

Dad's Life

written in 2004 by Estel B. Murdock

Oliver Bradley Murdock was born in Roswell, Chavez County,
New Mexico 18 June, 1921 of
Oliver Boyd Murdock and Agnus Ozella Singleton



of Tarrant County, Texas of Bowie County, Texas,
whose parents, living in Roswell at the time, were
James Samuel Singleton and Emma Jane Presley



of DeSoto County Mississippi.

Dad's other grandparents were Isaac Newton Murdock
(who was dead at this time)
of Warren County, Kentucky
and Eliza Elizabeth Beaty
of Wayne County, Missouri.



Oliver Boyd's father Isaac Newton died in 1892 in Mansfield, Tarrant County, Texas. Oliver Boyd was then taken from his mother Eliza and put on a farm in Johnson County, Texas, right next to Tarrant County with the W. M. Harp family from Tennessee. At that time, they called him "Ollie". His brothers and sister (Thomas, Henry, and Alice) were put into the Masonic Home for Widows and Orphans in Tarrant County. Their mother was not listed with them in that census (1900) where they were found. Eliza later was reunited with her children, as she was found in the 1910 census living with her daughter Alice Green (Greer) still living in Tarrant County.

Ollie worked on the railroad as a cook while the railroad was being built through Roswell in 1910. He also had joint ownership of a farm in Chavez County with his brother Henry. It is rumored that they split up in an argument over the farm and Ollie left. He got employment as a cook in a hotel that used to be next to the county building in Roswell called the Nickson Hotel.



Ollie found room and board with the Singleton's who lived on a farm south of Roswell on South Main just above where the Roswell Air Force Base would be built. There, he met Agnus Ozella Singleton and married her the 10 September 1919.



Ollie's and Agnus' Wedding Picture



**Dad's birthplace in Roswell
just south of St. Mary's**

Soon after Dad's birth, the family moved into the Gila River Valley, first going to Duncan, Arizona where Uncle Tom (Thomas Edward) was born. The farming must have been bad there, for they moved up the

river to another farm in Red Rock, Grant County, New Mexico. Lordsburg where Dorothy Agnus was born was 20 miles to the south of there and in Hidalgo County. That's where they had to travel to buy their supplies or to see a doctor, I would imagine. That was also the closest newspaper.



Gila River Valley



West Gila

Ollie built a dugout for the family to live in, which was a house underground. (I imagine it was made of cement, for he was good at working with cement. In Roswell, he had built a cement spring house out back of their house to let the water run through to keep their groceries cool. Spring houses were the first means which would be like the old ice boxes that my mother's folks had inside the house, and like our refrigerators of today.) It was like living in a basement without the house on top of it.



**This is in Red Rock.
First is Dorothy, then Margarete holding Tom and then Dad.**

There are some stories that go along with this time in Dad's life. He said that his dad use to lay traps for skunks and such rodents as would come along. It was Dad's and Margarite's custom to go to the traps and jump up and down on the skunks that were in the traps. They would go home and would not be allowed in the house until they were well scrubbed down with harsh lie soap. Them and their clothes. On one occasion, after they got cleaned up, they went right back to the traps and jumped on the skunks again. I'm sure they were a handful for my Granny to keep up with.

Another story about dad in Red Rock shows my grandfather's sense of humor. Granny was fixing lunch on a hot summer day. She fixed Dad some bread and molasses. She gave it to Dad and he sat it on a chair which must have been near the front door. He was small enough then to use the chairs as a table to eat on. After he sat his plate down, he heard his dad come in the door. He left the plate and went to greet him. After grabbing his son and giving him a hug, he went to sit down. He was so tired and weary that he didn't look and sat right down on the plate with the bread and molasses. He got up realizing what he had done, and with the plate stuck to his bottom, he danced a jig, laughing and singing a little song. I'm sure that my dad laughed and laughed.



He had a great sense of humor.



