihuahua a month later.

Probably as many as 250 Apaches were killed or taken into slavery by Mexican forces at Tres Castillos, Casas Grandes and Arroyo Carretas in that period, but it leaves close to 150 Indians unaccounted for. It is the story of the survival for a half century, and the final extinction, of those Apaches who didn't come in that is the subject of this volume.

The account is marred by the use of some dubious sources, by careless editing, and by the author's unfamiliarity with Indians, Mexicans, or the country in which the action takes place. The third sentence of the preface sets the tone. In describing the scene before him from the picnic tables at the monument commemorating Geronimo's surrender in Skeleton Canyon, Meed writes, "You can see several miles across the sotols, creosote bushes and cedar brakes to the upthrust Animas Mountains looking strangely dark and misty in the desert-clear light."

Sotol won't grow on the fine

alluvial soil of the valley and there is none in sight. There is no creosote bush within 20 miles. It is possible that a speck on the distant foothills is a juniper tree, but there is not a thicket of them closer than the Edwards Plateau of Texas. And, of course, the Animas Mountains can't be seen from there. Meed was looking at the Peloncillos. His confusion regarding geographical and floral matters is consistent.

The author's style is one of breathless exaggeration. The *barrancas* of the Rio Aros make "Grand Canyon look like an irrigation ditch." The bland tasting, faintly alcoholic tiswin is "fiery" or "potent." Though the Indians are ostensibly the subject of the book and expected to get sympathetic treatment, they are referred to as "squaws" and "bucks."

Perhaps the most interesting section is an account of the circus-like promotion by Douglas civic leaders in 1929-30 of a campaign into the Sierra Madre to shoot Apaches as though they were game animals. The mayor, chamber of commerce and chief of police were involved in an apparent attempt to publicize the city and to boost its economy.

In the part dealing with the last days of the Apaches it is difficult to separate fact from myth. There is a story there, but it hasn't been told yet.

— Alden Hayes