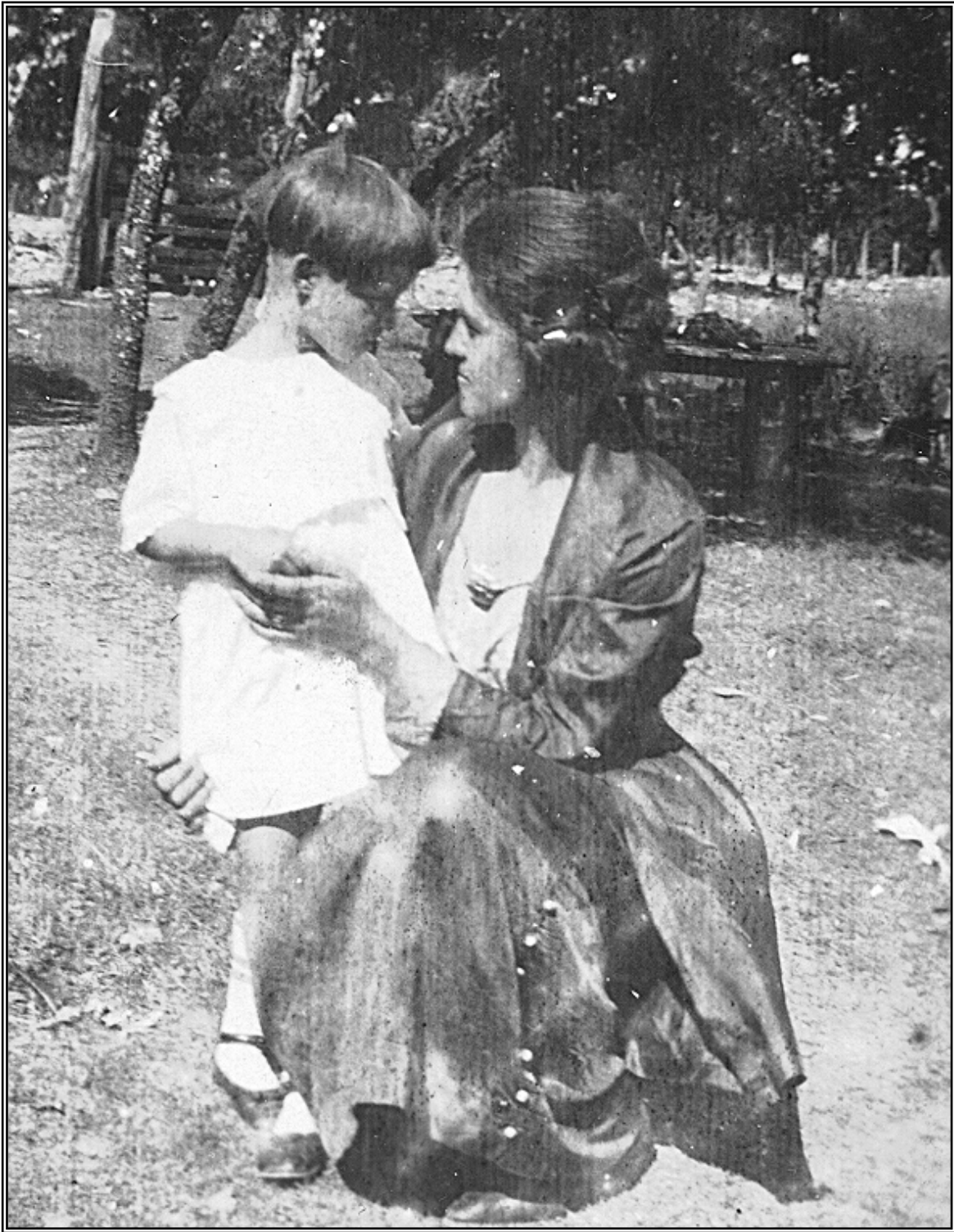


CHRISTMAS 1900 at Gibbens Home on Turtle Creek (Seated) Andrew Jackson Gibbens and Mary Louise Denton Gibbens, grandparents of Sibyl Bennett Sutherland with daughters (L) Lena Elizabeth (mother of Sibyl Bennett Sutherland) and Saydee Ray. (Standing from L): Francis Newton G.; Ernest G.; Henry Dutton Taylor Barton w/dau. Gretna, and Adelia Gibbens Barton; Ida Mildred G.; Susan Elleta G.; and Vida Mae G.





Sibyl Bennett Sutherland – with her mother, Lena Elizabeth Gibbens Bennett, 1915 ca.. at grandparent's home on Harper Road.



*1919 ca. - Sibyl, 4, shown here with her mother, Lena Elizabeth Gibbens Bennett
at Honey Creek in Kerr County.*



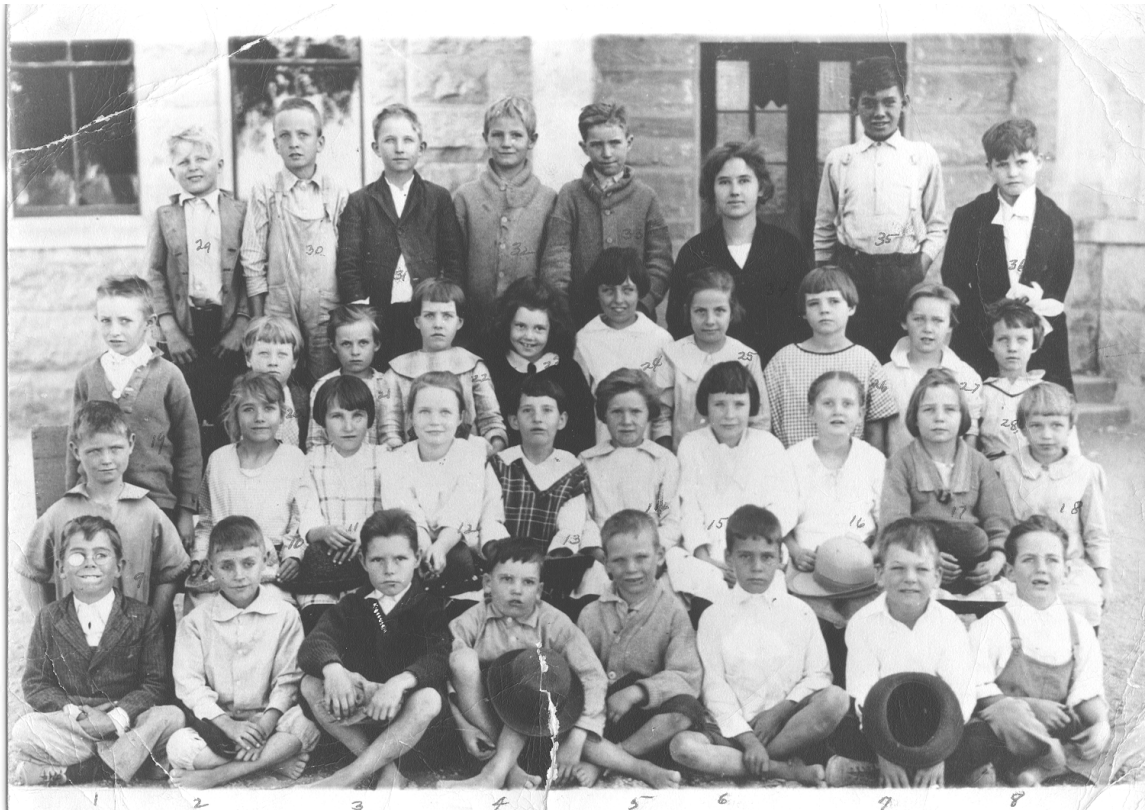
THE GIBBENS LADIES in the 20s in Kimble, TX

(Seated L to R): Anna Adelia Barton and Susan Eleta Ridgaway; (Standing L to R): Lena Elizabeth Bennett (mother of Sibyl Bennett Sutherland); Lorita Louise McBride; and Sadie Ray Adair; (two sisters not shown).

1. Billy White
2. Bobby Lee Swayze (Robert Spencers)
3. Jeal Lowrance
- 4.
5. Jimmy Turner
6. Shelton Mangum
7. Bruce McElroy
8. Raymond Mastly
9. Claude Hildebrand
10. Mamie Council
11. Lena Sturges
12. Marion Jettok
13. ~~Viola Lowrance~~ Viola Lowrance
14. ~~Lucille Turner~~ Lucille Turner
15. ~~Carrie Lee Surber~~ Carrie Lee Surber
16. ~~Lulla Rook Moore~~ Lulla Rook Moore
17. ~~Helin Washin~~ Helin Washin
18. ~~Duwan Elmore~~ Duwan Elmore
19. ~~Fahrene Edens~~
20. Fahrene Edens
21. ~~Eother Boerner~~
22. Roberta Schemard
23. Erna McBryde
24. ^{myrop} Betty Harritt
25. Sue Francis McElroy
26. Christine (Jipetra?)
27. Sibyl Bennett
- 28.
29. J.C. Woods
30. Waddrow Witt
- 31.
32. Jeff Woods?
33. Ralph Bishop
34. Miss Mary
- 35.
36. Hiram Meeks

Do not know #'s 4, 13, 21, 31, 32, 35

First and Second Grades - Center Point School
About 1920 or 1921





Sibyl Lucille Bennett Sutherland, age 8, 1923

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File: Sutherland, Sibyl Bennett - 1923, Age 8



1925 – Bob Bennett, 28, father of Sibyl Sutherland at his job as a newspaperman.



1929 - Sibyl Bennett Sutherland, age 14, when she lived in Center Point, Texas.



Hill House – The boarding house Sibyl's mother, Lena Gibbens, (sitting on porch rail) operated in Center Point from 1930-1965. This was also where the family lived.





Sibyl Bennett Sutherland, on point, 1930 ca., on the porch of "The Hill House," her home and a hotel her mother ran in Center Point. Sibyl took ballet lessons for 8 years.



Sibyl Sutherland, 1934 ca., when she was a student at Schreiner Institute.



Sibyl Bennett Sutherland, 1939



G. C. Sutherland, husband of Sibyl Bennett Sutherland, in 1940 when he was 24.



1942 – Sibyl Sutherland with her first child, Beau, 9 weeks old.