Ollie's grave site in Red Rock, Grant, New Mexico

It was in Red Rock that Ollie died. He got a fever and never came out of it. They had the funeral there at the house. His family was invited. His brothers and sisters came, bringing their mother, Eliza. Dad said that he remembered her as a somber dark figure with a shawl, sitting in a chair and not moving, not talking. Knowing my dad, he would have tried to get her to talk, but I'm sure that her sorrow prevented her. Granny said that she was a Cherokee Indian. It was Dad's memory of this funeral that he substantiates this. He mentions how dark she was. Well, we have a picture here of how dark everyone was. They must have had Indian blood in them to get so dark.



Next to the Harpers to the right are Granny, Grandad Murdock holding Uncle Tom, then Dad and Aunt Margarite.

The neighbors there were the Harpers, part of a Mormon community of polygamists that had been run out of Mexico by Pancho Villa. Dad said that they were really nice people and that they were good friends to his family. He talked about a girl he knew. Her name would have been Ida May Harper. She was just a year or two older than he. Her parents were Matthew Green Harper and Eliza Wallace. When Oliver died, the Harpers took care of the family. They may have been the means of sending the family back to Roswell. Dad can remember

that at the funeral an older man held his hand and took him for a walk. It was Dad's destiny that he join himself with this brotherhood. If they had stayed there, it is most likely he would have joined as a boy.

Dad said that he was always playing outside. It was unusual for him to be inside. Since he was a little boy, there were chores to do. He fed the chickens and led the cows out to pasture and retrieved them at night. He had to milk those cows also. They had about five or six. He was always working, helping out inside the house as well as outside. He made work his life. On questioning him, he said he was 12 years old when he started working full time. That was in Roswell. Earlier than that he was driving wagon. That's when he would have become a deacon if he had been LDS then.

When the children were still together, he and Margarite had a game they played. Laying the wagon onto its side, they would have a merry-go-round by sitting on the wheel while the other turned it around. One day Dad got the idea that he could ride the wheel down as Margarite flipped the wagon upright again, only when she did, he got his leg caught between the spokes, and the torque caused by the wheel turning and the wagon falling upright broke his leg.

The Singletons had a farm just south of Roswell located on Main Street between Roswell and where Roswell Air Force Base would be. They had an orchard and sold honey. They also sold milk and eggs. Dad had the job of delivering the eggs to the store using a horse and buggy. One time on the way to the store the buggy overturned and a lot of the eggs were broken. He knew where a hawk's nest was, so he went to that nest, gathered up the hawk eggs and placed them in the stead of the broken chicken eggs. When he delivered them to the man at the store, the man who knew Dad only winked. There's a note here. Dad had to upright that buggy all by himself. That took intelligence for he was only a little boy, not strong enough to do it by hand. He had to handle the horses just right



The Singletons in the 1930's with Dorothy and Maragrite.

Granny was in need of a husband. She had gone into business with one of her cousins one time and with one of her brothers (Ed) another time trying to raise cattle and swine, but both ventures failed. Somehow, she met up with Clinton Frost, a womanizer and gambler and overall outlaw. He stole his brother Jack's trucking business by changing his name to Jack. When he and Granny got married, they moved in with her parents and took over the place. He said to them, "I'm takin' over, ya see, and ya can't do nothin' about it!" He would take the family to any old shack on anyone's property and just take it over. One time, they lived in a chicken coup. The boys had to sleep on the screened in back porch even in the winter in the snow.



Granny and Clinton Frost

There were three years in Dad's life that was very troublesome. Because of that trouble, at the age of fifteen, he and Dorothy had to leave home and go to live with his grandparents, the Singletons, who then moved to Dexter so the kids could have a good education, that school being the best one in the county. Inside that three years, Tom

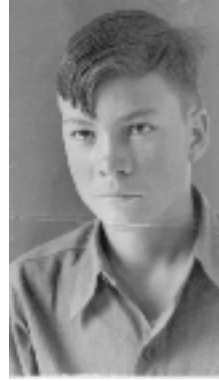
was sent to Alamagordo to live with their Uncle Ed and Margarite was sent to live with Aunt Bessie in Roswell. There, she found work as a maid. There were two factors that led to this. Old Man Frost was without morals, and no one in the family wore underwear.



