



THE BURKETT FAMILY

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The Texas Trip and Reunion!

In the last issue of our Newsletter I wrote that three of us planned to attend a Burkett Reunion in Goldthwaite, Texas and to stop at other locations while out there.

Several of you will be receiving this Newsletter for the first time so let me take the time to explain who the three of us are.

First, Audy Majors of Huntsville, Alabama. Audy is a son of Ova Burkett Majors; a grandson of Almon Lee Burkett; a great grandson of Jobe Burkett; a second great grandson of John Burkett; and a third great grandson of Henry Burkett, Sr. (Since I just typed Henry, Sr. let me take a minute to explain that he was not a Sr. in the true sense of the word but he had a son named Henry so we refer to them as Sr. and Jr. just to make clear who we are talking about.)

Next, Dr. Clyde G. "Sid" Huggins from Mandeville, Louisiana. Sid and wife Evelyn also own some property in Fayetteville, Tennessee and have close ties to the area so they are frequently up there. Sid is a son of Charles T. Huggins; a grandson of Nancy Ann Burkett Huggins; a great grandson of John Burkett; and a second great grandson of Henry Burkett, Sr.

Finally, there is me — Marvin Oliver Webb. My mother, Martha Caroline Burkett Webb, and Audy's mother were sisters so my lineage follows his making me also a third great grandson of Henry, Sr.

Audy and I are first cousins and are second cousins, once removed, to Sid and we are all three retired. I am 72; Audy is 63, and Sid is 76. Having now established our place in the Burkett family, let me proceed with the trip — and it was a dandy!!

September 8 (Tuesday) - Enroute to Huntsville

I left Tampa early AM and drove to Huntsville, Alabama to Audy's house.

September 9 (Wednesday) - Huntsville, Alabama

Wednesday was spent getting organized, making contact with Sid, and resting from my drive to Huntsville.

September 10 (Thursday) - Enroute to Texas

Audy and I left his house in his car early AM and drove up to Fayetteville, TN to pick up Sid which is only about 30 minutes from Audy's. Sid was ready and waiting outside signifying he was rarin' to go. We wasted no time loading the car and away we went with Audy driving. It only took a couple of hours for Sid to get very comfortable with Audy's driving and to recognize that Audy was a good driver. I had ridden with Audy many times before and already knew he was a good driver. We headed out west toward Memphis; then to Little Rock; from Little Rock to Texarkana and on toward Dallas. We arrived in Sulphur Springs, Texas around 6 PM where we pulled over to use a

phone to call one of our relatives we had never met and who lived in Sulphur Springs. This relative is Billy Bob McCool who is known both as Billy Bob and as Bill McCool. I had spoken with Bill on the phone some months back. Luckily, he was home and answered the phone. I identified myself and told him we were there in Sulphur Springs and would like to visit with him if he had time. His response was yes indeed. He was very friendly and helpful in getting us rooms at a Motel and in negotiating a reduced rate. (That's a good cousin!) We checked in and Bill came over and met us at the restaurant next to the Motel. He had already had his dinner but sat with us until we finished. We then went to our room and talked for hours about Bill, his family, our Burkett family, our trip, etc. Here is a picture of Bill and Sid taken in our Motel room.

Bill McCool on the left and Sid Huggins on the right

We probably would have talked later but the three of us



were a little tired from our ride. We really enjoyed our visit with Bill and hope to visit with him or him with us again sometime. His courtesy and hospitality were outstanding. We did learn that Bill had been Mayor of Sulphur Springs at one time. Bill is a son of Robert McCool; a grandson of Helon Nora Burkett McCool; a great grandson of Isaac Evans Burkett; a second great grandson of Henry Burkett, Jr.; and a third great grandson of Henry Burkett, Sr. Sid and Bill are third cousins, once removed, and Audy and I are 4th cousins to Bill.

September 11 (Friday) - Enroute to Goldthwaite, Texas

We got up early and headed out for Goldthwaite going around the bypass at Dallas and heading south toward Waco. In Waco we turned due west and went about 90 miles to Goldthwaite. Arriving in Goldthwaite we checked into the