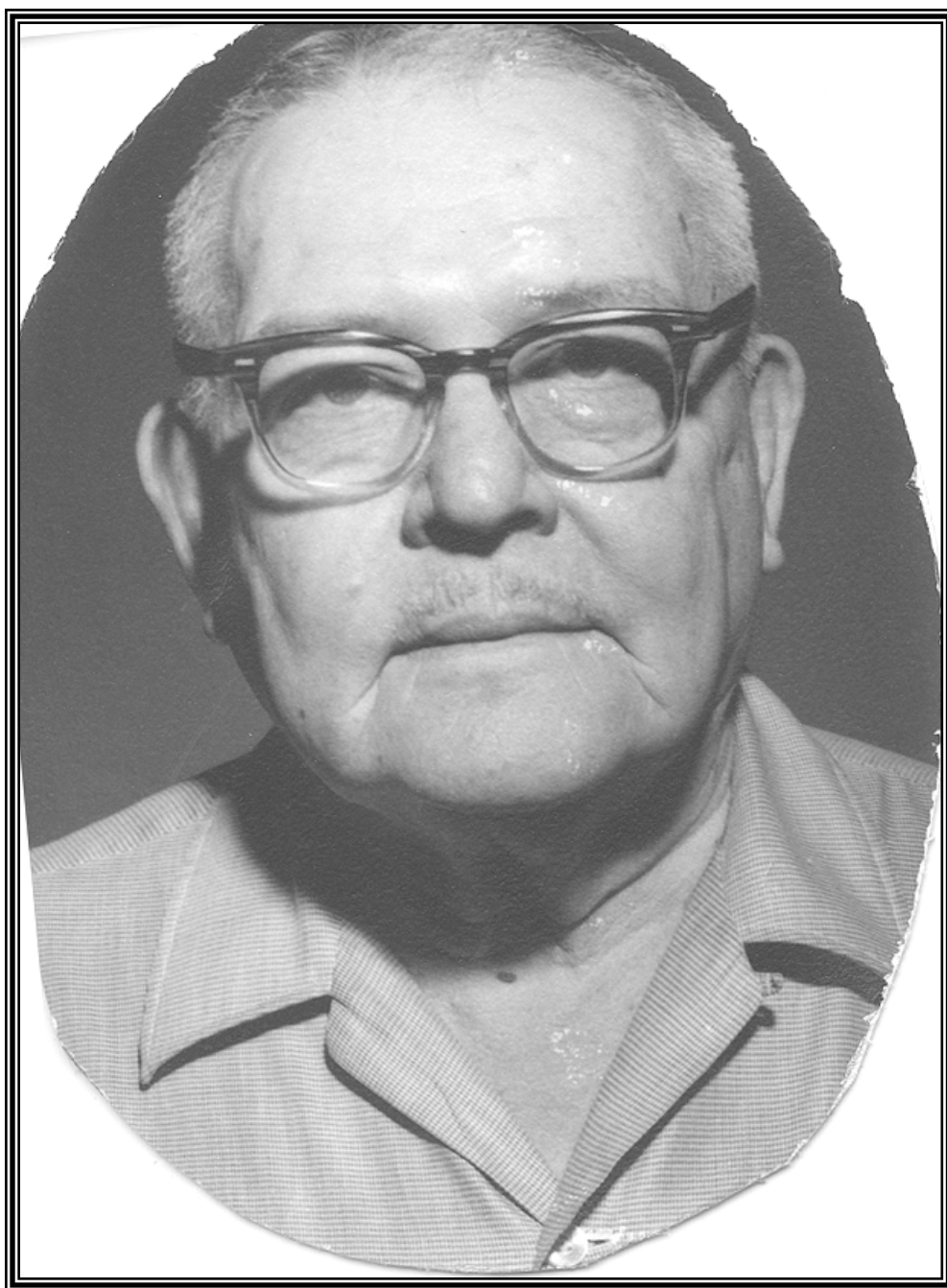
1945 - Lena Gibbens Bennett Tullis (Sibyl Sutherland's mother) and her brother, Ernest, after a hunt.







1953 - Stacy Sutherland, son of G. C. and Sibyl, shows off rattlesnake he killed with his rifle on the Sutherland's ranch off Harper Road.



Bob Bennett, 1956, father of Sibyl Bennett Sutherland, when he was staying in Kerrville while he was writing his book, Kerr County History 1856-1956, for the County Centennial.



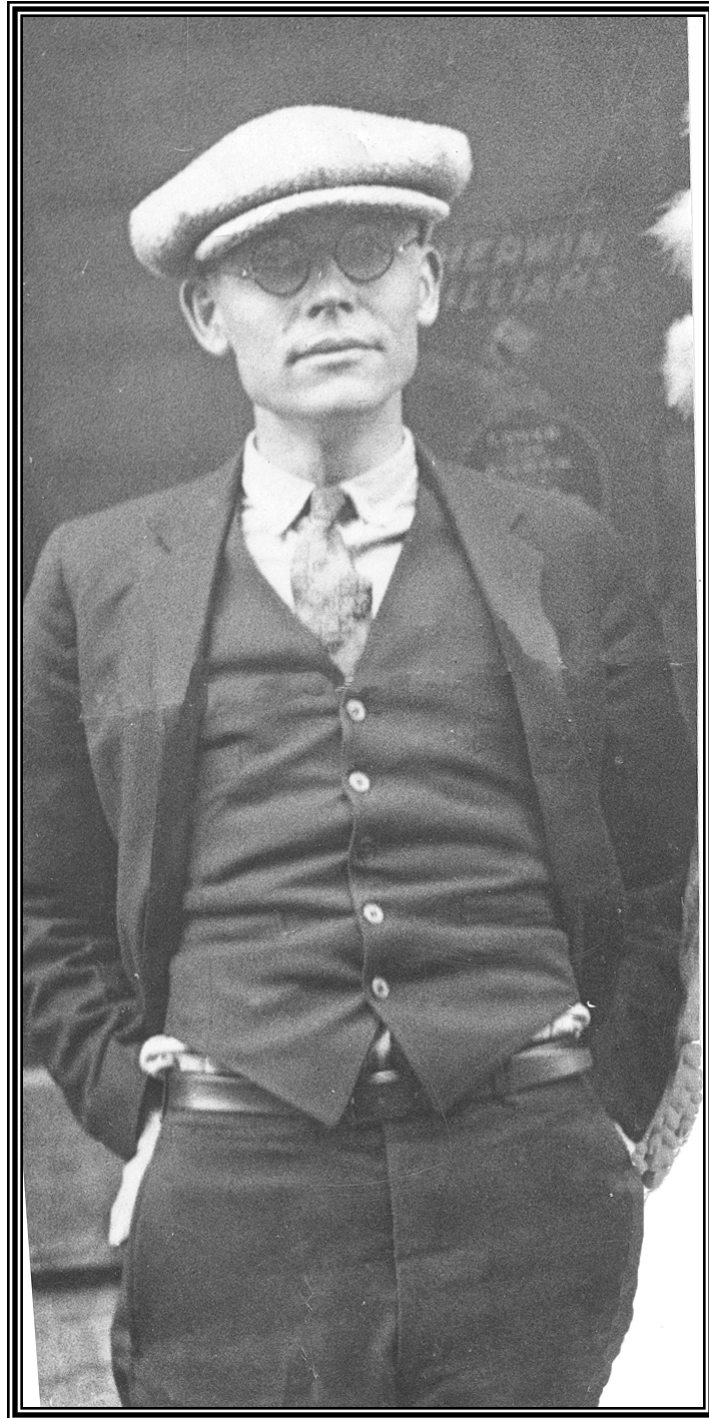
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File: Sutherland, Sibyl - 1972 Sibyl & Husband, G.C.



*1980 - Sibyl Bennett Sutherland (yellow dress) shown here with her family:
(l) daughter, Heather Davis; son, Beau, and husband, G.C. Sutherland.*



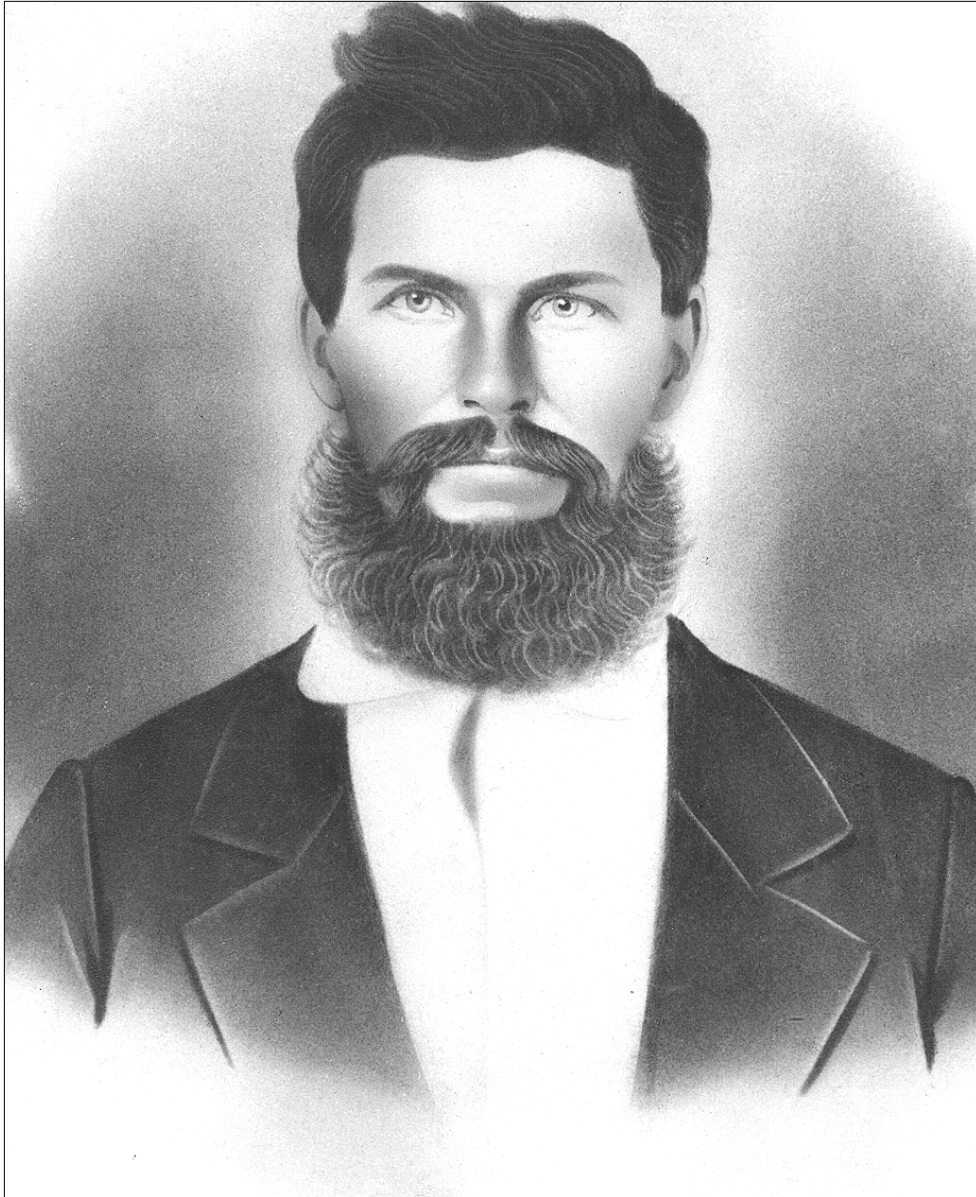
*Alfred and Delilah Bishop, paternal great-grandparents of Sibyl Sutherland.
(Reproduced from Tintype, undated)*



Bob Bennett, father of Sibyl Bennett Sutherland in 1925 in San Antonio.



