

Ellen O'Neal Sharpley
Letter to Peggy O. Farmer
3-18-1977

Dear Peggy and Walter,

Peggy, I was pleased to hear from you. Walter, you better get on the band wagon and lose some weight. Ben has lost about 30-35 pounds. Sure does look slim and trim - I take it you heard about Ben. He is doing great. He has gone back to Temple today to find out the results of his surgery. We hope he is fine and we will be thankful. He has just come in - he's fine.

Peggy, I really don't know what to tell you. Grandpa Owen was one of the great old men and he wore a beard and a mustache...long beard. I loved him dearly. Grandma was a dear little lady. She loved us kids. She loved to visit her neighbors near and far. What she could not go to see in an afternoon, she would hook the horse to the buggy and go spend the day. She always weighed from 87 to 93 pounds. I never saw a hair pin in her red thin hair. She used what you called a tucking-comb. Grandpa would have been very stylish today among the men of the world. Other men rode horseback, but Grandpa drove a horse and buggy. The only horse I can remember was a pretty little brown horse with a black tail and mane called Button. He kept Button for a long time. The first buggy was a top buggy like Dock Adams. Then in a few years, he bought a very stylish little red wheel buggy. You know, there were the hired men who lived with them and one of the boys borrowed the horse and buggy to go to a dance. Someone at the dance cut off Button's tail. Grandpa was so mad he didn't know what to do and if he ever found out he would shoot him. I don't think he ever found him. And, Peggy, listen to this: George Owen was his favorite grandson. George, Bob and Red.

Grandpa always kept a new buggy. Grandpa was a witty old man, a good sense of humor. Papa loved him and Uncle Dick. Papa respected Uncle Ross. Grandpa was always a Democrat. We all were in those days and I can remember when we knew one Socialist and only one or two Republicans.

Grandma was raised a Methodist, but she finally became a Baptist. Always a Baptist - long years later. Grandma in her young life about the time the war was over, the KKK tried to take over. They had it in for the people that kept their slaves. Well, Mrs. Herren, our great grandmother, did not run her slaves off because they had no place to go - So the young ones left when they found work. She helped them to go. All the old ones she kept - they had no place to go and were too old to work. They scrapped the potatoes, strung the beans, shelled the peas, peeled the fruit and such. They took care of the tiny babies - little stuff they could do.

I don't think Great Grandmother Herren lived too long after the war. Mr. George Pruitt came to Texas to Blooming Grove. He wrote back to Uncle Bob Herren (Grandma's brother) and he decided to come to Texas. Mr. Pruitt was a wealthy old man and he had bought up lots of land in the area down that way. The Stokes and the Armstrongs owned

land to Cryer Creek. So Mr. Pruitt came on down West of them and that's where Pruitt Ranch was. Uncle Bob bought to or 3 acres over there and lived there a long time until he had enough money - lots of land. He had 3 boys and 1 girl. Aunt Mary died soon after they moved. Mr. Pruitt bought Uncle Bob's land - some of it was in cultivation and the rest was in pasture land and full of white faced cattle that he took with him along with his family to Rule Texas, north of Haskel. They wrote to Papa and asked him to come build him a house. Papa went. Uncle Bob told papa "Tom wherever you drive one nail, drive one more. I want this house, if it blows over, I want it to roll like a box.". However it never did blow over, but it did blow off the blocks. Uncle Bob educated his children. George was a teacher (taught in Emhouse at one time) and he married Book Turner's sister. Sam was a Navy Man. Bettie was a teacher - taught a long time. Then when she was an old made she married an old bachelor by the name of Thomason and they had four girls. Aunt Tommie can tell you their names. Little Bob was as mean as a dog. (Even Clyde Owen, one of Uncle Dick's boys, agreed with me. Little Bob raised a family of fine children. One of his boys is President of a bank in Haskel. I kept up with them through Mr. Gabby Hays (our Singer Sewing Machine man in Corsicana) who was raised in Haskel. He knew Little Bob and his wife and children. You know Mr. Hayes died a couple of years ago, so that's the end of that) Mr. Hayes always told young Bob about us. Young Bob always said he was coming to see us.

