

Inch Time Foot Gem

Autobiography of Richard Clarke



Not twice this day
Inch time foot gem.

This day will not come again.
Each minute is worth a priceless gem.

From a Zen parable

From Zen Flesh Zen Bones

Compiled by Paul Reps

32. Inch Time Foot Gem

A lord asked Takuan, a Zen teacher to suggest how he might pass the time. He felt his day very long attending his office and sitting stiffly to receive the homage of others. Takuan wrote eight Chinese characters and gave them to the man: Not twice this day Inch time foot gem This day will not come again. Each minute is worth a priceless gem.

Published by
Infinite Pie Publications
2019
Lake Chapala, Mexico

Inch Time Foot Gem

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Autobiography of Richard Clarke

Born: December 28, 1943 in Paul's Valley, OK

Mother: Maxine (originally Wilkie) Adams and Father: Richard Merton Clarke

Introduction

I write this for several reasons. The first is that I am the only one remaining of my generation, or older, left in my family. So I am the only one that knows many family stories. I feel like I should write them down. The next is that I found earlier in life when I was going to New College, that to write about myself was clarifying, and helped me see much about myself that I really did not understand. And this process seems especially of interest in these "elder years." The third reason has to do with a course I co-led here (along with Matt Alspaugh, minister at the local Unitarian Universalist Fellowship) in Mexico starting in late 2018, "From Age-ing to Sage-ing." One process that we go through in this course is life review and "harvesting the past." This involves looking through your life, reviewing it, seeing what you can learn, and then resolving incomplete, hurtful, and unsuccessful life experiences. Then looking at your life and history from the improved perspective of one who has lived a lifetime. And finally addressing the big question of "Now what?" So this writing is, for me, a part of the process of harvesting my life, and leaving some kind of legacy. Stories are pretty much all I have to give, other than my accumulated lifetime wisdom, which nobody really seems to want very much.

I don't know who the readers will be other than children and their children. Maybe a few friends? I guess this is primarily work I do for myself (and Carol). Even of family readers, my guess is that few will read the whole thing.

Since I write this largely for myself, I will be pretty honest, and tell of things that are stupid and embarrassing.

I had a choice, whether to tell it as a chronological story, and some other way. I ended up writing in subject-area. My life was too chaotic to make much sense of out it if I just set it out in a timeline. Or so I thought. I feel like I had a number of different lives. So breaking the story in pieces makes sense to me. These lives include your intelligence analyst in the Air Force, young man working and succeeding at IBM, first marriage to Marcia, going to new College, the years at National Semiconductor in production control, marriage to Lucille and starting a family with Megan and Rich, the later years in product management at Boschert and Teledyne Semiconductor, marriage to Carol, the years I turned myself into a CRM consultant and system designer/implementer, the years in India, and now the life in Mexico. I feel like the Mexico life will be the final incarnation of this life.

Origins

From what I know from family stories, most of my grandparents were from the British Islands with strong Irish component. Except for the branch that probably goes back to the Comanches.

My father's side seems to be mainly Irish, with his paternal line that comes from James Clarke, who came from Ireland as a cabin boy, and jumped ship in New Orleans about 1850. His mother, also Irish, Mareva Kirkpatrick (Eva), b 1900 near Chicago Illinois. She told me of her ancestor, Lulu Belle Devine, who had, I think, come from Belfast.

My mother's parent's backgrounds are less clear. Her father, William (Bill) Adams, was born in Texas and his family was from Mississippi. That is all that is known. Because of his large frame and red hair, I have come to think there is a lot of Scottish blood in his veins. Her mother, apparently named by the Indian School as "Georgia Savage," was born around 1880, to an American man and his Indian wife, who died when the baby girl was quite young. She was raised (very poorly) by her father, and ended up in her early teens going to an Indian boarding school in Brazos Texas. Grandma always said she was French (not Indian), but never said why then she went to the Indian Boarding School. We think she was Comanche because they had a big reservation near Brazos. Maybe her father was French?



Thomas James and Mamie Clarke
Dallas 1916

Old Family Stories

Clarke Stories

Lulu Belle Devine

Grandma Eva's mother (I think) was Lulu Belle Devine, from Ireland. When Lulu Belle was a young immigrant, she worked in a boarding house. A skinny man came to stay at their house. He brought with him many books. Lulu Belle was immediately attracted to what seemed like this man of learning. They married, and he taught her to read, opening up the worlds in his books. Maybe this was the story of Eva's grandmother, instead of her mother. My memories are not clear, and I don't really know when the family emigrated from Ireland. There is no one left to ask.

