

A TRIBUTE TO OUR PIONEER PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS
SAMUEL H. VAUGHAN AND MARTHA LULA HENSON VAUGHAN

The Vaughan Family

We, the family of Samuel H. Vaughan and Martha Lula Henson Vaughan, look back with pride that we were born of pioneer parents - the kind of people who made possible this land we love. We will not forget the heritage they left to us; may we be worthy of it.

More than 20 years ago a small cabin, or retreat, was built in their memory on the homestead farm five miles east of Norman. It is used for family gatherings, as well as by church and community groups, Scouts, and as a guest house. As long as our mother lived it was never locked. She taught us the basic goodness of man and she lived in a world of confidence and trust. On the hillside across from this cabin is a slight indentation or hollow in the earth which marks the spot where our father turned the soil with a shovel for what was to be his future home - a dugout. There the meadowlarks still sing and the whippoorwills announce the arrival of nightfall.

The Run of '89 was one of the most dramatic moments in the history of the Southwest. For some it was the beginning of a satisfying and profitable life; for others it was a disappointing and frustrating experience. Perhaps for all, it was a time of adventure, heartache and excitement. We know that for two of those 89ers the drama unfolded as a fate-filled adventure fraught with hard work, frustration, sadness, pleasure and ultimate satisfaction.

Our father, Samuel H. Vaughan, was the only son of George Washington Vaughan and Charity Elizabeth Holland Vaughan. He had five sisters. Prior to the Run of '89, George Vaughan and his family had migrated from Tennessee to Texas. From Texas, they made the Run and staked their claim east of Norman. Samuel H. Vaughan traded a barrel of flour for his land - which was about a mile as the crow flies from his parents' claim. He set up housekeeping alone in the dugout he made for himself.

We often compare his lonely life with that of today. There was then no entertainment of any kind other than listening to the sounds of the wolves and other wild animals. Our father was a man who could see beyond the horizon and that this was a land of promise. He longed for the day when he could hear other pioneers cutting their way through the rugged terrain and when he would have neighbors. He knew that some day there would be people living all around him. We think of him spending long evenings alone, listening for "sounds in the night". This silence was broken in a few years when the Santa Fe Railway built its railroad through Norman. The loud clear whistle, 5 miles away, was music to his ears. He soon learned to depend on the whistle of the train to tell him the time of day - and the tone of the whistle indicated a change in the weather.

At last, and what a pleasure! He heard some pioneers cutting their way through the wilderness to settle on a homestead nearby. He loved people and missed being with them and the thought of having a neighbor overwhelmed him. He saddled his horse and hurried to the new camp-site. It didn't take him long to get acquainted and to learn that there was a 16-year-old girl among the new settlers. Yes, a romance developed quickly and they were married. He was tall, 6'4", handsome and 21 years of age. He thought she was a beautiful girl, small, with dark hair and grey eyes. Her head only reached his shoulders.

Samuel H. Vaughan married Martha Lula Henson, an orphan, when she was 16 years of age. We know little about our mother's life before she came to Indian Territory with her sister's family in a caravan of covered wagons from Montague County, Texas. We do know that Texas was her native state and that her sister, Mrs. Jane Webb, had made a home for her. We suspect that her childhood was filled with tragedy and hardships. It was never discussed

with her children. It was her philosophy to brush aside the unpleasant things of life, the things that she could not change - and to hold on to the better things and a hope for tomorrow.

Our mother was a great inspiration to us all. She was a true example of courage and unselfishness. On her way to the new land with her sister's family, many unexpected misfortunes slowed their caravan and they arrived a week or two late for the Run. Because the caravan had been delayed, the men rode on ahead in a fruitless effort to stake claims as quickly as possible. Courageously, our mother led the rest of the caravan through wilderness, over rugged terrain, where they had to cut their way through the timber, and over swift streams. The anticipation of a new life helped her to overcome thoughts of danger, hardships, or deprivation. Deer, buffalo, wild turkey, rabbits and squirrels were in abundance and helped greatly to supplement their scarce food supply. They also fished in streams along the way and gathered turkey eggs. With hope and faith in the future, our mother brought seeds, plants, and her few earthly belongings to the wilderness, a new world, to make her home, unafraid. What a wonderful example of faith was this 15-year-old girl. For protection of her family and herself, she became a crack shot with a gun. This protected against wild animals and also added meat to the scarce food supply. Though too late to stake claims, her sister's family traded cattle for the 160 acres of land where the Falls School now stands.

