Alice (Sexton) Gilder Story

I was born on November 23, 1919 in Pikeville, Tennessee (Bledsoe County), the fifth child of J.B. (Jessie Benjamin, photo right below) and Hattie Jane Elmore Sexton. The first child was still born. The second child was Homer, the oldest son and Dad's pride and joy. Ruth came next and then Esther. Allen, my twin brother was born an hour before me (picture left Allen and Alice). Had I been born 15 minutes later, I would have arrived on November 24th. I was the last child to be born to my parents in the state of Tennessee.

Dad's health was bad and the Doctor told him to move to a drier climate. So he gave up preaching in a Baptist church and we moved west to Oklahoma to become farmers.

A couple of years later my brother Paul was born and then came my sisters Thelma and Rachel. Next we had a little brother who only lived a few days and died of pneumonia.

In another couple of years, the last child my brother Dewey, was born in 1929. By the time we all went through school during the depression that was certainly enough children for my folks. Being on a farm many things needed to be done, such as milking and feeding the 28 cows (by hand) twice a day, etc. On one occasion, during this time, everyone in our family with the exception of me and my brother Paul (who was 8 at the time) came down sick with small pox. During this period he and I had to do all the chores, cook the meals and play nurse to the rest of the family. I remember the Doctor put a quarantine sign on the front of the house so no one could come in to help us. But God was good to us and Paul and I did what had to be done. Two weeks under those living conditions one learns important
lessons of life that you remember for a long time. As the other family members got better, Paul and I finally both caught the small pox, and the others had to take their turn taking care of us (photo of our house on right).

My father was a very stern man and he only told you once when and how he expected any thing to be done. His patience was very short, like the wick of a candle. His temper was high and easy to find. On the other hand, he did teach us all to be honest with our fellow man but, on the other hand to stand up for ourselves, not take anything off anyone and to be proud of who you are. In his way, he wanted all of us to get at least a high-school education and all of us did except Paul.

Years later I heard him say many times "a man can raise nine children by himself but all nine of them cannot take care of one man." He was a self-taught man, very smart in many fields, and could always come up with an answer. My mother was a very kind, loving woman, and a very understanding person (Picture of Mother Hattie right and Aunt Net left). Never raised her voice in anger. I never heard my mother complain in my life. Seemed she could always work all of the troubles out without any trouble. She also had a very good sense of humor. It was hard for me to understand how she could stay so calm through all the hard times. It seemed everyone who met her admired her. She had many friends. Dad was 66 when he passed away in 1948. (picture on left of Mom in 1949). Mom was 91 the first part of October and passed away on November 28th of 19xx.
Going from a preacher to farming, I am sure was not easily done for Dad. However, he did great with cotton, wheat, corn and maize, but certainly was not a gardener. One year he went out and bought 100 tomato plants, all of which died without producing even one tomato. One or two years his Irish and sweet potatoes were pretty good. He didn't believe in wasting anything. If we had more than we could use he would always share with the neighbors. He was also especially good at helping neighbors with legal matters. It seemed his word in court served to always be the correct one to win.

Our method of travel was mostly horses and wagons and we went without a car for many years. However, it was a slow way to get there and my dad would never arrive late. He would always say anything worth going to is worth getting there on time for. As an example, I remember, one night we had a basketball game at our school but we got a late start leaving home. When we drove into the school yard the game had started and dad turned the team of horses around and said "we'll not be attending this one but let this be a lesson to you next time be ready on time," and he took us all back home.

As we girls grew older and thought we were old enough to date, dad had a way to screen our potential mates - he would hire the ones he thought we were fond of (to work on the farm) so he could see the kind of people we were falling in love with. As he always put it, "I
loved them right out of my children's life."  I would say overall our parents did well with us as none of us turned out real bad or spent time in jail. My mother was an understanding person, that seemed to always have time to listen to our problems -- just her doing that always seemed to make the problems seem smaller.

During the winter months she'd get up at night and check to see if all of us were warm and covered. She was easy to make friends and a true joy to be around. If she had a problem no one ever heard about it. Some way she would handle it. (picture on right of my mother as a baby with her mother)

My mother was also a very good cook and most people would rather come to our house to visit than to have us come to theirs. Mom did a lot of sewing for us girls. She made all our dresses and even made a few coats we wore to school.

I never heard anyone say anything but good about her.

My dad liked to joke and tease a lot. Smart man in many ways and, even though he never went to college, he read a lot and acquired many skills over the years.

Should anyone have a problem, they would come to dad for help. he was always glad to help. He could figure a way to repair almost anything that broke down. His health was not the best as he grew older and he was in the bed most of the time, -- he lost a lot of weight and became helpless. He had Rheumatoid Arthritis and passed away when he was 66 years old.

I think dad did a real good job with all of us. We were taught to call people older than us by aunt or uncle, Mr. or Mrs., but never by their given name.
We were taught young in life that in a crowd, children were to be seen not heard. In other words -- be quiet. Boy! times have sure changed as I see children growing up now-a-days. We knew better than to make a big fuss over a problem, or to do anything that would upset our parents. They always wanted to be proud of us children.

We were taught at a young age what time of day the cows were to be milked and all the other work had to be done. We never had to be told to do it.

They taught us early how important it was to say "please and thank you." That has helped me a lot in my life. We never get to old to lose good manners.

