

## Virgil Hawley Stories

**I was born in Strong City Kansas November 16, 1923, in the house, which 12 years later, belonged to my best friend Buster Magathan's parents.**

**My earliest, faintest, memory, was of myself and some other neighborhood child, sitting under a pear tree in the neighborhood about 100 feet south of the house in which we lived. Yes, I can remember distances and directions. My mother was scolding me for messing with the neighbor's pears. I don't remember any neighbor who might have owned the tree.**

**I remember some of the little kids examining each other's whatzits. We thought that they were wormy looking little things, but the girls didn't have any.**

**Later at that place, I remember my dad had caught a 2-foot long carp. They took a picture of me holding it up, standing next to the yard water hydrant. It was about as long as I was.**

**Some time along about then, we moved out into the oil fields, to follow my dad's work. He had what they called a casing crew, which required that we move often to follow the development of the new oil fields. Those times were still in the era when the crude standard tools for drilling, were used. Standard tools consisted of a long heavy drill bit which was raised up a few feet then dropped to the bottom of the hole, gradually grinding it's way through hard layers of stone, shale, and the like. A long pipe with a check valve on the bottom of it was used to bring up the ground up stone and muddy water from the bottom of the hole. Rotary tools, which came later, had a three-headed bit, which was rotated continually grinding its way through whatever layer it encountered.**

**From pictures I've seen, we lived mostly in tarpaper covered oil field shacks. I believe that at one time my mother ran a tarpaper café for the oil workers. Those were the days when labor was really manual and the crews really did work up a hearty appetite.**

**My dad and the crews and relatives did a lot of rabbit hunting. Sometimes they took their wives. I have pictures showing them with the model 12 Winchester shot gun, which sits back in the corner my closet today. I have numerous snapshots of the cars guns and tarpaper shacks of that period.**

**In one of those shacks I was standing on a trunk looking out the window, when my mother hollered for me to "Get down off of there before you fall and hurt yourself." I didn't believe she was right, but as I attempted to get down of a trunk that was two-thirds my height, I did fall, whacking my ear on the edge of the trunk. It cracked the cartilage in my left ear. I screamed to high heaven, and got the sympathy of my mother, even though I had been bit out of line. The sympathy helped my feelings but it didn't do a thing for my ear. Seventy-six years later I still have an unusual bump in my left ear.**

**As the casing crew business slowed down we moved to Garnette, Kansas where we lived in a house, which was attached to the back of a White Eagle filling station. It was on a northwest corner of the block, not too far from the northwest corner of town. My Grandpa and Grandma Hawley lived about 5 miles South East of Garnette. Throwing a block of ice on the back bumper of the Model T Ford, and hauling it to Grandpa's house to make ice cream was a frequent and much enjoyed occasion.**

**Grandpa had won a county old time fiddler contest with a number he composed himself. I can still hum a few bars of it. In the evening when the chores were all done, we'd all gather**

**in the front room and sing hymns like “In the Garden” and “In That City Four Square”. Another was “When We Get To The End of The Way”. These songs were sung at their funeral, some years later. They had been killed in a car wreck. As so many of my family have been.**

**Grandpa always stuck his Spearmint chewing gum on the back of his rocking chair, when he started to sing. Next evening he'd chew it again for a while. In usual times the front room was lighted by ordinary kerosene lamps, but when there was company, Grandma would light up the Aladdin Lamp. To light up an Aladdin lamp one had to pump a little finger pump on the side of the lamp to get fuel pressure up. Then turn a little hand valve to let a bit of white gasoline into a small bowl just below the big asbestos mantle. That was called priming. When the tiny pipe bringing the fuel to the mantle got hot enough to vaporize the fuel, the mantle would glow with a brilliant incandescent glow as bright as modern electric lights! Aladdin Lamps were special. Not every home had one. As I walked by it one evening I started to speak and a droplet of saliva from my mouth, hit the chimney of the Aladdin. It cracked. I was disgraced, and embarrassed. I was scolded very emphatically. As you notice, I still remember it 72 years later.**

**As we moved around from place to place, we would come back to Grandpa and Grandma's for visits. On the occasions when we arrived after dark; Grandma would often say, "I knew it was you when I saw those headlights coming down Ram's Horn Hill!" Ram's Horn Hill was a high winding hill about a mile north of Grandma's place. From where she sat in the evening in her rocking chair, the north window of the living room was always in her line of sight. In the country, in those early days of the automobile, the sight of one coming over the hill at night was always exciting. It didn't happen very often.**

**Another event I remember from when I was about 5 or 6 years old, involved another hill. It was East of Elmdale, Kansas on the very very old way to go to Cottonwood Falls from points west. This hill road was a very steep one, probably made in the days before automobiles. It was so steep that our car couldn't climb it in low gear. Dad had to turn the car around, and back up the hill. Reverse gear was so low that I could get out of the car and run around up and down the hill, play in the ditch, pick flowers catch grasshoppers and still be ahead of the car. I always enjoyed this occasion, but I don't think Dad particularly enjoyed it.**

**There was an outdoor toilet at Grandma's house. It was equipped with an old Sears and Roebuck catalogue for toilet paper. The brown pages were no too bad, as long as one wadded them up, rolled them back and forth in his hands before using them. It had a latch knob on the inside of the door for privacy's sake.**

**When you're three years old, it's quite an adventure to go that far from the house, just to go to the pot. Grandma had turkeys at that time. One old gobbler was particularly aggressive. He fanned out his tail and extended his wings until they rubbed the ground as he walked around. When I passed by him on the way to the way to the toilet, he started chasing me, trying to flog me with his wings. I ran screaming into the toilet, and latched the door. The gobbler just strutted around in front of the toilet daring me to come out.**

**When I hollered "foo" it meant that I was through, and some one was supposed to come to get me. This time, nobody could hear me. I just screamed all the louder. Still no one came to rescue me. In desperation, I stuck my finger out the crack of the toilet door,**

and wiggled it back and forth beckoning, hoping some one could at least see me, even if they couldn't hear me. Finally some one saw that little finger sticking out through the crack in the toilet door. Boy did I stick close to grandma's skirt as we passed that vicious gobbler on the way back to the house ! I stayed in the house all the rest of the day.

