

The Story of My Life

by Clara Mae Burr Beadle

I was born September 9, 1925, in Sublette, Kansas, a small town 50 miles southwest of Dodge City, Kansas. Mother and my father met while Mother was teaching in a small country' school in the Sublette area. They would have made a very striking couple, Mother, a pretty 22-year old school teacher and he, the handsome town football hero. (My interpretation!)

My father was James Emerson (William Hudson) Burr, known as Cap or J.E. to most everyone who knew him. He was the oldest of seven children born to William E. Burr and Myrtle Lamberson Burr. The family home was a farm located a few miles southeast of Sublette. It consisted of quite a bit of land, and it seems they were pretty well situated for those times. Because my father left our mother with five children (the oldest was six years old, I was five years old. and the youngest was a tiny baby) I have no memories of him as a young child.

My mother was Gladys Myrtle Davis, one of eight children born to Robert E. Lee Davis and Mary Lillian Bethel Davis. Grandma Davis died before I was born. Grandpa Davis was a blacksmith for the Santa Fe Railroad When we came to live with him, three of Mother's teenage siblings were still living at home; Uncle Dale, Uncle Raymond, and Aunt Jewel. Grandpa came to Sublette and moved us, bag and baggage, in his car, to Dodge City.

My memories of our lives at Sublette are very vague. I remember a small white house next to a pretty, large, white house where our two special friends lived: Maxine and Mildred Watson. Their mother was so nice to Mom and us kids I'm sure Mother needed a kind "mother figure" during those difficult days. Oh, yes, Maxine and Mildred had three older brothers, and there were two Sherwood

boys that lived next door to them. Now, I was 5 years old, so why would I be so aware of "big boys' at that age?

There were many of Mother's Bethel relatives living in Sublette at that time, including Mother's maternal grandmother, but I have no memories of being involved with the Bethel family until years later when we would go to Sublette on Memorial Day to decorate the graves of loved ones.

My first "real" memories are of living in Grandpa Davis' house. It was a two-bedroom house at 1000 Avenue G. Grandpa had fixed up the basement for Mom and us kids. (Well the walls were whitewashed anyway) I remember a row of beds along the wall in the north half of the basement. The washing machine was in the south half where Mother did tons of laundry each week. There were many clotheslines at the ceiling, where Mother hung clothes in the wintertime. Grandpa had a workbench in that area too, where I can remember him putting new soles on our shoes when they were worn out. I'm sure we only had one pair at a time!

Grandpa Davis was a stoic man, but kind, brave and so generous to rescue his daughter and her small, needy family. The country was in a depression and things were tight financially. Mom "earned" our way by doing all of the cooking, cleaning and laundry for the whole family, as well as running a "taxi" service for a one-car household. I'm sure at times we were a thorn in the side of the three young adults at home, but I have no memories of any big problems. But what would I know I was just a kid! The strongest memory I have of those times is of the death of our little brother Bobbie at age five. He died of complications with the measles and "dust" pneumonia, a result of the terrible dust storms we were having at that time. His casket sat in the corner of the front room until time for the funeral. He was so special to Grandpa, and followed at his heels whenever he was home. Everyone grieved deeply for that little boy

We had many good friends while we lived at Grandpa's house: the Tilson family, especially David (and his trumpet) and his sister Hazel, the Buck family with several kids - the father had large horses that he used in his work, the Ditch girls, Connie Jo Oakes, Mr. And Mrs. Yeager and Harry. We attended Roosevelt Grade School. Flora B. Miller was the principal. Miss Seacat, Mr. Streiff, Rose Weber and Bernice Anders were our favorite teachers.

We attended The Church of the Nazarene from the time we moved to Dodge City and that is where mother met Eugene Paul Lewis and his family of five children. His wife had died giving birth to their youngest child, our Johnny." I guess it soon became evident that a "merger" would be beneficial to both families. Mother and Gene were married November 9, 1937. Because of the wisdom and patience of these two people, the "merger" formed a solid unit. It was not without a few rough spots of course, but with hard work and cooperation (most of the time) a good home was established at 801 Avenue E. Of course the most special event in that early merger was the birth of "our" baby, Dickie (Richard Lee), he welded our family unit in a special way. What other little boy could be lucky enough to have six big sisters!

Junior high and high school passed rather uneventfully. We walked to school in all kinds of weather. No fancy cars in those days! I did a lot of babysitting in order to have money for clothes and other things. In high school I worked in the school library as an assistant to Margaret Kerns, a wonderful mentor, through a special assistance program for teens. Perhaps that is where my passion for reading was born! All six of us girls had the three upstairs bedrooms; you can probably imagine the scramble with all six of us getting ready for school with one bathroom!

I graduated a little before my 18th birthday, and since the possibility of going to college was non-existent, and my dreams of becoming a nurse faded, I

went to work as a telephone operator for Southwestern Bell. It was a very good job at that time, except for the split shifts and night hours.

Jake and I met while I was in high school. When we knew he was going into the service, we became engaged. Then he was off to the army to fight in World War II. He left his little 1936 Plymouth coupe with me while he was gone, so I was independent, living at home, but helping out with errands and such at home and for Jake's family as well.

When Jake came home from the service wounded, we decided we wanted to get married right away. He would have to return to the VA Hospital in Temple, Texas, for an undetermined length of time. He had been in the hospital overseas for several weeks. His mother was in the hospital, dying with cancer; those were very difficult days for everyone. It seemed that Jake really needed the support and security at that time. Shortly after Jake was discharged we learned that I was pregnant I suffered so much nausea that I had to quit my job at Bell Telephone, but we were fortunate that Jake was able to go back to work at the Santa Fe Railroad as soon as he was discharged.

Most of the rest of our lives is known by all of the family. Jake was saved under the preaching of Rev. Milo Arnold, and this brought about a great change in our lives. The Lord opened doors of great opportunity for Jake with the Santa Fe: the move to Newton in December of 1960; a promotion to a job in Kansas City, and our move to Olathe in July of 1966; a promotion to a job in Topeka in 1977 where he worked until his retirement in 1986. The addition of three great kids along the way, then spouses, grandchildren and great grandchildren has made our lives full and rewarding.

Selling the family home at 801 Avenue E. and moving Mother to her little apartment in Topeka in 1983 was a difficult time for her. But it made frequent family gatherings and visits more possible. This brought joy to her life—her family

was her life! Her years of typing the carbon copies of the Round robin letters kept our family in touch. This is a closeness that we are working to keep as a heritage for our younger generations. Mother was a unique lady and with her quiet and reserved way she left her imprint on all of our lives.

One area I have not yet mentioned is my contact with our dad in later years. On one occasion when Dad was in Dodge City, Jake and I met him at the sale barn for a visit; this was the beginning of a friendship that lasted as long as he and Oline were alive. When Jakie was less than a year old, Oline became very sick. She needed surgery, but they had four young children at home and no one to care for them. I don't remember how we found out about it, but Jake took Jakie and me to their farm in Colorado. I stayed for several weeks caring for the kids, and helping out when Oline came home from the hospital. This created a tight bond between Oline and me. She was a sweet and kind lady, and I grew to love her. From their union we have two half-brothers and two half-sisters. I'm sorry that I no longer have much contact with any of them.

In September of 2006 we will have been married 62 years. We have had a very rewarding life. Our close relationship with our kids and their families brings us great joy. Staying connected with our large extended family holds a high priority, also it is good that the original ten are still in touch. Our great wish is that some of the next generation will pick up the torch, and hold on to this great heritage!

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