We moved into a house about a quarter of a mile from Grandpa and Grandma Elmore. Also living with them were my mother’s two youngest sisters, Aunt Emma Sue and Aunt Juanita, as well as, Uncle Jack. After a couple of years their Dad rented a 160 acre farm from Captain Dunlap. That is when we really started farming. While living there Allen and I turned 5 years old and were old enough to start school during the mid-term. I remember that year so well because I finally could start school in January. I liked school very much.

I had a rocky start in school being born left handed. This gave me a lot of troubles as my teacher, Vestor Newton, forced me to write with my right hand. Because of this my first year was sad, I failed because of having to change from my left hand to my right. However, it worked out well in the long run even though the teacher failed me, since when I returned in the Fall I made primary and first grade in one year. Colter was the first school I attended. A two room school with very few students, which made it easier to get acquainted with them all. It was between two and a half and three miles to the school and we either walked or rode in a buggy drawn by a horse.
Going to a country school was fun in many ways. Everyone knew each other, so friends were made fast. I feel our parents were proud of us. When Ruth was 12 she went to Muskogee to a school for the blind and completed her high school education.

A couple of years later my dad bought a 160 acre farm and we were transferred to another school. Like, Colter, the new school, Samsville, was also a very small school. I enjoyed going to it. We had a lot of ciphering matches and spelling bee’s. Lucky for me I was rather good in math so, when it came to choosing sides, I was chosen quickly to be on a team. Spelling was not my favorite subject nor is it to this day. Therefore I was the last one picked to be picked for a spelling team. From this I learned early in life to do your best at whatever you are good at and maybe your weaker subjects will eventually improve.

Each year our school would close for summer vacation just in time to start working the crops on the farm. One could almost see the cotton growing, each day we’d go to hoe the weeds and the cotton would seem taller than the day before.

After two years the Samsville school closed and a new school was constructed. We were all transferred to Pie Flat. Odd name for a school and the reason for the name was that on one night when a pie supper had been planned, a strong storm came up and did serious damage to the school building just before the event took place. When the building was rebuilt it was named Pie Flat. I am proud of the education I received there. Mostly I enjoyed my grammar (later called English), math and anything about geography.

Pie Flat had much larger and newer building with more teachers and students. The school had classes from first through twelfth grade. I saw right away that you could learn a lot more each grade having its own classroom. Even though I was young, I was a good reader and often read books at or above my age level. Being very shy I would
turn to books for my entertainment. I did gain a few friends along the way and they have remained very good friends ever since. Since I read very fast I was often asked to finish a story in our lesson. I had little to say, but when I said something, it would usually come out very fast and then back to my book. Poetry was also a great enjoyment to me and I memorized many poems just because I enjoyed reciting them.

I recall one occasion when I was sick and had to miss school for several days, which put me behind in my class. When I returned I learned that, while I was absent, the class had been studying the poem "Casabianca" by Felicia Dorthea Hemans. By the time that the students before me had recited the poem in class I had learned it and recited the entire poem without a mistake. The teacher was very impressed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Casabianca</th>
<th>And fast the flames rolled on.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Felicia Dorthea Hemans</td>
<td>Upon his brow he felt their breath,</td>
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<tr>
<td>The boy stood on the burning deck</td>
<td>And in his waving hair,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whence all but he had fled;</td>
<td>And looked from that lone post of death</td>
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<tr>
<td>The flame that lit the battle's wreck</td>
<td>In still yet brave despair.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shone round him o'er the dead.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yet beautiful and bright he stood,</td>
<td>And shouted but once more aloud,</td>
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<tr>
<td>As born to rule the storm;</td>
<td>'My father! must I stay?'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A creature of heroic blood,</td>
<td>While o'er him fast, through sail and shroud,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A proud, though child-like form.</td>
<td>The wreathing fires made way.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The flames rolled on he would not go</td>
<td>They wrape the ship in splendour wild,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Without his Father's word;</td>
<td>They caught the flag on high,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That father, faint in death below,</td>
<td>And streamed above the gallant child,</td>
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<tr>
<td>His voice no longer heard.</td>
<td>Like banners in the sky.</td>
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<td>He called aloud 'say, Father, say</td>
<td>There came a burst of thunder sound?</td>
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<td>If yet my task is done?'</td>
<td>The boy?oh! where was he?</td>
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<tr>
<td>He knew not that the chieftain lay</td>
<td>Ask of the winds that far around</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unconscious of his son.</td>
<td>With fragments strewed the sea!?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Speak, father!' once again he cried,</td>
<td>With mast, and helm, and pennon fair,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'If I may yet be gone!'</td>
<td>That well had borne their part?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And but the booming shots replied,</td>
<td>But the noblest thing which perished there</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Was that young faithful heart.</td>
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As you might expect, different teachers had different influences on me. One teacher, Norman Favres, taught our sixth and seventh grades. He was a great teacher and really knew how to get a point over. One day he started talking to us about "what we wanted to be when we were grown." Never will I forget the way he said, "whatever field you choose be the best in that field." Even a tramp, if he holds his head high and asked for a handout the right way, will no doubt get it. That really made me stop and think and his words have stayed with me ever since.

With our Baptist church in Hammon I received a diploma over the bible when I was 16 years old. At that time we did missionary work out at the indian camp north of Hammon. Two girls that attended our school and I contacted their father (an indian minister). With his help we would go out in the afternoon on Sunday and hold services for the indians. The indian minister would interpret into the indian language for us. The first Sunday we went from Tee-Pee to Tee-Pee inviting each one out. Very few came the first time, but after that we had a Wigwam full each and every Sunday. It really helped the friendship and relationship of all living in the town as well as the area near there.

