

Choice and Chance

The Life Story
of
Thomas Randall Rampy,
Major General, USAF



1897 - 1976

Choice and Chance

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P R E F A C E

In preparing this narrative I have had in mind a very small group of potential readers who have known me personally and who might have an interest in some parts of my experiences. I realize its personal nature and that not every reader will have an equal interest in each phase of my life. Those who knew me as a child, or only at home, may be little concerned with my recounting of business affairs, whereas persons who knew me only at work will likely pass quickly over childhood details and family matters.

Few events in the lives of most of us can be called important, except to ourselves, but there are turning points resulting from our choices and chances which seem to determine our destinies. I have mentioned some of mine in this record. Every life contains a story, but when told it may or may not be interesting, depending somewhat on the manner of telling. I have had the time and inclination in recent years to record my recollection of some of my experiences, which, I believe, are similar to those of innumerable others, most of which remain untold, and some may say that is just as well.

I have mentioned family members, friends, and others in varied circumstances, all without benefit of diaries or files. If anyone should question my memory I shall not be offended.

I have tried to be accurate and hope that nothing I have stated will ever cause embarrassment. If the narrative is read with interest, or even out of curiosity, I shall have been repaid for the effort of preparing it.

April 1971
T. R. Rampy
6635 Kennedy Lane
Falls Church, Virginia 22042

This edition of our father's original work was undertaken in order to make it available to a wider audience through the internet. We have changed punctuation, and in a few instances, word selection, where greater clarity was needed. Illustrations have also been added.

Gordon A. Rampy
Mildred Rampy Smith
February 3, 2004

P R O L O G U E

My military career began when I took the oath of a lieutenant colonel in the Air Corps on February 8, 1943. Fifteen years and twenty days later I was retired from the United States Air Force as a major general. I was sixty and did not want to retire, but when I said so to the Director of Personnel, he replied, "It's a young man's Air Force." This, then, was policy and, as those in military service know, policy dictates.

My associates in the Pentagon arranged a little farewell handshake in the office of the Air Force Comptroller. I was handed my Certificate of Retirement. My wife, Gladys, and I stood together as several generals, other officers, and civilians with whom we had served came to say good-bye. The Air Force photographer took the usual excess of pictures while the realities of retirement were submerged in the trivia of the moment.

The formalities lasted scarcely ten minutes and we were alone. Those who had taken time to come and bid us adieu returned to their routine of work, and Gladys and I walked out of room number 4E126 and down the winding ramp to the Pentagon's grand concourse, through the ever-present, crisscrossing of people, to the final stairway that leads to the good earth and South Parking. We looked back at the seat of the world's most powerful military organization, the place where I spent over ten years of my life. The Pentagon, five 1000 foot sides and five stories, encloses over six million square feet of floor space and more than thirty thousand people.

As we walked to our car I stared again at the great building, wondering what the future held for us. That unusual structure and its people had been major factors in our lives. I had been the first Auditor General of the United States Air Force and had received a commission as major general, conferred by the Senate upon recommendation of the President.

I was born and raised a country boy in Texas. How did the Pentagon, the Air Force, Washington, and many other places get into my life's picture?

Chapter 1

Early Childhood

On the fourth of December 1897, I became the firstborn of Tom and Betha Rampy (Thomas Jefferson and Bethsaida Ann Bonita, Nee Underwood). I held this position of only child for a relatively short time. Two brothers, Millard and Henry, and two sisters, Lela and Janie, arrived within seven years. We lived on a farm about a mile and half northwest of Salado, a village in Bell County, Central Texas, which my paternal grandparents had purchased shortly before their deaths in 1889. My father and his two younger brothers, Lewis and Lawton, lived on the place as bachelors until Father's marriage in 1896. Lewis and Lawton married within the next few years, leaving Father with his growing family and a hired hand, Marvin Rogers, to operate the home farm.

My memory goes back to around age four. I recall growing with my brothers and sisters among the farm animals and other living things. The normal utility animals were horses, mules, hogs, cattle and fowls, such as ducks, chickens, geese, guineas, turkeys and pigeons. We also observed and learned the different kinds of fowls of the air as well as becoming familiar with wild ground creatures - rabbits, squirrels, skunks, possums, armadillos, coyotes, raccoons and wildcats. We were, of course, warned to watch out for snakes, especially rattlers and copperheads. There were insects too, small scorpions, red ants, wasps, honey bees and bumble bees, from which we children suffered frequent bites and stings.

I was about four when Jim Buzby, a Negro neighbor, came to butcher some of our hogs. Jim was a quiet man distinguished by a smile which revealed several wide open spaces caused by missing teeth. After the hog was killed by stabbing with a long knife blade, it was scalded in a barrel of near boiling water to make the hair easier to remove by scraping with dull instruments. Then the carcass was hoisted by its hind legs to the top of a tripod so the nose was just off the ground. The evisceration and cutting then began. We boys were very much in Jim's way and he finally threatened to cut off our ears if we didn't stand back. His admonition was not very effective and we continued our pestering with questions. As Jim cut and removed parts I asked, "What's that? And that? And that?" Somehow he made me believe the liver was part of a dog. He had me carry it to the house to Mother.

When we sat down to eat that noon I saw the dish of fresh fried liver and called out loud and clear, "I want some of the dog." Mother and my uncle Lewis, who were there that day, laughed so loudly that I was quite embarrassed. The memory is still vivid. Mother remarked to Lewis that Jim had "fooled" me about the liver.

Father always provided pets. Sometimes it was a dog, a goat, or a lamb, and then it might be all three at once. The first dog I remember was Watch, a mongrel who was so gun shy that when it thundered he would run and hide under the nearest bed. He hardly lived up to his name and I remember well seeing my uncle Lewis take him to a nearby woods along with a gun, and return alone. We never saw Watch again.

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In former days some people delighted in frightening children with weird tales of ghosts, demons, and grotesque situations. One such man visited Father occasionally. Perhaps my pestering caused him to tell me that he had a deep, dark well on his place where he put little boys like me. I can still visualize being lowered into that well and then left alone. Some say such tales have adverse effects on children but I doubt it. My only recollection is that he frightened me and I was glad when he left without me.

One of our neighbors about 200 yards distant was the Jackson family. Mother sometimes took us children with her to visit them. On one of these occasions I went into a bedroom, pushed a chair up to a dresser, stood on it and tried to shave myself with Mr. Jackson's open blade razor. The result still shows in the form of a faint scar on my neck. I recall the confusion of cleaning up the blood from all around the room. Another time we were having a watermelon feast at the Jackson's and I wanted another serving. In order to attract attention I called out loudly, "Who wants some more?" This evidently struck the adults as quite amusing because they all laughed and I was overcome with embarrassment.

The Jackson's son, Berry, liked to tease me about my mass of freckles and red hair. He called me "Speckled Buck," which I understood to mean some sort of deer. I suppose I was somewhat of a Dennis the Menace, and he was trying to get rid of me.

At the time of my parents' marriage and until I was about a year old the Rogers family lived about a quarter of a mile from us. They then moved into the village of Salado so their children could more easily attend Thomas Arnold High School, a private institution. Their son Marvin was nearly grown and came to work as a hired hand for Father and lived with us. He did not share his sisters' and brother's interest in education. Our close relationship with the Rogers family was an important factor in my life. Their daughter Alice became my first teacher and my mentor. During my high school period I lived one term in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Rogers in Salado, about which I shall say more later.

I watched and imitated the adults around me. I saw men sitting whittling with their pocket knives, so I, too, wanted to "whitter." The men laughed at me and I soon learned to say whittle. I also saw men using matches to light their cigarettes. Marvin smoked but Father didn't. Desire for the forbidden caused me to sneak matches from the kitchen and take them to the barn. There I struck them and pushed the burning ends into cracks of the slatted cotton crib. I thought they were being smothered but instead they were burning inside and downward in the loose cotton. The barn was soon ablaze with black smoke pouring out. Neighbors came running and soon had the fire under control. I recall no particular punishment but a stern warning never to do it again. It was an impressive event in my young life.

While we lived at my birthplace the Rural Free Delivery mail system reached us. It was about 1903 that Mr. Mack Bush became our first carrier. I recall the talk of erecting the mailbox. What kind? How high off the ground? How far back from the roadway? I have read that the farmers resented the government's instructions on how to erect mailboxes and that very few were initially placed properly for the convenience of the carriers. Our box was about 200 yards from the house and Mother usually sent me for the mail after she saw Mr. Bush pass or when it was past time for him. I was beginning to

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learn my ABC's and could scarcely wait for the weekly newspaper, which I would take from the box and immediately spread on the ground to better study the big black letters of the masthead — BELL COUNTY DEMOCRAT.

This is a good point to mention my parents' education. My grandparents on both sides could read and write. My mother went to a small country school to about the fourth grade. She had a good retentive mind and could read and write very well. She read to us children as she had opportunity. Father did not go to school enough to learn to read and write. However, he had a good, strong mind and was a good listener, trying to absorb as much as he could from others' oral communication.

We children were fortunate to have parents who realized the need for schooling and who desired that we obtain more than they had. While Mother was busy about the house, I can recall two of us boys sitting on Father's knees as he pointed to the letters of the alphabet and numerals which he selected in the newspaper. Mother would read the paper to him in the evening. Father's speech was that of the eastern Alabama hill people where he was born and lived until he was about fourteen. It was quite a drawl and in some contrast to Mother's rather quick Texas tempo. In time, as we children learned better speech at school our parents also improved.

Chapter 2

The Family Moves - School Begins

In late 1904 Father sold the farm where I was born and rented another some two miles north of Salado, known as the "Rose" farm, from early settlers of that name and then owned by descendants. It was also about a hundred acres of good, black, cotton land, with a small pasture. There were the usual meager facilities – a fair sized tenant's house, a smaller one for a hired hand, a small barn and two wells. The main well was about a hundred feet deep from which water was drawn with a cylindrical bucket four or five inches in diameter, about four feet long and holding some three or four gallons. We boys did most of the water drawing, using a windlass and pulley. At times, however, the bucket rope was fastened to the saddle on a horse, who was made to walk back and forth to raise and lower the bucket. I have seen even more primitive methods in several countries of the world where camels, cows, or donkeys are still used to draw water in much the same fashion as several thousand years ago.

I was then old enough and strong enough to help with many farm chores. Although only seven, I chopped (thinned) cotton and helped cultivate by hoeing out grass and weeds. That fall I picked cotton but my mind was mainly on starting to school. I would be eight in December and school began in October. I knew that my teacher would be Miss Alice Rogers, Marvin's sister. Marvin had not moved with us because he married and began farming on his own. Miss Alice, as we always spoke of or to her, had visited us to discuss plans for my entering Amity where she was the teacher.