Grandma Eva comes to Texas



Eva at 13, on the way to Dallas

Another major story from Grandma Eva was in 1913, when she was just 13, her father basically kidnapped the young Eva and took her to Texas, where he was going to make a new life. He took Eva because he needed someone to cook and clean. They went from the Chicago area to Texas by horse and wagon, with two horses pulling "Kirk's Fixit Wagon." This is about one

thousand miles. Maybe the trip took about one month. When they arrived in Dallas, there was only one horse left. Though it looked like she was pulling the wagon, she really was not. One horse died and Eva walked next to the remaining horse, carrying one end of the doubletree harness. They got a very small house, and Kirk opened up a harness repair shop. This did not last long, as automobiles were replacing horse-drawn wagons.

Anna Mae Clarke

There is another Clarke story about Anna Mae Clarke, the daughter of James' son, Hal. James arrived in New Orleans at the age of 16. I guess he got married and some kind of work. He had a son, Hal Clarke. Hal was a riverboat pilot, a great job for a man from New Orleans. Somehow his daughter Anne Mae, lived on Hal's riverboat as a teenager, listening to the bawdy and rowdy talk of the rivermen. Her language got so bad that Hal (and his wife? I don't know anything about her), thought they had to do something. So she was sent to Philadelphia to attend finishing school. She stayed with relatives, I guess of the wife, the Harrisons, related to the presidents Harrisons, and Lord and Lady Harrison in England. I think finishing schools were kind of high class, so at least the family had high class connections. What she learned was to make Women's clothing from patterns. This was new technology at the time. So she ended up with maybe the first dressmaking shop in San Antonio, Texas, where you could get a dress made from a Paris high fashion pattern. Sewing patterns were invented about 1860, with a few companies getting into the business over the next 40 years. Maybe Anna maybe learned to use patterns about 1890?

Clarke cousins in Ft. Worth

There was another Clarke cousin who started the first carwash in Ft. Worth, maybe about 1915. His wife had a patent for an improved carbide gas light, the lights on cars before they had electric lights. Electric lights started to be installed on US cars in about 1912, So maybe the inventions was made about that time. Carbide lamps were still being installed on new cars until at least 1917.

So in the Clarke family we had women who were innovators and inventors, dating back into the early 1900s.

Kirk's Fixit Shop and Gas Station

When they arrived in Dallas, Eva's father, Kirk, upgraded his fixit wagon to a fixit shop, with harness repair. But horses soon became obsolete, so he opened a gas station on the outskirts of Dallas.

Grandma Eva worked there, serving sodas. This is where she met her future husband, Richard Mark Clarke.



Kirk's Fixit Shop 1915

Adams Stories

What happened to Grandma Adams first husband?

My mother's mother was born with the name of Georgia. When she went to Indian boarding school in Brazos Texas, she was given the last name of Savage. She always said she was French, not Indian. She was born during the time of the Indian wars, so not good to be an Indian, I think. And it was especially bad in Brazos, where several tribes were housed in a reservation that was too small, and many locals hated Indians indiscriminately. Her mother died when she was a young girl, and her father could not keep her, He probably worked and there was no one to take care of her. So she was in an Indian boarding school. I guess it was a pretty terrible place, so she could not wait to get out. To get free of the school, she married a Texas farmer, a Mr. Whitus. I think she was 15. They lived way away from town. Mr. Whitus was a tough old farmer type. He complained when she made "too much noise" when she was having his babies, unassisted, so he built a "birthing shed" away from the main house, so the noise wouldn't bother him.

Some time later, he brought two young children from town and locked them into the birthing shed. He forbade Georgia from giving them food or water, and hit her when she tried. A few days later, after they died, he buried them in unmarked graves on his land. We have no idea who these children were, but guess at illegitimate children from another woman.

When Georgia had been with Mr. Whitus about 15 years, and was about 30, she asked her oldest kid to stay with her for lunch and sent the rest to town. When she served Mr. Whitus lunch, there was rat poison in his food, arsenic. It takes a few hours to dies from arsenic poisoning, and you get real thirsty. Mr. Whitus would ask, "Water, water." Georgia replies, "Would you let me give those little babies water?" After he died, she and the oldest boy dragged his body into the fields and buried it. A few months later, she packed all the kids in a wagon and left for Oklahoma. There she met Bill Adams, my grandfather. I know little of their romance. I do know that he would sing her the Red River cowboy song, "From this valley they say you are leaving."