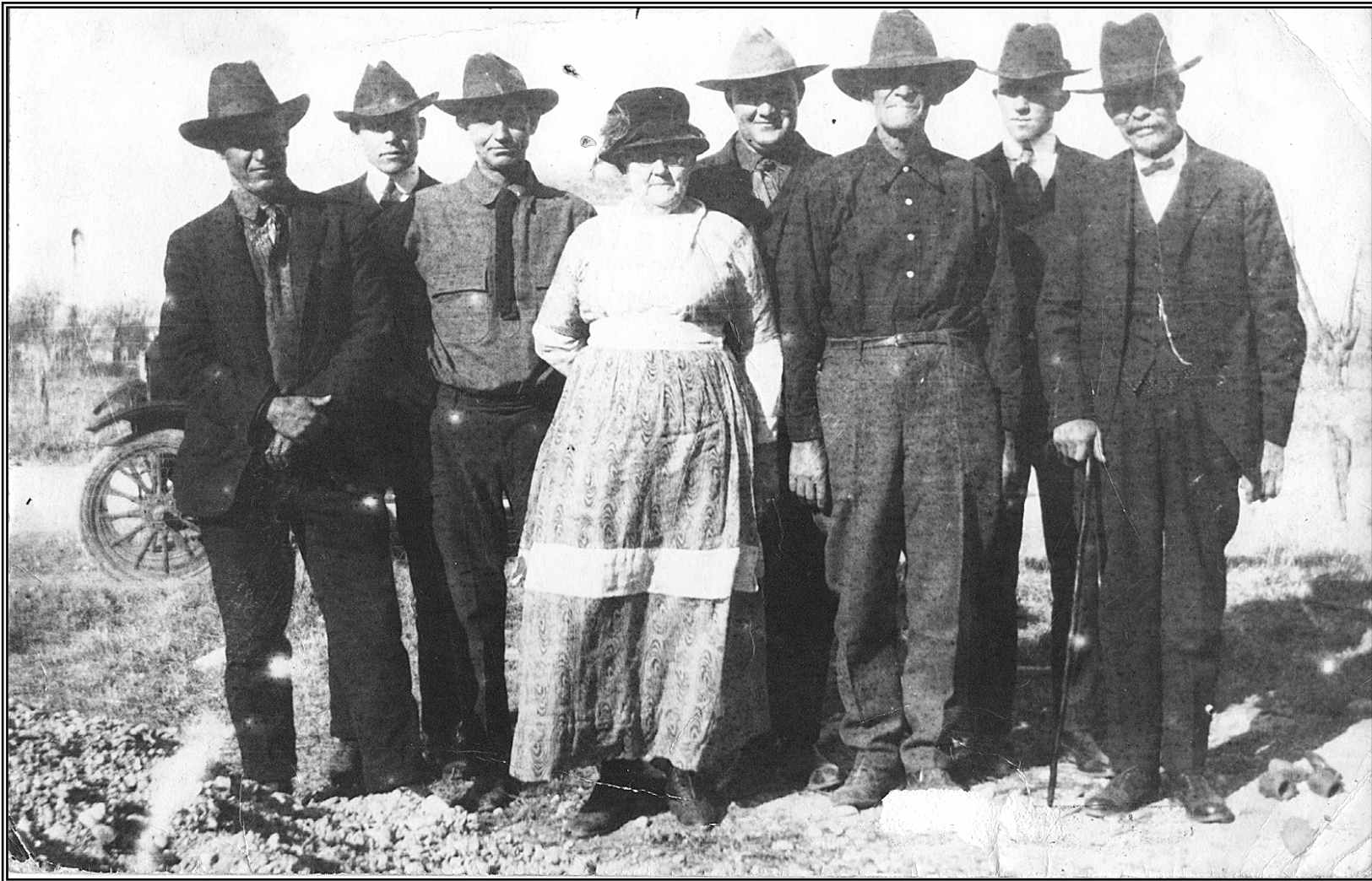
1920 ca. - Bob Bennett, father of Sibyl Bennett Sutherland, shown here with Jack Dempsey, when Bennett worked as a sports writer for the San Antonio Express and Evening News.



Henry Evander Gibbens
(b. March 8, 1834-d. after 1868)
Paternal great-great grandfather of Sibyl Bennett Sutherland



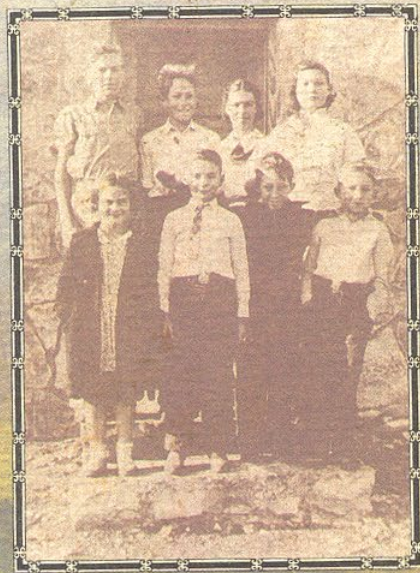
The Jack Gibbens Family, ca., 1915 - (From Left): Vida G. Lowrance; Delia G. Barton; Susan G. Ridgeway; Mary Louise Denton Gibbens, (Sibyl's grandmother); Annie Douglas (in-law); Jack Gibbens (Sibyl's grandfather); Lorita, G. McBryde; and Lena Gibbens Bennett, (Sibyl's mother) at the Gibbens home on Turtle Creek in Kerr County.



The Gibbens Family, ca., 1915 - (From Left): Will Ridgaway (in-law); Bob Bennett (in-law), (father of Sibyl Bennett Sutherland); Henry Barton (in-law); Mary Louise Denton Gibbens; Ernest Gibbens; Jack Gibbens; William McBryde (in-law); Jim Gibbens (Jack's Brother) at the Gibbens home on Turtle Creek in Kerr County.

T W A Y N E ' S O R A L H I S T O R Y S E R I E S

Hill
Country
Teacher



Oral Histories from the
One-Room School
and Beyond

Diane Manning

Book Cover

On the Cover:

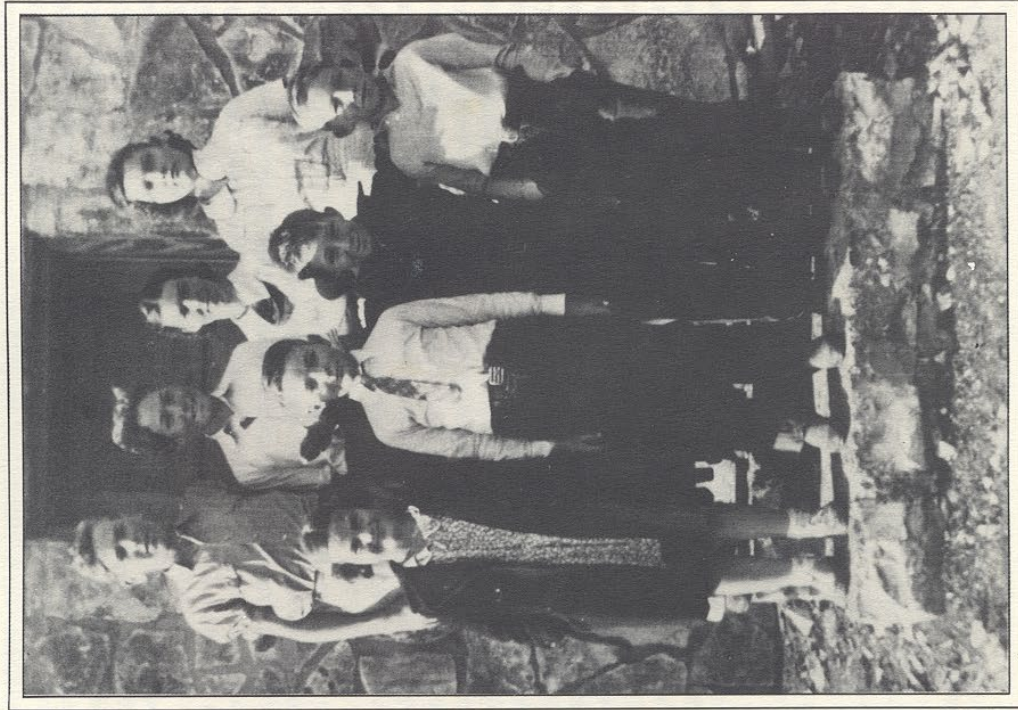
*Back Row (r to l): Lola Priour; Sibyl Bennett
(Sutherland), teacher; Orill Wadmore; and Rumor Clark.
Front Row (r to l): Barney Klein, Jr.; Billy Fred Klein;
Thomas Dee Hall; and Ramona Snodgrass.*

This excerpt is a chapter from the book:

Hill Country Teacher
Oral Histories from the One-Room
School and Beyond

By Diane Manning

This book was published in 1990 by Twayne Publishers of Boston, a Division of G. K. Hall & Co. It is part of Twayne's Oral History Series, edited by Donald A. Ritchie. (*All rights reserved*)



Divide Common School, 1936. *Front row*, second- and third-grade students; *back row*, seventh- and eighth-grade students. Sibyl Bennet, teacher, is third from left.

I didn't want to teach. My mother practically drove me into it. I'd been to Schreiner College for two years, and then I stayed home a year. I'd finished high school at sixteen because I started school when I was five, and we didn't have but ten grades at that time. After college, I just stayed home and trapped. I caught fox and ring tails and so forth.

Then one day Mother said, "You can't sit around here. You need to get out!"

She told me later she was just like a mother bird shoving her little one out of the nest. She said she could just see me staying at home 'til I was an old lady.

I always accused her of paying them to hire me. She went out with me to the interview. I didn't want to go talk to them. I was very shy. So she went out and just flat talked for me. They said they wanted someone who had a car and did I know how to drive? I didn't, but my mother assured me that I could get a car and that I could learn to drive.

So out of thirty-two applicants, I never did know why they chose me. That's why I told her, "I'm sure you slipped them something on the side to take me!"

But anyway, we came back and bought a Model A Ford. I paid six hundred dollars for it. It wasn't new, but it wasn't old. It was a good car, and I got eight hundred dollars for it when I sold it—more than I paid for it.

My stepfather taught me to drive. I went out from driving on paved roads to the Rocksprings Road, which was like nothing that you've ever been over in your life. You literally lurched off of one embankment down to another one—just off of ledges! One ledge to another—bouncing.

I've often reminded my mother of the day when she hauled me out there and put me down. I cried all the way out, saying, "You know I don't want to do this. You're just doing this to get rid of me."

"Nonsense!" she said. "You'll get used to it. You might even come to like it."

When I was arguing I didn't want to teach, I said, "I don't like kids." She said, "You don't know. You've never been around any."

We argued like that the whole way to Rocksprings.

She took me to Mr. Auld, where I was supposed to stay and share a room with his seven-year-old daughter. That was really an eye opener.

That night it rained fifteen inches. You couldn't think of going to school the next day. I sat around the house and stared out the windows and wondered, "What have I gotten into?"

The next day I started out for school in the car with the Auld girl. The reason for the car was I was supposed to take some of the children to school with me.

When I stopped to pick up the little Snodgrass girl, I got stuck in the

and her children sitting around waiting. They'd been there since eight-thirty A.M., and here was the new teacher arriving an hour late!

I hadn't had any training about how to issue a book or anything. I hadn't had any practice teaching, and I was just literally beside myself. But I managed to get out the books and register them just by looking in the register itself and finding out what I had to have. I gave them a list of supplies I wanted them to get and somehow got through that first day.

On the way home that afternoon—I had just one little one with me by that time—I ran a stick through the rear tire, and it blew out. I climbed out of that car, walked to the house, threw my books on the front porch, burst into tears, and cried, "I want to go home!"

Mr. Auld just said, "Oh, stay with us a little while. You'll come to like it."

It was depression times. That's why there were thirty-two applicants for that one teaching job. They didn't have the standards then that they have now. You could go to college for a year and go out there and teach.

I was about twenty years old . . . not quite. Nineteen. I made twenty during the year. After I'd taught just a month or so, I came to love those children. We had such a good time together, and I felt I started some things with them. For instance, they drank out of an old dipper and bucket, and I told them that wasn't good for their health. So every morning I hauled a little small barrel, put it on the front bumper of that car, and went down with Mr. Hughes and filled that barrel with water. I made each one bring a wash pan and towel, and they all had them on a shelf with their names over them. Each one brought a tin cup, and we dipped from the barrel. We used that water to wash our hands before we ate. They thought that was so great.

I tried to teach things that the whole class—from the first through the sixth or seventh—could understand. Except for their reading, math, and spelling, we'd have this sort of general class. There wasn't any special curriculum you had to follow. You got your books from the county superintendent, who was Judge Atkins here at that time.

We built rock walks. All those years they'd had school out there, and

the path struggled through the mud to get to the two out-houses the boys and girls used.

I said, "This is foolish. Let's lay us a walk."

A creek was fairly close by, and those boys just hauled big rocks one at a time out of that creek. We fit them together, turned them around until they fit well, and built those walks. We spent a couple of months. We carried sand in from the creek bed to fill in the cracks all in between so they could walk down there without getting mud all over their shoes.

I don't know if the walks are still there.

I guess the little old schoolhouse is. We used to hold some wild dances in it. Some of the church members out there in what they called the "lower community" were very much churchgoers. But the "upper community" wasn't so much that way, and they loved to dance. Well, when they moved the new school out, the powers that be just decreed there weren't going to be any dances. It was going to be used as a church and as a school and as nothing else. But there was a little old school further up the road where they still held the dances.