Amity was about a mile and a half north of our house and Father considered this too far for me to walk. We had talked of my riding a small horse we owned at the time, which represented a fair sized investment. However, one Saturday night shortly before

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school was to begin, Father brought home with him from nearby Belton a Mexican burro, or donkey named Inkus. He told us he had bought Inkus from Dr. Welborn Barton, a member of one of Salado's oldest families. Years later there was a question about returning the donkey to other members of the Barton family, some saying he was never sold, just loaned to us. He was given back but the facts will never be known. The deal was made over a bar in Belton between Father and Welborn.

Inkus was a sturdy, well-built donkey with reddish hair, a fat, round neck and broad back. Father did not get a saddle but only a saddle pad which was held on Inkus's back with a surcingle drawn tightly around his body. I had a quirt, which is a braided leather whip about two feet long, for use in persuading Inkus to do my bidding. He had been ridden and played with by many children in Salado and Belton and was, therefore, very gentle and practically harmless. But when he tired of children he would get quite stubborn and refuse to move, or, if he were being forced into a trot, he would stop suddenly and topple the child or children (sometimes four or five), off over his head. We had a lot of excitement learning to ride him before I started to school.

The big day arrived. The entire family helped get me off. With a satchel containing my lunch and my book over my shoulder, Inkus all bridled and ready, I climbed astride, prodding him to the pasture gate and through it to the lane that led to the main road a couple of hundred yards away. When I had reined Inkus north toward Amity I had an urge to go fast and did not hesitate to apply the quirt. Burros are known as slow creatures, but Inkus responded to my lashes with a gallop. The neighbors who observed then and afterward said that every time Inkus's feet hit the ground I hit him with the quirt, making him gallop all the way to and from school.

At the schoolhouse, which was back from the main road a hundred yards or so, I found a hitching post not far from the entrance. I tied the reins around the post and left Inkus to await time to go home. Miss Alice met me at the door and took me to a desk near the center of the one room schoolhouse. She showed me how to open my primer (first reader) and study the words on the first page. As she walked away I began to read the words aloud because I had learned them at home. This attracted her attention and she returned to explain that I should study quietly. Because I knew the words there was nothing to do but survey the situation in general by looking around the room. I saw children of all sizes and ages – seven to seventeen. Although I was at a double desk I had no companion that first day. Later in the morning Miss Alice came and sat with me, having me repeat the initial words of my primer. In a one room school like that there was no way to separate the very young from the older pupils. This made it difficult for all until the young learned the rules of conduct.

Around noon that first day Miss Alice came and whispered that Inkus was loose from his post and that I should go out and find him. He was close by and was no trouble to retrieve. He was adept at loosening the reins from the post with his teeth, which he did several times before I learned to fasten them more securely. I also found a hitching post a bit farther from the schoolhouse.

Amity was typical of the rural schools of the time with a six months term, October through March. Teachers seldom had more than a high school education and taught all who came until they completed what was called the eleventh grade, but few ever stayed in school long enough to reach that grade. I was fortunate to have Miss Alice as a teacher. She was deeply dedicated to her vocation and devoted her life to teaching, never marrying.

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The grades at Amity were not well defined and Miss Alice assigned children to classes based on her judgment of their abilities in particular subjects. When she called a class for recitation the pupils left their desks and sat together on long, wooden benches arranged on a raised platform about ten feet wide which extended across the end of the room, and with a blackboard across the entire end wall, toward which all desks faced. In this way the teacher could keep an eye on the whole room and the two rear doors. Also, the pupils who remained at their desks could hear and observe all that went on in the recitations.

There was a large wood-burning stove near the center of the room where the smaller children were allowed to sit to get warm or dry their wet clothing. The older boys cut the firewood and kept the fire going. There was no well for water, and Miss Alice would assign two children different chores each day to go together to a nearby brook to get drinking water in a wooden pail. We all drank from the same dipper. There was no provision for washing hands or faces. Few children had ever seen a toothbrush. The usual two outhouses were a hundred yards from the building, in opposite directions. Conditions were ideal for spreading, contagious disease. There was little effort at isolation and children continued in school with chicken pox, whooping cough and similar childhood maladies. First-aid facilities were also nonexistent. During recess periods the boys and girls played together in the usual outdoor games but few injuries occurred.

School was out around the end of March, so there was a period of six months for the children who were able to work and help on the farms. Shortly before my second term began my sister, Arbie Marie, was born. Grandfather and Grandmother Underwood, with Mother's sister, our Aunt Mary, came for the event. They traveled in a covered wagon from Eastland County, making the 150 miles in about three days. It was then cotton picking time and all who could pick were in the fields from dawn to dusk every day. I remember well how I stood up between the cotton rows and watched the covered wagon pass down the lane and up to the house, but we kept on picking until quitting time.

My brother Millard started to school that fall, riding with me on Inkus. We were much alike in appearance, with red hair and freckles. This was Millard's only year of school. In August of 1907 he contracted a malady said by some to have resulted from the bite of a dog and by others to have been spinal meningitis. Whatever it was took his life within two or three days. The shock to me and the deep grief of my parents is still a vivid memory. For several months, I can't say how long, I would awake at night from dreams in which Millard had appeared alive again. I did not speak of them to others, but in the daytime I would wonder whether I had somehow seen him at night. Perhaps children are more susceptible to grief than adults realize. Except for Millard's death, the summer passed as usual. I do recall the talk of a money panic and how it depressed the price of cotton.

I rode Inkus alone during my third term at Amity. Miss Alice was still the teacher and this year gave me special, individual attention. She showed a personal interest in me and gave me every opportunity to exercise my desire and ability to learn. She would stay with me after regular school hours and drill me in certain subjects in advance of my classes and others of my age. One of her pet subjects was pronunciation. She would go

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over and over the sounds of the vowels according to their diacritical markings, requiring that I memorize the names of the marks and the related sounds of the vowels.

At the end of this term Miss Alice persuaded my parents to send me to the remaining six weeks of the Salado public school. There I was placed in the fourth grade and at the end of the term was promoted to fifth. Miss Alice, who kept in touch with the Salado teachers, advised my parents to give me the advantage of nine months at the Salado school and a generally better learning situation than Amity could provide. The transfer cost was about twenty dollars a year for each child, but our parents made the necessary arrangements for Henry and me to go there the next fall.

The summer of 1908 passed with Henry and me playing as much as possible and working as little as we could. We visited with neighborhood boys, wandered along the creeks, and explored caves, looking for buried treasure. The legend of a Mexican general having hurriedly disposed of wagon loads of silver in the area in the early days of Texas still persists. We did all the things boys could do in the country, swimming, fishing, climbing trees, gathering nuts, and generally exercising our native instincts. But we also had our chores to do around the house and in the fields.

We tried to heed the warnings of our parents to avoid the "bad boys," largely rejecting the things we felt were wrong. Not all the neighbor boys were deemed good companions, and among the many hired hands were some who did not hesitate to repeat to us boys their most obscene stories and jokes. Yes, at an early age we heard almost all there is to hear about the vulgar side of life.

It was during this summer that Henry, then six, and I visited some neighbor boys who asked us to stay and eat dinner (the midday meal) with them. We had never been in their home before and did not realize that some of our neighbors had less good food than we did. At home when we children got something on our plates that we did not like we would offer it for trade or give it to another. On this day as we sat at table with our friends I saw nothing but turnip greens and cornbread. At home only Father liked such greens. So, when Henry was served, he stared at the greens, then looked around the table and politely, but firmly, inquired, "Who wants these?" I was embarrassed but tried to explain that he just didn't like turnip greens. I don't recall what sort of adjustment was made, but we still laugh about the incident.

I would be derelict not to record that my mother was a person of deep religious conviction who tried to train her children accordingly. She was handicapped to some extent in this respect because our father was not religiously inclined. Mother took us to services of the Church of Christ, of which she was a member, and saw to it that we children attended Sunday school as often as possible. Father assisted in this desire of our mother by taking us to church services. I recall one such occasion at about age ten when the service was in an open tabernacle in Salado. I fell asleep during the service and was lying prone on the bench when I awoke in complete darkness. Everyone was gone, including my family. It was a strange feeling as I adjusted to the situation and began to walk toward home, which was a mile and a half away. But after a short distance I saw two young men standing between their buggies and they recognized me. One was kind enough to take me home, but on the way we met Father coming back to look for me.

Living - Growing - Working - On a Farm

During the six years we lived on the "Rose" farm many hired hands came and went. Some had families and lived in the little house in the corner of the pasture; others were single and lived in the house with us. Among the married was Albert Merrill, a Negro, with his wife and two children, Ollie and Curtis. In addition to being a good farm hand, Albert was an expert horseman. He was in demand for breaking untamed horses. He had lived and worked for a time in Old Mexico, "south of the border," where he learned to speak Spanish. He taught me to count and speak a number of phrases in Spanish. I also picked up a bit more of the language from the itinerant Mexican cotton pickers we employed.

We children thought more of Albert than, perhaps, any other of the hired men. He was kind and humorous, laughed a great deal, and taught us to do various things with our hands, such as braiding leather and twine and tying special knots in ropes. He also showed us how to use a lariat to lasso cattle and horses. But we, even as children, knew there was a barrier between us; Albert was black and we were "white folks." Albert was always respectful to Mother, approaching her with hat in hand and a look of servility. When she served him a meal he received it on a platter at the back door and went away to eat. This was, of course, the custom derived from the days of slavery.

In the fall of 1908 Henry went with me to school at Salado. Although I liked to go to school and enjoyed my classes I also liked to play as much as any other normal boy. Baseball was our principal game and I was always on the team. But I was not a good fighter with my fists, as were some of the boys. I preferred to win by argument rather than by physical combat. There were no Boy Scout groups around but we were taught scout principles both at home and in school.

Although the rod was seldom used in our home, an occasional overt act brought out a switch, or other means of corporal punishment. The switch, when applied to bare legs, is quite effective. Henry seemed to get switched more than anyone, but he was clever enough to yell before he was hurt. In the warm months we were usually dotted with chigger bumps about our bodies, so as soon as Mother touched Henry with the switch he would start hollering, "Oh, Mama, you hit a bump, you hit a bump." That caused those around to begin to laugh and the battle was soon ended. It was different when Father punished one of us. We were somehow so closely attached to him that we did not feel the strikes on our bodies but in our hearts. We would cry and sob deeply; then he would take us in his arms and nourish us to life again. He was always deeply devoted to his family.