Motel. Our Burkett relative contact in Goldthwaite was Helen Mayr. Helen works part time at the Bank and when I spoke with her before leaving Tampa, she had told me she probably was going to have to work until about 4 PM Friday afternoon. We had lunch at Oliver's Restaurant where I tried to explain that I should get a discount since my name was Oliver — it didn't work. Both Sid and I had previously visited Mullin, Texas and the Williams Ranch cemetery where our 3rd great grandmother (2nd great grandmother in Sid's case), Mary 'Polly' Epley Burkett, is buried but Audy had not been out there so we took off to let Audy visit Mullin and vicinity which is about 8 miles from Goldthwaite. When we arrived in Mullin, we directed Audy as to where to turn to go to the Williams Ranch. The paved road ends about a block or so from the main paved road through Mullin and when Sid and I had been out there, it had deep ruts in it and you could only drive 4 - 5 miles an hour and it is about 4 miles from Mullin out to the Ranch. However, this time they had graded the road and it was fairly smooth. But only relatively speaking because at 25 miles per hour it was still a washboard effect. Although Sid and I kept telling Audy how smooth it was, Audy wasn't too impressed. We arrived at the cemetery in a light rain but it wasn't enough to keep us in the car so we showed Audy the grave of Mary 'Polly' Epley Burkett, and the ones of the Williams family along with some others. There is a box near the front gate with a log book for visitors to sign in and I recorded our visit while Sid and Audy walked around and took pictures.

Leaving there we drove back into Mullin and took Audy to the Oakview Cemetery where we have several relatives buried including Jacob Lorenza Burkett, a son of Henry Burkett, Sr. (Those of you familiar with our family history will recall it was Jacob who left middle Tennessee in 1865 with his wife *and 7 children* and went to Texas arriving in Burnet, Texas December 25, 1865. Jacob's wife, Lavina Burnett, died during childbirth not long after they arrived.) We walked around the cemetery visiting several graves including that of StellaB Jackson Jaynes who provided us with a lot of family history as a starting point for what we have today. Also buried there in Oakview is Joseph Lafayette Burkett and his wife Adela 'Della' Catherine Pyeatt. It is the children of this couple who have the reunion in Goldthwaite. After we took pictures, we then returned to Goldthwaite to our Motel. We had only been back a few minutes when Helen Mayr called and said she had not had to work and we could come on over to her father's house whenever we were ready. Well, we were anxious to meet and talk with her so we went over immediately. Turned out the house was only about a half block from the Motel and we could have walked if it had not been raining.

Helen greeted us at the door and after we entered she introduced us to her father, Archie Hodges. To establish Helen's place in our family, her mother was Gladys Beatrice Burkett Hodges; her grandfather was Joseph Lafayette Burkett; her great grandfather was Jacob Lorenza Burkett; and her 2nd great grandfather was Henry Burkett, Sr. After Helen seated us and offered something to drink, we began to talk about the rain and asked Helen about the reunion which was originally scheduled to be held at Lake Merritt just

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outside of Goldthwaite. Helen told us she had already made arrangements for us to use the Community Room at the Bank and had notified all of the relatives. She asked about our trip thus far and we told her about meeting Bill McCool in Sulphur Springs and about going up to Mullin that afternoon and visiting the two cemeteries. After that she began to show us what she had put together for us to review and it quickly became apparent we were going to be there a while because Helen had so much material laid out for us it was unbelievable! The dining room table was completely covered with stacks of information. We spent several hours looking over and talking about the information and it was obvious that all of us were enjoying the evening. Helen's father left the room and returned with a ballpoint pen made from the original Burkett pecan trip which he passed around for us to look at. (More on that pen later.) We found Mr. Hodges to be a delightful person and he must have been enjoying it because at one point when it was growing late, Helen said, "Daddy, you can go to bed anytime you're ready" and he said, "I know it and I'll go when I'm ready." He never did while we were there. Here is a picture of Audy, Helen, and her father.

Seated: Archie Hodges; Standing: Helen Hodges Mayr and Audy Majors

Here is Sid with Helen and her father

But the time came when we had to finally call it a night and head for the Motel because I think we were all getting a



little tired by then so we said our goodnight's and thank



you's.

Our Motel rooms were adjoining so when we got back we were standing outside talking about the schedule for the next day and I noticed a van pull in with the lady in the passenger side really giving us the eye. Well, the van had hardly stopped rolling when she popped out and came toward us asking, "Are you the out-of-town Burkett's?" We told her we were and introduced ourselves and she told us she was Juanelle Burkett Curtis and that was her daughter driving the van. Said she told her daughter to look for out-of-state tags and they spotted ours. We told her we had just come from Helen's and were headed to bed because we were all talked out. But we enjoyed the few minutes of conversation with Juanelle and would have talked longer but it was catching up with us and we knew we had a busy day coming up.

September 12 (Saturday) - Goldthwaite, Texas

In order to keep some sense of continuity to the trip, I am going to skip over the reunion at this point and make it a completely separate section later in this issue. I will say it rained all night and was still raining when we arrived at the Bank so Helen's decision to move to the Bank was a good one. And I would like to add that we had more than plenty to eat and it was delicious. Seems like all the Burkett's love to cook and eat!