Most folks around the countryside where Grandpa and Grandma Hawley lived had a telephone. When they made a call, they had to do the ringing by hand. There was a little crank on the side of the wall mounted phone box. That was the only kind we knew about then. In order to make a call, one had to grab the little crank and crank out the ring of the one he was calling. For example "a long, a short and two longs". This was the Finkenbinder's ring. Of course everybody on the party line, knew everybody else's ring and therefore nearly all of everybody's business. There wasn't much animosity about everybody knowing everybody's business. It was sort of like an extended family. Really extended! What you didn't want 'em to know you didn't tell on the phone.

Grandpa had two wells on the place. Actually one was a cistern. It was great for washing your hair, since it held rainwater, captured on the roof of the house. This was a common practice then.

Grandpa had a terrible time keeping the sparrows from building nests in the eaves. He hated them because their nests kept the rainwater from getting to the cistern. He had to keep shooting the abominable wretches, to keep them from plugging the eaves with their nests. Another place the sparrows got into trouble was in the chicken yard. Grandma went down to the granary and brought Kafir corn heads back up to the chicken yard to feed her laying hens. The sparrows flocked down into the feeding area and proceeded to have a feast!

**I'm not sure whether sparrows or buckshot did the most damage to the eves, and laying hens.**

**The well down by the barn seemed a little better for drinking. I remember carrying a 3-gallon cylindrical milk bucket in one hand and a standard water bucket in the other. It was about 80 yards from the screened in back porch of the house to the well by the barn. That was a pretty good load for an eight year old. I really enjoyed taking the cover off the cistern pump and watching the little buckets come rolling up and over dumping their load into the spout, thence into the bucket hung over the spout to catch the water.**

**Getting water from the cistern wasn't bad because the cistern was only about 18 feet from the screened-in back porch. That's where the milk carried up from the barn, was strained through a tea towel. The clean milk was then set down in the cellar nearby to let the cream rise to the top. Grandma used some of the cream for churning butter in 2-gallon churn. The rest she took to town on Saturday along with her extra eggs, to trade for groceries.**

**For a little boy, the cellar was a fascinating place. All those shelves of canned peaches, canned pears, blackberries were so pretty all lined up so neatly. There were pickles of every sort. Dill pickles sweet pickles, pickle lily, all made me want to try some of each. All except those pickled peaches. I never liked those. I wandered why anyone would waste anything as good as a peach on something like that, when they could have made regular canned peaches.**

**Actually, there was another well way back on the west eighty acres. This one was a hole in the ground about 7 feet wide, which was lined with flat pieces of limestone. In the bottom of the hole was a never failing spring. It nearly always held**

**beautiful clear water. In order for the cattle to get the water, we had to draw it up with a bucket on the end of a 6-foot rope, and pour it into an old galvanized tank that had been there for many years. When the cattle saw us coming they would run over to us. They usually were thirsty.**

**One year in a very bad drought, even the seven-foot spring hole didn't have enough water to keep the cattle satisfied. Grandpa and I had to dig a temporary well in the bottom of the dry creek in the valley. We had dug down eight feet, when, we finally struck mud. We found an old bucket down there where, many years before someone had dug a well . Grandpa didn't line this hole with stone because the first time it rained, the hole would be filled with soil again. We dragged an old tank down there beside the temporary well, so we could water the cattle during the summer drought.**

**During the summers I stayed with Grandma and Grandpa Hawley**

**One day when we making ice cream at the White Eagle filling station. I noticed the nice little stream of water from the freezer, running along the curb. I was wading up and down in it when one of the adults yelled "Hey, get out of that. Don't you know that will burn your feet!?" Of course I knew that water wouldn't burn your feet because I waded in the ditch all the time and it never had hurt my feet. I ignored their ignorance**

until suddenly, my feet began to burn like heck! Chalk up another one for adults.

It was while we lived behind the filling station, that the memorable event of my getting my first of rubber knee boots occurred. A very exciting day for me. After that I could wade in ice cream freezer water without burning my feet I also had more fun wading up and down in the street ditches hunting for crawdads. Sometimes they were bright red. I thought that they were bloody, but I guess they just looked that way naturally.

I remember watching the humming bird moths flying from one petunia blossom, to the next. I thought that they were little birds like a humming bird, but the folks got me straightened out on that.

One day Uncle Keith came driving into the station past the two five foot concrete White Eagles, which stood out in front of the station. He was driving his Model a roadster. When he got in under the canopy which covered the gas pumps out in front of the station, he got out and threw open the turtle back of his car and showed us a whole bunch of possums, skunks and coons. Boy! Did they stink; all messed up and muddy looking.

My dad cleaned and skinned one of the coons. My mother baked it with sweet potatoes and pineapple on top. It was a little tough and stringy, but wasn't too bad. I had the notion that it was a lot like bear meat. In those depression days one more or less had to eat what was available. Next day was Sunday so we had chicken. My dad tried to convince me to eat a chicken gizzard, but there was no chance. I wasn't about to eat any thing that looked kinda gray, like chicken poop! And the same shape too.



**That same year my mother made me a nice warm overcoat out of one of Dad's old ones. Even though it was worn in spots, there was still enough of that heavy woolen material to make a little coat for me. I didn't want to wear it because it was homemade. It beat the heck out of no coat at all, and I soon got so I really liked it.**

**Later that year Donald and Murray Smith, and another boy, were walking in the watery ditch just north of the Smith house when we found a round mud ball that looked kinda like a little turtle. Suddenly something seemed to move. It really was a little bitsy turtle. That was really an exciting moment for a few small boys. We washed him off in the ditch water and there he was!**

**Later that same day, we were down their, and my sister Joyce was along with us She was probably about three or four years old. Some of the boys thought that she would look good with a crown made of cockleburs, which were there in copious numbers, along the ditch bank. They were doing great and had cockle burs piled about six inches high, when Joyce decided that she didn't like it anymore. When Mom discovered what happened, she really threw a fit! The boys thought that they had done a great thing. But when Mom had to cut off a bunch of Joyce's hair, she expressed a much different opinion. I was most fortunate because I had not been involved in the unusual hair do.**

**Along about that time, our neighbor Blen Smith, bought the first radio any of us had ever seen. It had long bank of batteries and lots of radio tubes that glowed. In order to hear anything on it, one had to put on a set of earphones.**