When Mr. Auld first talked to me, he said, "Do you dance?"

I said, "Well, yes, I dance, but it's not necessary. I can keep from it if you'd rather."

"Oh, we like for our teachers to dance. Sure."

In fact, I went to my first dance out there with him. The other trustees didn't much like it, though. They were always fuming and fussing.

They had what they called the upper community and the lower community. A certain bunch of ranchers lived above Garvin's store, and that was the upper community. The lower community was below Garvin's store. I knew the lower community better because I lived in with them. I met the others at dances, and knew of them, but didn't know them that well. They were fine people, and I always had happy memories of the time I spent out there.

Church was right in the school building, but everybody did strictly as they pleased about going. It was a community thing. One month the Baptist minister came out, and the next month the Presbyterian. They just divided them up. People went. Those of a particular congregation usually just went to one meeting a month. I occasionally went. I didn't pay any attention to which one.

The next year when I went back, they increased the school year by a month and added the eighth grade because one child wanted to add the eighth grade. They asked me if I'd be willing to teach it, and I told 'em, "Yes."

I had seventy-five dollars a month. What was funny at that time, you

never could get it. They paid you in scrip, so I'd have to borrow from the bank. Some time that month the money would come in to pay off that note. But I constantly had a note in the bank. With the interest on the note, I was really getting less than seventy-five dollars a month, when you get down to it. But it went just as far as what I was making at the end. I paid twenty dollars a month board, and I paid twenty dollars a month car payment. My gasoline was cheap at that time because it was about twelve cents a gallon. So the rest of it was mine to gloriously spend on beauty shop appointments and whatever my little heart desired, and my clothes looked better than they do now.

That year I had an experience. Some of the boys got to climbing up on the roof. They laid a board from the tree to the corner of the house and would climb up there. I told them repeatedly not to go out. Next time I looked, they'd be up there. So one day I just went out and took their board down. I went back into the building. I could hear them calling and shouting. I rang the bell for them to come in and, of course, they didn't come. They were up on that roof.

I could hear them shouting. So I went out, and they said, "We're ready to come down now."

And I said, "Well, I'm not ready for you to come down. I told you to stay off, and twice you've ignored that and gone right on and climbed up. So I'm going to leave you up there until you've had all the roof-sitting that you want. Then I'll let you down."

Then I put that board in the fire and burned it.

One of them said, "I'm going to jump off here, and if I get hurt, it'll be your fault."

I said, "No it won't be, either. Because I told you not to get up there."

"I'm going to tell my father," he said.

"Good," I said. "I'm going to tell him, too."

Anyway, I finally got them down after they'd been up there about an hour longer than they wanted to be. That did put a stop to it.

One particular day Judge Atkins came in. It was May Day, and the kids had woven up a little crown out of buttercups and bluebonnets and crowned me Queen of the May. It was noon, and we had just finished eating. I was sitting with this crown of flowers on my head when Judge Atkins drove in. I went out to greet him and invited him in. He said he had come to visit and would like to spend the afternoon with us. So I rang the bell, and all the kids came in.

I just talked my heart out. Here this was my one visit of the year!

When he left, we told him goodbye and that we'd appreciated his visit to us.

He looked down at one of the kids and said, "Gee, Miss Bennet, you sure look funny with those little flowers on your head."

And there I'd been teaching all afternoon with that thing sitting on top of my head! I never had made an explanation to him of why I had it. I'd just forgotten about it. I was so embarrassed.

I thought, "I wonder what he thinks?" But he got out of there and went, and I never knew.

When I was staying at the second place out on the Divide, where this lake was, one day I washed my underwear and put it out on the line to dry. And here came the lady of the house all out of breath, "Barney's coming! I know you'll want to take your things in so he won't see them. You won't want him to see your underwear. Run get it off the line real quick."

I blinked and said more or less, "I don't mind it being out there."

She said, "I've lived with Mr. Klein all these years, and he never saw my underwear." Six or seven children, I'm sure he saw her underwear sometime, somewhere in there. I thought that was just hilarious. I guess it's just the way people are brought up.

My mother never went to that extreme. She had three lines, and she would hang sheets on the outer ones and then put our personal clothes down through the middle. Maybe that was out of a sense of modesty, I don't know. She never did say.

But I ran out and got them off the line so Barney wouldn't see them. It was just four or five panties and a couple of bras, and maybe a few hose.

I paid room and board at both places I stayed on the Divide. At the first place, they really were fairly well-to-do. They had good meals, and they really used imagination fixing our lunches. Of course, the little girl's had to be fixed, and mine too, and they fixed the same ones. You really never knew what you were going to have. There would be some delicious sandwich, or maybe a little jar of stew, or fried chicken. Just something really nice. Always such a neat dessert, and something different.

When I got to the second place, I got where I couldn't even eat lunch because I had a bologna sandwich and an apple every single day from the time I went there until I left. And a thermos of milk. They didn't have refrigeration, and that milk! I just got where I couldn't even drink it. It had an odor or a taste that I couldn't stand.

I signed a contract out on the Divide that I wouldn't marry during the year. And that I wouldn't wear nail polish or startling makeup. Can you imagine? I look back and think, "Why did I sign it? Why didn't I say, 'I refuse to sign this thing?'"

I also signed at O'Donnell that I wouldn't marry during the school year.

You had to wear a certain type of stockings. They had to be that lisle. It's that cotton stuff, that creepy crawly stuff. And you had to wear brogan-type shoes. But when I taught on the Divide in '35 and '36, I taught in boots and britches.

That first school where I taught is the only one-room school that still exists in Texas. Today it's on the Y. O. Ranch—between Kerrville and Rocksprings, below Mountain Home—though it wasn't on the Y. O. at that time. Back then it was down on the Dee Hughes Ranch. It was a little seven-month school. That first year I had three first-graders, three second-graders, a fifth-grader, a sixth-grader, and a seventh-grader—nine students in all.

It was about 1935. The ranchers were afraid that Hunt was going to close down their school so they moved it off the Dee Hughes Ranch and across the highway onto another ranch. They were afraid they'd have to consolidate—make their children come into Hunt.

Hunt wasn't very big—not even a town. I guess fifty people lived there. But their school served a pretty big community. They had quite a good school for it to be such a small little place.

The ranchers built a little rock school, which served as school, church, and community center. When they built the new building, they didn't get around to building any outdoor privies. This was very worrisome in that year because the boys just went in one direction, and the girls in another. All there was out there was a shin oak, which is a low, shrubby brush about waist to chest high. I'd wait until they all got back, and then I'd depart in another direction away from all of them. You can see over a lot of it, but we just assumed distance was decency. After you went a certain distance out there you hoped nobody could see. This was miserable to me 'cause I went still a further way away from the children, but I always had the feeling, you know, I don't know whether I'm far enough away or not. I was always uncomfortable all year because I never knew whether I was further enough away. Just distance was decency. That was about it. I never knew, and I was just miserable over there. But that was the only thing I didn't like about it.

The state tried to shut down the Divide school last year, the last ranch school in Texas. Charles Schreiner the Third went over to the legislature and fought for it. Where they live, they're fifty miles away from everything, and he convinced them the children would have to wait too long for a bus.

Today the school still serves the ranches around there. It has five to fifteen students at a time depending on how many ranch workers there

are and how many children they have. The ranch workers' children and the ranchers' children still go to school together—just like always. Some of the better-known families out there have been ranchers for generations, and their hired workers were there for years the same way. They were lovely people, wonderful to me, and I guess that's what made me decide to launch out on a career in teaching.

When I taught out on the Divide, most children came into Kerrville for high school. Some of the parents moved to Kerrville and sent their children. Some of the children moved by themselves or with their mothers alone and had room and board with a family. Most of the kids who came from the country were honor students.

In the Divide school, they learned from each other. They shared in whatever area of study the grades above them or below them had. I believe it's still the same today.

After two years teaching on the Divide, I decided to go back to school and get my degree. Mr. Klein, one of the trustees, came to me and asked me if I planned to come back. Cordelia, a sister-in-law of his, wanted the place. I told him I had been thinking about going and getting my degree.

He said, "We can't hire her if I'm a trustee. I'll resign and give her a chance at it if you don't plan to come back. But if you want the school, it's yours, and I'll continue to be a trustee."

I told him, "Well, suppose I just burn my bridges right here. You just go ahead and resign and hire her because I'm going to school."

So I sold that car but not right then. I went on out and went to summer school. A girl from Center Point went with me. We went clear to Alpine—here with San Marcos close to us. But I had heard it was cool and pretty out there, so I talked her into going out with me.

That was quite a trip out there. I'd never been hardly out of the county. I'd lived in San Antonio as a child, and Birmingham, Alabama, for a couple of years when I was a child. The rest of the time had been spent in this county. So we gypsied out. I ordered two tires from Sears Roebuck, and they came in at four o'clock one evening. We put 'em on, and I told Mother we were going to leave out. Well, she just had a fit. "Four in the evening! Why don't you wait and go in the morning?"

"No, I'm ready to go. We're packed, and we're going," I said.

We drove that night and got to Odessa. They were having a cattle-men's convention, and all of the hotel rooms had been taken. We were sitting, eating a hamburger, deciding what we were going to do.

I said, "Well, there isn't anything we can do. We'll just have to drive on."

The lady that was serving us said, "You girls aren't planning to drive on towards Fort Stockton?"

I said, "Yes."

She said, "You can't do that. I won't allow it." She just threw a fit.

She said, "Let me call a friend of mine," and she did.

Her friend said that her son was out of town, and we could have his room. When we went over, she changed the sheets. You wouldn't do anything like that today—go into a stranger's home. But she was so nice, and so sweet to us. We had a bath and went to bed.

And then the son came home after all! We offered to get up and to leave, but he said, "No," he'd sleep on the couch that night. It wouldn't matter to him.

The next morning there was a lovely breakfast fixed for us when we got up. She wouldn't take any money for it. We kept saying, "Of course, we've got to pay you. Just to take two people out of the blue that you've never have heard of before in your life and to go to all this trouble?"

We insisted, and she finally said, "All right. Five dollars."

When we got to Fort Stockton I understood why they didn't want us to go on. It was a hundred miles with nothing but a filling station at Sheffield where you could get gas. The rest was just sage and lizards. Not another thing. Not even a buzzard in the sky. No wonder they didn't want us to go. My mother would have dropped dead to think I was starting out into something like that about eleven o'clock at night.

At the end of that summer, I just decided that I would go on to school. I sold my car for tuition and went back to Alpine. On my own. Out into the blue.

I needed money for room and board, and I didn't have a job. I called the dean of women and told her.

She said, "Well, come and stay at my house. Tomorrow we'll start looking for something."

I thought maybe I could get a job in the cafeteria, but she said, "No, the boys have that all tied up."

The dean finally called me and told me there was a lady who ran a boarding house, but she'd always had boys to help her. My mother had run a boarding house, and I said I understood a little about it. My teen years were spent helping my mother. The woman agreed to try me, to give me room and board for helping her. Her son and two of his friends lived out in the garage, and she'd turned the rest of her house over. She had about ten girls that stayed with her all the time, and then forty kids ate their meals with her. It was right at the foot of a hill.

I had an aunt who lived in Alpine, and when I first wrote and told her

that I was going to Alpine for school I interpreted her letters as being a little snippy. Mother said it wasn't, that was just Aunt Annie. Anyway, when I went out there, I was determined I wasn't going to contact her, wasn't going to have anything to do with her, so I just went on. We drove in, found a place to stay, and I'd been there about two weeks when I ran into her in a grocery store. She said, "Sibyl, what are you doing here?" And I said, "I told you I was coming out to school."

"Well, my goodness, I thought you would contact us as soon as you got here," she said. "You'll have to come up and eat with us."