Margarite



Dad



Tom



Singleton's House



Singleton's House in Dexter

Margarite had to leave because she was being molested by Old Man Frost. He was a ruthless man. He would make Granny steal for him or he would beat her up. One time he was trying to stuff one of the babies shoes down her throat. Dad thought he should do something. but As he rose up from his chair, Old Man Frost hit him with his fist right in the eye and knocked him down. He told him not to interfere or he would get some more. Another time, he had his boys wait in Dad's bedroom and when he came in, they beat him up because he had crossed the old man. This happened more than once. One time he escaped out the window. Dad got tired of the meanness one day and decided to run away. He didn't get very far when he saw that the Frost boys were following him. They told him they wanted to run away too. Nobody liked Old Man Frost. They went to an old windmill where there was water and where there was a mullberry tree. They stayed there the whole day.

Granny had one more child. Her name was Edith Frost. Since she was just a baby, she kept her there in Roswell. The house they wound up staying in was on the old Dexter highway just south of East MacGaffey where Granny accumulated several rent houses. One of them had belonged to her mother out by the reservoir. Between East MacGaffey and their house (where Old Man Frost had a barn for all his trucks from where he ran his trucking business) Old Man Frost built a row of shanties for rent. None of them had a bath room. There were about four to six of them, and they all shared two out houses. Our family lived in one of them two different times.



Dexter Highway Shanties



Edith



side of house



front



back



years later

Dad's grade school was called Mountain View School, a one room school house situated on the Hobb's Highway south of Roswell. Dad had to walk a mile to school and a mile back every school day. Earnestine Stocktan was his school teacher. He said that everyone in

the school was in the Conservation Corps. except his family. The Frost brothers did not go to school. Pop Frost wound up adding another room to that school.



Mountain View School

Dad and Dorothy graduated from the Dexter High School. Tom didn't go beyond the ninth grade. He worked for a living after that. Both Tom and Dad worked for Old Man Frost in his trucking business during the summers while Dad was in High School, so Tom must have come back at least during the summers instead of staying at Uncle Ed's.



FROST TRUCKING

Wilber Clees, Norval and TJ Frost



Ditto



Ditto



Uncle Tom and Dad Trucking Along



Trucker Dad



Ditto

There was a little incident in Dad's trucking life that he told us about. He and Tom were driving back from El Paso, Texas. They usually went two days without sleep to keep things moving. Tom was at the wheel. Dad was sleeping as he sat next to Tom. Well, Tom fell asleep at the wheel, so that meant that both of them were asleep when they hit this old man driving his vegetables to the market in his wagon. The truck detached the horses from the wagon and threw the man and his vegetables all over the road. Someone called an ambulance which came and took the old man to the hospital. Dad and Tom went to the hospital every day and brought the old man flowers and told him that they would pay the bill. The man told them that he held no grudge against them. He forgave them and seemed to be happy even in the condition he was in. Dad said that he learned a lot from that old man.



The truck before



The truck afterwards

When Dad was seventeen, he joined the NYA, the National Youth Administration started by President Roosevelt, one of the programs to help the nation to get out of the depression. He said that every seventeen year old joined the NYA, and what they did mostly was to clean up people's yards.

High School was good to Dad. He excelled in basketball and cabinet making. He was considered his high school's champion player, and the cabinet making gave him something he could use to support himself and a future family. He also had friends in his teachers who gave him a lot of encouragement. Mr. H. Parker was the high school superintendant. He offered Dad a scholarship, but when the war started, he declined. He wanted to join the army.