**Not long after that, my folks, along with aunts and uncles, went to see the first moving picture that any of us had seen. The pictures didn't talk, but they sure moved around fast.**

**A little later that year, most of the town went out to a local cow pasture to see our first airplane. It was a Ford Trimotor. It was a sort of mottled silver in color. People got in and out of it. It made a lot of noise. That sure was something.**

**Profits were not that good at the filling station, so, we went to Eastland, Texas, where my dad's brother, Donald, had a job for him, at the Arab Oil Refinery. The folks got a two-wheeled trailer hooked to the back of our Model T Ford, loaded it up and headed for Eastland. We slept on the ground all the way down there. We burned rags to help, keep the mosquitoes away. I don't think it bothered the mosquitoes much, but it sure burned our eyes.**

**One evening just before stopping time, as we went around a corner the trailer started swinging back and forth until it turned over. Our belongings were scattered along the road for a hundred feet. Black folks walked over to where we were to look the situation over. They didn't bother anything, and would probably have offered to help, had it not been for the fact that my dad acted a bit suspicious of them. Dad said that the only reason they didn't bother anything was because of the fact that we had an enormous bulldog, sleeping by the trailer. I didn't believe that then, and I still don't believe it.**

**Folks were pretty poor those years. We passed lots of shotgun shacks with no glass or screens on the windows. Folks sat on the porch or layer in the shade of the trees. Dogs and cats were well respected. They could run in and out of the houses at will, but mostly they joined the rest of the family on the porch. Chickens on the**

porch did offer some problems. They just did what they needed to where ever they were, and they didn't care who sat in it. The little houses were called shotgun shacks because one could shoot a shotgun through the front door and out the back without touching a thing.

When we got to Eastland we stayed for a while in a duplex owned by Mrs. Van Gheem. I had some pretty good times there. Bull and I roamed around in the vacant lots. The old deserted houses gave us lots of interesting things to check out. Stuff like old broken dishes shaving mugs, tarnished silverware, and one real pretty flower vase, with just one corner of the top slightly chipped. One of the old rickety houses had a back porch I could crawl under. That's where I first discovered Doodlebugs. Doodlebugs are little critters that make an inch and a half wide, funnel shaped hole in the dirt. The sides of the hole are soft and dusty. When a small bug accidentally gets into that funnel shaped hole, the Doodlebug gets under him in the dusty dirt and shakes the dirt around so that the victim becomes covered with the dirt. Then the Doodlebug promptly eats him. What a way to make a living and what fun for the victim!!

One day when we were over at Uncle Donald's house for a visit, I noticed a nice sand pile out in the yard. While the parents were in the house playing rummy, I decided to go out and play in that sand pile. I was scraping the sand up to a nice peak, when Uncle Donald hollered, "Hey you better get out of that ant hill. Those things will bite you!" I had seen lots of ants in Kansas and they didn't bother anybody, so I thought they must have been just kidding me. Pretty soon I felt a sting on my ankle. Then they stung my knee twice. Then all up and down my legs and some on my hands and arms. They were stinging me everywhere. I was on fire and screaming. I jumped up and ran into the house. Dad said get back out side those

things will be all over the house. They dragged me out and turned the water hose on me. That just made the ants madder, and they had to be picked off, one at a time.

Another traumatizing event that took place at the Van Gheems house really finalized my hatred of cayenne peppers. One of the bigger neighborhood kids tried to get me to eat a cayenne pepper. When I refused, he caught me and shoved it into my mouth, rubbing it around on my lips. It set me on fire!! It just so happened that the city water was off for a while at the time. I thought I would die. So you descendants who have heard that story a dozen times, there it is again. So suffer! And stop fussing at me for not liking cayenne.

It was while we lived at this place that my dad and some of his friends got hold of an old 28-foot sunken boat that had no motor. They hooked our Model A Ford onto it and dragged it out onto the bank they cleaned the mud and trash out of it, and scraped all the old paint off. Then they gave it a new paint job. After that, they mounted an old car motor in it. Surprisingly, it worked!

They kept it hidden way back in a swamp since they couldn't afford to buy a trailer for it. Whenever they wanted to use it, they had to wade way back there to get it and drag out to the lake edge. The swamp water was always covered with duckweed. This made it seem more spooky and snaky! Of course there really were Cotton Mouth water moccasins there, but we seldom saw one. It was an exciting thing to wade back there and get the boat.

Near the place where they dragged it out was a nice area for picnicking, wiener and marshmallow roasting, watermelon eating and the like. There were also many pecan trees, with pecans free for the taking. The trees made plenty of shade for spreading out tablecloths. The women did the cooking over wood fires. They sat around and played cards or embroidered

while the men seined minnows and fished or just road around in the boat.

Right next to the swamp there was a nice lake bank, Where we kids could run and jump off into the lake water. One time when the men were made jolly by beer drinking, three of them; Dad, Ed Teecox, and Pop Sloan decided for all three of them, to run arm in arm, and jump into the lake together. Of course, two of them had made it up ahead of time, that they would stop right at the edge, and push the third guy into the water while they stood on the bank and laughed at him. It all went well for the two, but the third guy wasn't overly happy about the situation, as he came stomping out of the water, sopping wet. It took Ed Teecox a while to see the humor in it, but after a few more beers he too, thought it was terribly funny. I think all three of them repeated that story until the day they died.

The next place we lived in Eastland, was out in the suburbs in a little brown house with a screened in back porch my baby sister Myra Glen was born while we lived there. She sure looked red and wrinkled.

I remember playing Red Rover Come Over, in the yard of the house on the corner, just north west of our house.

I reached the age of six while we lived there. Mom took me to the grade school to enroll me. When we got there, the teacher told us that, because of a shortage of school space that year, the Eastland children would have to wait another year to start to school. However if the parents had enough money, to pay a certain fee, the child could start at the age of six. It was easy to see whose children got to start to school on time. I don't believe it had anything to do with scholastic qualifications.