Living on the farm had its advantages. I enjoyed my life on ours. There was always work to be done, but we all went out and worked together. If a piece of machinery broke, my dad would find a way to repair it. (Picture of Hattie and Jesse) We never tried to keep up with others life style but learned to use what we had. If someone bought a new car, we were happy for them. We learned to appreciate whatever we had and enjoy having it. We were taught to work hard and be honest -- that means a lot. On our farm we had cotton, maze, corn, wheat, oats and cane in the field. Always horses to pull the plows, cows to be milked, calves and pigs to be fed. By the time we got our chores done, we were happy for the night of rest.

Living on a farm, there is not much entertainment to look forward too. We often got together with neighbors on Saturday nights and had an ice cream party. Several neighbors gather and each brought freezers
of ice cream, cakes or cookies. One of our neighbors, Elmer and Anna Gage, were musicians. Elmer would often bring his three different instruments and play one or the other. He would play and sing and his wife would sing. Sometimes others would also sing.

The younger children would play games, such as "skip the rope," or "kick the can" or just sit and tell stories to each other -- mostly ghost stories.

On Sunday morning after breakfast, we would do our chores, then get ready and go to church. At that time it was held in the school building one and one half miles away. Sam Massingsall and his wife, Emma, would drive six and a half miles from Hammon to teach us all the bible. They were well versed and very capable for the job. I learned a lot and for years kept the Sunday school cards we were given each week. Each card had a verse of scripture which we were to learn by the following Sunday. It was at this time in my life that I decided to try to learn all I could about the bible.

Later Dad bought a car and we all started going to Hammon Baptist church. The church also offered a class one night a week in learning the bible. Each week Dad went and I went with him. By the time I was age 16 I had received my diploma over the bible. A certificate was given to all that had attended the classes and passed the grade. I was the only young person one to receive a certificate. The rest of my life I have continued to try to read some verses each day, the first thing in the morning. Seems to me like the best way to start my day. Many times I would have to get up earlier than my family in order to do the daily bible reading. Since that time I have read the entire bible each and every year. I really do enjoy reading and learning the word of the bible. I know that I do not know it all, but I have learned a lot.

When I was in high school for four years I was a librarian which also gave me an extra chance to read. The school gave me full credits for being a librarian.
By the time I graduated from the 12th grade I was happy to take on a new life style making my own way. I applied for a job with more than 20 other applicants. I remember that I was 19th in line to be interviewed and the lady before me was a very nice lady with three children and her husband had passed away. The man doing the interviews was not a very polite man. he talked very rough with her made me angry. When it came to my turn to be interviewed, I said "I have changed my mind." He asked me why and I told him "No way would I work for a man that would talk to a lady the way he had talked to the one ahead of me." He begged me to at least put in an application but I refused. I was happy at that time in my life to make my way in life as I wanted. As it turned out I ended up with a better job, better pay the respect that was shown made it well worth the wait.

My first job after I graduated from high school was working as a baby sitter and helping the babies mother clean house. The pay was very little but the lessons I learned have helped me through the rest of my life. The babies father was the town dentist, Dr. Charles Pyte, wife Bess and son Joe Charles) and, in my opinion, they were a very nice family. One day a week Dr. Pyte would go to Hammon to be their dentist. That would be my day off and he would take me with him. My folks lived six and a half miles from Hammon and if I didn't have a way to the farm I'd walk. Then I would also have to start back early enough to get to his office in Hammon before he closed for the day. I enjoyed walking and didn't mind doing it.

When Bess broke her leg and found it hard to get around I gave up my days off and stayed with her and the baby. I did that for a month and I recall that he forgot to pay me each week that month. Finally, he took me to Hammon, gave me my money and I walked to the farm.

My sister Ruth was visiting with her two sons Charles and Derrel (photo right). Ruth's husband, Charlie Gilliam called Ruth and told her that he had found a house for them to move into. Not
knowing how long she would have to be at the farm she had failed to bring enough money to return home. I told her that I would pay all our ways to Chickasha and then return by train. Charlie was a good man who had been educated at the school for the blind where he learned to tune pianos for a trade. He was a very good piano tuner and made friends easily so he made a good living at it. By the time I was there a month or two we decided if I could get my drivers license he would buy a car. I'd drive and he'd teach me to repair a piano while he tuned it. We bought the car on Friday and took a trip to his Mother and Dads home in Cyril.

Monday morning I got my drivers license and Tuesday we were ready to go to our first job. After getting the tank filled with gasoline, we started to Anadarko to do the work. Anadarko is about 20 miles from Chickasha and Verdon was about half way between. Levi Swink was a friend that had worked with Charlie for years and being blind he also did not drive a car. He was along with us on this trip. Five miles west of Chickasha, the car blew a tire, I lost control and the car rolled over into a ditch. Levi said "turn off the engine" which I did. By the time Charlie's seeing-eye dog (Luddie) had helped him out of the car, Levi had gotten out and I was right behind. By this time there were three or four cars that had stopped to give a helping hand. One man who recognized Charlie helped to change the tire and drove the car back up on the road. We then continued on to do the job. Later in the afternoon we returned to a garage in Chickasha to learn how much damage had been done to the car. Mr. O'Bar, the fellow that had financed the car was at the garage. Naturally he was not to happy with my driving ability. However, I convinced him I could drive that car and help Charlie. The only damage was a small bent ridge across the top. We drove that car for 4 or 5 more years, just the way it was, dent and all.