Now, I have always wondered often where Grandpa, Grandma and Uncle Bob got their money. Uncle Bob finally got sick and died. They had to take him to a hospital in Haskel. He begged to be taken home to die. They say he died like a miser in the little house that Papa built - owned a thousand head of cattle, 17 sections o land. Had a fine daughter, Bettie. George was a fine man. Sam didn't live long in died in Manila or someplace like that. Little Bob died early in life - left afine family. His wife was Angie. George and Minnie never had any children. They adopted one - one of Wallace Brown's twins) - Enough of them! Bettie's two girls live out on Preston Road in Dallas. They hae a couple of apartment buildinigs - real nice. Bettie died there.

Now, Grandpa bought land on the east of Kelm, Texas, about a mile east - good black land - and lotf of hard work for the two of them. They finished raising their family. Aunt Betty married. Uncle Dick got out on his own Don well, bought a farm, built a nice farm house, lived there several years. Went to Kelm and bought a grocery store from Drew Bennett, I think. I am not sure but I think the Post Office was in it. He built a nice home there. Then when the railroad came through, he went to Emhouse, took his grocery store, and built another new home up on the hill, lived there, raising his big family, and he died there. Aunt Myrtie died there. It was funny about him - his sister, his father and mother died, his son also, and he never shed a tear. Had a stroke and cried everytime he saw any of us, cried until he died.

Soon after Uncle Dick moved

GEORGE ROY O'NEAL

By

Ann O'Neal Tinkle

Early 1970s

Here I go again, Peggy and I truly hope all these things are of interest to you.

George Roy O'Neal (Red), your Dad, had he continued his education would have been more than a contractor and builder, because reading blueprints, even making his own in many cases, starting from the blue print to the finished product was the love of his life.

His first years were spent on the farm, working for John Thomas O'Neal, his dad. I cannot recall when he first began his own carpentry work. He, indeed, would have been a fine architect, but in those days very few young farmers attended college. He was boisterous and a very active boy. He loved his sisters, was affectionate with us and we dearly loved our only brother.

I do not remember when he quit school, but I have heard Mama speak of her protests, but he grew into a man before he quit being a boy!

He and Ellen grew up together, both worked on the farm together and whatever Red did, Ellen thought she could do just as well, if not better. They were two redheads - working side by side and growing into a close relationship that has lasted through the years.

Red, during World War I, volunteered and served in the U.S. Navy. While on duty in the Pacific Ocean, he became ill and for a few days was critically with pneumonia and other complications that left him almost totally deaf, which precipitated an early discharge. Once or twice a day, my parents received telegrams from the Naval hospital to inform them of his illness and for several days it was not expected that he would make it.

In Emhouse, as all over America where a group of people were known to be, patriotic rallies were organized where U.S. Government bonds were sold. My dad and others, whose sons were serving, organized an Emhouse rally....their speakers were probably the ministers or congressman or one whose oratorical ability would be appealing. The High School choral group and Red Cross made up the program for the afternoon.

We girls belonged and worked faithfully for our Red Cross as did all the people. It was a very large gathering.

Red's serious illness was of great concern to relatives, our neighbors, to all, but we expected him sometime the week after his long recovery. There were so many Emhouse boys - the Owen boys, Clyde, Bob, and George were Navy, as Red was. Joe and Tom Bennett in the Army - Jim McManus and John DeRusha, Army. There were others, but I cannot recall now. All in active service, perhaps some in France fighting and living

war.

The rally was on at fever pitch that Saturday afternoon and I'm sure never to forget "It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary" and "Over There". No one could listen to "Memories" without strong feelings.

Emhouse had already lost Joe, son of Mr. and Mrs. J. R. Bennett *though as well as I can remember, he was not killed in action. Nevertheless, it was a war casualty)

The songs were over and the rally was on! Ada Kate, 15 ½ at that time was old enough for the Choral Club - she was at that time, studying piano with Miss Mae, the music teacher there fir tears, (I was not old enough, but after the songs were finished, Ada Kate cameto the back of the audience where we sat together - just 2 or 3 seats back of Mama and Papa. As I recall, Mr. Luther Johnson of Corsicana was our Congressman to Washington and he was our main speaker and was deep in a very real speech about the War - the sons - the hardships, etc.