Farm boys and girls had to do what they could to help with all the chores as early in life as their physical abilities would permit. Boys could do some things earlier than girls, such as working with the horses and mules, but all went to the fields to pick cotton at about the same ages, beginning at about five. At eight to ten boys could harness teams and do some plowing. I was an eager type and liked to work along with the men, thinking I was doing as much as they.

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We had no planned vacations but Father would sometimes take us on overnight fishing trips to the nearby Lampasas river. I never liked these outings because the sleeping conditions were not very comfortable; also the men would wake us boys at dawn to go examine the fishing lines we had left in the river. There were the County fairs and the circuses which we sometimes visited, but not every year.

Our sister Irene was born in December 1908. I insisted on the name Irene because I had known a pretty teenage girl by that name who attended Amity school when I did.

When I was about eleven Father thought I was qualified to “keep books” on the cotton pickers. The pickers were paid by the pound based on weights which I was supposed to observe and record. The usual method of picking was to have a heavy canvas bag five to nine feet long and a yard wide, with a shoulder strap attached to the open end so that as the picker dragged it behind him he could readily drop the handfuls of plucked cotton into it. When full, or at any time the picker desired, it was taken to a central weighing point, weighed, then emptied into a wagon or pile, to accumulate about 1500 pounds. This represented around 500 pounds of lint cotton after ginning because two thirds of the field weight was the cotton seed. It was my job to tabulate the weights and determine when the 1500 pounds had been accumulated. It was not an easy job.

The pickers were paid at the end of the week, supposedly on the basis of my records. However, this seldom worked out because of the differences between my record and the picker’s. Even if my records were accurate, and I doubt that they were, some of the pickers would have claimed excess on the basis that I was too young to keep a proper record of the many weighings. There were other ways the pickers cheated also, such as by putting rocks in their bags or slyly laying hands on them as they were weighed. I started learning about the tricks of men at an early age.

Interesting incidents frequently occurred in the cotton fields. I recall the day a Negro couple and a white couple each left their two-year-old child in the shade of the cotton wagon. After a time of playing together there was loud screaming. Investigation disclosed that the Negro baby had bitten a hole in the white baby’s ear. This caused some angry words for a time, but it passed away. We boys often engaged in cotton boll fights. A good green boll is an excellent missile and when it strikes its objective, it’s quite painful. Of course this was wasteful as well as dangerous.

I was a pretty good cotton picker, but this was a phase of work I didn’t like. From dawn to dusk, in thick cotton, I did pick as much as 400 pounds in a day, but only a few times. There were some nimble fingered persons who could pick that much quite regularly, although the average was around 250 pounds a day. The rate for picking began at fifty cents a hundred and gradually went up to around a dollar as the cotton became thinner and lighter. Weary pickers often dreamed and talked of a machine that might some day replace them — they hoped. My first view of one was in 1952 in the irrigated cotton fields near El Paso. It was a surprise in size and complexity. I suppose I had visualized something on the order of human hands and much smaller than present mechanical cotton pickers.

My uncles Lewis and Lawton moved from Bell County around 1904 and settled in Runnels County, some 150 miles west. When I was around twelve Father thought it

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would be good experience for me to visit them. There was an exchange of letters, then several restless days and nights on my part until Father put me aboard the train at Belton about dawn on a bright summer morning, with instructions to the conductor to look after me and see that I was put off at Benoit, a flag stop twelve miles east of Ballinger. It was late afternoon when the train came to a screeching halt where it did not ordinarily stop but merely put out an extended steel arm to snatch a mail bag from the pole as it passed. My uncle Lawton was then foreman of Benoit section of the railroad and lived quite close to the track. When I stepped off the train my Aunt Sally was standing there to greet me. She took me into her house and soon told me that Lewis lived a half mile or so away and that Lawton was not yet home from his work on the track.

There were six or seven children in the two families and I alternated visiting and sleeping between the two homes. The landscape of that area is quite different from what I was accustomed to in Bell County. The terrain is quite level with a scattering of mesquite trees and some scrub oak, but it made a deep imprint on me as a child to observe these differences from my home area.

Another new thing to me was the sight of prairie dogs and their "towns." The little animals are very alert and shy of humans, so we watchers had to lie flat on the ground close by a town and wait for them to come out of their underground homes. A town might cover an acre or so in area with a hundred or more holes, which are entered from the top of the small mound around each hole. The dogs are noted for their ability to enter their holes quickly and avoid danger from other animals, including capture by humans. This experience was probably the highlight of my visit.

After a week of exploring the new scene I was put on the train for return home. It had been a long stay, or so it seemed to me. Father met me at Belton and I recall how anxious I was to get home and talk about my trip. This was my first one in a life which was destined to include innumerable trips – by land, by sea, and by air.

Henry and I had ridden Inkus to school at Salado until our sister Lela joined us in the fall of 1910, and then we three went by buggy. I was then earning my transfer tuition by sweeping floors and cleaning blackboards in the classrooms. School was still my absorbing interest and I began to read all the books I could lay my hands on. Miss Alice, who kept in touch with me from time to time, arranged for me to use the library in her parents' home in Salado. There was, of course, the Horatio Alger series, which made an impression on me – the poor but honest, hard working boy making good by becoming rich or marrying the rich man's daughter, or both. I remember the motto of the character Persimmons in another book, not by Alger, which was: "O what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive." Just a few years ago a very good friend of many years, then nearing eighty, remarked to me that he had learned that couplet as a boy in South Dakota and had tried to live by its warning. It so impressed me as a boy that I tried to explain its meaning to a playmate as we were picking and eating black haws in the woods near Salado. He lacked interest or understanding, perhaps both, and I remember looking at him to try to see into his mind and understand why he had no interest. I have studied the actions and faces of many people since with a similar objective.

The Family Moves Again - And Again - High School

The Rose farm changed ownership, and we learned late in the fall of 1910 that we would have to move. Father then rented a place two miles north and almost directly west of Amity school. We moved in December. The place was similar in size and facilities to the Rose place except it had a windmill and a better house.

Tenants in Texas at that time normally supplied all their needs for making a crop — teams, equipment, seeds and labor. The landowners received one fourth of the cotton produced and one third of the grain. According to Judge Tyler's History of Bell County, over sixty percent of the farms in the early 1900s were occupied by tenants. The owners were principally business and professional people who lived in the towns. In many cases the tenants were little more than serfs, being totally financed by and thereby obligated to the landowners. Often failing to make enough from their crops to pay their debts in the fall, these tenants had no choice but to remain and hope for a better crop the coming year. In most instances, however, the tenants were financed by banks and supply houses who took notes and chattel mortgages as security. Few tenants succeeded in getting from under the cloud of debt. Conditions have changed due to various factors, such as improved farming methods, mechanical advances, education, and product development.

As I reached my teens I began to recognize the ogre of debt hovering over our family. We were growing and our needs were increasing faster than the means of meeting them. Despite Father's lack of schooling, or perhaps because of it, he wanted his children to get good education, with the hope, he told me, that we might avoid the drudgery and insecurity he was experiencing.

Henry, Lela, and I continued to drive to school at Salado, now four miles instead of two. One spring day when we were within about a quarter of a mile of the school an unusual incident occurred. I had noticed that the old gray mare we were driving seemed a bit more sluggish than usual and just then she fell to the ground and expired then and there. There was nothing we could do but get out and move the buggy aside and pull the harness from the dead horse. We couldn't do anything with the 1000 pound animal. A few persons came along but they couldn't help us. We just walked on to school and called home on the telephone to report the situation. Father arranged to have the carcass removed and sent another horse for the buggy. That is the only experience I ever had with a horse having a heart attack, which is what I assume caused the sudden death.

Farm routine at the new place was the same as before, with the usual coming and going of hired hands. The family was then so large that we couldn't have anyone live with us, so Father hired married men who could occupy the small house on the place. My ability as bookkeeper for the cotton pickers had improved. Although I liked to work along with the adults, there were times when I was alone with my daydreams. There was something, I dreamed, which somehow I could find to do in life that would not involve the uncertainty and meager financial reward of farming as I had experienced it. But my dreams were not definite because there was no visible means of accomplishing them. I

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can recall working along in the hundred degree heat of the midday sun and repeating the words of Longfellow, "and the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts." My youthful judgment was that those words were indeed true. But my dreams and visions of a beautiful "somewhere" did not depress me. I went on working in the face of reality and the circumstances which I hoped someday to conquer. I have learned that human destiny is not foreordained as is the life of a "Chambered Nautilus," but that each day is a new beginning where choice and chance conspire to make us what we are.

In July 1912 sister number five, Alice, arrived. The house was then even more crowded. We were not only more in number but we were physically larger and our needs were greater. We were making our wants more audibly known. It was becoming more and more difficult for our parents. I recall an invitation for the family to attend a picnic with friends a few miles away, but we had no adequate means of transportation for the whole family. We all wanted to go very much. So Father bought a new surrey that would barely hold us all. I realized that he couldn't afford it, but the dealer accepted a horse as down payment with a promissory note payable in the fall. Father had some of Mr. Micawber's optimism, I think, because he always acted as though things would be better tomorrow, next week, or next year.

In September 1912 I entered Thomas Arnold High School, a private institution operated by Dr. S. J. Jones as a successor school to the original Salado College founded in 1859. Dr. Jones had been head of the school since 1890 but had let it be known that he was retiring at the end of the school term in 1913. The tuition was about fifty dollars a year. The school had a fine reputation but the enrollment this last year was only around fifty. The following description of the school and Dr. Jones is quoted from Judge Tyler's History of Bell County:

The Thomas Arnold was distinguished not only by the high standards and excellent quality of its work but by the rare personality of its founder and head, Dr. Jones. Those who did not know him well thought him eccentric, but they saw only the surface mannerisms. Of short, compact figure, with noble head and eyes of a poet, he added to an exact and wide learning — the fruit of a vigorous mind — an abundance of common sense and kindness that endeared him to all who were fortunate enough to know him well. He taught Latin and Greek, and as he enjoyed teaching them he managed to make those dead languages live again for his students, but he loved even better to gather a group of boys about him, either in his classroom or in his home on Friday nights and to talk of modern literature, current economic problems or of national and international politics. Many a boy and girl discovered through him not only the intellectual treasures of the world of books but a newer and finer attitude toward the practical problems of life. The short, sturdy figure, the magnificent head, the smiling face, the rich voice, the dreamy hazel-brown eyes that could be so keen, the twirling cane that he always carried make up a picture that will never fade from the memory of

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the boys and girls to whom he was ever an inspiring friend. It may be said of him that he made many of the men and women who are making Texas today.