Children are sometimes smarter than we think. Their son Charles, the older boy, learned early that Charlie was blind. When he did something that he shouldn't have, Charlie would call him to come over to him. Charles would stand very still about arms length from his dad. Derrel was a couple of years younger and a very good boy and he always carried his favorite baby blanket. When I would walk to the store a couple of blocks away, Derrel would grab his blanket and run after me. Yes! very proudly I would carry him and his blanket to the
store, then carry them and the groceries back home. Most people thought that Derrel was my son and that made me very proud.

Charlie's work slowed down, so we moved to an empty house on the 80 acre farm owned by my mother and dad. The empty house was only 3/4 of a mile from the folks house. it was only a two bedroom house so I would sleep at my parents house and leave the bedrooms for the Ruth, Charlie and the boys.

The old house had not been lived in for a long time and, most recently, it had been used to store feed and seed. I was helping them clean it and get settled when large chicken snake crawled out across the floor. I told Ruth to stay with the boys in the other room. Then I killed the snake and took it outside. Ruth was very much afraid of snakes. Even though she was, they stayed in the old house for several months.

After that we rented a trailer, loaded it up with all the belongings and set off for Chickasha. About half way to Chickasha a tire came off the trailer. After a long search we finally found the tire and a nice fellow stopped to help us fix it and we were back on the road to Chickasha. Just before we arrived at Chickasha it started raining, and we had no tarp over our belongings in the trailer. What were we to do? I pulled into a service station with a cover over the pumps. The owner came out to ask what we wanted and I explained that we wanted a shelter for a few minutes -- he was nice enough to let us stay for about thirty minutes, and by then rain had stopped and the sun was shining. We went on our way to Chickasha and got there before dark.

Opal Lane owned and operated a small cafe and a very small hotel. Since work was slow, Ruth decided she could help out and work in the cafe. I also helped by making beds, and dusting and cleaning rooms in the hotel.

Charlie was a very thin fellow and really needed to put on some weight. Someone suggested it might help him gain some weight if he started making home brew and drinking it. He (we) did and it did seem to help a bit. He became a fair size fellow and felt a lot more like working than before. On one occasion we had just finished bottling a batch of brew when Ruth had a few angry words with the
neighbors. Scared that the neighbor would report us we loaded the home brew into the car and took it to Lane's hotel for a few days.

Oklahoma was a dry state at that time and the only way to get whiskey, even for medicinal purposes, was from a bootlegger. Dad always thought a small hot toddy would cure anything from cramps to snake bite. Luckily, none of us grew up to be heavy drinkers.

Linnie Lee and Levi Swink were very close friends and at the house often. Especially if they got low on grocery money. So we would cook up whatever we had around the house and they would eat with us. After we ate Ruth, Charlie, Linnie and Levi would play diamonds. I would take care of the young boys.

One day we found ourselves low on grocery money, so we took the boys and walked to the Swink's place. Linnie had made a huge pot of stew to last the week for them. By the time we went home, I'm sure there was not much left in the pot, as she was a good cook and we did enjoy helping them eat it.

A class in shorthand was offered at night and I decided to go. Now believe me, I did enjoy that class -- but unfortunately I didn't get to go very long -- to bad.

Charlie's cousin Samuel Jefferson Gilliam (Sammy on the left in the photo below) moved to town with his father Charlie Gilliam. We got acquainted and really he was a delightful man. He and I got some cotton picking sacks and picked cotton for a few days to help out around the house.

In January of 1941 of the following year, he and I were married in the Baptist church of Chickasha. We continued to live with Ruth and
Charlie for some time. Sam received his papers to become a U.S. Navy sailor in October or November and he reported for duty.

I continued to stay and help Ruth and Charlie until Thelma came to visit from California in the spring of 1942. When she returned, I took off to California with her. She had been living with our brother Homer, his wife Edith and their two young daughters Alice Catherine and Mary Edith (photo right Homer Edith and children Alice Catherine and Mary). Before I was there a week, Thelma, Rachel and I rented a one bedroom house half a block from Homer and Edith's home. The bedroom had twin beds in it and a hid-a-bed in the dining room, so each of us had a bed to sleep on.

The house had been a two bedroom house until the owners made an addition of a small living room, bath and kitchen onto one of the bedrooms. Mrs. Stella Short, our land lady, lived in it. At first she was very nice. When we rented it I had told her she could charge us whatever she thought was right, and she asked if we could pay each week. Naturally, she was pleased with these terms. As soon as we moved in Rachel and I went to Lockheed, where Thelma was employed, and we were hired the day we applied.

For 3 or 4 months things worked out well. But one day I was very ill with a sore throat and Rachel took the rent to Mrs. Short, who said she would accept it as soon as we came up with the money for a utility bill she had received. Sick as I was, that hurt. I got out of bed, took the money back to her and told her I wanted a receipt for it. She gave me the receipt and said that she was registered with the O.P.A and so she could raise the amount of our rent. The first day that I was able to go back to work, I went to the office at Lockheed and talked to an attorney. he gave me the address of the O.P.A. and I wrote them a letter. When they received the letter a fellow came out and told her "no way" was she listed with the O.P.A. and no way could she raise the rent. Of course, she was pretty upset and went to our brother
Homer. He came over and told us that "she (Mrs. Short) was really going to fix us."