**While we lived there my dad built me my first kite. He made it out of split orange crate sticks, grocery store string and brown paper sack paper pasted on with flour paste. He tore some old rags into long narrow strips and tied them together to make a tail about ten feet long. There was a big open, grassy field out back of our house. It made a great place to fly a kite. Other kids were flying kites out there too. We noticed, while we were out there that there was great big home made kite, about 7 feet long, lying in the grass. It had been made out of two by fours and corrugated sheet metal. Had it ever had enough wind to fly, a kite that big, it would have taken Goliath with a strong rope to hold it.**

**One day I was walking in the mesquite southwest of the house in an uninhabited area. I turned my head just in time to see a full grown panther about 40 feet away, sort of slinking away from me real low to the ground dragging that long tail behind him. He just kept going and I did a quick retreat back to the house. I don't think he was worried about getting away from me, but I was deeply concerned about leaving him behind. Soon as I got out of sight, I took off in a full run all the way back to the house. Nobody believed that I had really seen a panther, but I know I did. I can still see that long tail nearly touching the ground to this day.**

**One time as we came home from Power Lake, and Bull was riding on the running board of our Model A, where he normally rode on such trips, Dad stopped to ask some local residents for some information. We always felt that Bull had gotten off too, to check out the area, and missed getting back on the running board. In case some of you young whipper snappers don't know what a running board is, it's a long flat metal piece about a foot wide, usually covered with rubber non-slip material. It usually runs from just behind the back door, up foreword to the beginning of the front fender. OK, so**

**you don't know what a fender is either. Oh well, anyhow it was used as a foot step as one got into the car, and that was where Bull rode, leaning up against the hood of the car. So you don't know what a hood is either?**

**It was while we lived in the little brown house with the screened in back porch, that we got a replacement for the original big bulldog named Bull. Dad came home from work one day and set his lunch bucket down on the bench on the back porch. He said, "Why don't you look in my lunch bucket and see what you find!" I opened the lunch bucket and there sat my best friend for the next 16 years. His nose was black. His hide was brindle. And his muzzle was bright pink as a baby's bottom. He spent the rest of his life as my pal, defender and fellow adventurer.**

**When Dad was working the night shift out at the refinery, he sometimes would take to work with him. We stayed in he boiler house most of the time. Those boilers made so much noise that we had to holler to hear above the roar. It was good sleeping on the floor in the boiler house, because no other noises could be heard above the boilers. Some times Dad would take me on his rounds with him. He showed me the butane pipes with the ice frozen on them. I thought it was so strange to see ice on pipes in the summer time.**

**The depression finally closed the Arab refinerey, which left Dad without a job again. We loaded the trailer again and headed north this time.**

**For some reason unknown to me, we stopped at a little town called Galva, Kansas, just a few miles east of McPherson. We rented a tent with a wooden floor. One day Bull and my cousin and I went out exploring the area. We found some trees along a creek just covered with wild**

grape vines. We picked about a bushel. Mom made grape jelly out of some of them. Dad wanted to make some grape wine, so we went back and got another bucket of them. We kids sneaked in and tasted the wine before it was finished. It tasted like heck, so it was safe from any further raids from us kids.

Our next temporary dwelling was some room on the second floor of an old three-story house. Nobody lived on the third floor. While we lived there, Dad and uncle Bob took the trailer and drove to Abeline Kansas. They loaded the trailer with cantaloupes and watermelons. They got the cantaloupes for nothing, because it was late in the season. They paid a nickel for the watermelons. When they got home they peddled them, at a nickel apiece for the cantaloupes and a dime for the watermelons.

Us kids enjoyed the old sack swing hanging from an old Elm tree in the grass free dirt yard in front of the house.

While we were there a tornado was spotted in the distance. Dad went berserk as usual. He was always afraid of tornadoes and bad bulls, Especially Jersey bulls. Anyhow, he chased us all down into the cellar. The cyclone, as he called them didn't come our way, so all we got was a little excitement.

The next place we lived was an old two- storied farmhouse out north of Canton Kansas. Dad spotted parts of an old sulky type buggy. The shafts were still in tact. And as usual were made of ash. That's the wood that's used to make tool handles. It also makes a very durable and effective archery bow. Dad made me a very professional looking bow. Then he cut some straight sticks out of some plum thickets. He skinned the bark off them with his pocketknife. He sharpened them and



hardened, and straightened them by putting them in fire for a short time. Green wood becomes flexible when it is heated. When it cools it is harder than it was before. I think he used rawhide for a bowstring. He cut a notch at one end of the bow so the string could be loosened while it was not being used. Then the bow would straighten out. This kept it so it kept it spring better. The first time he shot it, nearly straight up, it went out of sight. Boy was I impressed. Then he shot it into an old wooden building. The hardened wooden arrow tip actually stuck into the wood and stayed there. I was impressed again. I don't think I ever killed anything with it, but I sure shot at lots of things like cardboard boxes trees and wooden buildings. Once in a while at squirrel nests and rabbits.

One day I was walking along the creek, when I saw a great big bird flying over the trees above me. He flew out in the tall grass pasture a way. Then he alight and just sat there. I think there was a dead rabbit or something he was looking at. I crawled on my belly till I was about forty feet from him. He saw me and flew straight up. I shot my arrow at him with no idea I'd hit him. I didn't come close, but I got a big thrill at the size of him. He had a seven-foot wingspan! He was a golden Eagle, not just a big hawk.

On the way back across the creek, I noticed a squirrel nest up in the top of an old Elm tree. I pulled back on my bow and shot an arrow through the nest. The problem was that my arrow stayed, ticking through the nest. I didn't have many arrows so I decided to climb up and get my arrow back. I shinnied all the way up and got my arrow. I threw it down to the ground, and made a fateful decision. After I was half way down, the limb that I was climbing down on, was about a foot in diameter,

and sloping at a pretty flat angle, so I decided that I'd sit on top of it and just scoot down carefully. All went well until I was holding a small side limb, which turned out to be a dead limb and snapped at my slight pressure. Of course I fell over the side of the limb and all the way to the ground. On the way down I whacked my right wrist over an old dead horizontal tree. It didn't hurt the dead tree but it broke my wrist. My Uncle Henry heard all the screaming and came down to see what the entire ruckus was about. He grabbed me by the good arm and dragged me toward the house, right through a big nettle sticker patch. The stickers didn't bother his booted feet, but it raised cane with my bare feet. By the time we got to the house, I must have had fifty nettle stickers in my feet. What with my being in a state of shock, I didn't even notice the stickers. When I got back from having the doctor splint my arm and put a cast on it, I then began to notice the pain. Man did that hurt! Later the itching bothered me about as bad as the hurt had before.