It was a privilege for me to attend this school and study directly under Dr. Jones. My other teachers there were likewise outstanding in their respective fields. I had known Dr. Jones all my life by reputation and by sight as he walked across the Salado public school grounds daily on his way to and from his school on the other side of the creek. About five feet five, as described in the above quotation, he walked with eyes on the ground, twirling his cane in rhythm with his steady measured pace. I had also often stood in the rear of Dr. Guthrie's drug store, at a respectful distance from the fireplace where Dr. Jones and other gentlemen were gathered, talking of what seemed to me to be great and important matters. On one such occasion Mr. Maclin Robertson, a local landowner, noticed me and asked in a kindly manner who I was. When I told him he remarked that he knew my father. I was flattered to have such an important man speak to me. It was his father, Colonel Sterling Robertson, who donated the land for the original Salado College in 1859.

In attending Thomas Arnold that year I rode a horse the four miles each way. He was a good, gentle animal that I loved very much. The other children went to Amity part of the time and also to the Salado public school. Things seemed to be going well until just after Christmas when we learned that due to some disagreement between Father and the landowner we would have to move again. It was too late in the year to find a good farm but Father was able to rent a place that was below his standard a few miles distant. We moved by the first of the new year and I continued in school. School was over around the end of May and I took my place as a worker on the farm.

Chapter 5

Salado College

I had finished one year of high school and the big question in my mind was what was I going to do now that Thomas Arnold was closed. There was much talk in the community about the prospect of someone taking over the building and establishing another high school. By midsummer the Trustees leased the facilities to Prof. W. V, Doyle, who agreed to operate under the original name of Salado College. Doyle had operated private schools in Missouri but had most recently lived in Uvalde County, Texas, where he lost all the property he had purchased, due to flaws in the deed. So he was forced to take up teaching again.

Professor Doyle was an elderly man with a young, second family. His wife, said to have been a student in his school, was much younger than he. They had five children, ages six to sixteen. Doyle's hurried solicitation resulted in the enrollment of some fifty or sixty students, I among them. He rented a large house where several students could be accommodated with room and board. A few other families in the village also arranged to take in boarders. There were no rules against boys and girls boarding in the same house.

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This seems to have been different from the policy of Dr. Jones in prior years. An item in Judge Tyler's History of Bell County is pertinent in this respect. I quote the following:

The good people of the town [Salado] opened their homes for the accommodation of the nonresident students and thus a wholesome home influence was enjoyed by all of them. There was never a regular 'boarding house' in all the history of Salado as a school town.

The founders of the college were determined that no avoidable temptation should surround the students of the school. In all deeds made by the corporation for the conveyance of lots there was this clause: "It being agreed that should the owner of said lot sell spiritous, vinous or other intoxicating liquors in quantities less than a quart or permit the same to be done by others on said lot, the title or claim to the same is to revert back to said (grantor named in deed)" - and this recital was copied into all conveyances, from one to another, for many years after the founding of the village. On September 26, 1866, "a special act of the legislature prohibited the sale or gift of intoxicating liquors within six miles of Salado College, except for medicinal or sacramental purposes, under penalty of a fine of from fifty to one hundred dollars.

The testimony of a soldier who passed through the town in July, 1869, may indicate something of the people of Salado: 'The village of Salado is particularly impressed on my mind as being the first teetotal, 'sure enough', 'total abstinence' village that I ever visited. A female college, or some institution of learning, controlled the place and its surroundings, and neither 'love nor money' could induce or produce any kind of spirits - at least so said the boys who investigated the subject as we passed through.'

As the time for my starting to school approached it was evident that there was no horse for me to ride. Miss Alice came to my rescue by suggesting that I go and live with her parents in Salado and perform various chores for them in lieu of paying board. This suited me because I certainly didn't mind taking care of the horse and cow, cutting firewood, and doing other errands as required.

I took my own bedding to the little room assigned me, which had no stove for heat. On cold winter evenings Mr. and Mrs. Rogers asked me into their combination bedroom and sitting room where there was a stove. There I sat and studied. Yes, it was by the light of a kerosene lamp. Then about nine o'clock they would tell me to keep studying and they would dress for bed in another room. The picture of them returning and climbing into bed in long flannel nightgowns and nightcaps tied under their chins is still vivid in my memory. I sometimes wonder whether I have repaid the kindness bestowed on me by similar treatment of others during my lifetime. Dr. Jones remarked to me once that

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gratitude was a rare quality in humans. I'm sure I have not been as thoughtful of others as I should have been.

In my room at the Rogers' home I found and studied a five-volume, self-teaching bookkeeping course. This was my introduction to what became my vocation — the field of accounting and finance. Many years later, in 1951, I was interviewed by Mrs. Leslie (Liz) Carpenter, granddaughter of the Maclin Robertsons of Salado and press assistant to Mrs. Lyndon Johnson in the White House. I was then Auditor General of the Air Force. She asked me how I became interested in accounting and I related the above incident. She included it in her news article as follows:

Washington - Sept. 8, 1951. More than 30 years ago, a young Texas high schoolboy, Tom Rampy, came across five volumes of accounting books in the tiny town of Salado where he lived. He looked them over, became entranced with the figures within, and studied until he knew them well.

That was a small but important incident in the life of Brig. Gen. Thomas Randall Rampy, who today is Auditor General for the United States Air Force. In his present position, he handles

\$20 billion a year, checking it and rechecking it to try to insure this country getting its money's worth. 'Coming across those accounting books may have directed an interest into what has been my life's work,' Gen. Rampy said.

The Rogers home was about a half mile north of the school, both being on the main, north-south road through the village. The dozen or so stores and shops were mostly along this road on the south side of Salado Creek, which runs east through the village at that point. Overlooking the stores from an elevation of fifty or sixty feet on College Hill a couple of hundred yards to the south was the college building, the town's most imposing structure. My daily walks to and from school took me past the business places, the names of most of which I recall - W. R. Berry's general store, Guthrie's drug store, Vickery's grocery, Cawthorn's general store, Guest's blacksmith shop, the cotton gin, Ed Berry's confectionery, the Post Office, Crocket's meat market, and Dad Smith's cafe where we students met to eat chili at ten cents a bowl. Just south of Dad's place was the Shady Villa Hotel, snug among large live oak and pecan trees. Along the sidewalk outside the hotel was the flowing well, a continuous source of smelly, bad tasting mineral water, considered by many to have therapeutic value. People came from miles around to fill their jugs for home use.

The Shady Villa has evolved into the now nationally known Stage Coach Inn, a place to enjoy good food. The College building was diagonally across and up the hill from the hotel. It was burned and rebuilt twice before my time but after another fire in 1924 it was never rebuilt. Only gray stone walls and rubble remain as reminders of the

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past. The main highway now skirts the village just west of the Stage Coach Inn and only a couple of stores remain. But there is now a large Stage Coach Inn Motel, The Central Texas Area Museum and a few other attractions which make Salado an interesting and comfortable place to stop.

Time has erased from memory many events of my three years at Thomas Arnold and Salado College which were, no doubt, exciting when they happened. There was little social activity except among the boys and girls who lived in the same boarding houses. None of the boys showed any evidence of having more than enough money to live comfortably and most did not have even that. All were in school because they wanted to be there. There were absolutely no distractions to keep the students from studying as much as they wished. I studied and learned quickly, making grades that were good, but which should have been better. The year I stayed with the Rogers family I took piano lessons from Miss Ruby Vickery, the music teacher at school, and acted as janitor for her music room as payment. She also allowed me to practice on her piano at home. My own social activities were limited by the lack of means to indulge my normal inclinations. I think I had only two or three dates during the whole period.

When school was out in the spring of 1914 I took my things from the Rogers' home and went back to my family and the farm. We now had another sister, Claudia. We were then eight, and now, more than fifty years later we are still eight but our parents are gone. We children are fortunate and grateful for our measure of health, love and respect for one another.

Work on the farm was as usual - plowing, planting, cultivating, and hoping always for a good harvest. My brother Henry and I were old enough to hire out to neighbors for an occasional day's work, trying to make a few cents of our own. I recall one job where we worked together helping on a hay baler twelve to fourteen hours a day and received \$1.25 a day each, but it was for only three days. Other times we cut cedar fence posts for a neighbor at two cents each. We used heavy, four pound axes, chopping down the trees from which we could trim out posts eight feet long, six inches minimum at bottom and three at top. This was in the cedar brake along the Lampasas River. It was a good day's work for a grown man to cut as many as fifty posts in a day. We boys could not do that many.

One of my close friends at Salado College was Lee Stubblefield. In the summer of 1914 he invited me to visit him at his home near Holland, about twelve miles from us. He came for me in a buggy. I had never experienced such hospitality before and shall never forget how pleased I was. Lee's father had died and left his mother with five or six children. She had then married a widower with a similar number of children and their marriage had resulted in two or three more. When that great family sat down to dinner I found myself one of about sixteen at the longest table I had ever seen. Their home was also large and people seemed to be everywhere. In the few days I was there I never learned who was half, step, or real brother or sister to whom. It was a most pleasant visit and further developed my esteem for Lee. He afterward played a pivotal role in my life.

Graduation

The summer of 1914 presented the same quandary as the previous ones with respect to continuing Salado College in the fall. What would I do if I didn't? The nearest high school was in Belton, eight miles from home. I had no means of transportation and no one there who might take me in as the Rogers had. But fate favored me. Prof. Doyle finally made arrangements to operate the school another year. He agreed to accept a note from Father for my tuition. (This was paid off by me several years later, when I began to earn wages myself.) Then there was another problem. Mrs. Rogers had died during the summer and Dr. Rogers had gone to live with a daughter. I mentioned my situation to Mark Halsey, who had taken over Dr. Guthrie's drug store, and he suggested I come and live with him and his bride of a year or so, the former Esther Campbell, whom I had known all my life. Mark and his brother and sister had come from a nearby county to live together in Salado and attend Thomas Arnold, from which Mark went on to study pharmacy. After getting his degree he worked in south Texas for a year or so and then returned to Salado to marry Miss Esther and lease the drug store. He had worked hard getting himself and his brother and sister through high school and college so they could lead professional lives. He wanted to help me too. I could earn my room and board by doing the same type of chores for him that I did for the Rogers. This was fine with me but Mark had not discussed the idea with Esther. It took considerable persuasion by me and Mark to get her agreement. She afterward said she was very glad that she accepted me. They were both kind and I tried to deserve their consideration.

