THE JOHNSON FAMILY

FATHER: Thad Johnson

Mother: Fila Johnson

Children: Oldest to youngest: Lucille, Zell, Marue, Twins: Wendall and Mary Wilma.

There was a fierce blizzard blowing when the train pulled into the station at Dyer, Arkansas, in January 1917. Mrs. Fila Johnson, along with her five children: Lucille, Zell, Marue, Wilma and Wendall, Jim Stevens, the Joe McAllisters (step-brother to Thad) and their children, came ahead of Mr. Thad Johnson, (papa) and Mr. Greenberry Stephens, his other two sons, Sam and Truman. They were coming with horse-drawn wagons loaded with the furnishings for the new home in Dyer, Crawford County, Arkansas.

Blizzards were nothing new to these Arkansas families coming from Delaware to Dyer. It did make the move a bit more difficult. Papa had quite a time with the wagons and horses coming through the storm.

I was a very young child, but I do remember how the food in the house even froze, and there was not enough firewood to keep us warm.

The house I am speaking of was once known as the Moss Hotel. It was so big and grand with it's carbon lights, especially to a little girl. Now it belonged to the Johnson family and would be our home for many years and be filled with many memories, some sad but most of them happy. There was only one slight drawback. It seemed the house was located near the Missouri Pacific Railroad. Sometimes, as the trains rolled through, the whistle was so loud that it could scare the socks off a person, especially if he happened to be sleeping. After a time, we became accustomed to it and probably would have missed it if it ever quit running.

Our Papa and Mama were very devout Christians and brought us up in a Christian home for which I am very proud and thankful. They were very diligent active workers in the Methodist Church and Community in Dyer. Papa served as superintendent of Sunday School for many years and Mama taught Sunday School Class #7 and was President of the Woman's Missionary Society. The ladies of the Church held quilting Bees in our home.

I remember hearing my nephews (Zell's twin boys: Billy and Bobby) sitting in Church one Sunday, staring out the window, as young boys do, whispering to each other. They knew how important it was to be in Church on Sunday morning. So, as they looked out that window, they noticed a man passing the Church with a fishing pole in hand, and out loud, they both said, "Pa, look, that man is going fishing on Sunday." Papa taught us well.

Many ministers stayed in our home, especially every summer when we had revivals for two or three weeks. They were held in a big tent back of the Methodist Church. We enjoyed the revivals except when a storm came and damaged the tent.

We also had three school teachers who boarded with us during various school years. Namely: Bertha Laseter, our cousin, Marie Brown also a cousin and Miss Pearl Myers, who we accepted as one of the family and have loved her dearly through the years and we still keep in close touch.

One night while Papa was attending Church Conference at Mulberry it came a terrible storm. Mama and three of us children, Marue, Wendall, and Wilma (me) were all huddled in bed in the big hallway. We were really frightened. The storm blew down our largest maple tree in the front yard. It also blew down the Baptist Church and other buildings in town. Our Mama, being the calm, level-headed person she was, tried to reassure us not to be afraid. She said, "Just lay back down, children, it's just a little gale" I will never forget that day even though I can look back and laugh at it.

There were so many school memories. We always had big Christmas trees at school and Church. There were so many programs and plays to be in and attend. There was the marching by Mr. Clark's drum at school and the scary ghost stories Truman Wright entertained us with on Friday afternoons in Mrs. Dora Moss's school room. I was so proud of the gold stars Mrs. Dora put in our books when we did our lessons.

There were so many happy memories of my years in Dyer involving school. Church, parties, picnics, programs, plays, friends, and just plain old good times.

One such memory comes to mind about a cross-eyed fellow named Clarence "Tangle-Eye," as everyone called him, who lived upon the mountain. One day when he came to town he stopped by the General Store to visit with some of the men there. As they were talking, Tangle- Eye said out of the clear blue, "I sure don't like that old oatmeal." One of the men said, "I can't understand that: oatmeal, cream and sugar makes a fine meal." Tangle-Eye looked at the man ever so seriously and said, "Sugar and cream? I guess so' You could have heard the men's laughter for a mile.

With Papa being a farmer, there was always plenty of work to share. Almost everyone in Dyer did lots of canning out of the orchards, berry patches, and gardens so we always had lots of good food the year around.

Although we have not escaped the sorrows of the losing of loved ones as all of us have at one time or another, we are ever so thankful for the many wonderful blessings we have enjoyed and are still enjoying in our lives. God's Blessings.

Mary Wilma Johnson Calk

Now residing with her husband of over 40 years, William Carlyle Calk, Sr, at 3530 Lament Street, Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas 78415.

Their children: William Carlyle Calk, Jr, Martha Fila Calk Crossland, and David Ross Calk deceased at age 19 by a tragic accident.

***Filename: WeRememberDyer post-1986 Book 03, 110-111 ~ the Johnson family***