Our next move was to Hollyrood, Kansas. We lived out in the country, part of the time, on the Kasten farm. They had some extra room since the children had left home. Dad had a job there as a pumper. This was the place where I walked a mile and a half to school. It wasn't up hill both ways, but we did have a blizzard, which piled snow up to the eaves, on the north side of the house.

Before the snow started however, Bull and I chased rabbits into long pieces of 6-inch pipe. Then we took a long sucker rod put a tin can on the end of the rod, pushed it through the pipe up against the rabbit. As the rabbit was pushed to a point near the end of the pipe, Bull would hear the rabbit coming, and rare up as if to grab it. Then I knew the rabbit

was near the end where I could reach in and grab it. We skinned the rabbits and hung them on the windmill to freeze. Dad said that that made them tender. I remember a surprising thing that happened. One time when I was out in the pasture, Bull was not right there with me at the time, but the farmers little rat terrier was. He started chasing a jackrabbit. The rabbit was trotting out a little ahead of the little terrier, with his ears sticking straight up. They run that way when they're not afraid of being caught. Pretty soon when he was a distance from me, the rabbit stopped, and ran, butting at the little terrier. It scared the heck out of little terrier and surprised the heck out of me.

We moved into town just a month before school was out. I had to go back to school for a month. There was a group of kids that was led by sort of a bully. Every evening when school was out, they would dog pile me because I was a new kid. One evening I decided to make a run for it up the railroad track, taking the back way home. I ran lickety split down the tracks with the bully close behind me. When we got way down the tracks where the other kids were out of sight, I stopped. The bully started to jump on me and knock me down. Only it worked the other way. I jumped on him and knocked him down, whacked him with my dinner bucket. My empty pint milk jar fell out. I grabbed it and threatened to bust him in the head with it. He turned white and scared looking. I told him that if he ever dog piled me again, I'd really bust the jar over his head. That was the end of that problem. No more dog piling.

The old house where we rented rooms in Hollyrood was on the edge of town and near big wheat fields. In fact about anywhere in Hollyrood was near the edge of town. Being wheat

country automatically meant that it was Jackrabbit country. I walked about a block north of our house, into the edge of a big wheat field. There were Jackrabbits everywhere! I stood in one spot and counted 49 Jackrabbits. Our dogs couldn't about to catch a Jackrabbit. When they tried, Mr. Jack rabbit would sail across the field with his ears sticking straight up, until the dog gave up. Then He'd just top and go back to munching. When a Jack rabbit is in front of a fast dog like a gray hound, he lays his ears back, and really puts on the speed. I've never seen one caught, though my uncle Kieth said his Staghounds could catch a wolf or a Jackrabbit. I've seen them clocked at over 40 miles per hour running down the highway. While we lived in Hollyrood, we did actually did go through the edge of a tornado. Amongst the other damage I saw that it did; was a Box elder tree, which had been twisted so that the grain actually opened up. While it was open position, flying straw flew into the cracks in the grain of the tree. When the force of the wind decreased, the grain closed back up. It gave the appearance that the straws had been driven into the trunk of the tree. We wondered how a weak little straw could be strong enough to have been driven into a tree.

Out back of the Mrs. Winters house, there were about an acre of old discarded automobiles. They were old enough that they had carbide lamps for headlights. We kids removed some of the headlights and used them for lanterns. Some of them still had useable carbide in them. When we poured a bit of water in them, a hissing sound came out the little nozzle in the center of the reflector. We lighted the nozzle with a match, and got a very bright light. We could shine on a spot in a tall tree 200 feet away. In later years I found that a similar device was used for night hunting. They called it "Bull-eying the deer, or what ever they were trying to shoot.

**After leaving Hollyrood, we moved to Lehigh, Kansas, where dad had a job on an oil lease. It was at Lehigh that I got a Christmas present that really excited me. It was a Stevens Junior 22 single shot rifle. I still have it today. The folks let me go hunting with it by my self, right then. I was eight years old, but I already had gun sense enough not to shoot toward a car or cow or house or barn.**

**Bull and I headed off down along a country railroad, checking brushy thickets, animal dens and such. Bull was checking out a den, when he got his tongue into a steel trap. He was screaming about the trap and I was worrying about how to get off of his tongue. I finally managed to get my knee on the springs of the trap and get it off his tongue. Boy! Were we both relieved about that! We picked up right where we left off, except that Bull was a little more cautious about traps in a hole. We brought home nothing that day but in the years that followed we brought home many rabbits, squirrels and even a few ducks.**

**While living in Lehigh, Dad got acquainted with a sheep farmer, who had a lovely clear spring-fed creek on his land. It was one of the most pleasant places of my childhood. The sheep kept the brush and weeds from covering the area. This made it easy to walk up and down the bank, fly fishing, or bait fishing. Dad used a minnow he called the Horny Chub. He thought that it was the best bass bait in the world. I mostly fished for Pumpkinseed perch, some place away from where Dad was fishing for bass. Bass fishing and noise don't go well together. One day I had my long cane pole with a worm on the hook. I threw the bait way over toward the other side of the water hole, right behind as foxtail moss bank. My cork popped instantly under! I jerked my pole back over my head hard as I could. A two-pound bass came flying over my head to the ground 20 feet behind me!!**

**On the sheep farm, way up the creek from the fishing holes, there was the butt of a very old cottonwood tree. It was 8 feet across. That was in the 1930's. It had to have been alive when Indians still inhabited that area. It always gave me a strange feeling when I stood near it.**

**From time to time through the years the folks would drive to Strong City Kansas to visit Grandma Brecht and other of my mothers relatives. When we made such trips dad would usually go over to cottonwood Falls and fish below the dam. (Insert picture of the dam here)**

**I recall Dad hooking a pretty big fish on his reel. Some times he would hand me his rod and reel with a big fish on the line, swishing around out in the water in front of us. I was always afraid I'd loose the fish so I didn't want to hold it. I preferred fishing around below the dam with my long cane pole, using worms for bait. Mostly I caught small bullheads. But I caught a lot more of them.**