Adie and I both looked around at the same time toward the sidewalk that led to town and we saw this young sailor - in his blues, of course, we knew Red! Without telling Mom and Pop at all, we almost crept away from that place of people until we were clear and we started running to meet him! Oh, how we ran! Someone else saw him and told Mom and Papa and, needless to say, the O'Neals broke up the rally. Red, tall, pale and thin, devastated by his serious illness, but his homcoming gave a brand new drive to the rally which turned into a huge success.

I think Red volunteered for the Army sometime after his discharge but was rejected because of his ear problem.

A RESCUE

During the year before the war (or perhaps the following year), Red mmade a daring rescue of two neighbors - a very elderly father, Mr. Tinkle, and his son.

Chambers Creek, about 6 or 7 miles North of Emhouse, during excessive and similar rains, would go on a rampage. The floods were were not on a large scale rampage as those the Mississippi River, but on a smaller scale.

Tis time Chambers Creek and surrounding land was deluged by a flood. Uncle Nate Tinkle and his son, Buck, spent almost two days in the branches of a tree until they were missed. I don't know why that family of strong sons had not hunted for them, but Red found them. He saw at once that they were tired and worn, especially old Uncle Nate. Red found a boat and in the swift, circling water he rowed out and helped Uncle Nate into the boat and carried him safely to land. Later, he went back for Buck.

I remember this well, although it was pretty daring since Red could not swim and the waters were very rough. It was very serious to his little sisters and as I grew up, we all knew that he had lots of courage and with his generous nature often literally would take his shirt off for his fellowmen.

(Note from Peggy O'Neal: Mother and Daddy must not have been married at the time, perhaps only dating, but Uncle Nate Tinkle offered Daddy any amount of money he would name for rescuing him and his son, but Daddy would no take pay. Mother often chided him about that! If the "rescue" was before WWI or the year of the war, then they were not married as they married in June 1922. Daddy was born in 1897. So that made him about 21.

I remember growing up in the 30's how Chambers would literally flood northern Navarro County with its fast spreading waters. There was a large steel topped bridge built over the creek at that time and I remember how big it was to all of us, and we wondered how such a big bridge would be built for a little creek like Chambers, but when it really rained, we all knew. The bridge was condemned in the 60's and the county replaced it with a small cement bridge which couldn't be used when there was flooding.)

- Ann O'Neal Tinkle
More on Red

Random Notes:

This is our 7th year to have lived in Amarillo. Among the older buildings still in use is the old Herring Hotel (wonder if there's a relation to our Herrens)/ Several years ago it was bought by the Federal Government and now Social Security has offices there. When it was sold, it received a lot of publicity and a statement was made that the main floor would be left as it was when originally built.

Red and Ora moved to Amarillo about 1922 or 1923 and Red worked as one of the carpenters to do the inside of the Main floor. The atmosphere with an authentic western motif is still there, unchanged. We (Pete and Archie) have been there several times and each time I think of Red's having been there a lot.

When you and Walter were here, we showed you the old Herring, but did not take you there. I think the year they were here was 1922 or 1923. I know that Daddy also worked in the panhandle oil fields, but I am not sure which job came first.

ANNIE LAURIE O'NEAL TINKLE

Annie Laurie (nicknamed 'Pete, but who wanted to be called 'Ann') was the third daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. T. O'Neal. A graduate of Emhouse High School, she turned down a Baylor Scholarship, and studied speech for two years with a Baylor instructor.

She is a recognized artist having had one-woman shows in Dallas, Corsicana, Olton and Amarillo. She participated in group exhibits with numerous art prizes to her credit. She is a poet and was a member of Texas Poetry Society.

Ann and Archie Tinkle now reside in Amarillo and will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary soon.

(This was written in mid-70's for Vol.2, Navarro County History was published)

I Remember Mama

My earliest recollections go back to perhaps the time we lived on Grandpa and Grandma Owen's farm.

Peggy, when I say we four little O'Neal girls had a very happy childhood, you know that I am talking about Mama O'Neal.