On giving up his store in Salado Dr. Guthrie moved his family to Waco, some sixty miles north, in order to be where his sons, Edwin, James and Robert Lee, could readily attend Baylor University. This event came to play a role in the course of my life, as I shall relate later.

One of my teachers that year was Prof. Henry Sibberns, a tall, erect Prussian, born and educated in Germany. He was a bachelor, kind, sensitive, aristocratic in appearance, but spoke little of his homeland. I had Latin, Spanish, German, physics, and mathematics under him. He took special interest in me, and I recall how hard he tried to teach me to correctly pronounce the very difficult German "ch." He boarded with a local family and sometimes invited me to his room where we talked about books, literature, and philosophy. I, of course, was capable only of curiously listening.

There were just two in the regular, academic graduating class – Rubye Lee Studdard and myself. Various others were graduated in business subjects, typing, shorthand, and bookkeeping. It was June 1915. My mother and Henry drove in to attend the evening exercises. The auditorium was filled with the usual number of families and friends of the graduates. I made my much rehearsed address, which I doubt that any but those close by could hear, and listened to the speeches that followed, including one by Prof. Sibberns on the subject of loyalty. Finally, Prof. Doyle handed us our diplomas. My formal education was over. But as we older ones know, it was only the beginning of learning.

I went home with Mother and Henry. The next morning I hitched a team of mules to a wagon and drove back to Mark and Esther's to get my things – bed, books and clothes. The return drive to the farm is vivid in my memory. As I sat among the sparse belongings I was taking home I felt very much alone and hopeless, perhaps even helpless. It was noon when I reached home and found a corner of the big room where I could set up my bed. Then I went to the field to take my place as one of the family, trying to wrest a living from the soil.

Chapter 7

Leaving Home

Because there was no prospect of my going to college in the near future, I obtained a list of subjects and sample tests and began to cram for the State Teachers' examination at Belton in July. It was late one hot afternoon when I set out to walk the eight miles to Belton. Soon after I reached the main road a man came along with a load of hay and invited me to climb atop. On arrival in town I went to the home of a friend with whom I had arranged to stay overnight so I could be ready for the examination the next day.

The tests did not seem difficult in the areas where I had made preparation, but some of the questions were based on texts which I had not studied. I recall the subject of reading in particular. My very positive answers to questions about which I knew nothing were evidently very positively wrong because I failed the subject. I also failed another subject which I do not recall. It was disappointing, of course, but as I see it now, why would anyone have engaged a seventeen year old boy as a teacher?

The next examination was late in the fall, so I began to study the subjects I had failed and took them again. It must have been January 1916 before I learned that I had passed with grades high enough to justify granting me a First Grade Teacher's Certificate. This meant that I was authorized to teach all grades through high school.

While waiting to hear from this examination I had written to my former teacher and friend, Prof. Sibberns. He did not reply at once and in the meantime I had gone to my grandfather's in Comanche County, about a hundred fifty miles from Salado, where I was to remain for a time and begin life on my own. There I received Prof. Sibberns' reply to my letter. I had evidently indicated quite a bit of discouragement, seeking his advice. His letter (see page 39) encouraged me to be patient and persevering. I have read it many times and am still impressed by his understanding of youth and human nature and his kindly attitude.

It was early in January 1916 that Father had sent me to my grandfather in Comanche County to ask for help in finding a farm there to which we might move. This was a surprise to me. I had not heard that we had to move from where we were. I went by train but can't now recall how I found Grandfather's place. They (my Aunt Mary lived with him, Grandmother having died a couple of years before) lived six miles south of Gorman in the deep sandy land north of the town of Comanche. I hesitatingly explained the purpose of my visit. They were obviously surprised and at a loss as to what to do. The

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season for renting farms was past and after a few days of inquiry among the landowners of the area I wrote to my parents that there just wasn't anything available that would suit our requirements.

Within a few days I received a letter saying they had rented a place from Father's lifelong friend, Seymour Rose. He was of the Rose family that owned the "Rose" farm where we once lived. Although the Rose family were educated people, Seymour and Father were close friends and associates. Seymour was the local land surveyor and also practiced as a veterinarian. This latter art reminds me of an occasion when Father had a sick horse and called Seymour for advice. After some discussion Seymour said to Father, "Let me tell you what to do, Tom. Just drench that horse with a pound of Epsom Salts and if he isn't dead by morning give me a call." He came often to our house and we boys enjoyed hearing him talk and watch him chain-smoke cigarettes. His wife was an elegant lady and taught elocution in the village. I was fortunate to be among her students a couple of years.

Once or twice each year Mrs. Rose would have her students put on a recital at her home, a modest colonial mansion on the outskirts of Salado. I can still see myself bravely standing on the veranda between high columns, lighted by oil flares, facing the audience seated round about in walkway and yard under a bright Texas moon. There, in my stiff, dramatic stance, I proclaimed in a not too vigorous, boyish voice, "Romans, countrymen, lovers", from Brutus on the death of Caesar. Afterward the parents and guests spoke complimentary words to each other and to Mrs. Rose. Everyone seemed happy, and I believe they were, indeed.

And now, sixty years later, Seymour and Mrs. Rose are gone. But the old mansion stands with columns and shutters and white picket fence, all scarred by the inexorable hand of time and neglect, yet occupied by another Seymour, the only son of the other, with his wife, the current Mrs. Rose.

Chapter 8

Will Haynes's Farm

Now that my family had remained in Bell County I had no desire to return. Grandfather couldn't afford to keep me but I wanted to find a way to make my own living. One of the neighbors needed another hired hand and agreed to give me a trial, working with his own two sons and another hired hand. He would pay me eighteen dollars a month and furnish room and board. I soon found that I was to work all non-sleeping hours, dawn to dark, that was, except that I could go to church with the family on Sunday. This meant that I put in about 75 hours a week at a pay rate of about six cents an hour, plus board.

After about three weeks my employer evidently decided I was not worth even six cents an hour and told me I was not strong enough to do the work he expected of a hired hand. That's how I lost my first regular job. After a few days back at Grandfather's, another neighbor, Will Haynes, offered me a trial on his farm and ranch. It was then March, the time when farmers in that area get busy with their spring plowing and

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planting. The working arrangements were the same as with my former employer but Will had no other help. Will had married Flora, the daughter of Mrs. Hamlin, a well-to-do widow with several grown, married children, who owned considerable farm and ranch land around her home place where Will and Flora lived with her.

Will acted as the overseer and collector of rents for his mother-in-law. He also used some of her farmland and grazing pastures for himself in raising and feeding cattle and hogs. The Hamlin home was large, with good facilities, barns, orchards, vineyards, and most other conveniences except electricity and a water system. I had a small comfortable room in the back part of the house, with a good bed, plenty of warm covers, a washstand, table and good reading lamp. It was the best living I had ever experienced.

My day began about five-thirty, seven days a week, and ended when it became too dark to work outside. I had time off for haircuts and went with the family to church on Sunday. I had little need for dress-up clothes and had only the minimum necessary. Will bought my work clothes in nearby Gorman and gave me a dollar or so in cash when I asked for it, keeping strict account of all such advances; thus I had no chance to spend my earnings. When Will woke me each morning I went directly to the barn and fed the animals - horses, mules, cows, hogs. Will usually milked the cows and we finished our pre-breakfast chores about the same time. By then Flora and her mother had prepared breakfast which was typical of that served by those who could afford whatever they desired. We had hot biscuits and cornbread, fried chicken or steak and cream gravy, eggs and bacon, potatoes, jams, jellies and coffee, milk and butter and fresh fruits in season. Of course, one could not eat much of so many things, but there was plenty of choice. From breakfast Will and I went to the barn where he outlined what he wanted me to do that day. Among those tasks were plowing, planting, cultivating and harvesting of crops of peanuts, wheat, oats, corn, maize, sorghum and vegetables, hauling wood for cooking and heating, helping with care, feeding and roundup of cows and calves and working in the blacksmith shop.

We had no power equipment, using horses and mules to do all of the work. Will had the best animals available and kept them in good condition. He had no lack of food for them because the tenants on Mrs. Hamlin's farms brought him whatever he required from their harvest rent. The tenants sold or stored the balance of the rent portion of their harvest, according to Mrs. Hamlin's desire. It was my job to help keep the animals well groomed, including the replacement of their shoes or trimming of hooves.

At times Will and I worked together. During harvest of grain he sat on and operated the reaper as I drove the team of four that pulled it, I riding one of the team. In addition to reaping his own crops of wheat and oats, Will would serve his neighbors on a hire basis. We usually returned to the house for our midday meal, also feeding the team and giving the animals a chance to rest. Because it was in the heat of the day we often took off as much as two hours for noon, depending on the urgency of the job we were on.

The heat of the Texas midday sun is so intense in summer that it is easy for farmers to linger longer in the shade after eating than they should. But modern tractors have helped in this respect by having canopies, lights and other attachments for continuous operation both day and night. Two or more persons can take turns and keep a powered machine in more or less constant service. This is only one example of the advances in farming techniques. No doubt young men are now dreaming of and designing a

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completely automated, computerized farm operation with a comfort-conditioned control room and visual supervision by television cameras.

Will and I got along very well. He was not a hard taskmaster and always spoke to me in a kindly manner, giving me instructions and advice which I tried to follow. He was of slender build, about five feet eleven, weighing around a hundred and fifty. He was quite cross-eyed and wore his hat at an angle of about thirty degrees, which seemed to me to be somehow related to the angle of his eyes. He also used snuff, carefully removing it from his two-ounce tin box with the blade of his pocket knife, and then placing it behind his back teeth. There the snuff gradually mixed with saliva to create the desired effect, whatever that was.

Perhaps many are familiar with the various ways people dip snuff, but I have never seen another who did it as Will, with a knife blade. A more common method I have observed is the use of a short, green twig two or three inches long, with a half inch or so broken into a fibrous brush, which is moistened in the mouth and then held a moment in the snuff box. The wet fibers collect a ball of snuff which is placed behind the teeth, allowing the end of the twig to protrude from the lips. It was not uncommon to see dark saliva streaking the chins of dippers or forming a drop on the end of the twig, creating doubt as to where it might eventually land, especially in the kitchen.

Chapter 9

More of Will Haynes's Farm

Although the days were long and the sun was hot I recall no particular feeling of discouragement as I worked along in the fields and pastures, quite alone most of the time. I did constantly harbor the

idea that I would eventually get out and find a teaching job. But I had no contacts with school people and didn't realize how much one needs help to get started.