So my roommate and I went and ate with them several times during the year, but I wasn't around there a great deal. But she insisted, was really insistent, that we come and use her washing machine. So about once every two weeks I gathered up all the towels and sheets and went over there and washed that kind of stuff, but the rest of the time I just kept our clothes clean.

I suppose there was some place where the wealthier kids had their laundry done by somebody. There were always people around who did it, but we just did our own. I always thought it was strange.

I didn't stay in a dorm, I never stayed in one in my life. I stayed at boarding houses where the ladies had rooms—like seven or eight rooms. They would keep maybe fourteen girls, or boys, as the case may be—but never mixed. It was cheaper to stay in a boarding house than a dorm. We had four together in a room with two double beds. It was cheaper for there to be four in the room than for two in the room. I know our big bedroom had two double beds in it.

Here again I slept with someone and found it difficult. As long as I was there in the summer, I went with a girl from Center Point that I grew up with. She didn't smoke so we got along great. But several of the girls I stayed with did smoke and that did bother me because I never did get used to the smell of smoke.

I was a little unhappy that year because one of the girls was a communist. She got up every morning saying, "Hail to the Red Flag of Liberty!"

I got to where I'd leave at seven and not come back 'til ten at night. I just didn't want to hear her philosophy and her theorizing. She was very excited. That was the year they had a kind of a communist uprising in San Antonio. You remember—they were a bunch of pecan shellers. She took part in that and some strikes and one thing or another that they had. It was a time when they said America was closer to turning communist than it ever had been before because there were literally thousands of people who belonged to the Communist Party. This was in about 1936. Depression times—that's what brought it on.

Anyway, this communist group had a big meeting in the Municipal

Auditorium in San Antonio, and the veterans went down there and broke all the windows out of the Municipal Auditorium because the communists were holding this meeting there. She was there, and she thought it was so wonderful.

She'd come from up North somewhere, and she said, "You all do not know."

I had asked her what she was doing down here. She said, "Well, it's warmer. It's cheaper to live here. Up North it gets very cold."

She was just going to school on a wing and a prayer. She didn't have any money. She washed clothes for some of the other kids in order to even eat. She worried about food constantly. Maybe she'd had a bad time. We'd set up a card table and fix our meals. If you had a peach in the bowl, you would be halfway through your meal, and she'd start in, "Aren't you going to eat your peach?"

I'd say, "Yes, when I get through eating, I eat it like a dessert." Of course if you didn't eat it, well, then she did. She was always hounding. The other girls felt the same as I did, except they continued to be civil and nice to her. I just got to where I'd leave and wouldn't come back 'til night so I wouldn't have to listen to her. She was always telling me that I was naive, and I was this, and I was that. Which was probably true. But that's all part of growing up—people that you meet.

Alpine didn't have too many people. Alpine had possibly twelve hundred. That's what I liked about it. It was a small town, and I always felt at home and at ease in a small town. I do not like cities to this day. I'm miserable in San Antonio. People here shop down there, and I say, "What can you find down there you can't find here?"

I can remember going to San Antonio to buy shoes in my younger days, but this! There's so many people and everybody going in a different direction. They even smell to me. They even have a certain odor to them, cities do. You go in a place like Kresge's or Woolworth's. I don't know what it is. It's a combination of people I guess.

I can remember as a kid only having oranges at Christmas time. Apples we got more often. Oranges were always a part of Christmas. It was always an apple and an orange in your stocking at Christmas and a few nuts. Walnuts and yellow nuts which we called nigger toes. Do you know why we called them that? I don't know. And hazelnuts. My granddad would buy a box of oranges right before Christmas and bring them home. That's the only time I ever saw oranges up here. For years we didn't have bananas too often. Once in a while we'd go into a grocery store and see them. I thought they all grew on stalks. Like this on the stalk and hanging upside down. Chop a certain number off the bunch, and that was it.

Sul Ross College in Alpine had been founded in 1928, and I was going in about 1935. It was a four-year college, but there weren't too many students. I would say there weren't but about four hundred going there.

The president of the college was so involved in getting land set aside for Big Bend National Park that he spent all his time riding around doing that. He hardly functioned as far as school president was concerned. We saw him twice all year. Every time we saw him he was talking about this intermental park. Mexico was supposed to donate a certain amount of land, and we would donate a certain amount of land. Ours mostly. So the Big Bend should be named for Professor Morlock. By the way, he taught in Kerrville in his earlier years.

I think all those early teachers' colleges were called *normal* at one time. I know San Marcos was. I don't know what that meant—*normal*. Later on, they gave them the name of *teachers' colleges*. Normal schools were only two years. Then when they went to a four-year bachelor degree, they became a college.

I don't know why those eight were called teachers' colleges except I know you had practice teaching. You were taught how to make lesson plans. You were actually taught how to teach, and those were the only colleges that did that at that time. There was one at Commerce, Sam Houston Teachers' College, San Marcos, Sul Ross. There were eight of them.

So I went on and got my degree. It took me all that year and the next to get it.

In April I had written all kinds of letters looking for a teaching job, and I'd given them to a friend of mine to mail. Two months later he found them still in the pocket of his suitcase. He'd forgotten to mail them, and that alarmed him so that he stopped in every town he went through and gave them one of those letters with my picture and application. It didn't make any difference who it was written to—just gave them one!

Suddenly one day—it was about four days 'til graduation—I got a phone call from O'Donnell, Texas, asking me if I'd be interested in teaching the first grade. It was strange circumstances. The superintendent said, "The first-grade teacher here that we're very fond of's father has cancer, and she wants to spend this remaining year with him. She will have her job back just as soon as he passes away. But if you want it under those circumstances, we'll try to help you if we have another opening. And if we don't, we'll try to help you find one."

I said, "Sure."

He said, "Well, could you come up for an interview?"

I rode all night, walked out in fields and talked to guys on tractors. They said, "Yes," I could have it.

All my life long, I guess the Lord must have been with me. Nearly everybody came looking for me and said, "Will you teach for us?"

So I came back to Alpine, graduated, went home, packed my things, and went back to O'Donnell.

Well, O'Donnell was an eye opener, too. It lies between Lubbock and Lamesa—on the high plains. Lamesa's the next large town above San Angelo. There were no trees, no water, no hills—on the high plains. I thought, "If I could get back to where there are some trees and water, I'll never leave again."

Even Alpine, as far west as it is, is like a little Switzerland minus the snow. There are lots of hills and trees. Alpine's hills are higher and more closed than here. You can't look any direction without seeing more hills. It's a strange kind of mixture. Some of it's like our hills with timber on it, and some of it is those strange-looking hills like they have way out West—like Monument Valley. Fort Davis is nearby and it's heavily timbered. It's five hundred miles from here. It's just in a little pocket of timbered land. All the rest is flat and level. Just sage.

I don't know why I was so homesick there. Every day I'd go to get the mail, the tumbleweed would be stacked up against the door until you'd have to claw it out of the way. Then I'd get the mail, go home, and lie on my bed and cry a while.

I found a place to live with a lady and her husband and her elderly father. I had a room there. They were nice to me, and people asked me out. I did nothing to try to make friends with those people. I just laid at home and cried a lot. I never have known why I acted like that. I just felt so far away and so cut off from everybody in the world.

I wasn't pining away for anyone. In fact, I started going with one that I had gone to school with. He had two sisters. He always thought I looked so much like his sister, and he told his father and mother that he'd met a girl that was just like his sister that had died the year before. She died in childbirth.

When they saw me, they hugged me—the father and mother—and they said, "You look just like Charlotte. Exactly like her."

They asked me out very often, and I got where I went pretty frequently to their home. I went with this boy to shows and things together, but we didn't have a great thing going. The times I wasn't over at their house I was just miserable.

One of the teachers that taught there, the second-grade teacher, would worry about me. I had kitchen privileges at the place I was staying. I had stocked a neat little pantry, but it just stayed there, and I never did cook

anything. I ate peanut butter and crackers, and cheese and fruit, and cereal, whatever I could eat that I didn't have to cook.

And yet I drifted into a nice relationship there. This lady did not like to wash dishes. She was very neat. She washed out all the plates, stacked them, and everything. They didn't have dishwashers, and she just loathed washing dishes. She had really pretty nails, and she always wore rubber gloves. She would sit there and go like this, and I thought, "My goodness! Here I'd washed for forty people and could sling them out faster than you could think of."

So I just got in there. It took two minutes to wash them. She would just die over that, "Oh, you are so nice! I saved you a dessert."

She got to saving me a whole meal so I got more home-cooked food than you might think. I wasn't doing it for that. I had just started doing them 'cause they were there, and I didn't like the looks of them. She would never wash them more than once a day and sometimes once every two days. But they were stacked, and she'd put a cloth over them. I thought, "Why does she hate to do that so? What does it take? Five minutes?" She liked to play bridge, and she liked to keep her hands nice-looking.

This second-grade teacher would worry, too, and say, "You need to come over. You need some vegetables. Come over to my house tonight. I'm going to cook you a meal."

She, too, hated washing dishes. So the trade was made. She'd cook for me, and we shared expenses on the groceries. We'd buy them, and I'd go over to her house. We'd broil steaks or pork chops, something like this, and she'd cook spinach or corn and these kinds of things. We'd sit and eat and talk and laugh and visit with each other. Then I'd get up and wash the dishes and clean up the kitchen and go home. We did that any number of times.

I also traded labor with a girl when I was up in school. She absolutely loathed washing clothes. My mother taught me when I was growing up to wash my hose, panties, and bra every night when I took them off and hang them up. She said you constantly had a clean supply, and there's no smelly, dirty clothes lying around in a closet somewhere. So I just automatically did this every night. Well, I got to taking my roommate's, Dorothy's, and washing hers at the same time. She said, "Well, you wash for me, I'll iron for you."

I thought I had the best of the trade 'cause I didn't like to iron. She ironed all my blouses and skirts and did a beautiful job of it. So I washed for her, and she ironed for me.

My friend's sister had died in childbirth. That happened pretty often in those times. In fact, if you go out in the cemeteries and look at those

dates that are on graves, a great many children died with diphtheria and whooping cough. So there are all sorts of children's names there, and many women did die in childbirth.

I remember a lady in Center Point. Everybody was so upset over her. She had six little boys. Everybody had their babies at home in those days, and some neighbor lady or relative would come stay. With her last baby, she started hemorrhaging after the doctor left, and by the time he got back to her, she had died and left those six little boys. Her husband, his name was Wharton, reared those boys. Never did marry again. And if you go to her cemetery today in Center Point it has, "Ruth Wharton, mother. Love."

Teaching probably was a good opportunity for women who maybe didn't want to get married and have children. A good many taught. Short of nursing or working in a beauty parlor, about the only opportunity a woman had to get out and do anything was teaching. I guess there were secretaries, too, but that never occurred to any of us. I never had a friend who became a secretary. The ones I know of were all men.

I think of Miss Minnie Irving. I can't imagine her ever even going with a man. She was head postmistress. She was a teacher a long time, and then she became the town postmistress for about twenty years. She was so exacting about how things were to be done in the post office. If you brought in a package, if it wasn't tied up or taped the way she thought it ought to be, she'd tell you to take it home and do it over. She drove people nutty like that. Precise. Every penny accounted for. Everything done the way it should be done. I'm sure it's the only time in the history of that town that the post office was run the way it should have been run. Another one of my teachers was a stickler for convention. I can't see her going with any man. Just like two teachers there in our retired teachers' group. They have never been married. I bet one of them never even looked at a man other than her brother-in-law.

One of the kids came in one day and asked me, "Who is that teacher that looks like George Washington?"

I all but died laughing because I knew that it was Minnie. She wore her hair parted in the middle. It came down and made two kind of rolls here over her ears. Mostly white, some of it was grey. It was white on each roll. She had that austere mouth held a certain way. You knew instantly who George Washington was.