We remember our mother saying that her life really began when she met and married our father. George, their first-born, graduated from Norman High School and served in World War I in the Army Medical Corps. Being in the Medical Corps, working among the sick, there was no escape for him from the flu epidemic and he died during this flu epidemic at Camp Stanley, Texas, after the War had ended and on the day he was to have been discharged to return home. He was looking forward to being a 32nd Degree Mason. Anna Lou Vaughan, the youngest daughter, graduated from Norman High School, attended Oklahoma University, and was employed at the State Hospital for a number of years. She worked in the main office in Norman and helped organize the Hospital Annex at McAlester. She died in 1949. Our family never fully recovered from the untimely deaths of George and Anna Lou.

Their other two sons are Cicero Vaughan, who is married to the former Thistle Baird, and Samuel R. Vaughan, who is married to the former Gladys Chesser. Their three daughters are Mrs. E. M. (Nellie) Watson, Mrs. Ellis C. (Florence) Russell, and Mrs. Robert Clinton (Ila) Ketner.

We remember our father, who died in 1929, as being very civic-minded. He was self-educated and was always interested in knowing what was going on in school and trying to benefit from it himself. He astounded us with his knowledge of arithmetic and algebra. He was active on the school board in helping to build better schools. He was concerned about better roads and a better community. He served as County Road Overseer. Prisoners lived in tents on our land and worked building roads and bridges through-out the county. One of our fond recollections is the two and one-half mile walk on Sunday morning to meet with the neighbors in the Adair Country School for Sunday School service. It was another happy occasion when we walked with our father through the woods to our grandparents' house. The little ones, who couldn't walk the one mile trek, would ride "piggy-back" on father's

shoulders. With a hand full of wild flowers, we would stop under the big oak tree and decorate the grave of a little Indian baby.

Honesty was among our father's greatest virtues. He instilled in us the importance of never running away from a debt or responsibility. "Never hide or run away", he would say. "If you cannot meet your promise, talk it over with the one who placed the trust in you, and it will not be lost."

Father was a strong believer in "law and justice", and was active in helping to eliminate cattle rustling which was prevalent because the pioneers had no property line fences. He served the community as President of the Anti-Horse-Thief Association - a valuable service to the community. This took him away from home on many occasions, leaving our mother alone with her little ones. If she was ever afraid, she never let her children know. Indeed, there was plenty of cause to be afraid. She knew how to use a gun, and she would not have hesitated to do just that if there had been reason to do so.

Indians were scattered throughout the territory. They were quick and anxious to make friends. It was not unusual to see one of them standing in the doorway, with bow and arrow, trying to make conversation through sign language or with the few words of English he knew. They were great traders for tobacco, seeds, plants, animal skins and food. They passed on to the white man their skills in hunting and trapping as well as in planting - all vital in a fight for survival. Many wild animals roamed the woods and the Indians shared their buffalo and other meats with the white man. Their folklore and their knowledge of nature as a predictor of weather conditions still remains in the thinking of many pioneers. For example, they taught that thick bark on the north side of a tree or extra thickness of fur on animals - or extra thickness of the shucks on corn meant a severe winter. A three day wind from the east - or the sun setting behind a bank of clouds on Friday - indicated rain within three days. We learned much from these "native meteorologists."

As the family grew, so did the house. First a one-room log cabin was built above the dugout. Later, other rooms were added. Finally, our father's dream was realized - from the dugout that was his beginning, he moved his family into a two-story house.