I can remember when I was four years old, Ada Kate just a little more than two years older than I was. Peggy (Maggie Pearl) was a chubby little girl with brown curls, Tommy was a baby (certainly I cannot recall day by day living, but the things Mama was always doing for us and what we did for play, and I am sure that sewing must have been piled up for Ellen and if any lace or ruffles were added to our dresses, it must have been our big sister, Ellen, who was responsible for those little girl touches.

Mama read to us - she spoke with us - we loved to talk about Papa. We would ask if he was rich and I know we were not, but she would invariably answer "Yes" - we are all rich and he was rich because he has us and we are rich because we have him." Her teaching us that first of all that riches lay only in character and through the years our learning from here came before all other sources of learning. She was our first Sunday School teacher - our first teacher in our memory work (which began with Bible verses she chose for us). "Do unto others what we would have them do unto us" and we grew up really not knowing then that she not only taught it but lived it.

She was a gentle, loving Mother and a firm disciplinarian, and we soon knew if we trespassed. We were surely punished. Not always by a spanking, but as we four - with 2 by 2 pairing off: Adie and me against Peggy and Tommy. Often in a battle our hostility was not with a few moments of hating each other, stopped by our mother with measures for more severe than a spanking. The 2 who were stronger and more dominant had to meet the two losers for hugging and kissing each other. Oh the cups of rue we had to sup!

The old house we lived in had a long shady porch across the front - at one end where we could lift ourselves from the porch up and into an old quaint Chinaberry tree and where we spent many play hours. This tree was a mecca. I have never forgotten or never will forget that tree. We loved that old house, surrounded by fields that my Dad worked until he bought his first land and built the first bungalow type house in the area.

While we lived on Grandpa Owen's farm he and Grandma lived in a cottage in Emhouse and that is where Grandpa died at the age of 74.

I will continue writing about Grandma and Grandpa here.

He was one of the tallest men I ever saw - He had a mustache and a very large man. More like his oldest son, Uncle Dick (George Garrett Owen). Grandma was the tiniest

lady I ever saw! Her sons and daughters, all tall and on the stout side.

I can remember sitting in my Granddad's lap and how his big arms engulfed me, making me feel like a very favored child and I hoped I favored all the others. All the others who remember him had those same feelings of favoritism. I'm sure being the man and grandfather he was, he really played no favorites.

I recall the night he died and the pall of sadness that descended around us. After his death, Grandma being a very practical person, living her life out until the age of 81.

Has anyone ever told you that Grandma was a redhead? Don't you know that big old George Washington Owen courted and won the cutest little girl in all of Mississippi? She was all of 14 ½ years of age when they were married during the Civil War. At that time, to be married before 20 saved the fate of girls far worse than any other disgrace - that of an old maid!

Grandpa and Grandma Owen, after settling in the Emhouse Community, after having bought land there, and after recuperating from the War, also helped pioneer the little town of Emhouse. They gave the first land for the Emhouse School - the campus and the building of it,

Grandpa wore a large white felt hat. Surely somewhere there must be a picture of him surely hope you find one somewhere with the older farm circle. He was a great looking gentleman.

He helped to establish Navarro County and Emhouse after serving in the Confederate Army honorably. He was taken prisoner of war by the Yankees at Vicksburg and given a parole. He was a corporal.

We grew up in Emhouse. All O'Neals attending the same school for many years. Those of us who graduated from Emhouse High School planted roots, too, before we left. Ada Kate chose to attend Miss Lacey's Business College.

Grandma Owen would visit us for a day or for perhaps two nights. I can recall the afternoons spent. She would tell us about her young life and their times of hardship during the Civil War. Until I began studying history in school, I thought the Confederate Army was fighting a bunch of pirates. Never did Grandma ever refer to the Northern Army by name - only by "Damn Yankees" and only by reasons that the Herren family (her maiden name) and the Owen family and other loved ones in Mississippi were devastated by the war.