**The next place we lived was on the Stucky Oil lease about ten miles south of McPherson, Kansas. The Derby Oil Company had three company houses there. We lived in the middle one. The houses were nice little modern houses for the time. They had running water in the house, but for drinking water, we had to carry a bucket from the one well about 60 feet out in front of the middle house. Derby had 8 wells on that lease. It was Dad's job to look after them.**

**While we lived there we attended Turkey Creek School. There were two buildings one for the early grades and one for the bigger kids. It was about a mile and a half from our house to the school along fencerows dividing large wheat fields. Most of the way, there were Osage orange hedgerows.**

**Squirrels lived in the hedge trees and rabbits lived in the underbrush below the hedge trees.**

**Turkey Creek was polluted by the run off from oil wells in the area. There were no fish in the creek, but a large stock pond about a quarter of a mile East of it had bullheads and lots of perch. That's where we kids did most of our fishing. We would dig a can of worm and catch a Prince Albert can full of grasshoppers. The big yellow ones that liked to crawl up those big tall horse weeds. When you broke those horseweeds, they would get that red dye all over your hands. I've heard said since the Indians actually used this as a dye. We always pinched the grasshopper's heads so they wouldn't jump out of the can when we tried to get one out to put on the hook. They really were messy. They got tobacco juice all over everything. I liked worms better, but sometimes the fish liked grasshoppers better.**

**We used big long cane poles, and sometimes we'd cut stick poles out of a Willow thicket. They made pretty good poles but I thought they were too limber. When we saw the string being pulled out, by a fish, we'd give the pole a mighty jerk. The fish would come flying over our heads in a 20-foot arc, and slam down on the ground behind us.**

**For a stringer, we would cut a 3-foot switch off a Willow sapling. Then we'd cut all the side branches off it, except the one nearest the butt end. This one we'd leave about 3 or 4 inches long, sticking out so the fish couldn't slide off the butt end of the switch. In order to string him, we'd stick the small end of the switch through the fish's gills. Then about 5 inches from the small end we'd bend it to a ninety degree bend, so it could be stuck into the mud at the edge of the pond. This way the fish could be in the water without being able to swim**

away with the stringer. Our average fish was about 8 inches long. They made good eating when fried whole.

One of my chores while we lived on the Stucky lease was to milk the neighbors cow every evening after school. We had a little tin shed where the milking and feeding was done. During the day, the cow was tied out in some nice grassy place to graze. When I got home from school, I'd go down to wherever she was tied, untie her and let her go trotting off to the shed, to get her grain and be milked. She was a gentle cow just like an overgrown pet dog

Bull and I did a lot of possum treeing and rabbit chasing up and down the creek.

One day we came upon some baby possums scattered around on the ground. It appeared that a dog or something might have killed the momma. We found one of the tiny things still alive. When they are tiny like that, they are all shiny black, except for the nose, ears and tiny, mouse-like tail. Those are always bright pink. They are so cute when they are that size!

These events may seem like a strange to entertain small boys. There was no radio, no television, no movies close enough to be attended by little boys. What a shame! All we had was the whole world! At least the part that was in walking distance. A kid that can't find something exciting to do, in such a large area as that, must have something wrong with him. The possum episode mentioned here is only one of many encountered in our area of operation. A whole book could be written on the adventures in the life of a small country oil field boy. Our problem was not boredom. It was the lack of time in a day to get done all the things we'd like to do.



**Well, anyhow back to the baby possum. We took him home and made a tiny shredded rag nest for him in a little box that we thought might resemble his mamma's pocket. You know marsupials keep their babies in a pouch on their tummies. We made a tiny cloth tit for him, and squeezed warm milk into his mouth. Mom helped us with it. He seemed to do well on the cow's milk even though it wasn't quite the same as his momma's milk. He grew right along. He wasn't afraid of us but also, he didn't seem act like a pet like a coon would. When he got the size of a rat, he wandered off, and we never saw him again.**

**One day Bull and I were wondering around on the west side of the lease. I was throwing clods into the oil skimmer pond, to make that pretty rainbow colored film rise to the top of the water. They sure were pretty! I was enjoying myself, watching them as they got thinner and thinner and spread out until one could hardly see them. As I walked over to the edge of the levee to get another clod, I heard a muffled barking sound. It was Bull over east of me in the wide grassy area, which often covers the space between wells on an oil lease. When I got over there I saw Bulls rear end sticking out of a hole in the ground. He was barking, and growling at something inside the hole, that was growling and snarling back at him. I bent over and looked into the hole there were the growling dripping jaws of the biggest badger I had ever seen! He and Bull were growling biting shaking each other viciously. Badgers use their long sharp claws to scratch their enemies. They swing their front paws in a wide arc with their claws pointing toward their enemy thus scratching whatever is in reach. Bull's chest was pink from the light scratches from those flashing claws. Dad was at the well not too far from where we were. He heard all the commotion, and came over, to see what was going on. When he saw that the badger was in a horizontal hole, which ran along just 8 or 10 inches below the**

ground, he got an idea. He went back to the house and got a shovel, two gunnysacks and a piece of bailing wire. When he got back, Bull and the Badger were still facing each other in the mouth of the hole. Dad put one sack inside the other to make a double tough sack. The badger still sat in the front of the hole, fighting with Bull. I don't know why he didn't retreat back into the hole. Anyhow Dad opened top of the hole about 2 feet behind where the badger was. He then lined the hole from there back, with the double sack. Then he started digging the top of the hole away from over the badger. As he did so, the badger kept backing up to keep himself in the receding hole. All of a sudden he was backed all the way into the waiting sack. Dad jammed the front of the sack shut with the shovel, jumped down on it with his steel-toed boot He quickly tied the sack shut with the bailing wire. It seemed that there were teeth and claws sticking out through the sack everywhere! Lots of growling was going on inside of the sack. We hauled him to the house, where we had an empty 55- gallon drum. We dumped the badger into the drum and quickly put a piece of plywood over the drum in case he was able to leap out the top. Since he wasn't bumping the board, we edged the board carefully over a bit, so we could see what he was doing. It turned out that badgers can't jump; kinda like white men. He could nearly reach the top, but badgers are just not made for jumping. We let him settle down for a while, and when he quieted down we fed him and were surprised to see him eat in captivity. Then we noticed that he had a steel trap on his left back foot, which we managed to pry off, with a long stick.