Realizing the need for telephone communications because travel by ox team and horse-drawn wagon was so slow, he acquired a telephone linking our home, five miles east of town on what is now Old Highway #9, with Norman. It was the only telephone in the community. Recognizing the needs of the total community, he later developed a system known as "Vaughan Switch", and it was shown on the State map as Vaughan, Oklahoma. It provided service as far to the north as Franklin; to the east and south it served Maguire, Denver, Stella, Enterprize, Independence, etc. Originally, telephone wires were strung in make-shift ways along fence rows and trees. Families did not have telephone numbers; rather, each had a different "ring". A short, a long, and a short - or two longs and a short - etc., were the telephone signals. Connections with other lines could be made with one ring for Central. As the system grew,

Southwestern Bell Telephone Company furnished a switchboard to better accomodate the increasing number of subscribers.

One of the highlights in our mother's life was when electric lights became available. How happily she "turned the switch", exclaiming, "We are out of the darkness into the light." We marvel at our mother's ability to read, explain, discuss and interpret from newspapers, books and magazines. She was never too busy to read a letter or an article for a neighbor or the funny papers to a grandchild.

As our mother worked with her growing family, she also was helping people in need in the community. She learned from experience to help care for the sick when a doctor was not available. She and our father were skilled in making poultices and plasters from mustard leaves, other leaves and herbs, to reduce high fever and infections. Her specialty was a poultice from peach tree leaves and jimson weed. When leaves were out of season, different kinds of seeds and grain were used. When a new baby was to arrive, she proceeded to have things ready, hoping the doctor would arrive before the baby did. A big wood fire in the kitchen with plenty of boiling water was a necessity.

Home remedies were of great importance because doctors and medicines were scarce. This knowledge was shared throughout the community and everyone shared special home remedies. On one occasion, our dear neighbor, Mrs. James Jackman, who was always helping in time of trouble, had found what she believed to be a "Mad Stone". This object, as the story goes, was from the head of a deer and, if soaked in warm milk and applied to a wound inflicted by a rabid animal, was a sure way to prevent hydrophobia. There was no serum and only one "mad stone" in the area had been handed down to one of the doctors. At last, Mrs. Jackman had an opportunity to use her "stone" on our cousin who was bitten by a stray cat while visiting us. If the "stone" stuck to the wound when applied, it was evident that the animal had rabies and the "stone" served as a treatment. We watched breathlessly as Mrs. Jackman reached in the pan of warm milk to pick up the "stone". It was not there. It had disappeared. The heat had melted what turned out to be a piece of sealing wax. The cousin is still living.

While reminiscing about Mrs. Jackman, we are reminded of a close neighbor's granddaughter who was stricken with appendicitis. The news spread throughout the community that she was to undergo surgery. Our mother helped prepare the dining room table with a sterile white sheet to be used as the "operating table". The doctor arrived in due time. Neighbors came in wagons and on horseback and brought lunches and ate under the big oak trees in the front yard as they awaited the outcome of the operation. During the surgery, a member of the family came out of the house at intervals and told us of the progress. The smell of chloroform lingered in the house and yard.

These are but two of the many childhood experiences which cement our love for the land, for our friends, and our community - a fondness which still lives in the minds of the children and grandchildren. They love the red earth and the black jack trees on the old homestead - and they still refer to the place as "home". Jerry Vaughan, son of Mr. and

Cicero Vaughn, has already built his home there and other grandchildren plan to do likewise.

Mrs. Florence Russell and her husband, Ellis C. Russell, live on the site of the original farm house. There they reared their three children - Stanley Russell, Mary Lou Gillmore, and Martha Nell Tullius.

The pioneer spirit of our parents will live on - it will be passed from generation to generation. We know that without the God-given strength, direction, faith and courage, we would not have the heritage that is ours. We feel humble in knowing that, in large part, the luxuries, comforts and beauty which we enjoy were made possible through their hardships and sacrifices.

We will continue to reflect upon the lives of these two 89ers and to tell our children and grandchildren of the courage that was so much a part of life for them and their friends. We do this with the hope that, along with bits of history of other pioneers made available through the Cleveland County Historical Society, these reflections will provide strength and encouragement for new generations as they, too, face their adventuresome, new, and different world.