The younger ones grew up with a broader manifestation of our land - our love for America grew as we did - and the older grandsons of George and Susan Owen served in World War until the bitter end. Their younger great grandsons served their country just as faithfully in World War II and Korean War with end results as being great Americans

O'NEAL-FARMER

Peggy Lois O'Neal and Walter Farmer were married October 25, 1947, in Corsicana, Texas. Peggy, born in Emhouse on November 8, 1928, is the daughter of George R. O'Neal and Ora Cannon Gracy O'Neal. Walter, born May 31, 1923, in Hubbard City, Texas, is the son of Mrs. Molly Augusta Motley Farmer and the foster son of Thomas Harvey Farmer.

Walter graduated from Corsicana High School in 1941. He attended University of Texas at Austin and Navarro College. After graduating from high school he enlisted in the U. S. Army Air Force and served as an engineer (T/Sgt.) aboard a B-24 bomber during World War II. Based in England, he flew 10 missions over Germany before his plane was shot down over France. Reported Missing in Action, he was captured in France by the Germans and was a Prisoner of War for 14 months at Stalig Luft I near Barth, Germany. After the war he worked for Ford, Lincoln-Mercury dealerships and Bethlehem Steel before the family moved to Duncanville in 1957. He now owns and operates a Texaco Service Station in Duncanville. He is 2nd Vice-President of the Duncanville Chamber of Commerce and 3rd Vice President of the Duncanville Noon Lions Club. He also serves on the Duncanville Board of Adjustments and is a member of John Pelt Lodge No. 1322 AM & FM of Duncanville.

Peggy graduated from Emhouse High School in 1946 and attended San Angelo College and Navarro College. She was employed as a secretary for Radio Station KAND, Dawson & Dawson, and Corley Funeral Home. She is now secretary to Chief, Audit Division, Dallas District, Internal Revenue Service., Dallas. She is active in The Old Chisholm Trail Chapter, DAR, Duncanville.

Peggy and Walter have one daughter, Susan, born in Corsicana on December 14, 1955. Susan graduated from Duncanville High School in 1974, and attended Texas Christian University as a ~~Freshman~~ ^{freshman}. She is now a Senior Piano Pedagogy major at Southern Methodist University. Susan married David Lee Clay June 19, 1976. Both families are members of First Baptist Church, Dallas.

Submitted 1977 by Peggy O. Farmer

The O'Neals in Emhouse

by
Ann O'Neal Tinkle

If I wrote about all the things Mom and Pop did for Emhouse from building it to its peak (a very thriving community) and then seeing it submerged by modern times after the Depression (as with hundreds of small towns) going down into the past just as Emhouse did. You know Pop always said 'if one rich farmer had bought that bank, the community would still be there. Alas and alack, there were a few people with money, but no financiers.

A few instances of their benevolence: Mom and Pop were always doing something for others - it was nothing for Pop to be building something in the old garage (and of course we little girls were not permitted to go stand around with a lot of interminable questions) when he was building a coffin for some poor family who could not afford one. He donated a place in the O'Neal family cemetery lot (Pattison Cemetery) for one poor family to bury their son. He re-built one of the Emhouse churches and donated a good part of his work. His donations were made for the asking! He befriended the Black farmers - he figured their crops with them and was as honest with them as he would have been with the President.

He was strongly opinionated and did not mind expressing his opinions to anyone, any place. I never knew of his attending church, but the ministers who came into town on weekends were most likely to be the houseguests in the O'Neal home for a few days. (NOTE from Peggy O'Neal Farmer: My mother told me more than once that Papa O'Neal had been "churched" from the Baptists for drinking. Papa was not a drunkard, but did enjoy a drink now and then and the Baptists were not going to interfere with that, so he never went to church again, while Mom was a very faithful member.)

I have heard his, Mama's and Brother Jenkin's conversations until Saturday midnight and thus, found that my dad was as knowledgeable about the Bible as any Bible scholar. Pop gave his books to his reading chronies and when I was about 15, as he read E. Phillips Oppenheim's mystery murders, he would read at night and I would pick it up for my own reading during the day. Adie (my sister) and I read them together.