We built him a good-sized cage from two by fours, sheet metal and some strong welded wire fencing. The next morning I went out to check on him, and found that somehow, he had managed to tear open one side of is cage. I thought that he deserved his freedom after all that. About that time I heard our neighbor holler. He had been about to lift his booted foot

up to step down into our mutual storm cellar. When he raised his foot something jerked the heel off his boot. The badger just stood there and dared anyone to bother him. He could have run off, but he just stood there. He was still mad about the day before.

Dad and Mr. Mercer called Bull and another dog, out to get after the badger. They couldn't do a thing with him. He just shook them off and stood his ground. This was one animal that was just not accustomed to giving ground! There were children in the neighborhood so there wasn't much choice as to what to do. The badger had to be shot! It made me cry. I had pictured him becoming a pet badger like several which I had seen. Usually tame badgers are taken around on a leash. They would eat from your hand, and some times let you pet them. They never were really friendly like a dog, but they did, at least, tolerate human beings, with a minimum of disdain. So I pictured the big one, eventually doing the same. This was not to be. Dad skinned the badger and we took the hide to a fur buyer when we went to Garnett, to visit Grandpa and Grandma Hawley. The buyer gave only 50 cents for the hide. I thought he was a cheat, since that badger had been the biggest baddest and bravest one I had ever seen. Anyhow for 50 cents, I could get 5 Sky-High ice cream cones with a cherry on top, and that was no small matter! Now these had the ice cream in a cylindrical shape that stuck above the cone a good 3 inches, and that bright red candied cherry really set it off. In the summers when I stayed with Grandpa and Grandma Hawley; they would give me a nickel for every dozen eggs that I found not the hen houses. Mostly the hens layer eggs in nests down in the orchard or along the pasture fence lines by a fence post or a bush.

One time, I was walking across the East Eighty pasture hunting those big yellow winged flying grasshoppers. The way to get those big hoppers for fish bait was as follows. First you

get one of those big tall weeds with the purple flowers on the top (*Vernonia angustifolia* Michaux.). Then you strip all the leaves off, from the bottom to the top. This leaves a nice long whip-like piece, with the purple flower head, still in tact. Next you strip most of the flowers off the top, but you leave the little twigs that were holding the flowers. This gives you a nice long fly swatter like weapon for swatting the hoppers quickly before they decide to make their next flight. Of course you gotta sneak up on them before they notice you, and take off before you can get a chance to swat'em. The reason this switch is so good is that you can stop the hopper from flying without smashing him too badly to make good bait. Anyhow that's what I was doing out there in the east horse pasture, when I heard Bull fighting something in a hole' right out in the middle of the pasture. I went over there full of curiosity about what would want t have a hole out in a more or less barren pasture. When Bull backed out of the hole for a moment, I looked in, and there was a big woodchuck. Some folks call then ground hogs. Bull had a big torn place on his right cheek, where the groundhog had cut him with those mean looking beaver-like teeth. The groundhog then wheeled around and disappeared back into the hole. I think bull and I were both glad to see him go. Besides we were in the process of going fishing with the two Prince Albert cans of yellow winged grasshoppers.

Across the fence from Grandpa's mid- twenty corn-fields, there was a forty- acre pasture. It was covered with millions of wild Shasta white daisies Grandpa hated them with a passion. He called them "Those Abominable wretches" Every time he saw, even one of them, on his side of the fence, he would jump down off the hay rack, cultivator, or what ever he was riding, jerk it out of the ground and throw it over the fence. Anyhow Bull and I were going over into that pasture to a big pond where we intended to fish for a while. Shep, Grandpa's really great cow dog, was going with us that time.

**We had been there for about half hour, and had caught several nice bullheads. I made a radical move, to grab my cane pole before the fish dragged it into the pond. The sudden move caused the dogs that had been a bit leery of each other, anyhow, to start a fight. They were both jealous of the other's affection for me. I jumped in and grabbed them by the collar, and jerked them apart. When they lunged back at each other, one of them accidentally got me by the calf of my left leg. So I grabbed them both and threw them I into the pond. That cooled them off! I still have the scar from that accidental bite I got 72 years ago!**

**On Halloween night 1935 we were heading west of Hillsborough Kansas, on the way home from Strong City, Kansas to our Stucky lease house, south of McPherson. Most of us were about asleep as we rounded a wide corner, which would turn us back west toward McPherson.**

**There, swerving back and forth across the road was a pair of headlights coming our way. Dad hollered as he swerved completely off the road over against the pasture fence; trying to avoid a collision. The drunk driver swerved all the way over toward our side of the road and met us head on against the fence. We were nearly stopped but he was going 71 miles per hour, and was probably passed out drunk.**

**We learned that he had just been released from a jail sentence for driving drunk, and was celebrating his release by getting dead drunk. He died instantly and Dad died early next morning. I remember seeing dad's head leaning back over his seat. I was slammed against the doorpost. I was covered with his blood the blow fractured my jaw. I**

**remember coming to, and passing out on the way to the hospital, in some stranger's car. The ambulance was full of the rest of the family. Next morning when I woke up, I could see only out of one eye. The left side of my face was purple and swollen from my eye to my ear. Mom and Joyce both got cuts and bruises. Glennie was a baby and rolled off Mom's lap under the dashboard with only a little nick on her forehead.**

**At the time of Dads death Bull howled a long and mournful howl, over and over again for a day and a night. He had never in his life howled at all, before, and he never in his life, howled again.**

**Of course we could no longer live in the Derby Oil Company house company house. I don't remember which of the family helped us move to Strong City.**

**We bought an old house for \$1500. It wasn't bad. It was right on the corner across from the old Rettiger, 3 story stucco house, which stands there to this day It had cold running water in the kitchen, but it didn't have an indoor bathroom. We had to walk about 80 feet out by the alley, where there was a WPA toilet. It had a concrete floor, which most outdoor privies didn't have. This house was 1 block south of Buster Magathan's house, The one in which I was born, a fact I mentioned at the beginning of this story.**

**The Rettigers who lived in the big house across the street had big orchards. In apple season we kids would go over there and watch them put apples into the cider press. As they screwed the press down, the raw apple juice would flow down to the large container below it. Sometimes they would pour the**

juice into a cup or jar and let us drink it. When it was fresh they called it fresh cider. As it got older and turned sort of brownish, they called it hard cider. Hard cider actually did have a little alcohol in it, but not much. In those days they didn't have a clarifier, so it always stayed a bit cloudy.