Georgia told this story to my mother when she was 102. She told mother that she had never told that story to anyone. Many years later Mother talked to one of the Whitus grandkids. He told of doing family genealogical work, and he had tried hard to find some record of his grandfather's death. He had searched graveyards, church records, public records, and there was nothing. It was like one day Mr. Whitus just fell off the Earth.

Grandpa Adams had a big farm in his most successful period. Maybe he had forty farm hands and a few hundred acres to farm. Mother had a piano and took piano lessons as a young girl. But then The Depression came, and more important, the Dust Bowl of the 1930s. After several years with no crops, grandpa did not have enough money to make his tax payments. So he went and gambled, a card game, I think. He literally bet the farm, and lost it. They went from prosperous to poor, from a big house, to a small rented one. By WW2 grandpa was sheriff of the city, Altus, OK.



Bill Adams

Here are two stories my mother liked to tell about her father, who she admired all her life.

Bill Adams and Negro guests for Sunday Dinner

Bill Adams was not your typical Oklahoma farmer. One sign of this was that he invited a Negro family to his home to enjoy Sunday dinner, the most important meal of the week. This was to great consternation of the other white folks in the area.

Bill Adams and the KKK

Perhaps as a result of this dinner, Bill Adams was visited by a group of hooded men on horseback who called him out of his house and started threatening him. He stood on the porch with a shotgun. He recognized some of them by their shoes and started calling them out by name. The crowd soon dispersed, and Bill Adams never had trouble with the KKK again.

Childhood

My life was really shaped by my mother, Maxine. She had unusual ideas about child raising for the time. She hated to constrain me by telling me “no.” So, when, as a toddler, I would throw food, instead of yelling at me, she put newspapers on the floor to keep them clean. When I was 2 or 3, I figured out how to open screen windows by unlatching them. And then I would climb out the window, and ride my trike down the block, shedding all my clothes as I went. She would come behind me, picking up what I dropped, and bring me back home. From her I learned that curiosity is good, and to believe in myself. These shaped the rest of my life.

As an example of my belief in myself, in my late teens I was talking to a minister, Presbyterian, I think. I told him, “I didn’t think that God, if he exists, would **not** make us find the truth in a book, rather we can find it by looking within. And if God does not exist, I can’t think of anything better to do than to look within for the truth. What do you think of that?” I said challengingly. “Why, son, that’s sound theology,” was his unexpected reply.

My mother and father divorced when I was six. When my father got back from WW2 I was 2. He did not approve of how mother raised me, and tried to “bring order.” He also teased me about being fat, which stuck with me most of my life. It seems like either he could not live with himself after the war, or had given up on the marriage with my mother. Whatever the case, he took a job where he traveled during the week and was only home for the weekend. It stayed this way until they divorced.

I was diagnosed with polio when I was 6. I guess a mild case. I had to wear dorky high-top corrective shoes as a kid into middle school, and I would fall when I ran (my mother would go to the playground and watch. She would hide, so as to not be noticed). By the time I was a teen, there seemed to be no lasting effects. I was fortunate; this was before the vaccine, and many of my generation were not so lucky.

One big influence was my brother, Tom. He was 4 years older than I was, so we were not much of playmates. After I came from the hospital, I guess I cried a lot. Mother caught him putting a pillow over my face. “I was just trying to get him to shut up.” Tom asked, after a few days, if mother could return me

Inch Time Foot Gem

to the hospital. With no father present, he became much more important than he would have otherwise. He was my hero, my model, and my opponent. There was a time that I said, to make a good decision, I would think of what Tommy would do, and then do something different. He thought he could outsmart and out-trick anyone. He would practice on me. We shared a bedroom, and for a long time he would make up serialized stories and tell me one each night after we went to bed. He also helped me, as a teenager, get over my fear of heights. To help me get over these fears he took me out on the hillsides near our house on 52 Jackson in Los Gatos. He would take me to a place where there was something that I was afraid to cross or climb. He was patient with me, and sometimes would secure my foot with his hands. He taught me how to get through these things that scared me, and helped me gain the skills and the confidence I needed.