Class of 1939
Dad is the tallest in the back

Dad was always having incidents in his life. During one basketball game, there was a bully that kept taking the ball from him. The way he told it, the guy was on his own team. He wouldn't let Dad play. When Dad had enough, he punched the guy in the face. He didn't bother him anymore. In fact, they became good friends. When Dad did that, his coach George Lewis just smiled.

We didn't know that Dad was a drummer in the Dexter High School band. He played on the big base drum. His music teacher was



Dad made something very beautiful in his cabinet-making shop in the Dexter High School. It was a cedar chest, a big one that sits on the floor about 3ft x 3ft x 5ft with curved corners made by false posts attached to the legs which he carved on a lathe. The color is red cedar with yellow tongues and black knots flowing through the sides and top. One of the legs got broken when Pop Frost threw it out of one of his shanties, trying to get us to move because we didn't have the rent or because of an argument. Dad and Pop Frost were always fighting when we were young. That chest still smells of cedar. It was made completely of cedar, not just the inside as some.

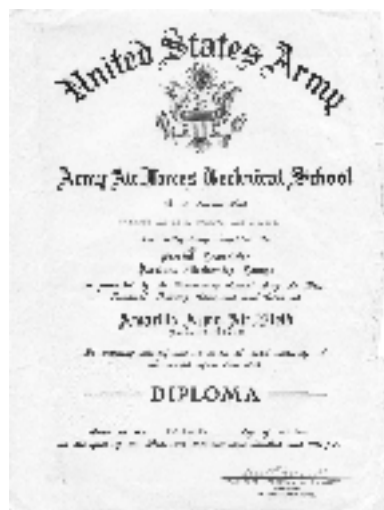


1942 came and Dad graduated from high school. He immediately joined the Army Air Corps right there in Roswell. He became an airplane mechanic specializing in the B-29 flying fortress. After school,

he made sergeant, leaving the Army as a staff sergeant.



1942 High School Diploma



It says that he graduated as a B-29 mechanic

He claimed that he was the best mechanic Roswell Air Force Base had. There was one time one of the other mechanics tried several times to put a fuel pump in a certain engine. His superior officer got tired of the whole thing and told Dad, "Murdock! You put that blankity blank pump in!" Dad went to the engine and came back in a few minutes and said, "It's in." He had a certain common sense that was his talent. He had the knack. He always tried to remain a mechanic when he left the Army.

Another incident in Dad's life was when he was working on this one

B-29. They took it up to try it out. They didn't bother putting the cargo door back on. When it took a sharp left bank, he was right there at the cargo door. The only thing that prevented him from being thrown out was the length of his arms and his strength. He held onto the edges of the opening by his fingertips. He joked that he might have had to walk back. Ha! Ha!

Being a sergeant had its challenges. One of the men that was given him to work for him was a college athlete who thought he was something special. He would never take orders from Dad. Finally after several days of him not doing anything, Dad complained to his superior officer and the guy was gone the next day.

Near the end of the war, in 1945, Dad was working on an odly named B-29 named the Enola Gay. He was one of the ones that made sure it would fly all the way to Japan. I don't think mechanics loaded the flying ships, but he couldn't have been beyond earshot when they loaded the A-Bomb there in Roswell. He watched it climb into the air and heard before it had returned what it accomplished. He was always proud that he had helped end the war in the Pacific.

The youth of the city were not the only involvement for Roswell. In December, 1941, construction of Roswell Army Air Field began. The land was originally leased from the city after community citizens had raised about \$35,000 to purchase the several thousand acres needed for the field. By May, 1942 the base was initially occupied and training began. The first class of twin engine pilots received their wings in July, and bombardier training was added to the base curriculum. By 1943, transition in B-17 aircraft was begun and later the B-29 appeared. Roswell's 509th Bomb Wing eventually became the first and only unit to deliver an atomic weapon on a combat target. Its personnel dropped the weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Roswell truly was a part of the nation's victory over the axis powers.