Late that afternoon after most everybody had departed, we also left and headed southwest toward Kerrville, Texas where we were to visit Joe W. Burkett, Jr. on Sunday morning. Here we got lucky. The more we drove from Goldthwaite the less rain we had and finally we got completely out of it. We arrived late that afternoon, checked into the Motel, went out for dinner, and returned to just relax and talk about the activities of a very busy and enjoyable day. I couldn't wait to get my hands on the photo's and information everyone was kind enough to give or loan to us and I'll have more to say about that in the Reunion section. But I didn't get to review too much and had to finally give it up and turn out the light which didn't bother Audy — he had already turned over in his bed and gone to sleep!

September 13 (Sunday) - Kerrville, Texas

We got up and had an excellent breakfast of eggs sausage, pancakes, bacon, biscuits and gravy. Now we didn't each order all that but between us that's what we had. I'm not going to say who ate the most but it wasn't me or Sid!

We were scheduled to be at the home of Joe W. Burkett, Jr. at 11 AM so we got directions and arrived almost on the dot of 11. Mr. Burkett greeted us at the door and, after entering, his wife Pearl came out to greet us. Mr. Burkett's sister, Dorothy Alford, who by the way has provided a wealth of information and pictures, was driving over from San Antonio. Mrs. Burkett provided us with cokes and we began our conversation by telling them about ourselves and what we had been doing on this trip so far. We asked and they answered several questions about their immediate family. Dot and her husband, Gaston Alford, arrived after a little while and entered into the conversation.

To establish their place in the family, Joe Burkett, Jr. and Dorothy Burkett Alford are children of Joseph Washington Burkett; grandchildren of James Henry Burkett; great grandchildren of Jacob Lorenza Burkett; and 2nd great

grandchildren of Henry Burkett, Sr.

*Standing left: Mrs. Joe (Pearl) Burkett; Seated: Joe W. Burkett, Jr.; Standing right: Dot Burkett Alford
Colonel Gaston Alford and wife Dot Burkett Alford*



Since Dorothy — or Dot — had already provided me



with a lot of information and photo's most of which was included in the last Newsletter, there was little new information but we were able to expand on what we have. We talked about our plans to visit the old homeplace and orchard of their grandfather, James Henry Burkett, who developed the Burkett pecan. Since my return, Mr. Burkett has provided by mail some additional information about the tree and about his Uncle Omar Burkett both of which will be covered in separate articles later in this issue. Thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Burkett for a very hospitable visit and to you, Dot, for driving over from San Antonio with husband Gaston. We are glad to have met all of you.

Unfortunately, we did not get to meet Mr. Burkett's son Joey and his family. Joey was in New Mexico on business and the children were in College. Maybe next visit.

Leaving Kerrville in late afternoon, we headed north to Brownwood where we planned to spend the night.

September 14 (Monday) - Brownwood, Texas

We awoke early and again had a nice breakfast but far be it for me to say publicly who ate the most but Sid and I disclaim that dubious honor! This morning we headed for

Cross Plains some 30 miles north of Brownwood. Our purpose was to visit Mr. and Mrs. Robert Watson. Mr. Watson was a member of the Callahan County Historical Commission and Callahan County is where the original Burkett Pecan tree stood until it finally gave in to the ravages of old age. They not only were present when the tree was cut down — and as I said there will be a separate article on the tree — but they had preserved it and we wanted to get pieces of the tree. Also under the auspices of the Historical Commission, a firm in Odessa, Texas makes ballpoint pens from this wood. See picture below and Burkett Pens later.

We had a nice visit with Mr. and Mrs. Watson. She has an email address and we had communicated many times before our visit. In giving me directions on how to get to their house, she had told me they lived “out in the country.”



Well, believe me, they do! They have about 400 acres and I have to tell you it is impossible to describe how *quiet* it was! We just thoroughly enjoyed the time we spent with them — they are most hospitable folks. However, I might point out they are not related to us Burketts. Their sole involvement was through the Historical Commission. We selected and purchased some pieces from the wood of the original Burkett Pecan tree — proceeds from the sale go to the Historical Commission. As much as we hated to leave good company, we told them we had to move on in order to stay on our schedule.

We told them we were going on to Clyde, Texas to visit the old homeplace and orchard of James Henry Burkett. This is where the family moved to after the pecan tree had been developed back in Callahan County. They gave us directions but suggested we stop at a Feed Store in Clyde for more specifics which is what we did and a picture of the store is shown next. There is a cute story associated with the store.