As a kid, I said I wanted to be an aeronautical engineer (I think because it sounded cool, and it made people laugh when I told them). I always excelled in math and science, so it seemed like a natural thing to do. But, in high school in my junior year, one day I thought to myself that $2 + 2 = 4$, but if you ask four people you will get six different feelings. So numbers and facts are not the problem, people are! This changed my approach. When I went to college, for a while I studied philosophy and psychology, but found the ideas too narrow, too based on Western thinking. I ended up a few years later studying cultural anthropology. I learned that people live in cultures, and cultures are really just a set of ideas about life. This view made sense, and was useful later when I was in marketing, which really just deals with sets of ideas.

We moved many times, in Oklahoma and then in California. I went to 5 different elementary schools and 3 different high schools. I had few friends; I was always the new kid. With the ever-changing life I never had the long-term friends that many people do. I think this probably added to me being a bit of a loner. I also was a latch-key kid before there were such things. From about the 6th grade mother worked full time (and often had things like creating writing classes she taught at adult ed in evening classes at Los Gatos high school. With Tommy working too, I had every afternoon with nobody around and time to fill. I was lonely enough that I saved lunch money so I could offer to buy a soft-serve sundae if somebody would walk with me towards home after school. In the evening, I would make a simple dinner for the family.

With too much unsupervised time, I explored in this Los Gatos hills. Above the house at 52 Jackson. There was a forested slope, and above there were a few houses. Some were vacation houses I think, and unoccupied most of the time. I figured out how to break in to one of them. I didn't take anything, just explored and snooped in the house. Later, when we moved to the house on Massol Ave. in Los Gatos, I would sometimes, when no one was home at our house and neighbors houses, break into them and look around. From one I took a deck of Las Vegas casino playing cards. Soon after I was called into the Police office. They asked me about break-ins, had I seen anything? And they showed me a joker from the deck I took. I was sure shook up but didn't show this at the police office. That pretty much ended the breaking into neighbor's houses (except for one time later in high school when I stole some booze from a neighbor's house).

At University Avenue School in Los Gatos, in the 6th grade, the teacher, Mrs. Butler, told mom that “They couldn’t do anything for me,” and that I should be in private school. The reading tests we took each year showed my reading level as 2nd year of college, though I was just starting the 8th grade.

High School

I went to three high schools: Los Gatos, Camden, and Lincoln in San Jose.

Los Gatos High was a mixed experience. On one hand, it was a continuation from University Avenue School, so there were some kids there I knew, but no real friends. Also, Tom had gone there, and gotten in lots of trouble. Soon after I started, the Boy’s Dean called me into his office to say that he was watching me. But even before I started, I had gone there to summer school for Algebra, and I had joined the football team, which started practice before the school school started. When I joined the team the first thing they did was give me a uniform: pads, jersey, pants and helmet. I had to buy shoes first. Because of my extra-large head, they didn’t have a modern plastic helmet that fit, so they issued me a very old leather helmet. This gave the others on the team something to tease me about. They called me an old football name, Knute (Ka noot), but instead of Rockne, they called me “Knute Knocknees.” I was on the Junior Varsity team. It practiced with the big guys, the Varsity. Somehow they said I was a center, and most practices, when it came time to break up into position groups, they had me play center for the Varsity. This way, I got a lot of good experience pretty fast. When school started, the first dance was a sock hop in the gym. For spirit, they had the football team wear their game jerseys. So I was there in my black and orange number 77 jersey. Early in the dance, they called the football team to come down. Jim Liggett, the varsity quarterback and school hero called out, “Knute, get down here,” I ran down the seats, in front of everybody, and joined the team. This was my introduction to the student body. For years afterward, a car would drive past, and out the window someone would yell, “Knute.” I knew they were from Los Gatos. The JV football team was very good. We were undefeated, and won almost every game by 28-0. The exception was one we won by 28-7. I played full time, both ways, as offensive center and defensive middle linebacker. I really enjoyed defense, and there were many games were I thought I spent as much time in their backfield as their own backs. Finally, the last game, they ran a trap, and the wing back, who had gotten up a good head of steam hit me in the side, really the lower back. I had trouble getting up, but told the coach, “I’m OK. Leave me in.” He did, and I finished the game, but afterward, when it came time to get my uniform off, I couldn’t reach my feet to take off my shoes! I wondered for many years if that wasn’t the source of my ongoing back trouble? I was pretty good. A local Stanford scout told me, if I kept it up, and was all-league, he would get me a scholarship to Stanford.