In midsummer I asked for a couple of days off and went by train to visit Abilene Christian College where I explored the possibility of entering to study stenography and typing, with deferment of payment for tuition until I could earn some money. I received no encouragement. I then went on to some other towns and tried to contact school trustees about a teaching job. None seemed interested in talking to me. I returned very much disappointed.

I had become acquainted with several young men and women whom I met at church and the few Sunday evening socials I attended. I was at the age when girls become of special interest but I couldn't afford the customary horse and buggy necessary to date them. Therefore all the contacts I made with such were by walking over the deep sandy lanes called roads.

Sandstorms were common and sometimes severe. Clouds of sand would obscure the sun, irritate face and eyes, and sift into the tightest houses. In one such storm my eyes became so sore that it took weeks for them to heal. But the sandy soil is well adapted to growing of peanuts, which was then and is still a major crop of the area.

Choice and Chance

The hot summer burned into and warmed the fall as usual, during which we harvested the Spanish peanuts. The peanut plants, or vines, were uprooted with a plow, left to dry a couple of days, then the sand was shaken off so they could further dry before being threshed. The plants were then hauled to a centrally located thresher (separator) operated by a local farmer on a fee basis.

The thresher was a machine five or six feet wide and twelve or fifteen long. A box-type thing some six or seven feet high, which contained machinery powered by a gas or steam engine, stood some thirty feet back and was connected by a belt. The plants were fed into the front end and forced into the spinning parts which separated the peanuts from the stalks and leaves. The peanuts poured out on the side of the thresher while the leaves and stalks were blown out the back end into a pile, being later compressed into bales and used for winter feeding of stock. The peanuts represented the major money value and were sold in the open market or fed directly to hogs on the farm. Those sold in the market were processed into numerous products, oil being the main one. The residuals of peanut oil are meal and cake which are sold back to farmers for feeding stock.

Fall drifted into winter and Will asked me to stay on with him. There were many jobs to be done during the winter – mending fences, repairing equipment, and hauling feed out into the pastures for the cattle during severe weather. My thoughts, however, were still on other things. Will received the Fort Worth daily paper by which I followed the progress of war in Europe and realized that our own country might become involved.

Early in the spring of 1917 Will bought their first car, a five passenger Chevrolet. This was quite an event in the neighborhood. Shortly afterward Will had to make a train trip to New Mexico. I did not then know how to drive the car, but being left alone with it I soon learned. I had lots of curiosity and wanted to find out the mystery of the reverse gear. I carefully took the gearbox apart and examined the positions of the meshing gears. The greater mystery, however, is how I got them back together so that it worked properly.

Will returned from New Mexico the day after the United States declared war with Germany. The daily paper became more and more interesting, but the farm work went on as usual. Seeds were planted and the growing crops were cultivated. But in late July and early August the Texas farmer tries to reach a stage when he can say, "I have my crop laid by." I don't know what a literal translation of those words would mean. They seem to me to mean nothing, but the farmer means that he has a period of a few weeks when he can sit by and not worry about fast growing weeds and frequent plowing.

So when Will and I had the crops "laid by" this August, I told Will I'd like to go visit Fort Worth, and possibly Dallas. I had read of the need for workers on construction of Army facilities in those places and felt that I could get a job. I can't recall, but Will and I probably had an understanding that if I didn't find work I could return.

Will examined his records and showed me the notations he had made of all advances, then paid me the balance due in cash. After eighteen months the amount was less than a hundred dollars, but this was more money than I had ever seen before at one time. I evidently had no fear of the future and had complete confidence that I would find a way to make a living.

This was the end of a period, a turning point in my life. I had made a choice and now I must look out for chances. I can't assess the effect of the year and a half with Will on my character and maturity. I had lost none of my desire to get away from farming, not

that I thought it in any way degrading, but only that I saw no means of my being able to be successful and prosperous in it. I saw only a fortunate few who had the ability to survive the fickle favors of nature. One never knew what kind of a crop he would make. The farmer planted, another watered now and then, and a good harvest was likewise — now and then. Surely, I thought, even my little education could help me be more satisfactorily productive.

So in August 1917 I ventured to leave the security of being a farmhand - good food, comfortable quarters, and a considerate employer. I was uninhibited by any knowledge of what could happen to an ignorant boy in a strange, new kind of world. My confidence was, perhaps, induced in part by a subconscious realization that Will Haynes and his peanut farm remained a refuge.

Chapter 10

Dr. Guthrie's Drug Store

August days are hotter in Comanche County. My things were packed and now my objective was to get to Gorman, six miles north, where I could take the train to Fort Worth. It was one of those Texas summer days when the meridian sun seems to stand still and the only sounds are those of katydids perched round about, rubbing their wings in vibrant praise to the gods of sun and heat in unvarying intervals of harmonic tones. All else is silence as one lazily listens, dozing in his selected shade.

But this day I had plans that couldn't wait. Will made no offer to take me to Gorman; he knew I'd find a way. By phoning around I located a young man who was driving there that afternoon. I took my suitcase and set out on the mile walk to his home. At that age neither sun nor heat nor any such thing would have hindered me.

It was about four in the afternoon when we reached Gorman. There was nothing for me to do but wander about and wait until train time around midnight. Gorman had a population of some 1500 but this day it was almost as quiet as the farm from which I had come. The stores were empty and sidewalks deserted. A few saddle horses and wagon teams were hitched here and there with animals' heads drooping from the heat. As I watch television and movies today I realize that the most accurate part of the portrayal of southwestern towns is their form and appearance. The long wooden sidewalks, dusty streets, false storefronts, livery stables, wagon yards and watering troughs were typical aspects of the towns and villages.

The train arrived and the conductor stepped off with his lantern, put the step stool in place and I, along with two or three others, climbed aboard. Inside the coach I soon struck up a conversation with a young man who asked where I was going. He said he was also going to Fort Worth and that he had made the trip before. He suggested that if I wished I could skip the change of trains at the regular transfer point of Dublin and go on to Waco and change there without additional charge, even though it was quite a distance farther that way. This idea appealed to me because I might be able to visit my friend Lee Stubblefield who, I knew, was working there as a stenographer. I checked with the conductor and he agreed that I could do this. That bit of conversation changed the course of my entire life. I reached Fort Worth not hours but years later.

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As the train approached Waco I could see the twenty-two story Amicable Life Insurance Building sticking up like a needle in the center of the city. That was where Lee had written me he was working. It was the tallest building in all of Texas and a very well known landmark, about which a cowboy was reported to have said when he first saw it, "My God, what a silo!"

It was about eight in the morning when I got off the train in Waco. In walking around the depot to try to get my bearings I saw a sign, "Guthrie's Drug Store," just across the street. Knowing that Dr. Guthrie had moved from Salado to Waco, I correctly assumed this to be his place of business. I took my suitcase and went over to the store where Dr. Guthrie gave me a pleasant welcome. We talked of our families and mutual friends. I told him of my plans to see Lee and then go on to Fort Worth.

Dr. Guthrie was not a rugged Texan, nor a Texan at all. He had been educated in Tennessee, never having done heavy physical work like the average Texan with whom he had been associated at Salado. He and his family had lived rather sheltered lives. He was a small man, very polite and sensitive, cautious and professional in his relations with the public. In his business location near the railroad tracks, next door to a saloon and a third rate hotel, where much of his trade came from those who lived on the wrong side of the tracks, he was much like a rose among thorns. He patiently and understandingly listened to the problems of many of his customers.

After telling me about the big business boom which had engulfed Waco because of the construction of the military facilities in the area, he spoke of his difficulties in getting satisfactory help in his store. He finally asked me if I would consider working for him. This was an unexpected turn but after very little consideration I accepted his offer of \$10 a week. I found that it meant working twelve to fourteen hours a day, six days a week and about half that on Sunday. That was no more than I was accustomed to and in retrospect I was probably fortunate to have been so confined because there were many questionable attractions in which I might otherwise have become involved.

I then had to find a place to live and assumed that Lee would be helpful in that respect. He was not at the office where I expected to find him, but had taken a job with one of the contractors on the military construction. I therefore went to his boarding house and waited for him. When he came in, I told him of my situation and we promptly went to the landlord with whom I made arrangements for room and board for \$20 a month. I had to share a room with another young man named Sadler, who became my good friend. It was a large boarding house and provided meals for a number of nonresidents. It was about a fifteen minute walk to my work.

Most of the people at the boarding house were in some way engaged in businesses directly or indirectly related to the big military construction and training programs around Waco. The city was a beehive of activity. It was swarming with soldiers, their dependents, sweethearts, "camp followers," dope peddlers, swindlers, gamblers, and every other type who thought he could make a quick buck. Having read only the Fort Worth paper, I had not realized that Waco was just as much a boom town as were Dallas and Fort Worth.

Dr. Guthrie allowed me to visit my family at Salado. They were not very surprised by my move because they had observed several young fellows my age leave Salado and seek work around the army camps. Some of these had already returned with tainted reputations caused by the reports of their misdeeds in connection with their government jobs. My friend Mark Halsey was still running the drug store and was glad to learn of my association with his longtime friend Dr. Guthrie.

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My brother and sisters had, of course, grown much in the year and a half since I had seen them. They were doing well in school. Salado College had been abandoned as an institution but the building and grounds were given to the local district for use as a high school. This was very good for our family because it was their only chance of getting even a high school education.

After a couple of days I returned to Waco and my work in the drug store, which, I soon learned, brought me in contact with many of the undesirables who preyed on the young service men who roamed the streets at night in great numbers. Men and women came to the store for drugs, some of which can now be sold only by prescription. Some would sit at the fountain and show me the needle pricks from dope injections. Others would buy bottles of certain drugs which they would immediately drink in front of me. I shall never forget the look of guilt and pride on the face of one young girl who came in to buy several dollars' worth of cosmetics for which her man-friend had prearranged with Dr. Guthrie. I also had contact with some of these unfortunates who had rooms in the nearby cheap hotels and to whom I had to deliver prescriptions of medicine prepared by Dr. Guthrie.

One evening a man who had been cultivating our confidence came in with a companion and ordered drinks at the fountain, making the usual small talk. After he saw things were dull and Dr. Guthrie was not working behind his prescription case, our friend took a pair of new socks from his pocket and asked permission to go behind the prescription case and put them on. The companion remained and engaged us in conversation for two or three minutes until his pal came out and they immediately paid their bill. Suspicious, Dr. Guthrie went and examined his prescription case, quickly returning to tell me that he had been robbed of certain drugs. He was quite disturbed but realized there was nothing he could do; the man had not been caught in the act of stealing.