Instead of fixing us she sold the home to another couple. At first they were very nice and treated us pretty good. Until they started coming through the bedroom door from their side of the apartment rattling pans, etc and trying to scare us. They soon found out that we did not scare very easy. I contacted a man on the police force and one day we were sitting in the dining room drinking coffee when the new owners opened the door. They were very surprised to find me waiting for them with the law. Being very surprised that they had been caught in the act, they were glad to give an apology and go back to their side.

Soon after they put the house on the market and again it sold very quickly, closing escrow in a couple of weeks. The weekend before they closed, I went to a real estate office and filled out papers making an offer to buy my first home. I told them I'd give them 20 dollars to take the listing off the market and I'd get the remainder of the down payment at the bank on Monday -- which I did. The house was completely furnished, even linens of the bed, dishes in the cabinets, and pans for cooking. We could also move in any time. (photo to right of first new home). We waited until the end of the second week for the escrow to close. Rooms were hard to find during the war. But if you found one and were working in the defense industry it was twice as hard for anyone to kick you out.

Thelma and Rachel continued to work at Lockheed, but when I learned I was working with a fellow that was making $2.50 and hour while I was making 35 cents an hour, I asked for a raise. No way
would they give me a raise so I gave them a 72 hour notice and quit Lockheed. I went to an unemployment office to find out what kind of jobs they could offer. I found that I could go to work on Monday for Fitzsimmons grocery store as butcherette. (Picture Alice above right)

Andy Iron and Tom Boone were wonderful to me. Andy was the manager and showed me how to cut up chickens and different cuts of meat. It was a great place to work. The store was 8 or 10 miles from my home, but I could catch a bus and ride to my new job. All went well for a long time and I enjoyed my job -- waited on a lot of customers and made a lot of friends.

I worked at Fitzsimmons for 3 or 4 years and while there the meat cutter's formed a union 421. I was the second girl to join. Our salaries went up a lot. Little by little they continued to get more money, even though we paid union dues, we had very good fringe benefits.

Dear Sam came home on leave for a week. it was a nice visit and all went well. Rachel had also married to Joe Squyres by this time and Thelma and I lived by ourselves. It was during this leave that I became pregnant. Sammy and I had talked a lot about a son. Well the great chief of Haywood street arrived 3-13-46. He was a very healthy boy and a baby everyone loved. the only small baby on the block, so he was very special. I was off work until David was two months old. I'd take him to a babysitter, Louise Sailor, on my way to the bus. then Thelma would pick him up on her way home. It was great having her there. She was also very fond of David. (Alice Pregnant with David)

During this time, some of the girls we worked with couldn't find a place to stay, so we took them in. At one time there were 9 of us --
some on their way to work, some already at work and some on their way home.

We shared the work, the expense and all. Each week we took an envelope for the bills -- groceries, gas, lights, etc -- and put money it to pay the bills. Then when the bills came in we had the money put away to pay them. If and when we get a little money ahead we would go out, eat and go to a show. (photo of baby David to left).

We didn't get to go out very often, as we either all went or none went at all. The work was equally divided up -- we paired off, in groups of two, to do the house work, buy the groceries, pay the bills or whatever needed to be done. Even the cooking.

The girl that always wanted to work with me was June Peters, she was a high school girl that had moved here from Australia. A very beautiful blonde who also had a very pleasant personality and was easy to get along with. We have remained friends all these years and exchange letters often.

Marie Blume, her sister and Marie Woody also stayed with us so you can see that there were plenty to do the work and do a good job.

Sometimes in the evening we would play cards, or just set around and visit. After a few months Marie Blume married and moved in with her husband to a nice home. Then the two woody girls moved back to their home town with their parents. June Peters stayed with us until after David was born. She and Thelma stood-up for him at his baptism service at the First Lutheran church in San Fernando. David was very young when Sam and I agreed to disagree and got a divorce. He moved back to Oklahoma with Ruth and Charlie and I did not hear from him for a very long time.

It was nice having the friends I had, they were also very fond of David and helped me a lot to take care of him.
The couple living next door to us were Marie and Bob Chadwick and she also had a small son. Later she had several more children - I think. She acquainted me with her brother Carl Gilder. (photo Alice and Carl)

After a year or so, he and I went off to Las Vegas and got married.

We stayed married for 20 years and had 3 more sons. Like me, he also had a son, Ronald, from a previous marriage. So we had my son, his son, and a little 3 more sons so it would also be our sons. (photo of Ronnie and David on the right).

I continued to work in the grocery stores for 20 to 25 years - I just don't remember anymore exactly. Carl was carpenter and the only son of Carl Sr. and Florence Gilder. They had four daughters, Evelyn (married to Ernie Lione), Leah (married to Charlie Crabtree), Lois (married to Joe Jacobi) and Marie (married to Bob Chadwick).

Carl's dad was a contractor in the carpentry trade and Carl Jr. worked for him a lot. Since the carpenter trade was seasonal work, they were often between jobs, therefore I continued to work.

Many times he would come home and tell me to quit work and stay home since he had found a new job building a home or whatever. I would stay home for a few weeks and he would come home and say that the job was over and I probably needed to find another job. One year I had stopped and started work six times. At that point I told Carl that I could get a job anytime I wanted and all I needed to do was call the Union 421. usually within an hour I had a job. But I told him that this time, if I go back to work, I will not quit again until the boys were grown.
We looked for a larger house and found one in San Fernando. It was on four acres with lots of olive trees. Nearly all the houses around there were on two to four acres.