Yet I was very fond of her. I found out some things about her when I taught next to her. She clothed a child every year. She picked a child in her room who she felt was in real need and bought her a dress. Always a girl, never a boy. She bought dresses and shoes. I thought that was so neat and so good of her that I started doing it, too. It really was a rewarding thing.

I would contact a little child first and ask if she could go shopping with me some afternoon. I would usually go down to J. C. Penney or some place like this. I couldn't afford something vastly expensive. I would tell her, "Now I want you to pick out some underwear, two dresses, a sweater, and a pair of shoes." And oh, she would be just beside herself, trying on styles!

I never did a boy either. I was strictly girls.

Once I found a little girl whose mother was dead. She was living with her father and older siblings. Her hair always looked so stringy, simply horrible and unwashed. So I asked her if she would like to have a permanent? She stayed after school one evening, and we washed her hair down at the place where the kids washed their hands, and I gave her a home permanent, cut her hair and bought her some hair ribbons. I showed her how to tie bows. Oh, she was just delighted. Thrilled to death!

When I took that child home, my heart just bled for her. They didn't even have an outdoor privy, somewhere out there in Oak Park, way to the end of nowhere. She kept saying she could walk from Oak Park. She didn't want me to go home with her, but I took her all the way there. There was an old board laid across a muddy ditch that they walked over. Their house was real tiny and terrible.

I thought, "Well, it's a wonder that that kid was as clean as she was." She wore the same old clothes, kind of grubby, and then I found out her mother was gone.

I taught another one how to braid her hair. It was growing so limp and terrible. When I had the children, I used to have them write something like, "I wish . . ." and they could write about what they wish, and "I'm afraid when . . ." She was forever saying something about her house. She was ashamed of her house. She wished she had a bigger house. She wished she had a nice house. If she had six thousand dollars, she'd spend it on a house. This went on constantly with her. I taught her how to braid her hair. It was long. She insisted on it being long. So I taught her how to both French-braid and how to just regularly braid her hair. It looked a lot nicer after that.

I taught a little girl one time that I and the other teachers had got to noticing. We thought she dressed funny. Her clothes were a lot longer than other kids' were. She'd come to school with a thing tied under her chin and gloves and galoshes when nobody else in the whole wide world was wearing them, and we got to thinking, "What kind of people must she have?"

We found out she was an only child, and she was reared by this rather older father and mother. The child was very talented and musical, but she just didn't act like other kids. She sat in the library and read when other kids were out playing on the playground. Her parents seemed so

concerned about her health. If it rained or if it was cold, she didn't come to school.

I would see them eating in places round town. The child had perfect manners. Everything was "Please" and "No, thank you." But I thought, "What have they been preparing her for? She isn't ever going to fit in with her bunch."

I don't know what finally ever happened to her. She had a beautiful complexion. I just wonder if she ever got away from them—became a different person.

Some of the retired teachers here married late in life. One was married in her forties. She went socially with a lot of people and seemed to have a good time. In fact, she used to pain me 'cause she would always try to act younger than she was. She'd come down the hall skipping in the morning, like a child would, and here she was in her forties. But she met her husband, and they seemed to hit it off okay, and as far as I know they still do.

The one I told you about before, the postmistress? She was rather tall and thin and somewhat masculine-looking in all her ways. I remember her being so austere—never a frill, never a lace. She wore a bar pin and a white blouse and a black skirt, and that was practically her uniform. Back when I was a student myself, and she was a teacher, someone told me one day, "Miss Minnie wants you." I just turned into a state, a mass of jello. What could Miss Minnie possibly want with me? She didn't teach me, but she did keep a study hall that I was in.

So I went up and said, "Miss Minnie, did you want me?" She said, "Yes, come with me."

So I went with her. We went into this study hall, and we walked down the aisle and stopped at the desk that I sat in. She said, "Did you do this?"

Well, I had to squint to see what she was pointing to, and here was a little "SB"—probably scratched with a pen. I probably did do it, but I had no memory of it. Those were my initials. I had no memory whatever of scratching it on there with a pen, but I supposed I must have 'cause it was on there.

I just said, "Yes." There it was—SB.

She said, "Well, just a moment."

She went up to her desk, took out a can of varnish, a piece of sandpaper, and a brush and said, "Sand that off, and paint this desk."

So I did.

When I returned them to her, she said just as calm, not at all unkind, "We musn't scratch on desks."

I said, "Yes, ma'am," and made my escape. But I always remembered that 'til the end of time.

The whole town called her Miss Minnie. Even when she was postmis-

triss, she was Miss Minnie to everybody. A lady lived with her. They lived out on the edge of town, and Miss Minnie did all the outside work. She milked the cow. She gardened. They say she wore pants and put on boots and did all this outside work. Her friend kept the house and cooked. They were together for years—were buried together in the cemetery. Nobody ever questioned their being together. You never heard any unkind word about them. In fact, I can't conceive of Miss Minnie being anything other than Miss Minnie. That was her life.

Everyone in O'Donnell was very nice and sweet to me, but I was so glad when that year in O'Donnell was over. The superintendent kept his word to me because he took me to Brownfield. I got a place there. He took me to Tahoka. I got a place there. But I kept writing letters of application back closer to home and finally to Kerrville itself. All summer long I'd take one job and then resign to move to another one closer to home. When I had a chance at Kerrville, I took it.

I taught there a year, and then I got married in 1941 and resigned. I didn't have to quit, I just decided I was through with teaching. I was going to stay home and have a family.

Of course, Pearl Harbor was a year later. War broke out, and that's why my career didn't end at all. They started wearing the hinges off my gate at Center Point wanting me to come back and teach, but I said no. I stayed home two years and had quite an experience with my husband. We couldn't get any help. We got out and cut a hundred acres of corn, chopped the fodder, and tied it with strings because there wasn't any wire. We couldn't get anybody to help us. The government had started rural electrification, but there wasn't any wire obtainable. Here were all the holes dug, the poles lying on the ground, and no wire. And no help at all. We had to do everything ourselves.

Sometimes I'd go out at night and sit on one of those posts that were lying on the ground. There wasn't any light you could see by. At home, we'd always had electricity in town. I reared my children without electricity. The only one I ever had any electricity with was the last one. 1951 was when it finally got to us. We used lamps and old kerosene stoves.

Other times when I got angry at my husband, I'd wander off into the cemetery. He'd come looking for me, and I'd be sitting on a tombstone writing poetry.

Poems about life, and love, and death, and all sorts of things. I have some of them still. Funny, I've never written any since.

Between the time I finished high school and when I went to teach in the Divide, I went to school at Schreiner College. It was during the '30s—'32, '33, and '34—and they just started to let girls go there. We had six

girls and all those boys. You would have thought that would have been hog heaven for us, but I can remember being so embarrassed so many times. For instance, I was in chemistry class with thirty boys, and I the only girl in it. The teacher would start to tell a kinda off-color joke, and then he'd remember I was present. So he'd just break off and the boys'd go, "Ooooh," and that would embarrass me.

Then I was in a psychology class with a whole bunch of boys and invariably the instructor would say, "Well, let's get the female point of view," and he'd read mine out loud to all of them. He was always giving us subjects like, "How I'd act if I were a member of the opposite sex." Mine would be the only one in there that'd be an opposing view.

A lot of those boys were from families who were traveling, or they were foreign students. Some of them were children with problems.

I had a ride to school in the morning, but I did not have a way home in the afternoon and I walked. It was ten miles. So when you talk about walking through the snow, I did literally. I was dying to go to school. I always wanted to go to college. When I finished school, it was the depression. I thought college was just as far away as the moon.

After graduation, I went up to the high school and asked if they'd allow me to arrange the library Dewey Decimal System. They had just stacked the books alphabetically. I made out all those cards and started rearranging the library.

My mother came in one day. She said she'd been talking to my father, and he'd agreed to pay half my college tuition, and she would pay half. How would I like to go to Schreiner? Well, of course, they could have sent me just as easily to San Marcos cheaper because books, room, board, and tuition would all have been less than the tuition at Schreiner. It was probably thirty or forty dollars the semester hour then—way up there.

By Christmas, my father decided he couldn't do it, and he sent me a letter and said he could no longer do it. My father and mother were separated. Divorced. So Dr. Delaney called me in, and he said, "You must really want to go to school because I know you walk home in the afternoons."

I said, "Oh, I do want to go to school." I wanted to do just about anything—decent that is—to continue going to college.

So Dr. Delaney got me the NYA—the National Youth Administration—where they paid me twenty dollars a month. He said, "I know you make high grades in English and that you're good in literature. So I want you to write book reviews for our school paper, and I'll pay you so much for that." Then he asked me to tutor some high school boys in English. So three times during the day I taught grammar to high school boys while I went to college.

I got twenty dollars on the NYA, and the rest of it amounted to about

thirty dollars. I just turned that in. I signed my check and gave it right back. Evidently they let it cover whatever I owed because they never did ask me for anything else.

I didn't know it at the time, but evidently I had hypoglycemia. I was one of those that got terribly weak and started feeling faint, and occasionally I did faint. It was because I hadn't eaten since morning. It was a matter of false pride because my mother would have gladly fixed lunch for me. She fussed at me all the time about it, and I'd say, "I'll eat when I come in." But because I got out at different times every day, I'd give out on those long afternoons when I got out at four. My mother even took me to the doctor about it, but they hadn't heard of it back then.

I all but collapsed one day there at school, and they sent me over to the nurse. I was shaking all over. She asked me what the matter was, and I said, "I don't know. My knees got weak, and I feel like I'm gonna fall or something."

After that, Dr. Delaney called me in and said, "I want you to come over and eat in the faculty cafeteria"—being kind to me. He said since I was tutoring those boys, I was a faculty member, and he wanted me to eat in the cafeteria with the other teachers.

The next year Dr. Delaney said that I got a scholarship. That paid my tuition the second year. They did a lot for me. I was always grateful that I went to Schreiner.

After I taught in the rural school and before I went away to college, I went with this cousin to the church camp meetings. We'd stay overnight and camp out for two weeks. There were young people, oldsters, all kinds. Some of the girls chose to stay with their father and mother in their own tent. They have a place out there for mobile homes and campers, but very few go in campers.

The camp meetings are still going on now, and how many years is that? About fifty years and still going on. I think it started up in the thirties at the Fish Hatchery. Johnny Hill started it. They made the salad and the barbeque and the bread. A lot of people from here went just for all that food. This went on for two or three Sundays, just on Sundays. You'd go back home at night.

They'd have services in the open air building. The crying and carrying on some of them did at those meetings! It got to be kind of like homecoming.

By the way, we had a homecoming at Alison-Hunt four years ago where all the stragglers came back. I had such a good time because the town was just like it used to be when I was little. All the ^{Center Point} ~~Louis Park~~ School people were there. The oldest graduate was from 1910. She was ninety-two. I never had so many stand up and hug me. And I hugged them, and

we were so glad to see each other. Years ago, I had been homecoming queen, and my cousin was the graduation speaker.

I started school at ^{Louis Park} ~~Louis Park~~ in the first grade, and I went back in the seventh grade as my father and mother broke up. I attended school here through the tenth grade, which was all they had. Then I came up there to high school in Kerrville one year, and then I went to Schreiner College two years.

There was a movie star from ^{Center Point} ~~Louis Park~~. What was her name? They had a parade for her. It was hot, but they had a nice parade for it to be such a small town. The town was like it used to be. That's what I enjoyed. Every place that I was at, there was one that I knew. When I go down there now, I can't find five people that I know because all of north Dade County, Florida, has moved in, and the ranches have been broken up into little areas. Lots of mobile homes, this sort of thing, and you don't really know the people any more.

When I taught at ^{Center Point} ~~Louis Park~~ it was quite a bit different than when I was a student there. We no longer had the double desks. We had single desks that were screwed to the floor. Later on they put those desks on runners, three on a runner, and you could shift and move. I never did that 'cause the kids could move them around. They'd move their desks up close to each other and way far apart. They were always moving around, and I liked them when they were screwed down. They couldn't get out of place. That's just a notion I had about it.