Some weeks later as I was on my way home around ten in the evening, I ran into this man as he came onto the dimly lighted sidewalk from a dark building. He didn't recognize me and began telling me how he had fallen asleep nearby and had to get back to his hotel. I could see that he was "high" but continued with him to his hotel. After lingering a couple of minutes outside I went in and asked the hotel clerk a few questions about the man who had just come in. He did not hesitate to tell me the man's name and that he was a dope fiend and dope seller. I told Dr. Guthrie about the encounter the next day, but there was still nothing he could do in the way of prosecuting the man.

My work at the drug store was pleasant and easy compared with the physical energy required on the farm. In addition to duties as a fountain boy and general clerk, I made deliveries on foot, by trolley car, or bicycle, depending on distance and location. Late one night I took a prescription to a family in a distant section with instructions not to leave it without payment because the man was several months in arrears for previous deliveries. This was a bit difficult for me but I told him I would have to be paid before handing over the package. His children were present so he invited me inside and began to say how pleased he would be to pay me right away and didn't realize that his credit was not good. In a somewhat boastful attitude, reminding me of Dickens' Mr. Micawber, he said he would speak with Dr. Guthrie soon. The incident made a deep impression on me.

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Dr. and Mrs. Guthrie had three sons, Edwin, James, and Robert Lee, who were raised in the strict path of religious training and were sheltered from undesirable companions in their early years. Dr. Guthrie showed a similar interest in helping me avoid "evil companions." I had respect for his interest and did manage to stay out of trouble. Edwin, the eldest son, had then finished Baylor and was teaching; James, who was my age, was studying law at Baylor; Robert Lee was still in high school but later went to Baylor, then Brown University, and finally to Oxford through a Rhodes Scholarship.

Chapter 11

Wells Fargo Express

A month or so after arrival in Waco I came down with a severe case of three-day measles. Just at that time my friend Lee was getting ready to go with his employer to a new job at the Hog Island Ship Yard on the Delaware River just outside Philadelphia. Before leaving he visited me as I lay in bed with the measles. A week or so later while enroute to Philadelphia on the train he broke out with the measles. He was able to avoid being put off the train but still thinks that is one of the best ways to spread the disease. After Lee left I felt a bit alone. I stayed on with Dr. Guthrie through the winter, suffering a case of pneumonia in February or March. My roommate and other friends thought I was pretty sick and called my family. Mother came up to see me. Coincidentally, the physician who attended me was the same who attended my mother at my birth. He was Dr. Witt, who had moved from Salado to Waco some years before.

My roommate, Sadler, worked for Wells Fargo Express. He knew I was making a low wage and had confidence that I was capable of doing better. He suggested that I apply to his company for a job, which I did. It was April when I left Dr. Guthrie, who said he could not afford the \$65 a month salary I would get at Wells Fargo.

The new job was quite different but I had no doubt about my ability to learn it. I had to get up at five A.M. and walk to the main Express office in the center of city where I checked out a truck load of packages for delivery to the branch Express office at Rich Air Field just outside Waco. I was given a .45 caliber pistol and holster which I strapped over my shoulder. Another man drove the truck as I sat in the back to guard the packages, many of which contained valuables for the men at Rich Field. When we reached the branch office we went through the checking process again to make sure that all packages were accounted for and to transfer responsibility to the manager of that office. There was another clerk in the office who was older and more experienced than I. After unloading, checking and sorting, the manager signed a receipt for all the packages I had delivered. I then remained in the office as a clerk, serving the public by receiving and delivering packages at the counter until about four in the afternoon. We then loaded the day's receipts on the truck and took them to the city office where they were checked in and I was relieved of responsibility. I then turned in my pistol and went home in time for the evening meal.

Choice and Chance

This was an interesting job. I was learning something new. I was handling cash and other valuables and accurate records were required. My contacts were not only with people who came to the counter but also with other employees of the company. I could see possibilities for advancement. The branch manager liked me. He helped me learn my duties and complimented my behavior, saying he would like to meet my parents because I appeared to have had excellent home training. This, of course, pleased and encouraged me. The other man in the office was equally helpful. I began to get the feeling of how complex activities are accomplished through the coordinated efforts of many who understand their individual responsibilities and thereby contribute to the common objective. I could see the different levels of ability and responsibility. Although a very small cog in a large organization, I realized that I, too, had a chance to become a branch manager some day.

It was late in June 1918. I had been with the express company about three months. Suddenly a letter came from Lee. He wrote that if I could get to Philadelphia he could get me a job that would pay at least a hundred dollars a month. Immediately I knew I was going to Philadelphia because I had enough money to pay my way. I wrote Lee that I was resigning my job and would leave as soon as possible. I gave the usual two weeks' notice.

I asked for time off to visit my family. After I got home and renewed acquaintance with them, Philadelphia seemed very far away. I began to waver in my plans to go so far from those I loved. My parents said little to dissuade me but my sixteen-year-old brother reasoned that it would be a mistake. Things were changing, the children were growing up, and I was needed closer home. Salado was not the same since the war had taken hold of the lives of so many. Mark Halsey had gone to serve in the Army as a pharmacist, leaving Esther, who had passed the State Pharmacy Board, to run the drug store. Most of my former associates were gone.

All of America was involved in a great social upheaval which would not only affect all of its people but also the peoples of all the world. Henry's reasoning that I should not go so far away was persuasive. I could not sleep that night. To go or not to go, that was my problem. I'm sure it was the first sleepless night of my life caused by my having to make my own decision. I got up in the morning with a decision not to go.

When I told the family of my decision they seemed pleased. It was necessary then, I felt, to telephone my boss and withdraw my resignation. Later that day Henry took me to Belton where I took the "Interurban" (electric train) to Temple and then the train to Waco, about fifty miles north. But on the way to Waco that day something happened. I don't know what it was nor what kind of reasoning I went through but I changed my mind again and was determined to go to Philadelphia. I fully understood that my actions were causing trouble for others but in my mind it just couldn't be helped. My boss was upset with me when I told him I had changed my mind again. I went to the main office and tried to explain my situation to the top man there and tried to assure him he would have no trouble replacing me. But that suggestion did not strike him favorably and he told me in very definite terms that I was a little young to offer suggestions about how he could run his business.

I checked on trains and wrote Lee the date and time I should arrive in Philadelphia. Then I had to finish out my time at the office, collect my pay, and bid farewell to my few friends in the city. I shall never forget saying good-bye to the clerk, a married man, who

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had been so nice to me in the office. He walked with me to the street corner where I was to take the bus to the city, and as we parted he wept as though I were one of his own family. It was unusual to see a man weep, but for him to weep for me I just couldn't understand.

The die was cast. It was another turning point in my life — a choice and a chance.

Choice and Chance

THE RAMPY FAMILY

Thomas Jefferson Rampy

b. 14 Sep. 1870, Alabama
d. 24 Jan. 1948, Winters, TX
m. 1 Nov. 1896, Florence, TX

Bethsaida Ann Bonita Underwood

b. 27 June 1875, Granger, TX
d. 26 Aug. 1961, Ballinger, TX

Alfred Hope Drinkwater

b. 10 June 1876, Birmingham, England
d. 6 Jan., 1959, Phila., PA
m. 16 Dec. 1897, Phila., PA

Eunice Short

b. 3 Jan. 1876, Phila., PA
d. 11 June 1962, Phila., PA

Thomas Randall Rampy

b. 4 Dec. 1897, Salado, TX
d. 21 June 1976, Falls Church, VA

Gladys Anna Drinkwater

b. 17 Dec. 1899, Phila., PA
d. 3 Mar. 1993, Falls Church, VA

m. 16 Dec. 1922, Phila., PA

Their children:

1. **Thomas Randall Rampy, Jr.**

b. 21 Mar 1924, Philadelphia, PA
m. 11 Nov 1944, Bruning AFB, NE to Nancy Noteboom, b. 7 Sep 1923, Mason City, IA
d. 5 Jul 1982, Ann Arbor, MI

Children: 1. **Kristina Dee**, b. 24 Apr 1947, d. 3 Jan 1964
2. **Thomas Randall, III**, b. 5 Feb 1952, d. 14 Dec 1987
m. Imelda Salembier. No children.

2. **Ollie Mildred Rampy**

b. 5 May, 1925, Philadelphia, PA
m. 16 Apr 1949, Fort Meyer, VA to Richard E. Smith, b. 1 Dec 1925, Plainfield, IL

Children: 1. **Barry Richard**, b. 12 Nov 1953, Portsmouth, VA
m. 14 May 1977, Ft. Worth, TX, to Susan Grigsby, b. 25 September 1956
Their children: 1. Grant Thomas, b. 7 May 1985, Fairfax, VA
2. Mandy Renee, 1 Apr 1988, Fairfax, VA

3. **Gordon Alfred Rampy**

b. 4 Jan 1930, Springfield, PA
m. 23 Apr 1955, Portsmouth, OH to Bertha Susan Hale, b. 31 Aug 1936, Fullerton, KY

Children: 1. **Jefferson Alan**, b. 10 Feb 1956, Akron, OH
m. 28 Aug 1976, Dennison, TX to Malena Oreta Terry, b. 3 Mar 1957
Their children: 1. Jefferson Hayden, b. 9 Jul 1980, Austin, TX
2. Nolan Marshall, b. 19 Aug 1983, Austin, TX
3. Preston Thomas, b. 4 Jun 1986, Austin, TX
2. **Bruce Hale**, b. 23 Oct 1957, Chillicothe, OH
m. 31 May 1980, Warr., VA to Catherine Marie Pittelkau, b. 21 Jan 1957
Their children: 1. Neil Joseph, b. 5 Jul 1984, Warrenton, VA
2. Scott Andrew, b. 29 Jan 1986, Warrenton, VA
3. Karen Alma, b. 30 Jan 1989, Warrenton, VA
3. **Randall Grant**, b. 13 Jun 1964, Terre Haute, IN
m. 22 May 1994, Murfreesboro, TN to Marna Karen McCasland, b. 4 Sep 1970
Their children: 1. Sarah Jane, b. 13 August 1995, St. Louis, MO
2. Luke Hardy, b. 18 March 1997, St. Louis, MO
3. Katerina Grace, b. 7 July 1999, Simferopal, Ukraine
4. Gordon Nathaniel, b. 10 September 2002, Reston, VA
4. **Wyatt Andrew**, b. 24 Oct 1967, Nitro, WV
m. 30 May 1997, Nashville, TN to Wendy Lynn Woods, b. 18 October 1974
Their children: 1. Wyatt Ellis, b. 16 March, 1999, Nashville, TN
2. Anna Grace, b. 29 December, 2001, Nashville, TN
3. Lauren Ashley, b. 17 February 2004, Nashville, TN

Choice and Chance



The Underwood Family, ca. 1895
Wm. Lane, Mary (Mollie),
Bethsaida, Mary, William David



Thomas Jefferson and Bethsaida Rampy, November 1896



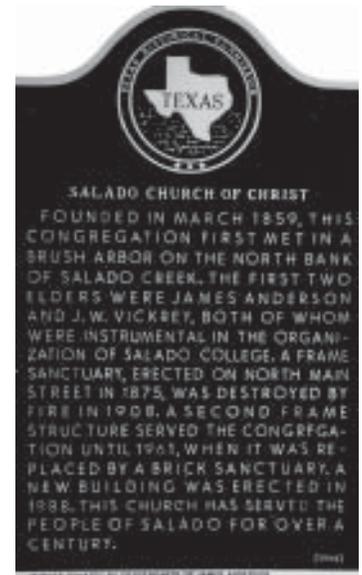
Threshing in Salado, ca. 1900 (T. J. Rampy with long pole.)



