



Davy and May in 1926 Touring Car

Cowpuncher or Cook

ONLY A SLIGHT dip or depression in the sand bank marks the site of the Moore family's first Texas dwelling, a dugout on the north side of the Wolf Creek valley in the northeast corner of the Texas Panhandle. Birthplace of their daughter May (August 18, 1897), the dugout had to be abandoned when the waters of Wolf Creek filled the valley and flooded them out.

Relocating to the higher flat ground south of the creek, A.B. Moore built their square, stout, wood frame house. The few photos from her early years show a serious but happy May, usually astride her horse. Her half sister Lura came to live with the Moores during this time.

A.B. Moore, a Civil War veteran and 23 years older than his wife Hattie, died in January, 1911. Hattie and May, with the help of hired man Charlie Lynch, managed to keep their small ranching and farming operation going. Lura, who married in 1909, wrote May in 1912 about her family's hard times in Oklahoma. "Ralph had to shoot our calf today. It had hydrophobia [rabies]. The rest of our stock may take it. We are sure in hard luck. Sometimes I don't know what to do."

For another income source, Hattie converted one of their outbuildings into a boarding house. Ranchers checking on holdings along Wolf Creek and cowboys line-riding for the larger ranches, or looking for work would stay over at the Moore boarding house. May seems to have caught the eye of some of the young cowboys. Bill, nicknamed "Slippery Jim," wrote May from Channing, Texas on the west side of the Panhandle in 1913, "Started back to Lipscomb [Texas] and got as far as Amarillo and the foreman of the XIT nabbed me just as I got off the train and begged me to come up here as they needed men bad...the wagon will be out two months or maybe three....Gee! but it does get lonesome out here. I most go crazy at times...Say dear how long will it be until watermelons are ripe? Do you

remember those moonlight rides after eggs and melons? I sure do.”

In that same year, Hattie Moore and Charlie Lynch married. Hattie, born in 1866, was 23 years older than Charlie.

By 1914, Bill, working for the railroad, pines for the cowboy life. From his letters it is apparent that he did not get a lot of encouragement from May’s direction, and he had resigned himself to moving on, “...so you still have some good dances out here, do you. Gee! Girlie it don’t look as if I’m going to get back for you to learn me to dance.”

In 1916, Davy Wright, ranching in partnership with his older brothers, began staying over at the boarding house while on cattle buying trips. Davy took a liking to May and the frequency of his trips increased.

When the U.S. entered World War I in 1917, May’s and Davy’s relationship had matured enough to withstand a two-year separation while Davy served in France. By 1919 some of their letters show a good-natured exchange of opinions about future marital duties. January 5, May wrote, “I was surprised that you didn’t want to dry dishes when you get home, but you’ll have to anyway...I don’t worry because you will be so glad to get back, you’ll just delight in helping me. I’ll like to help you so it wouldn’t be fair if you didn’t help me.”

Later that same month, Davy wrote, “May, you say you don’t intend to cook after I get back but ride horseback all the time. Well that is a pretty good idea but my idea was to have a good cook and also a good cowpuncher—don’t you think that would be better or would you rather for me to get a French Mademoiselle

to do our cooking, and when you was gone on a visit I would not have to batch. Ha, Ha.”

Davy came home in October, 1919. Wedding plans were set for June, 1920. May’s mother Hattie never got to see her daughter married. She passed away in May, 1920. The only record of her passing and the difficulties May faced during this time is found in a letter from Hattie’s sister Henrietta in Columbia City, Indiana. She wrote, “...in the condition she was everything depended on you...don’t see why you took your mother to Canadian [Texas]. There is no hospital at Lipscomb is there?” In October, 1920 May had an estate



May as a child

MAY WRIGHT, WHEN SHE SPOTTED A BIRD PERCHED OUTSIDE THE WINDOW OF HER GLAZIER, TEXAS RANCHHOUSE



May, circa 1960

auction, selling the old farm machinery, Hattie's model T, and the livestock.

May and Davy set up housekeeping on the Wright Brothers' ranch in western Lipscomb County. Their house was in the Valley Park area where Gibson Creek flows into Wolf Creek. Neighbors helped each other work calves and drive the herds to shipping points or distant pastures. May had good friends close by and she was surrounded by her beloved Wolf Creek valley.

Davy had been looking for his own land, preferably closer to

railroad stockyards. He purchased land a few miles northeast of Glazier, Texas in 1928, and soon after had a house built out in the sage and bluestem. May did not want to leave Valley Park, but she went ahead and made the move.

The new ranch became an overnight stop for Lipscomb County neighbors shipping cattle out of Glazier. After a long day of pushing cattle south, cowboys and critters all rested and watered before loading out the next day. Famous for her fried chicken, May made sure everyone had plenty to eat.

Trips into Canadian to trade cattle or play a hand of bridge were part of Davy's daily routine, but May went to town with Davy only reluctantly. Shopping or waiting around for Davy were not to her liking. And she was never comfortable driving in town.

May and Davy did travel to Kansas City when Davy sold cattle and they took train trips on the Santa Fe out through the Southwest; though after Davy's death in 1952, May seldom left the ranch. Ode Price, May's ranch foreman and business partner, took care of the town chores and brought May her mail and groceries. She always loved to have company and would visit with any of the neighbors, but as she got older May quit going to town altogether. When May reached her ninth decade, Ode and his wife Ruth, convinced that May would eat better if she had company, took a meal a day out to the ranch from their home in Higgins, Texas and sat down with May while she ate.

May died April 12, 1987, after 89 years of living on the rolling plains.



Old-timers relate how May's childhood home always looked bright and neat as they passed by on the Wolf Creek road. Yellow siding framed by blue-green window trim now makes up the case of the "Cowpuncher or Cook." The cabinet door frame and legs were once part of the south entry door. A broken pitchfork tine serves as a door handle. Cast-off banding and rivets buckle down the top. The magazine cover door panels are copied from magazines May had saved.