So I sold the house on Haywood in Tujunga and we moved to Dronfield Avenue in San Fernando. (photo of house on Dronfield below)

By the time mine and Carl's first son Victor Eugene was born, money had become scarce so we sold two of the four acres to a wonderful lady, Mrs. Schillinger. One of the best people I have ever known. Her husband had been dead for years, her children were all grown, but she was a good Christian and became our babysitter. She had a two bedroom house built on the land we sold her and planted many different flowers, trees, etc, so that her place looked like a nursery. She also raised lots of vegetables in her garden. As time pasted and she got older, my sons grew up, her son-in-law passed away so she sold the house and moved to northern California to live with her daughter. (Photo David, Victor, Danny and Dewey below)

Victor who was born on June 27, 1948 remained the baby until Daniel Joseph was born on May 16, 1953. Danny was a good baby and like his brothers was a pretty one. On February 29, 1956 Dewey Lee was born. He was the last and also the largest weighing 9 pounds and 8
ounces. A baby that size is very easy to take care of since they do not need to be fed so often. He started sleeping all night when he was very young.

When David was a little older, but still in school, he went to Idaho to stay with my twin brother Allen and his wife Thelma. He stayed in Idaho until he completed high school and then went off to go to different colleges.

Ronald was very close to his grandma Gilder and often stayed with them. He was born on August 2, 1941, and therefore was about 5 years older than David. He was a husky boy and had a way of getting what he wanted -- one way or the other. He was also a good looking boy and I often told his dad that he was a bit spoiled. One day his grandmother took him to the Doctor for us, so I could take care of the smaller ones. Ron thru a "temper tantrum." The Doctor picked him up and gave him a couple of swats on his behind, looked at the grandmother and said, "this child needs to be broke of his temper, and the only way to do this ism let him know he needs to do what is told." I am sure this upset the grandmother -- odd how these things can change the mind of a child at that age.

He was a great one to get upset, hold his breath and turn blue. That also had to be corrected. However years went rapidly by and he became to big a boy or young man. When he was about 16 years of age, I asked him to put the trash out to the curb so it could be picked up. I explained that I was late for leaving for work, he put his hands on his hips and said, " You S-O-B, if you want it there, put it there," I said "OK, but when I got home at 4:30 PM have your things together. You and I will take a little ride to grandma's house." When I arrived home after work I asked him if he was ready to go? He looked at me and said, "I thought you were kidding." I said I don't think so. Come on and let us get it together. So we went to his room, boxed up his things and as we started out the door, his dad asked what are you doing? I told him no way will I carry the load I am, and take that kind of talk from any boy. So we drove to Lancaster and dropped him at the grandparents house. But I did tell him, "When you apologize and straighten up your act, then you can come back home." Within a month he came to the door crying and said "Mom, I can't wait to apologize, I am sorry." I told him it takes a bigger man to say `I am
sorry' then it does for one to talk like he did to another adult. Things between us worked a little better after that.

Victor was a fairly high tempered child unless he had his way. However his was not always according to the rules. He was a good worker when he wanted to be. Very often he would go out back and cut up wood for the fireplace and stack them in a neat pile.

Vic disliked school and one day his teacher had me come to school for a conference. The teacher showed me the attendance book and every day Victor had a 100 marked. I was delighted until Mr. Jasper said " that means he was one hundred percent gone." Believe me that was a big surprise. So I gave Mr. Jasper the phone number where I worked and told him, "Anytime he doesn't show up, call me and he will be here the rest of the day." Time passed, but I can't say that Victor ever liked school and did not graduate from high school.

Danny started school at Sylmar Elementary school and attended until he was ready for Junior High School. They (the two schools) were less than a block from each other. He liked math, anything to do with electronics, and enjoyed art and music. He graduated from Senior High in 1971. He started to Pierce College that Fall.

Dewey Lee, also went to the two schools in Sylmar until he was ten years old. By that time I was financially at the end of my rope. My sister Rachel and her husband were about to leave for a new job in Alaska. She called me at my job and told me that if I could get the school to give Dewey his transfer papers, they would take him to Alaska and keep him with them for a year.

He started school in Anchorage Alaska the fall of 1966 and stayed a couple of years, while his Uncle Joe worked the oil fields there.

He learned to play many games, do a lot of things and had a lot of advantages I could not of afforded to give him.

On August 15, 1976 Carl was making cabinets for a friend in our garage. Some way or another, while working with a table saw, he cut off all the fingers on his right hand, except for part of the thumb and the little finger. The friend screamed for me and I told them to meet
me at the car. As I went through the house for my keys, and purse, I picked up a clean white towel and shaped it around his hand. The hospital was about 6 to 8 miles away. By the time we got there he was almost in shock. But I kept talking to him and got him to answer. I certainly did not want him to go into shock.

I arrived at the hospital and told him, I would get a wheelchair and be right back. All kinds of folks came out to help. They put him on a gurney and wheeled him in to the hospital. I felt that Carl would never work again.

When I got home, I called his parents in Lancaster and asked to talk to his Dad -- Mrs. Gilder was a good woman but a typical one and I did not want to overly upset her.

