MY EIGHTY YEARS

By

Lois Chitwood Williams

I'll try to tell of my 80 years for Arkansas Sesquicentennial. We who have lived during these 150 years have seen so very many changes in our lives and in our times. I was born in this our town on April 7, 1905. My parents were John Bryant and Addie Davidson Chitwood. My dad was born at Stamp Creek, Cartersville, Georgia. His parents Richard and Harriet Baker Chitwood who he lost in June and November of 1886 there. He then was brought to Arkansas to live with his older brother Daniel Columbus Chitwood.

My mother was born here at Shiloh on the Wire Road between Dyer and the town then of Pleasant Hill, Arkansas. Her parents, Thomas Jefferson and Martha Francis James Davidson.

My Dad and Mother lived their married life in Dyer. I was born on what was called Widow Street then and now is Main Street. My memories go back a long way. I remember when the town stores burned the night of June 30, 1909. That was a frightful night for a small child as our house was very close to the scene. In fact our well then is in Frank Rhodes store now. All means was done to save our house, even to using Mama's new quilts on top of the house to keep wet to prevent the roof from catching fire.

When I was 5 years old in 1911 we moved to the country where we have called home every since. I had already started to school.

The most interesting things of our time began to happen. Few people had telephones but my Uncle Dan had two. One from Mulberry and one from Alma. One on each side of the room. He was a cattle buyer. The next amazing thing was the car. My first memory was Mr. Joe Well's car, a two seat open touring car. If it was raining or cold, curtains could be fastened up for protection. Other cars of course follow and the horse and buggy days fade into the past.

One memory though was our trip to the circus in Fort Smith in the surrey which we borrowed from Mr. R .L. Lester. The Emzy Arbuckle family was going to. We left about midnight it seemed to me, drove to Van Buren and took the ferry across the River then walked up to the street car where the rodeo grounds are which at that time was a big electric park and a big house for entertainment. The circus was on the other side of Fort Smith where the South Side High School is now or very close.

By that time the airplane had come into being but not yet here. By the time World War I had come along and our Country declared war April 6, 1917, on Germany. The memory of the sadness of the boys in their khaki suits going through town on the loaded train's. We could see them from our house and watched daily for them. But Dad nor brothers or uncles went but cousins from both sides of our family. We'd hear of the big battles the boys were in after our first boys landed in France, June 25, 1917. Like July 15, 1918, Battle of Chateau Thierry and September 26, 1918, offensive in Argonne Forrest. Most of all we were proud to hear all the noise raised when we heard the War was over on November 11, 1918. We had no radios or television to get the news fast like we have today.

In the meantime, before the war we had electric lights brought into town with the street lights installed and new concrete sidewalks in some parts of town. That was much improvement but that did not do away with the old kerosene lamp for our lights. Soon though the stores, churches, and school had them put in.

Our churches were our places to go other than school. It isn't like today, our attendance so low. Then most every household's children were in Sunday School with a full house each Sunday. We not only learned and enjoyed going to Church but was our way of life each Sunday. We had the Methodist and Baptist churches then the Church of Christ and the Assembly of God churches came.

Our school only went to the tenth grade when I finished but the state only had to the eleventh grade at that time but now we have to the 12th for high school. A year later I married to Edmond Settles Williams on May 11, 1923, and moved into Oklahoma and learned a new world of oil fields instead of farming, and that became a new life style with our two children coming along and our moves to different places but that wasn't the only changes being made. We had the Great Depression which the young people of today cannot imagine nor could they adjust to going back to those times. Rich men went broke and jumped out of windows. People lost what savings they had in the banks and the world became unsettled with families loading everything they had in the "old" car and taking off to new places for them maybe even to "worsen" things for themselves.

But the hard times became the times of new inventions, new industries, and a time we had never seen before. There was more study on how things could be improved. It became necessary for both husband and wife to hold down a job to feed their families. More scientist were working in the field of energy, medicine, home improvements, farm equipment, and so many other things that have come our way.

Then the great shock of December 7, 1941, when Pearl Harbor, Honolulu County, Hawaii, was bombed by the Japanese and World War II was declared the next day. Then those of us who had been through World War I knew the sorrow of War again. The scientist, ship builders, airplane factories, car manufactories went to work in earnest and our times became better except the rationing of food products, shoes, tires, and other things. The 75 cent to a $1.00 a day wage became higher and higher and the worry for our loved ones became greater each day after they left for war. So many of our boys fell in battle each day. But not only our boys but each country included in the War. Our son was taken just after his 18th birthday and his school year was over. We were some of the luckiest parents for he had about two years before he went in on Iwo Jima, February 1945, but by God's loving care he came home to us. But in March 1945 we lost our brother around the Remagen Bridge in Germany. So with sad hearts we were so proud when Germany surrendered May 8, 1945, and Japan surrendered August 1, 1945. President Truman saw the necessity of dropping the awful atom bomb on two of Japan's cities which ended the war and occupation of Japan began and our son was sent there for his tour of duty, finally came home in April 1946.

After the war seems scientist went to work on many things. Seems the most far-fetched was the shot to the moon which was accomplished with success after years of work. Now we have the computers, the key-punch copy machines and so many new devices which I can't understand. Even the radio and television that we think we can't do without. This is only a small sketch of the many changes in our time. It does not tell of the change of furnishing in our homes, different to our parents and grandparents. I will try to tell you of a few things that they never had. Our gas ranges instead of the wood cook stove or of our refrigerators instead of keeping the milk in the well or spring house, our cars instead of walking everywhere or riding horseback or wagon or buggy. Our news collectors, the T.V. and Radio which we hear around the world in an hour's time and maybe they never heard. Our clothes are mostly store bought, theirs were mostly made at home maybe the wool or thread prepared themselves to spin. Our food can be bought in ready prepared or ready to cook. They worked a full summer to have food laid back for the winter or until another crop planted and harvested. One of our most useful things are the washer and dryer, dish washer, electricity which has become very common to us.

We must not forget our other two wars for our country. The Korean War with so much strife and our boys still guard the line between the North and South of that country yet. The Vietnam War in which we almost lost our grandson and nephew. These wars were not to be compared to the two World Wars, which make four wars in my life time.

Before Vietnam War the Country began working on the shot to the moon and man finally walked on the moon which was an unheard of accomplishment and many said it could not be done. BUT IT WAS DONE.

Wonder what can yet be done in this Century before the year of 2000. I did in time back wish to see the year of 2000 and by 2005 I would be 100 years old But as time passes I wonder if I do wish that. Our Heavenly Father rules the destiny of that occurrence. I have in these eighty years seen so many changes in the way of living, ways of work, ways of travel, that a few pages can not hold. I hope to write more for my children and grandchildren and especially my great grandchildren whereby they may know how we came through some of the very trying times of depression, which as yet they have not seen and hope they never will and some of the greatest things that history has ever accomplished has been done in my eighty years and more are coming along every year. What will the changes and accomplishments be by the year of 2000?

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