I remember our very first magazines at our house - as Saturday Evening Post - it was 5 cents a copy. We also had "Farm and Ranch", The Sehnester" (sic), Ladies Home Journal, McCalls. Since we lived in the country. Mom and Pop subscribed for those magazines and not till every page was read could we use them for cutting paper dolls. We girls did not play paper dolls in the usual sense - we kept our paper dolls for years, choosing and cutting dresses out to fit all of them. Perhaps that is the reason Peggy (Maggie Pearl), Ellen and Tommy were the good dress makers when they grew up.

MAGGIE PEARL O'NEAL

(aka 'Peggy' and 'Doo')

By

Ann Tinkle

Maggie Pearl was the fourth daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. T. O'Neal. On the night of her graduation from Emhouse High School she was married to Everidge teen, their two sons, Cosby and Joe were born in Emhouse and later the Steens moved to Corsicana where they made their residence for thirty years. The boys, both graduates of Corsicana attended A&M, and are now successful engineers in Anchorage Alaska. Cosby was a flight engineer in the Air Force during WWII. Joe served in the Arm during the Korean War for two years. Maggie Pearl was known throughout the family as "Doo", probably because she wanted to 'do' everything her sisters did! Maggie Pearl was pretty, sweet with twinkling eyes and everyone's favorite!

Maggie Pearl's activities were centered around First Baptist Church and "people. Her talents extended in musical circles and for years, she, Ellen, and W. C. O'Neal were members of the choir there.

Maggie Pearl died suddenly on November 30, 1958. Her husband, Everidge Steen died about 10 years later.

(Note: During the choir time, Mama O'Neal's brother, Ross Owen a former Navarro County Judge, also sang in the First Baptist Church Choir, as did Walter and I. We were there about 18 years. Peggy O. Farmer)

TOMMIE LOUISE O'NEAL HATLEY

Fifth Daughter of
Mr. and Mrs. J. T. O'Neal

Tommie Louise O'Neal Hatley, born May 26, 1908, daughter of John Thomas O'Neal and Nannie Ophelia Owen. John Thomas' was the son of Lee Roy O'Neal and Minerva Emaline Hamrick (called Ellen), both were natives of Carrollton, Georgia. Nannie Ophelia Owen was the daughter of George Washington Owen and Susan Anna Herren, both of Hinds County, Mississippi.

Tommie Louise O'Neal was married to John Miles Hatley of Blooming Grove, Texas, on February 24, 1924. From that union were two children: a son, John Thomas born March 8, 1927, and a daughter, Dolores, born on July 20, 1931.

John Thomas was a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin, and later married Deborah Compton of Little Rock, Arkansas. To that union were born a son, Darryl, now 15 years of age, two daughters, Laura Gail, 10 years of age, and CarolAnn 7 years of age. Their home is in Phoenix, Az., where John Thomas has been an English professor for the past 14 years at the Miramosa Junior College of Arizona.

The second child, Dolores, married Lawrence Walker of Pontiac, Michigan. To this union were born two children: a son, Thomas L. Walker, and a daughter, Cheryl Louise Walker. This marriage was dissolved in divorce after 6 years, and Dolores and the children are reside in Dallas, Texas.

In 1959, Dolores married a native Dallasite, John T. Anderson, and they reside in Dallas, Texas.

There are many descendants from the union of George W. Owen and Susan Herren Owen. Grandpa and Grandma, I am sure, are all very proud of their heritage. Although many years of passed, those who are still living cherish the memory of these great citizens and know them to have been very proud, generous, and compassionate people.

Tommie Louise O'Neal Campbell

Note from Aunt Tommie:

"To Peggy Lois

"And they all lived happy forever after. Ha! Ha! Bless you so much for our efforts in this epic. Love you so dearly - and thank you again - you are my favorite niece, and I guess Betty Sharpley is second. Besides, you are the only two that still call me.

"Aunt Tommie"

Note: Aunt Tommie married a Mr. Campbell and always used this name, after her divorce from John Hatley (to whom she was married twice). She wrote this article for me to go into the Navarro County History Volume II. Aunt Tommie, according to my mother, was a very cheerful and fun person to be around. I am sure she struggled raising two children in Dallas by herself for many years. They spent many summers in Emhouse with Papa and Mama O'Neal. Our family lived next door, so George and I had 'next door' playmates in those years.