Later on, when we had chairs, I put them in circles and all kinds of ways, and that was nice. You could put them in groups and do group work. But the trouble was you had to watch them half the time 'cause they'd switch them around to suit themselves and arrange themselves where they could have tea parties and such.

Yet I was never very strict about that sort of thing. I always let them chew gum from the beginning. I never could understand why teachers didn't do these sort of things in polite company. But I allowed the kids to. It seemed like after I announced to them that they could, they'd chew madly for a week or two and then give it up.

I used to tell the other teachers, "Some of you smoke, and I really don't like that. So I don't see why you object so to their chewing it if it helps them concentrate."

I had some rules about it. I said, "Chew gum as long as I don't see or hear it."

They'd say, "How can we do that?"

When I'd see it sticking out of their mouths or wound around their pencils, or pulled out to here, or in a big bubble, I'd say, "Ooooh, that looks like your liver or spleen!"

They'd all laugh about that.

Something else I tried one time, and it only worked in that grade. I could never figure that out. I had fifth grade, which is my favorite of all grades. I just love ten-year-olds. I got tired of this: "May I go to the restroom? May I go to the restroom?" No matter how much you cautioned them at recess to be sure they went, and set aside a time when they could go, there still would be somebody who had to go.

So I said, "Okay, just write your name on the board. When you come back, erase it. No one else may go as long as there's a name up there. If you abuse the privilege, we'll have to do away with it."

That worked fine. People seldom left—once in a great while.

I tried it in junior high, and it didn't work. They stayed out of the room all the time.

In the rural school where they had to go out in the brush, they would ask me permission to go, and I would say, "All right." I didn't have but eight or ten kids there so that wasn't so bothersome. When you've got thirty-two or -three, and they're ding-donging about it all the time, you find yourself spending more time.

They had a fit here in Kerrville when I let the kids just sign out. They wanted teachers to keep a record when kids left the room. I found I was spending more time writing down when they were going to the restroom than I was teaching. So I told the children when they had left the room three times, then they had to give me five minutes after school. Most of them didn't want to stay after school so that put a stop to that. But others, they'd just as soon stay their five minutes.

By 1942 I'd had my first child. I kept saying I couldn't teach because I had a baby, and they said, "Well, we have one teacher that has a baby just three weeks old. We're going to let her go home and nurse it at recess and whenever she needs to because she lives in the Baptist parsonage right across from the school."

"Well, I don't have anyone to leave my baby with," I said.

"Your mother can take care of your baby," they said. "It's patriotic duty. We need you." And they kept on.

Finally, my husband said, "Go ahead and do it."

So I taught two more years in Center Point.

Our principal that second year lost his mind. I think I decided when I met him that he didn't have one to begin with. He did such strange things. I mean at Christmas he left out and just never did come back. We heard he'd been put in a mental institution. He'd had a nervous breakdown.

He had installed some sort of system where he could speak to everybody in every classroom. We'd never had anything like it in any school. All day long these announcements would come over, "Attention all class-

rooms! Attention all classrooms! Who moved a chair out of the library?" It was just something like this all day long. And he did away with a lot of the things we'd worked so hard to get accredited at Center Point. It was just a little old, small-town school. And things like homemaking and the boys' agriculture he dismissed as nothing and put in commercial business type courses like typing and bookkeeping in place of them. I suppose the trustees allowed it. I don't even remember.

He was with us a half year. The principal, who later became the superintendent, felt just like I did about it. We talked about it any number of times. He said, "There's something weird about this person." The principal called me in after the Christmas holidays and showed me a letter the man had written in which he was applying for a position somewhere else. He said he was a small man, five feet and four inches tall, but he could lick his weight in wildcats. It was just a strange kind of letter to be a letter of application, you know. He signed it, "Yours truly and I hope we lick the Japs." And signed his name to it.

The principal said, "Doesn't that strike you as a strange letter of application?"

I said, "It certainly does."

Then he told me that he'd made superintendent, and he'd like for me to be his principal. He said there won't be anything other than if you'd consider it an honor because you won't have a raise in pay, and it's just a lot of hard work. You've got a bunch of monthly reports to get in. But I'd like to have you if you'll agree. So I did. I served that one year as principal.

He was marvelous, quiet spoken and in perfect control of the kids. He used to talk so softly. He used to say, "I'm not going to talk loud. They can get quiet and listen to me." You could hear a pin fall when he talked. He taught classes like everybody else. That was true everywhere I taught until I came to Kerrville.

After my one year as principal in Center Point, my husband moved in closer to the city of Kerrville. Again I thought, "Well, I guess my teaching career is over."

Then one day I met Mr. Daniels, the principal of Tivy Elementary. I'd taught for him one year before I was married. He said that he had a teacher that was going to leave at Easter and would I finish out the year for her? Well, I talked it over with my husband, and he said, "That won't be but six, eight weeks. Go ahead and do it."

Once I'd started back in, Mr. Daniels talked to me and said, "Why don't you come over?" So I agreed and started back teaching.

Let's see . . . I taught there until 1951 when my daughter was born. That year I decided, "Well, I'll stop for sure now." But I was back in

seven months. I decided to stay with it that time until I got it out of my system, and I didn't get it out until two years ago.

My elementary principal, Tom Daniels, had a school here in town named for him. He would walk around the school yard and put his arm around a little child and say, "John, is your father better now? Is he out of the hospital?" He just knew everything that was going on in every child's life. He was the kindest, most gentle person.

If he ever chose, which was very rarely, to spank a child, he talked and talked and talked to that child. It would be a child he'd had in the office many times. Then he would eventually say, "Now, if you continue to do this, I'm going to have to punish you." So when the child went on and did it, he'd finally say, "All right, now you come on down to the office at three this afternoon." Just as calm, never a word of anger in his voice. It didn't happen very often, though. I'm going to say once every two or three years.

My junior high principal was Jack Murray. I always felt fairly close to Jack, and I liked Jack. He was a different personality all together from Mr. Daniels. He was more a gung-ho, macho type. Mr. Daniels was a gentle, quiet person. I came to be fond of Jack and to understand him, and I feel like he genuinely cared for me, too. I guess we both cried when I went.

I loved Katy, his wife. I taught both of his children. I always felt close to the Murray family.

One year someone told me Mr. Murray was looking for me. It was the first day of orientation. I had just been up there a little while before, but I went back up to the school. Mr. Murray said he wanted me to teach English in eighth grade. I just came unglued. I'd been teaching the sixth. He told me Miss Stevens had decided to resign. She'd had that throat cancer operation. She got up there that day and started crying and said she wasn't up to eighth grade.

I said, "I don't want to teach the eighth, Mr. Murray. I taught the eighth before, and I didn't like it."

He asked, "Will you teach the seventh?"

I said, "Yes."

So he hired Miss Stevens for the eighth and me for the seventh, and that's how I got in junior high. I never did want to teach there. I think that's a difficult age, and I believe only their mothers could really understand and love them at that age.

Mr. Daniels used to be good about allowing me to do things I wanted to do. I would get tired of the fifth grade and say, "I'm tired of being in

the United States in geography. I want to go to Europe a while. Can I teach the sixth grade next year?"

He would say, "Yes," and quite often I would get children that I'd had the year before. I knew them so well that really it was a help to them and to me. I knew which ones were performing and which ones were not doing what they could. I'd say, "Oh, you know how to do that. You remember last year."

I would go from the fifth grade to the sixth and from the sixth to the fifth. He let me do that three or four times, and then I was caught in the sixth when they changed it over to the junior high. That was the reason he let me go on over to Peterson Junior High.

I cried because I didn't want to leave Mr. Daniels. I went and I told him, "I'd give anything to stay, you know," and he said, "I'd give anything to hire you back."

This experience taught me one thing in life. Sometimes you resist change, but when you go ahead, you're just as happy there as you were anywhere else once you settle down to it.

When I was teaching English, I gave them a six-weeks study on Funk and Wagnall's book, *Thirty Days to a Better Vocabulary*. We went through that entire book, and, oh, they fought me. After they graduated from high school, three of them went off to Officers' Candidate School. They came back and said, "Thank you. Four of the words from that vocabulary book were on the test. We know that's probably what saved us."

I said, "I figured that sooner or later you'd have some use for them."

I made them memorize poetry, too, and they just pitched a fit about that. One of them later on was interned for a while as a prisoner in World War II. He told me, "I sat there and went over and over those things you made us memorize." Like from Shakespeare. You know, "Good name in man or woman, dear my Lord, is more precious than any jewel" . . . "He who steals my purse steals trash." He said he'd say those things over and over, and I was so glad. He said, "I wish I'd memorized a lot more because it gave me something to occupy the hours with, and I did a lot of thinking about it."

I taught drama and role-playing, and when the kids learned poems, I'd have them act it out. They'd say, "Oh, this is silly!" But one of the boys I had, David—I'm real proud of David—was accepted to theatrical school.

I went to the library the other day and got a list of books that they considered for everyone to have read to be well-educated. I got to looking at that list, and there wasn't one I hadn't read. But a lot of them were things the teacher had made me read back in high school. One was *Pride and Prejudice*. I can't reconcile those two.

All those years in the junior high, part of the time I taught English and

part of the time art. It started off with them knowing I had an interest in art. The principal asked me if I'd like to teach one semester of art in the eighth grade, and I told him, "Yes." So the next year he made it a full year, one class. During that time, we switched schools. The high school took the junior high, and the junior high went back to high school. Shortly after we got over there he gave me two art classes, then the next year three classes, then the next year four, and the next year five, and I was just out of English. I always missed that because I enjoyed my English classes.

I told him, "I've never had any formal art training." I'd had a few art lessons in watercolor and a few in oil when I was a kid.

He said, "Well, to keep 'em off our backs you've got to get twelve hours."

So I went back to San Antonio Community College and took "Teaching Art in the Elementary School" and some things like this. Then I took a course in silversmithing and cutting gem stones. Enough to get twelve hours credit. I also at this time began taking classes out here at the Point where they have artists' courses all year. They would allow me to take a two-weeks course and would give me credit for that. During that time I must have taken about eight different sessions out there.

I have wished many times that school books were written by teachers. I don't believe they are. I have bought books that looked like they would be marvelous, and then when you got into them, you have to ask, "Why in the world did we adopt this? It's going to be here for twelve years." It would be just impossible. I'd finally stick them in a drawer and go on teaching. We've found some that had half a dozen mistakes in them. You know, grammatical errors in an English book. They hadn't been edited. This sort of thing.

I have often said that the whole thing should be turned upside down and started over. I can't feel like what's being done is going to improve the situation. And I don't think paying teachers more money is going to make a good teacher. It has to be a caring person. I don't know whether there are too many teachers that don't really care.

I know for one thing I used to give my children essay-type questions to answer because you have to think to answer an essay-type question. When you give an objective test that you can run down the line like on a math or a spelling test, and there's just one answer that's right, children get where they can't write. They can't put an organized thought down on a piece of paper.

And you know another thing—the reading? When we used to read, we read poems by Celia Thaxter. We read about Rosa Bonheur and her paintings in the first grade. But when you say, "See, see, see, run, Dick

run," when you get through with twenty pages of that, what have you learned? Absolutely nothing!

I'm ready to go back.

I remember the winter on the ranch. I'd come out with a kettle of hot water to pour on those gate latches so I could slide them back. I'd caution my kids not to burn their fingers with the hot tea kettle. I'd drive to Center Point and leave my daughter, and then make it back to school by eight o'clock.

Today, my daughter gets her children to school late every morning.

She says, "I just can't do it."

I say, "You can if you want to. You just never have decided that it was important that your children arrive on time. You're teaching them a very bad habit—a very rude habit of not being places on time."