Dad was fortunate that he could serve right in his home town during the war. He could leave the base and go home if he wanted to. He could pal around with his friends and his brother and sisters. And that is exactly what he did.



Dad, Norval, Tom
Pop Frost



Sisters-in-Law



Mom

Dad seemed to have a lot of girl friends, mostly, Dad met girls who were friends with his brothers and sisters. Of course, being the champion basket ball player and being in the band, it would have helped him meet girls in high school, and wearing a uniform in the Army, he would have had many chances of meeting girls. One time in Amarillo when we were coming back from a job, we passed this white building that looked like the Alamo. It was an old dance hall. He said that when he was in the Army he was taught a lot of basics in that building. What he meant by that is a good guess.

There was a good looking chick working with Dad's sister Margarite. They were both working as telephone operators, and they became good friends. Dad dated a lot, but usually, he went out with groups of friends, his family, some of the guys on the base, his sisters and their girl friends. Mom was in this group, even if she sometimes had to sneak out of the house to be with them. She often visited Margarite at her house which was a white plastered box affair that was cheaply built and popular in Roswell at the time. That's where Dad met her on several occasions.



Margarite



Mom and Dad



Mom

Dad went one day to visit Margarite and found Mom there. He sat down beside her on the couch and said, "We might as well get married, huh?" When he said that, she jumped onto his lap and started kissing him. That was her answer. (Mother had recently been married and had that marriage annulled.) She had finally met her man. He was strong and handsome and had a He-Man body. She knew that because they went skinny dipping together out at the Bottomless Lakes late one night, but probably after they were married. We know one date they went on before they got married was going on a hay ride where the whole gang would get on a wagon of hay bales and ride out into the country singing songs, have a picnic and come back the same way, singing.

On another occasion, Mom went to the New Mexico Military Academy to see Dad march in a parade. I mention this because she said it was before they got married, yet I remember being there with Anne and Sherry and possibly Tim. If Mother was correct, then I must be remembering something before we were born. All I know is that we were there with her, and we said, "That's our daddy!"

Mom's father Estel Leo Bonine (Granddaddy) married the two at their home on the hill overlooking the Hondo River, one street over to the east of the two story house on North Washington on the 20th of November 1945. It was a simple wedding with just the family in attendance. I'm sure Granddaddy had his reservations about who she

was marrying, but they became good friends.



Nanny and Granddaddy and Nellie in 1945 Mom and Dad's Wedding Picture

After Mom and Dad got married, Dad had to go to California to get discharged from the Army. There, he met Mother's cousin Wendy and her father Uncle Dick or Richard Bonine who hired him to do some carpentry work in Roswell, working with his brother, Dad's father-in-law.



Wendy at the Beach, Wendy and Dad at her home in California.

One of the first jobs Dad did in Roswell with Granddaddy was to raise the roof of his new home on 806 North Washington to make it into a two story house. When Graddaddy built it, he left the roof unattached so he could raise it later. At this time in his life, Granddaddy had retired as a preacher in the Nazarene Church on the south of Roswell, possibly on the corner of East 3rd and East McGaffey. He now was a contractor with his brother Richard and had a job going on at the air base there in Roswell to build some barracks. Dad helped him with that job also.



I include the kitchen because of my memory of how it smelled. It always smelled of black tea and Ritz crackers.

After the second story was done, Mom and Dad moved in. Anne was born first in a large white plastered doctor's office near the junior high school 14th of March 1946. I was born eleven months later in St. Mary's Hospital there in Roswell the 20th of February 1947. Sherry was born a year later, 1st October 1948 and Tim four years later, 1st of May, 1952. By that time, we were living in Abeline, Texas.



Olivia Anne



Estel Bradley



Sherryle Dean

Mom and Dad started with a wonderful little family in Roswell.



Tim being born in Abeline, his part of the story will be in the rest of the story in another volume, but he was cute:



He's the one in front.

The End