Already I started cutting school. I think I cut about 1/3 of high school. Most classes were not at all challenging, and Tom showed me his trick of typing a note and forging mother’s signature. The typed note meant that I didn’t have to forge too much, just the signature. This worked until late in my senior year. Mother worked, and car-pooled to work leaving the 53 Studebaker in front of the house. I sneaked its keys and had a set made for me. Some flakey friend and I would cut school and drive to Santa Cruz, or something. Sometimes he would have a part of a bottle of wine. My grades were OK, in all but Latin. You had to take 2 years of a foreign language at that time, and I bought into the story that since Latin was at the base of all romance languages, it would be especially useful. But with a language you have to

actually study, and I never learned to study. I would ace the tests and have great class contribution, and basically, except for math, never do much homework. This would get me Bs. (Ds in Latin, though.) Mother never followed up on homework, never asked, "How's your homework?" Then towards the end of my freshman year, she married Bill Ryan and moved to Cambrian Park, in San Jose. I finished the year at Los Gatos, and then the next year was at Camden.

Camden was not a particularly good experience. I was new and didn't know anybody. I told people that I couldn't play football because of the back injury, but really, it was that I was not willing to do all the work it took, not at this new school, without any of my teammates from the previous year. This year is a blur in my mind. Mother spent several months with very serious back trouble, and had a spinal fusion operation, so she was gone much of the year. After she recovered from the surgery, she divorced Bill, who wasn't needed anymore. Then we moved again, near Lincoln HS in San Jose.

The last two years at Lincoln were good years. I was in a speech group both years. We recorded weekly radio shows, and many in the group competed in speech tournaments. They had me do Humorous Interpretation. I looked around for material and found something by James Thurber, "If Grant had been drinking at Appomattox," I did OK. The speech teacher took me with him to various service clubs, like the Rotary Club, and had me give it at lunches. The men at, say, the Rotary Club, thought it was funny, the kid imitating a drunk. I was great at math. I took algebra in summer school before I started high school, so I was always a year ahead of everybody. My senior year I competed for a math scholarship, shown in the article to the right. I didn't win anything, though; I thought I made an adding mistake in a very complex problem. I understood the problem, just made a stupid mistake. In math, we had the senior program from the New Math that was put into schools after Sputnik showed American that we needed to do better in teaching school. So instead of the usual trig and solid geometry, we had set theory, inductive reasoning and differential calculus. I loved it, and did very well. We did not have the usual hard-bound textbooks, we had mimeographed books, stapled together. The teacher was an interesting person, Winette Fowler. She was the first woman technical graduate from Stanford. This New Math was new to her, too. She told us at the end of the year, that she was never more than a couple of pages ahead of us. One thing she did was bring small 3-D puzzles and leave them out for us. So I would go to class early, and try to solve a new puzzle.

I was also involved with the Student Council. Even though I was new in school, I was pretty outspoken. The Student Council members were

2 Lincoln Seniors In Math Race

Abraham Lincoln high school's representatives in the Central California Math Contest are Al Peponis and Dick Clarke.

They'll meet with more than 50 outstanding high school upperclassmen at San Jose State College on April 22 to compete for prizes that include slide rules, certificates and \$500 in U.S. Bonds. The contest is sponsored by the San Jose Mercury and News in



AL PEPONIS

DICK CLARKE

cooperation with the Santa Clara County Joint Council on Science and Mathematics.

Clarke, 17, a senior, is in the top 20 per cent of his class. A recent transfer from Los Gatos high school, Clarke finished high school math in his junior year. In other activities, Clarke earned his Block L.G. at Los Gatos in football and is a member of the National Forensic League. He is the son of Mrs. Maxine Clarke, 2076 Lynwood Terrace.

elected from the Social Studies classes, and they elected me, even though they didn't know me very well, just that I was a loud-mouth.

The next year I ran for student body VP, along with a football-playing friend who ran for president. We didn't want the jobs, it was just that popular jocks were running unopposed, and we didn't want this. We lost, badly.

