

INTRODUCTION TO PART 1

Grandpa wrote his memoirs in 1972 when he was 94, and I have owned a copy since a few months after Kathi finished typing them. Five or so years later, when I became a typesetter, I still remembered them. As my abilities and skills as a typesetter developed, I often thought I would like to typeset the memoirs, but I never did it. I never even read them again.

In January 1994, however, I enrolled in a creative-writing course. When I was groping around in my mind for ideas, the story of “Gammie” (his mother, Mary Hendrix Thompson) and the Towne Creek settlement kept coming out on top. I felt that it exemplified a woman ahead of her time, a woman who, out of necessity, left her children with a relative and commuted on horseback to work to support not just her own family but two other families as well.

Well, it all follows, doesn’t it? Having to dig back through the memoirs for her story brought the thoughts of typesetting them back to mind. Only now, my career had moved into the realm of publishing books, and I decided to publish them. I believe there is some wonderful history written here which might otherwise languish away in all of our closets, chests, and boxes. I believe that this story is better served on a bookshelf and, perhaps, in the hands of a few historical societies.

Before I took it on, I promised myself that I would be allowed to change some things. Grandpa had numerous paragraphs that ran on for pages and pages, numerous sentences that ran on just about as long, a multitude of sentences beginning with “And”. So, Family, I made some changes. I arbitrarily broke the paragraphs. One learns in journalism that writing lengthy paragraphs is the best way to lose readers. Actually, I even moved a few of them around. I cut up many of the longer sentences and edited many of the sentences beginning with conjunctions.

Then there were the digressions. Some of them served to embellish the stories and although they were not pertinent, they sat well in place. Others were completely distracting, and some of them were boring. So, I cut out the offending digressions and placed them in "sidebars" to be read separately out of choice.



Finally, there were his "family trees", which I have fondly dubbed "The Begats". I removed those for Lora's and Della's families and placed them in a chapter of their own (Chapter 14). His own family tree, listing his immediate descendants as he knew them in 1972, has been moved to Part 3. The paragraphs written by Grandpa about each of his children's families are used to introduce the individual family segments. These segments also contain the updates you have sent me, and the section is ended with some blank pages for you to record future family-related events. (As I have already told many of you, I would like to count on someone's grandchild or great-grandchild to write Volume 2 one day.)

Despite these editorial changes, I feel that Grandpa's personality, idiom and vernacular are left untainted, and I hope his story is edified by my efforts. While I must personally disclaim his prejudices, I don't feel free to cut them out. They are a part of him and of his time. They do not get in the way of the breathtaking panorama Grandpa has presented to us.

TO MAKE THE READING EASIER

For those of you, his descendants or other interested parties, who are reading this book, it will help you to know the following in advance:

1. "Mommie" was the name he always used for his wife, my grandmother, Margie Lucile Reynolds Thompson.
2. Wayne, Chet and Don are the familiar names of their sons.
3. Isabel, Dorothy and Margaret are the names of their daughters. It is noteworthy here that Aunt Isabel changed the spelling of her name later to "Isobel". However, Grandpa wrote it throughout with the original spelling, and I did not edit it.

There are many other names mentioned herein, but most of them are explained or introduced by Grandpa.

Please enjoy the book!



Walter Coke Thompson at age 94