Across the street from our house there was a stone arch tunnel. It was about four and a half feet high. It ran about 185 feet to the river. It came out about 25 feet up the riverbank. We could walk in it if we bent over. Sometimes we felt it was easier to crawl, if you didn't mind getting your knees dirty. At several places along the East side of the tunnel, there were smaller tunnels leading from the street storm drains. These were only about thirty inches high and 24 inches wide. One could crawl into them, but he had to back up when he came out because they were too small for turning around.

We had a gas cook stove in the kitchen. But the house was heated by two potbelly stoves. Mostly we burned wood because coal cost a little more and was much dirtier. This meant that I had a lot of wood splitting to do.

Some of the relatives had a car and old flat trailer. We went out along the creek and cut down unwanted trees, sawed them in 2 ft long pieces, and hauled them home. There was an old gentleman 80 years old across the street. His name was Mr. Drummond. He taught me the correct way to split firewood. It really made a difference to know how to do it. I got to be really good at it. To this day when I see people in movies, cutting trees or firewood, with an axe, it makes me smile because most of them have no idea how to do it right.

**One thing I do remember is that we had bought a new Crosley Shelvadore refrigerator which had the miraculous ability to make ice cubes which we all enjoyed while we lived in the oil lease house. In Strong City we couldn't afford the extra 50 cents a month it cost to run it so it stood still in the corner of the kitchen until we were finally able to sell it.**

**In Strong City, we had relatives not too far way. Grandma Brecht lived on the river bank several blocks south of where we lived. My favorite cousin Vick and his sister, Louise, stayed with her. Vic was a star athlete in Cottonwood Falls High school at that time he held the county record for the 440-yard dash. He was also a good football and basketball player. Above all he was a ladies man.**

**He and I did lots of fishing in the river right there in Grandma's back yard. The riverbank was really high right there! About thirty- five feet. It would take a small book to contain all the stories that happened on that short stretch of riverbank. We had a small wooden rowboat, which we used to set trot lines and limb lines. One time in the fall when there was ice along the edge of the river, Vick and I decided to switch places in the boat, so I would do the rowing instead of Vick. In the process we lost our balance and upset the boat. We weren't far from the bank so I started swimming toward it. Vick didn't know I could swim so he started trying to save me. He was a great hindrance to my swimming so I had to stop and tell him to quit rescuing me. I beat him to the bank. Then all we had to do was to swim back out in that icy water turn the boat back over, bail out the water, and get home before we froze.**

**Grandma Breech made thin pancakes for breakfast. The ones that were left over from that big stack were put in the cabinet on a plate. When the fish stopped biting, Vick and I and whatever other cousin was there at the**



time, would scramble up that high bank, run into the kitchen and grab that plate of cold thin pancakes. We'd spread a layer of soft pale yellow, home churned butter on 'em and then get down the canister of brown sugar and pour sugar on the butter. The brown sugar that didn't stick to the butter was dumped on the next pancake in the stack. The trick was to roll the pancake into a cigar like roll, then eat it like a hot dog. That was some kind of good! A stack of fifteen thin pancakes didn't last long. Grandma made the butter in the shake the jar method. She put the cream in a quart jar, screwed the lid in tight, then began to bouncing the jar on her knee

We really had an exciting day when we caught the 4-foot fish eel. He just gave a gentle tug on the line of my cane pole. I thought that he was just another bullhead, so I gave my pole a heave, to throw the bullhead way up the bank so he couldn't flop his way back into the river before I could grab him. The only problem was I couldn't heave him. Something too big to heave was on the line. I finally dragged the pole behind me and climbed up the bank-dragging pole and line behind me. I looked behind me, and there coming wriggling all over the place was a four feet long super slimy eel. We didn't know what to do with him. He was so slimy one couldn't hold onto him. We dragged him all the way to the top of the bank to a place where there was a lot of dust. Once he got to wiggling around in the dust, he got all covered with rubbery mud like stuff. In that condition, we could nearly hold him in our hands. The problem was that that rubbery mud wouldn't come off our hands or clothes. We were a mess! Mom really thought we were a mess, when she tried to wash my overalls. Anyhow, we skinned the eel, and cut him up in pieces so he would fit in the skillet. Actually he tasted good, a lot like catfish. But when the

**meat got cold it became a bit rubbery. Not too bad. All you had to do was to warm it up, and it was good as ever.**

**The house that I mentioned at the beginning of the story, was 1 block north**

**The house 50 feet north of us belonged to my Aunt Lizzy and Uncle Bert Overstreet. Their two daughters Bethy 22 and Juney, 17, were still living at home with them. My dad had planted several tiny cedar trees on the property line between the house we later bought, and Aunt Tizzy's property. The last time I was there, several years ago, some of the cedars were still there, as full sized trees, of course.**

**A few years later, Buster and I and Billy De Boer and Chuck Little managed to scrape together \$5.00. Billy bought an old Model T Ford for that price. We took the motor apart and bored the cylinder walls, replaced the piston rings, and in general, cleaned and fixed it up. And what do you know! The thing started right up on about the third crank. This car was, of course built long before cars had starters.**

**We had some wild times with our Model T. One evening we went to Emporia, about twenty miles east of Strong City, to watch wrestling matches. All went well until we started home. The Model T started right off, but there was one problem. We had no headlights. Two of us had brought flashlights, for whatever problems we might encounter. We sneaked down ally ways to avoid the local police. When we got to the edge of town, we managed to get over on the old Highway 50 South. It had been deserted some years before, when the new Highway 50 South, was finished. Now there is a new, new Highway 50 South. Anyhow, the old highway had a few chuck holes, and of course no edge markings to help us see the road. One of sat on each front fender pretending that our weakening flashlights**

**were headlights. Flashlights were somewhat better than nothing, but they gradually weakened as we crawled along the road. By the time we got back to Strong City, we were walking hollering instructions to the driver, who could see nothing. Which was a little less than we, the so-called headlights could see.**

**Insert some place the you hold the pole story carp fishing. This is the case where Dad would have a big carp, on the line and try to get me to hold the pole. I was always afraid I loose the fish, so wouldn't hold it. Etc.**