Randall, 1900



Randall, 1905



Choice and Chance

Amity School, 1906
(TRR circled.)



Millard and Randall
on Inkus, 1907

Amity School Pupils, 1906
(Randall and Miss Alice Rogers circled.)



Choice and Chance



A Baptism in Salado Creek, 1907 (Randall and Millard seated at water's edge, right.)



The Rampy Children, 1907
Rear: Thomas Randall, Arbie Marie, James Millard
Front: Janie Jewel, William Henry, Lela Pearl

Choice and Chance



Salado College, 1924



SALADO COLLEGE
GRADUATING EXERCISES
June 2, 8:30 P. M., 1915.

Invocation—Rev. Patterson.

High School
"HAMMER IT OUT"

Randall T. Rampy.....Salutatorian
"Man the Empire Builder"

Ruby Lee Studdard.... "Individual Responsibility"

Bookkeeping
"PREPAREDNESS"

Louis W. Condra....."The Business Man's Obligation"

William Tully Doyle....."Lights of the Centuries"

Shorthand

Stella Luesta Belk....."Success"

Edgar Earl Black..... "Preparedness"

William Tully Doyle

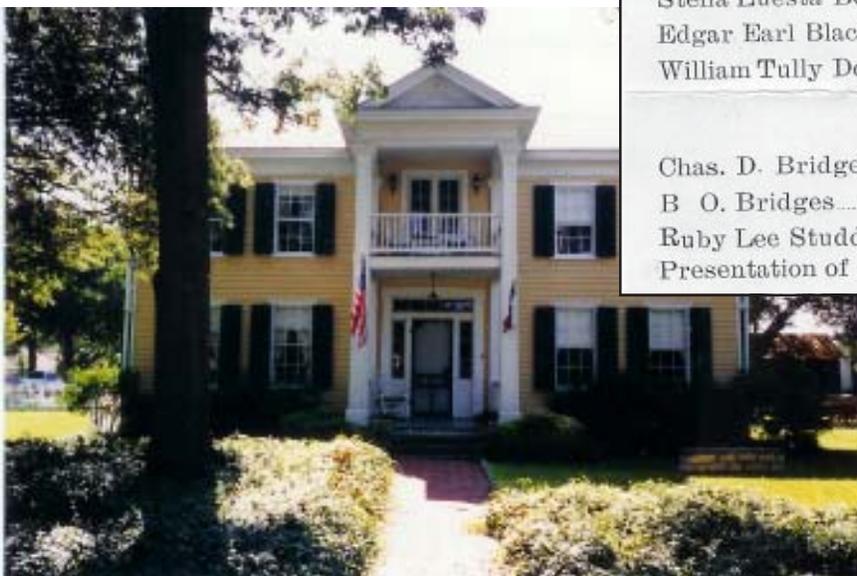
Typewriting

Chas. D. Bridges "Dispatch"

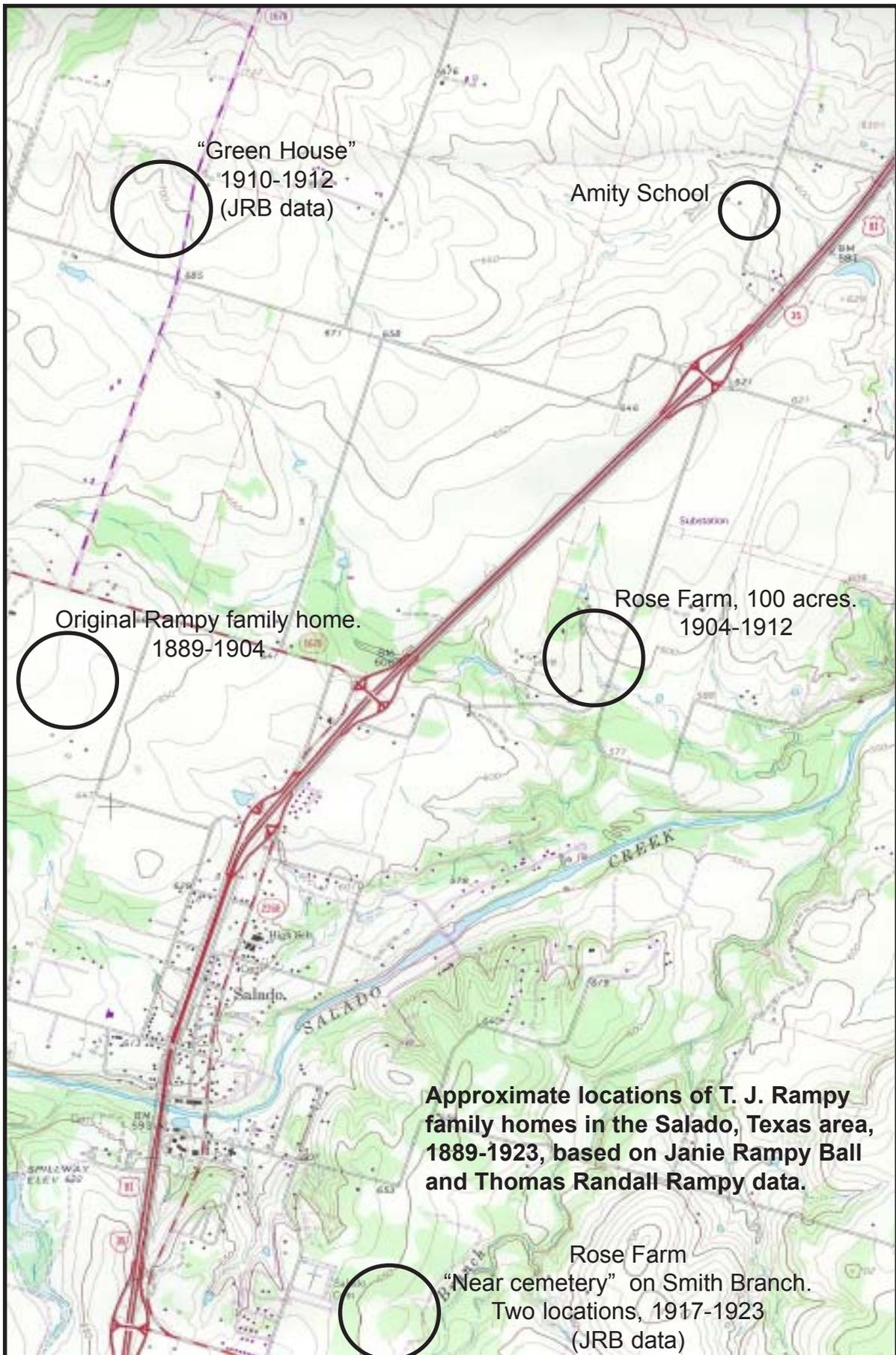
B O. Bridges..... "Aims"

Ruby Lee Studdard.....Valedictory

Presentation of Diplomas.....Pres. Doyle



The Rose Residence
in Salado



A Letter from Professor Henry Sibberns

Comfort, Tex., Febr. 13th, 1916

Dear Friend Randall

You must pardon me for not having answered your kind letter sooner, but my time is taken up to the last minute; many a time the midnight lamp finds me writing, but not letters.

Well, old boy, cheer up. Your ship will come in yet, just keep the channels clear, you have lost nothing, rather you have gained in experience. Try again, you know now where you are a little weak. Civil government is important, more so this year in which elections take place.

So look to it, and next year you can have a school if you look out a little. I wish you could come to me, and we both might dive deep into languages and philosophy for both of which subjects you seem to be well gifted. But science is indispensable since it forms the basis of nearly all modern education. You are young and talented, so you can afford to have some difficulties arise, but conquer them and you will have the greater satisfaction when success comes. If the mountain refuses to come to the prophet, well, let the prophet take the hint and march to the mountain, barefoot even. Ask Dr. Jones, he is kind and willing to lend a helping hand, just as I am, were it only I could help you. There's the rub. My university course is just as instructive as it is pleasant though it takes up all the time I can possibly spare. The book bill is rather large, too, since I have no library at my disposal. But if you should come to Comfort you, could sleep in my second room which is literally stuffed with books, so you would be among surroundings which seem to please you best, as you say. Books are good, certainly, but we must not neglect life as such. Our social surroundings demand their rights, the individual must become a useful member of society, a too introspective life makes man too sensitive and unfit for economical activities. But the state needs active citizens; few if any, can be allowed to dream aesthetic dreams. Let's be active, each one in his own rational way, and things in this world might still become tolerable. Even if you should decide to remain on the farm, even then you can do much for the community; intelligent farmers are the real backbone of the nation, believe me, not lawyers and the rest of professional men, indispensable as they are. But we do not choose our vocation, the vocation chooses us, if we hear the call, the inner voice, we must follow, heedless what the future may bring. Now let me say no more on this subject, decide slowly and deliberately, but your mind being made up, go ahead, steadfastly and with perseverance. The outer world may retard success, the inner development will go on unencumbered.

How are things going on in Salado? I understand that the College has closed its doors. As was to be expected. The more satisfied I am that you are not connected with this institution. Mr. D. is no teacher for you.

Yesterday it was summer, charming outside. But just in time for a masquerade ball a norther came up, so I crawled into my bed and had a good sleep. Today the stove is quite cheerful and comfortable. But I must close as much is to be done yet.

Write soon again, I am always glad to hear from you. Don't become a dreamer now; I want you to be cheerful and confident, hear?

Sincerely yours,

s/Henry Sibberns