So I told Carl's dad, I needed them to come down for a while. He wanted to know if anything was wrong. I said you need to be here and I will tell you when you get here. When they arrived I had made a pot of coffee and after a cup of coffee with them, I explained what had happened. Naturally his mother had a fit. I asked, "Please don't break down in front of Carl, he does not need that." Well, we got there and went into the room, she took one look at Carl and went all to pieces.

After Carl came home from the hospital I kept telling him how good he was at figuring materials lists for and all that for bidding construction jobs and maybe he could do a job like that. All the while his mother was saying "No way can he ever work again." So Carl kind of gave up on trying.

I continued to wrap meat in a store in Los Angeles. I had a strong feeling hit me and I asked my boss if I could go to the pay phone in the front of the store and make a call. He said sure and I called home and Vic answered. I asked him what was going on and he said "dad came by and he had gone to the bank drew out most of the money, went to an
attorney and started divorce proceedings. That was the first time in 20 years we had the money to pay the taxes on the place. Well, needless to say that was a rough one for me -- but I made it.

I got me an attorney, Frank Hennessy, and counter sued. Naturally Carl did not do as well as he thought he would.

Through the years since his accident we had bought old houses, repaired them and sold them for a profit.

Of all we'd repaired we had one in Sunland that was in good shape and one in Forest park, that was small and not in good shape, but it was the only one that was paid for. That is the one Carl wanted, but he was out numbered and ended up with the one in Sunland.

I rather imagine he sold his house in Sunland, I am not sure, and it was none of my business. The following spring we had a lot more rain and the house in Forest Park had part of mountain behind it wash down on it. Lucky for me that I had so much to do that I had no time to worry about conditions such as they were.

I worked 6 and 7 days a week (5 at one store and 2 at another) then at night I'd go to Forest Park to clean up the mess from the flood and rebuild and/or remodel the house. It took me an entire year, but well worth every day of it.

I paid $7,500 for the house when I bought it in 1960 and sold it for $29,500. I feel my work got good pay.

Carl passed away in Oct. of 1968 (funeral photo right) He had cancer. The boys and I attended his services. David was just finishing basic training at Fort Dix New Jersy and he was released a couple of days early to attend the funeral. After that I pretty much lost contact with the Gilders.

I had not taken a vacation from my job in six years and when Carl
passed away, I collected his insurance and Danny, Dewey and I went to Oklahoma to visit my mother and other relations. It was a very pleasant trip, even though the car we came in was a Pontiac Le Mans with no power steering. One of the hardest cars I have ever had to drive. Thank God Danny was capable of driving it and did well. On our way home he taught Dewey how to drive.

That was a car I had Victor buy with the promise he would keep up with all the car repairs, insurance and payments. The insurance company called me on the job one day and gave me 24 hours to get a payment in or they were going to cut the insurance off. I told them I would stop after work and take care of it. Which I did.

That evening I talked a friend, Harry Williams, into going with us and we repossessed Vic's car. Vic said you can't do that, I have a date. I told him I was no finance company, that I had paid the insurance and for him to forget the little red Pontiac. Yes I am sure he was disappointed, but when I buy anything, I expect to pay for it. But when anyone lets me buy something with a promise to pay for it, I expect them to do just that.

After Victor was left with no car to drive and still did not liking school, his dad and grand parents talked him into joining the Marines. He found the Marines interesting at first but the new wore off and he would decide to take off and leave base A.W.O.L.

After several stays in the marine prison, he finally accepted a dishonorable discharge and returned to the Gilder grandparents. Carl died in October of 1967 and Vic stayed with the grandparents until his dad was buried. Daniel, Dewey and I stayed on Dronfield until Daniel graduated from high school 1971. Dewey had another year or two before he graduated.

Daniel started to college at Pierce College in the Fall and worked nights to help pay his way. In September 1972, I enrolled for classes at Canyon County College and began attending night classes taking to two subjects. My niece Pat Squyres also went, so we went together. I always studied my lessons ahead, outlining the lessons as I studied them. Than in class the teacher lectured, I took notes everything he said and outlined them in another notebook.
It had been over 30 years since I had graduated from high school in 1939 and I was going to school with students years younger than myself. But I figured if I studied hard enough I could make it and keep up. I tried! Still, going to work almost every day, then going to college three nights a week, bible study on one night a week and working on the Forest Park house a couple of nights a week kept me pretty busy.

Then on October the second 1971 I had a freak accident. I had stayed up very late that night studying and outlining a few chapters in a test book hoping to be ahead in lessons for my classes. Just after I finally had gone to bed at about 1:00 AM, Dewey came into my room and said "Mom, someone is breaking into the garage." I was very sleepy but I said don't worry I'll check it out.

I had converted a breezeway between my bedroom and the garage for Dewey a bedroom. I went across his bedroom, and opened the garage and opened the garage doors. I heard nothing so I started back to my room.

I had taught the boys, to never turn the inside lights on, but the outside ones only, so they would have the advantage in case anyone was out there.

As I stepped into the bedroom someone said "who is it?" I did not recognize the voice so I did not answer. But it was Dewey. While I was looking for the prowler, he had gone and gotten his 22 rifle. Since I did not answer, he shot me. I asked, "what did you get me with." He said, "Oh! Mom it is you." I pulled the bathroom light on around the corner from the bedroom, and decided to lie down for a minute.