What's wrong with being a wife and mother? Today if a woman says she doesn't work, people look at her like she's crazy.

Years ago at O'Donnell, I had to make lesson plans for the entire year. I never could stick to those lesson plans. You'd have one section that they'd learn fast, and another section where they'd go slow. You can't plan a year in advance where you're going to be. The principal would come down and ask, "Are you on page so 'n' so?" I was only there once. Fortunately, I had superintendents who allowed me a good deal of leeway. I hate organization and having to teach the same subject every day at the same time. You can't just quit something they're really interested in to get out another book and do something completely different. I just never could stand that.

I'd say, "I like broad periods of time. I may want to work three days hard on something, and then I'll catch up with the rest of it."

My superintendents always said, "Go ahead. Do it your way and get it done."

It's wonderful that all the way through I had supportive people like this that allowed me to do my own thing my own way. I always said, "If they get supervisors breathing down your neck, I quit that day because I can't survive."

The best superintendent I ever taught under was Ed Wildman. I liked Mr. Wildman. The teachers felt a closeness there we never felt after that. He let us all go over to the cafeteria, and we had coffee every morning together. We just sat around the tables, and we talked. We knew everybody in the high school. The schools were right together across the street from each other. We all knew each other, and knew what was going on,

and felt close to him and to every teacher. But you know, there weren't but about eighty of us then. Later on when the school grew so much and there were over two hundred teachers, I never knew two people in high school. I never knew when people resigned, other than what I read in the paper, and when new ones were added. I never did meet them. I got where about all I knew was my middle school and one or two of the old ones over in the elementary that had remained there when I left.

Teaching was hard work, but it was very rewarding to me. I wouldn't take anything, of course, for the children that I knew, and the contacts and relationships I had with them. That was what was the really important part.

had fun and attended her first dance with a school trustee from the more open-minded "upper community."

Sibyl had an ability to make others want to help her. The pull of her personality was apparent from the inception of her career, although she often underestimated it. She won her first teaching job in the depression over thirty-one other candidates but claims that "I always accused my mother of bribing them." She was warmly welcomed by the family with whom she boarded and by the community where she taught. Later, in one of the unhappiest periods of her life, she "fell into a situation" where a woman prepared her meals in exchange for her doing the dishes and was "adopted" by a family who thought she resembled a daughter who had recently died. Still later, the president of Schreiner College gave her a full work-scholarship and after learning she had fainted from hunger during an exam, declared she was eligible to eat free in the faculty dining hall.

Although Sibyl often elicited help in her career from significant life figures (precursors of the mentors sought by today's career women), an important side of her character is reclusive and introspective—dreamy, creative, self-sufficient. She is a woman who once wrote poetry by moonlight. Unique among the teachers interviewed, Sibyl never expresses an ambition to have a career. Some of the women wanted to be teachers; others began with a different ambition but transferred it to teaching instead. With her opening words, Sibyl says she was content living as a trapper until her mother forced her to get a teaching job. Her only other stated goal came recently in retirement when she asked to have time to be alone and read.

Just as Sibyl underestimates the attractiveness of her personality to others, she also externalizes credit for her considerable abilities. She attributes her career success to higher forces: "All my life long, I guess the Lord must have been with me. Nearly everybody came looking for me and said, 'Will you teach for us?'"

In spite of her initial indifference to a career, many episodes in her life attest to considerable effort exerted, first to attain credentials and then to exercise her craft with distinction. In fact, once established in her career, she remained in it for many years "until I got it out of my system." The humor in this remark was given a practical and reality-oriented twist by the young teacher when she taught some recalcitrant students a lesson by stranding them on the schoolhouse roof where they had climbed despite repeated warnings. The altruism that is evident in other teachers also was displayed by Sibyl, who clothed a poor girl in her class every year.

In addition to the idiosyncratic features of Sibyl's life, the story she tells illuminates certain historical conditions. First, Sibyl observes that

teaching was a good opportunity for women who did not want to marry and have children. Perhaps this possibility occurred to her more than others because of her similarity to a friend's sister who had died in childbirth. She tells the reader to read the tombstones in the cemetery to learn how often young women died in childbirth in those days.

Second, Sibyl's vignette about how the school trustees "started wearing the hinges off my gate at Center Point wanting me to come back and teach" personalizes how World War II opened up teaching to married women universally for the first time. Only a shortage of men allowed women equal opportunity as teachers.

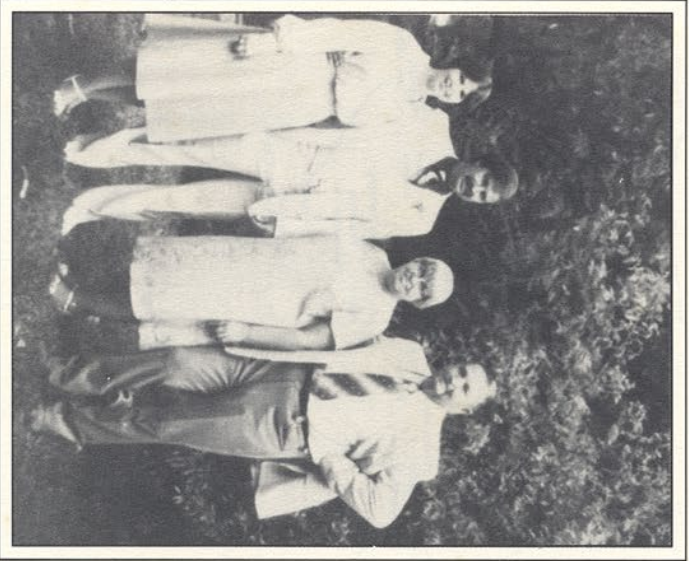
Third, in spite of the cruelty and chauvinism of some men (such as the professors who deliberately embarrassed her in class), there were inclinations of remarkable kindness by other men who supported the education and professionalism of women. Notable in Sibyl's life were Dr. James Delaney of Schreiner College in Kerrville, Texas, and several of her principals.

When we try to understand why the teachers tolerated certain conditions modern women reject, it helps to remember that the world then was vastly different. In one anecdote Sibyl and a friend were driving through Odessa, Texas, on their way to college in Alpine, and the waitress overheard them saying they were going to continue driving to Fort Stockton since a cattlemen's convention had booked all the hotel rooms in Odessa. The waitress refused to let the two girls continue on the road at night and found them a place to stay overnight. As Sibyl herself says, "You wouldn't do anything like that today—go into a stranger's home!"

In retirement, Sibyl enjoys the pleasures of the reclusive side of her personality. She is the only interviewee in this book who is not active in the Retired Teachers organization and says she had enough of joining as a teacher to last a lifetime. Instead, she enjoys the solitary delights of reading and shares the love of her growing family of grandchildren.



Sibyl Sutherland



Sibyl Sutherland and family ca. 1980.

I signed a contract out on the Divide that I wouldn't marry during the year. And that I wouldn't wear nail polish or startling makeup. Can you imagine? I look back and think, "Why did I sign it? Why didn't I say, 'I refuse to sign this thing?'"

SIBYL BENNETT SUTHERLAND began teaching in 1935 at the age of nineteen out on the Divide between Kerrville and Rocksprings near where the only one-room schoolhouse in Texas today remains in operation near the Y.O. Ranch. She interrupted her career to be a wife and mother but returned to the classroom when the school trustees "started wearing the hinges off my gate" during the teacher shortage created by World War II. She continued to teach until 1982, when she retired from the Kerrville schools at the mandatory age of sixty-five.

Sibyl's life holds strong images: fainting from hunger after walking ten miles through the snow to college; sitting in a treehouse with her pupils throwing crumbs from homemade bread down to the wild turkeys below; writing poetry in the cemetery by moonlight as a young country wife and mother; a stone's throw from the derelict poles that would bring electricity, radio, and washing machine only when men returned home from war to put them into the ground; the jeers of "Old Lady Sutherland" hurled by defiant students at the end of a career. From these images emerges a personality that was often challenged by life's circumstances but ultimately triumphed over them.

Unlike most of her contemporaries, Sibyl was the child of divorced parents. Her father was a newspaper man, and her mother ran a boarding house. Perhaps because of her own experiences, Sibyl's mother encouraged her only child to obtain a college degree and be self-supporting. Sibyl washed dishes and won a work-study scholarship and eventually earned a bachelor's degree.

Sibyl displayed some individual characteristics that helped her meet life's personal and professional challenges. As the child of divorced parents, she must have experienced financial and other hardships, but she minimized problems. Similarly, in later life, the "lower community" of her one-room schoolhouse frowned on dancing and good times, but she



G. C. Sutherland, husband of Sibyl Bennett S., with Beau, their first child, 1942 ca., in Center Point.



Lena Gibbens Bennett Tullis, 1928, mother of Sibyl Bennett Sutherland.



Sibyl Bennett Sutherland, 1½, and her mother Lena Gibbens Bennett, Aug 6, 1916.

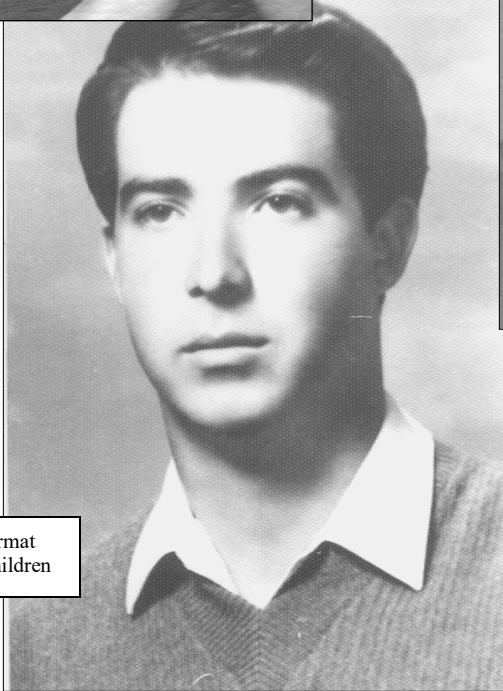
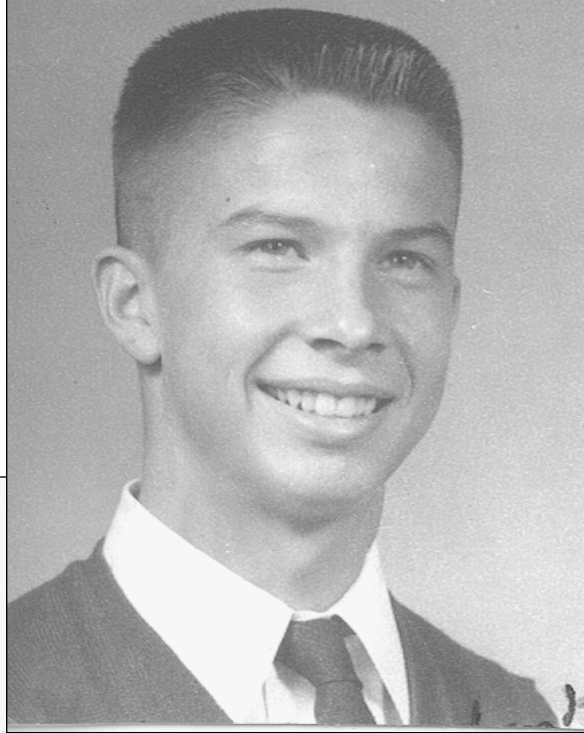
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File: Sibyl, one-one-half with Mother



Sibyl Lucille Bennett Sutherland & George Charles "G.C." Sutherland, Aug. 30, 1940



1955 - Tivy Elementary School – 4th and 5th Graders “Students of the Month” Honor Class. Sibyl Sutherland’s son Stacy, 9, is second from left, front row.



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File: Sutherland, Sibyl - with three children

*Above right: Sibyl Sutherland and her three children.
At left, clockwise: Stacy Keith, Heather Leilani
and Beau Eldred*