In the spring, they caught me forging notes, and to punish me for cutting school, they suspended me for a week. Some punishment! Later in the spring, they held a competition for one of the graduation speaking slots. I won the competition, but then the Girl's Dean found out I had a 2.9 grade average, and the speakers needed to have a B average, this was 3.0. So she pulled me from the spot. They had me, for consolidation, do an oral interpretation of the graduation theme song "Climb every mountain." I still remember standing at the podium in front of hundreds of people, with the orchestra playing, and me, reciting dramatically, "Climb every mountain, ford every stream. Follow every rainbow, 'till you find your dream..." Thank god, that's over.

The Fires

My daughter Megan wanted to make sure that I wrote about "the fires." So here are the stories. I accidentally set three fires as a kid. The first one, I describe in the section about Tom, my brother, when I slipped a blanket onto a lamp.

The second fire was near the end of the 8th grade. I would be graduating in a few days. It was after school, and I was alone as usual. I was hungry, so I put a pan over a flame on the stove, made a hamburger patty and put it into the pan. I went outside into the garden while it was cooking, and I was so happy I just started singing. After a bit I returned to the kitchen and found it aflame, with the fire going up the wall behind the stove. I didn't wait; I got a hose and put it out. The firemen came and had to make sure the fire was out. What was not drenched before was soaking wet now. This was in the house on Massol Ave in Los Gatos. It was a two-story Victorian. The stairs were off the kitchen, so smoke went up the stairs, like a chimney. Tom and my rooms were filled with smoke, and the smell lasted for days.

The third fire was my senior year. That day, senior pictures were being taken for the yearbook. Boys were supposed to wear white shirts, I forgot, and so drove the 53 Studebaker home to get the right shirt. I smoked at that time (I had started at 13, to try to act older) and lit up when I got home. I set the ciggie on an ashtray on my bed, while I searched my closet for the right shirt. I put it on and left for school, and left the cigarette burning in the ashtray on my bed. Well, Tommie to the rescue once again. He had slept in that morning, and when he awoke, it was to yet another fire. So again he doused the fire. Nothing was destroyed this time, other than my mattress and bedding. Again, a lasting smell of smoke in my room, and Tommy saved the house.

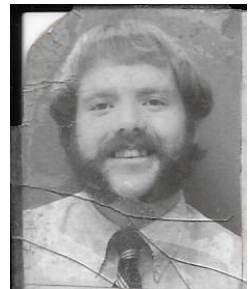
The Air Force

After I graduated from high school, the family broke up. This was the end of the family life we had since I was born. Mother went away to college, to USC on a fellowship for a Masters degree in psychiatric social work. She left Tom in charge of the house. I got accepted at San Jose State, and did not want to live in the house with Tom and his friends. I was not working during school, so I must have gotten money to do this from Mom. I lived in a couple of crummy shared apartments near the college. It was a lot of fun, going to college, but I was just not prepared to do the studying needed. I had never had to before, so hadn't learned how to apply myself. I registered as a double major in Philosophy and Psychology. I took two Philosophy courses, and was in the Humanities program. This was advanced for its day; a cross-discipline integrated lower division program to meet all the GED (General Educational Development) requirements. I was learning good stuff in all these classes, but could not keep up with the reading, nor the writing needed. So poor test grades, poor marks overall. I decided that what I needed was to be older, and if I did something like join the Air Force, I would be older when I got out. The Air Force recruiters loved me after I took their recruiting test and got the highest marks possible.

After I got discharged from the Air Force, I got jobs, first at the Bank of America, then at IBM, I met and married Marcia during this time. I worked for IBM for six years, then quit to return to college and live on the GI bill.

My New Beard

During the IBM days, sometimes I would visit Tom when he had the art gallery 54 ½, in Los Gatos. One day when I was visiting after work, Tom kept staring at my face. I asked him what was up, and he related a dream in which I had shaved out the chin of my beard (I was wearing one during most of my IBM days). He said that I looked so good! I thought it was great! I even told IBM that I had lost my ID card, so they would make me a new one with a new picture, shown to the right. When I quit a few years later, I gave them the old ID and kept the one with the cool photo. Now it is the only one I have of this beard treatment.



I will tell more of my stories as I write about my brother, Tommy, (later Tom), and mother, Maxine.

Maxine

My mother was certainly another bigger than life figure.

She was born in 1919 with her fraternal twin, Wilma. Mother's original name was Wilkie, after her father, Wilkerson David Adams. The twins were Wilma and Wilkie. They were the last of several kids from Georgia and Bill Adams. There were a bunch of older half-brothers and sisters, children of Mr. Whitus. Wilma was the outgoing popular twin, and Wilkie, reserved and standoffish.