Dewey came over to the bed and said "Mom you are bleeding to death." I very calmly said to him "go wakeup Danny." Then went to the toilet. Seeing blood in the stool I felt for sure I had a kidney punctured. It turned out that I was right, my left kidney had a bullet go right through it. When Danny came into the room, I motioned for him to come real close. Then I told him to dial the operator and tell
them to send an ambulance out. But I added, don't worry it doesn't hurt and I will be back.

Having a very soft rug by my bed, that I knew I could replace easier than a mattress, I dropped my pillow on it. Then I told Danny to put some blankets on me so I would not go into shock. He no sooner did that when the policeman and an ambulance and two attendants arrived. I tried to stay very calm since every bit of energy I used would cause the blood to flow faster. When the police asked if I knew what happened I motioned with my hand, "yes." Then he asked if I would tell them. I shook my head no and then told him "later."

When we arrived at the hospital Dr. Charles Moore and Dr. Detwilder were there to take care of me. (Dr. Moore and wife below left)

Believe me! Dr. Moore certainly worked a miracle. I lost my left kidney, my spleen and several feet of intestines. With God's help, and two months in a hospital I made it home the day before my birthday. The day afterwards we had Thanksgiving dinner with my niece Terry and her husband (at that time) Bud Dilley. All my sisters and brothers were there except Paul and Rachel. I had lost several pounds from 150 to 110 so I looked very thin and weak. With time, of course, I did correct that.

I had to have a colostomy for 11 months. In August of 1973 I returned to the hospital to get my colon connected. That was a success, but I got a staff infection the day before I was to get out of the hospital. Thanks, once again, to Dr. Moore I eventually made a full recovery. So many times we take life for granted. It is amazing how often things find a way of working out. Well, in any case, I feel I have been very lucky in all respects and in many different ways. To be as sick as I was yet to be able to make a successful recovery is truly a miracle. Dr. Moore became a very good friend of mine. I call him once or twice a year and write him from time to time. He calls me “his miracle patient.”
Dewey Lee decided to move in with Vic and Sharon so he could stay near enough to graduate at Sylmar High School.

On my trip to the doctor to get a release to try to go back to work Dr. Moore told me I'd probably never be able to work again. He said I should file bankruptcy and not worry about anything. He said I would be lucky to live six months. I patted him on the back and told him I'd planned to outlive him. At the time of this writing we are both still alive and doing well.

In February of 1974 my sister Thelma had plans to fly to Oklahoma City to visit our mother. She asked me to come along and I told her that I had never rode on an airplane. She said there are pills we can get; you take one and it won't bother you. So I decided what the heck, and went with her to visit our mother and other relatives in Oklahoma. The pill I took to ride the plane made me lightheaded and weak in the knees. Yes! I was scared. After two days there I decided I'd just buy a house and move back to Oklahoma. If I only had six months to live I should live near my mother.

I asked Charlie, my brother-in-law, if I could use his car that afternoon. He told me it would be okay but he wanted to know what I was going to do. I told him to look at some real estate.

Sammie Gilliam, married to Charlie's nephew, and who happened to be setting there, said "I'll sell you mine." I told her it had to be a two-bedroom. She said it had three, so right on the spot I said "I'll take it." She said she would not sell it to me until I saw it. So she took me to her place. I liked it the minute I saw it. But I told her it would be impossible for me to finish all my business during this trip and I would have to come back before June of that year. She asked me if I would allow them to rent it until June as she had a son and daughter that were attending school. With all that settled I bought my first Oklahoma home. I returned to California, put my house on the market, took care of all the necessary business, and rented a U-haul truck. I asked a truck driver friend of mine to take all my belongings to Oklahoma with my son Danny. I gave him enough to pay his wages and a plane ticket back to California. It took Linda Rae Webb (Danny's finance), her three children Linda Lee, Monte, Maury Cale
about two weeks to get everything under control. We packed whatever was left at the house and we headed for Oklahoma. Linda Rae and Daniel were soon married. We arrived in Oklahoma City about mid afternoon on June 8th, 1974. Danny had already put the furniture in its place so we were ready to become Okies.

Early the next morning we turned on the TV only to hear beep-beep-beep -- a tornado warning was being forecast. Boy! Even after growing up as a child in Oklahoma I had never heard that before and was very alarmed. After a short time of being in Oklahoma we got used to hearing the warning signals on the TV. When I grew up in Oklahoma in the earlier days we did not have a TV and there were no signals of tornadoes.

As soon as I got settled in Oklahoma I started driving for Charlie Gilliam again and it worked out well from June until January of 1975. My eyes had been a letting me down and after I checked with a Dr. James B. Wise he told me I had a cataract and needed surgery. I had surgery on my right eye in January of 1975. Soon after I had a glaucoma infection which caused both eyes to go blind for four months. I started thinking my move to Oklahoma was a big mistake. But I made up my mind that the same thing could have happened any place so decided to stay and see if things would improve. One morning I woke early and thought "the entire world was against me." Then I said to myself "change your outlook and try again." So I said "these Okies may not like me but they are stuck with me." It seemed from then on I could be more relaxed and have met a lot of people who have become my friends. Now, as I look back over the years, I am sure that many things that happened were as much my fault as anyone else's. It's hard to admit you're wrong but we can all make mistakes I have! My eye sight returned enough that I can get by and Danny and I live a peaceful life.

Added by David: About the time mom quit writing (April 2002) she had a very serious bout with her gal bladder. She nearly died before it all worked out and she was in intensive care for over a week. Says she probably does not want to work on the story any more but I hope she does cause I think there is a lot to learn from her.