As a girl, Wilkie showed some unusual interests. She would go by herself to sit by the Red River, and talk to Jesus. Not talk to him mentally in prayer, but talk to him physically. You were supposed to love Jesus,

but not in person! Later in life, she had several experiences where she was, “in the light” and somehow it was the light of Jesus, she told me. He was there with her.

Secretly listening

As a girl, young Wilkie would hide under the quilting frame and listen to the women talk. She heard what they said to each other, as opposed to what they said in public to others, and their husbands. These were quite different! She was particularly incensed to hear her mother talk about her father; I don't remember much of what she told me. There surely was something about making sweet when they were courting, then warding off his ‘attentions’ when married. I remember her talking of hearing her father say on a number of occasions, “Georgia, a man has to have some loving!” She learned to see all these women as hypocrites, listening to them talk among themselves.

Stella's suicide

One event that traumatized her family while Wilkie was young was the suicide of an older sister, Stella, one of the Whitus girls. She had moved away from the family to Oklahoma City, which was a happening place at the time and a center of jazz (and probably stylish black men). All I know is that she committed suicide, and that this put their mother, Georgia, into deep depression for years. I don't know any more of the story, but it is easy to suspect that maybe Bill Adams, physically estranged from his wife Georgia, sought “comfort” from an older step-daughter, a child from Georgia's first husband. And that maybe this is what led Stella to leave the family, and eventually to her death? Surely if Georgia had heard about any of this, it would explain her depression. But who knows? Another story lost in the mist of time.

The Minister's attempted sexual assault

Young Wilkie learned a big lesson about local ministers when she was in her teens. A minister offered to give her a ride home in his car; He tried to rape her during this drive. She never told anyone; no one would believe her anyway: “A Minister?” they would say, and then dismiss her charges. She saw then that these ministers were hypocrites too. This was the end of her and the Baptists.

Marriage to Russell Boroughs, Birth of Tommy

Wilkie escaped through books, and used the town's library a lot. This led her out of the small town to go to college. All she had to do to get there was to marry some boy, Russell Boroughs, forced on her by her mother, Georgia, who was concerned for Maxine's future well-being since the family's finances had fallen apart. She agreed to the marriage because Russell promised her that she could go to college. She got pregnant with Tom along the way. During this time she changed her name from Wilkie to Maxine; she had always hated the name, “Wilkie.” When Tom was born, she was 21 and in college. She did not want to drop out of school to raise him, so Tom spent his first two years living with Grandma Georgia and Bill Adams. So Tom had this vital part of his life living away from his mother. She divorced Russell soon after.

Meeting Richard

Then she met my father, Richard at Oklahoma University, where they were both going to school. And after a pretty fast courtship, they were married. Richard was a good dad to Tommy, and wanted him to live with them, so he went to the effort to actually adopt him. To afford college, Richard was in Army

ROTC, so he knew he would be going on active duty as an artillery officer in Europe. Maxine got pregnant while he was in training, and he just got to see me briefly before he went to Europe. To make ends meet, Maxine had some kind of job, maybe at the Air Base. There was a red headed doctor who she worked with and who she was friends with. Grandma Eva, perhaps jealous at the loss of the attention of her only and devoted son, told Richard a malicious story that the two were romantically involved, and my red hair at birth was taken by Grandma and I think Richard as proof of the affair. The only problem with this theory was the Maxine's father was also a red head. I think from this time on, things were rocky for Maxine and Richard. I think Richard believed it to his death. When we were together and he was in his 80s, he said, of me, "I caught it in my trap, so it was mine." He meant me.

My Birth

My birth was a special experience for Maxine. I was apparently a few weeks late. Perhaps the date discrepancy helped Grandma Eva and Richard think the story about the red-haired doc was true. Anyway it was a late December night in SW Oklahoma. I think Maxine was with her parents in Maysville, OK. They called an ambulance when she went into labor. By the time they got there, labor was pretty advanced, and I was born with what is now called "Natural childbirth" in the back of the ambulance at night during the drive to the Paul's Valley Hospital. Mother said the men were upset at her, saying, "Lady, can't you wait? You're making a big mess. And we're gonna have to clean it up before we can go home tonight." It was the middle of the night, very late. For Mother, she says that this was her first experience "in the Light." During labor, I guess when she surrendered to it, the ambulance filled with light, and then she relaxed and then I was born. She said they called me, "Pinky" at the hospital because of my head of pink fuzz. She always took this as if it were proof that I was a late-term baby.

Richard came to see me before he shipped out to Europe. He was gone for two years. This time is captured in a book I wrote from his emails, "*Clarke Family Stories*." He told me of this period, about Maxine, that he just wanted someone to rely on, and her letters were all over the place, one way in one letter and another way in the next. This was hardly the picture of security, of the "little woman" waiting for him. So I think by the time he got back, he was over his love for Maxine.

He was appalled at the "permissive" way that she was raising me. This really upset him. He believed in order, and did not see it in me or my life. I didn't see him much, since he was gone "on the road" 5 days each week for his job. He took me on one of his trips. I remember driving all around, and he stopped in a couple of places to test the level of chlorine in the water of municipal swimming pools. What I remember of him during this time was how afraid I was of his criticism. He taught me how to ride a bike, and when I had to ride it on my own, without his help, I remember being afraid, not of falling, but of failure, and disappointing him.

Electro-shock treatments, then divorce

The next part of Maxine's story I do not have any memories of. All I know is what I have pieced together from various things she told me, and imagined after I heard how disappointed Richard was of Maxine during the war. The first part is that he thought that I had another father, as told to him by Grandma Eva. The next part was that he wanted something steady back at home to look forward to returning to. When he talked to me of what he felt while in Germany, he was really dismayed at how in one letter,

Maxine was this way, and in the next, some other way. I think he was determined to “fix” her. The first thing, she got a hysterectomy. I never heard, but I would guess Richard pretty much forced it, and the doctors at that time might have thought that it would make her mentally more stable. I just don’t know any more about this. The next thing is that she had a course of electro-shock treatments. Mother talked a bit about how these affected her, that she was pretty much ‘out of it’ for days after each session. She also said that prior to this she had an eidetic memory, commonly called a photographic memory, and remembered everything that she read. But no more after E.S.T. The progression of Maxine and Richard’s “marriage problems” was hysterectomy, electro-shock, and then divorce. Swell guy, huh?

One memory I have is of a 4th of July celebration at our house on McNamee. I was 6 or 7 years old. I had some firecrackers and one was a dud; it wouldn’t explode. So I got the clever idea to put it in a bin of old newspapers, and light them on fire to explode it. The only problem was the bin of papers was in the garage, next to a wall. The kitchen was on the other side of the wall. I remember the burning papers, then Dad, rushing in with a hose, and then the most terrible beating I ever got. It was so bad that mother took me and Tom over to a friend’s house, where we all spent the night. “A while after this, they filed for divorce, and suddenly he was no longer there, and we had to move from the house he had built for us.

Maxine the Writer

In Norman, Maxine’s creative focus was on writing. She had taken creative writing under Foster-Harris at Oklahoma University. He was famous at the time as a teacher of fiction writing, especially for the “pulp” fiction market. One of his books from that period was, *“The Basic Formulas of Fiction.”* She said that this was one of the best creative writing programs in the USA at the time. It was his teaching that enabled her, many years later, to make a small success in pulp-writing for women’s magazines (so-called “true confessions”) and support the family for a couple of years in the 1950s. She spent years working on a novel, “Speak to the Earth,” about Oklahoma, its farmers, and a family modeled after her own. She even sold the novel to a big publishing house, and got a \$2000 advance payment. This was in the 1940s and \$2000 was a lot of money. But they kept asking for rewrites, and after rejecting one, told her, “put more sex in.” So she started her next draft, “Johnny stood on the steps of the whorehouse.” Even this was not enough. The project just fizzled out.

Moving to California

After the divorce, we moved from place to place in Norman, OK. Mother worked somewhere. She found a creative (but, it turned out, crazy) writer, who said he would take us all to California. So she married Dick McDowell. Tom and I spent Christmas with our dad, Dick Clarke and his new wife Clara in Little Rock, AR, then took a Greyhound bus to San Jose, CA. It was a 3-day trip. Dick was supposed to give us plenty of money for food and stuff on the bus trip. But he gave us far less than mother thought he should. I remember spending a quarter for a science fiction paper back, the beginning of my long-time love for sci-fi.

We lived in East San Jose for about half a year, the second half of the 4th grade. It was a mainly a Mexican school, and I learned about discrimination by being the target of it. That summer I learned to

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