

Grit In My Gizzard: No. 00

Ol' Rosie Goes To College

Idealism rather than oratorical or scholarly aptitude led me to want to attend ACC as a ministerial student. My brother, George (Bud) shared my dreams and had been trying for three years to accumulate money necessary to enroll. That was a hopeless task in the cotton patch during the Great Depression and Dust Bowl days. After my graduation from high school in 1937, we both determined to go together. But that was not all. Our sister, Emily, had attended in 1933 where she met and married Fay Wilson. As they tried for three years to save money to return their son, Kay, was born. So the five of us loaded into a friend's car with a trailer containing a few necessary pieces of furniture. In that trailer also was Ol' Rosie – the Wilson's cow! So we were off to fantasy land sixty miles from the cotton patch at Rochester, where we expected some sort of magic to change us into persons we could only hope to become.

Down on Cedarcrest on the creek near Ambler we rented a small guest house consisting of two bedrooms separated by a small kitchen and bathroom. Now we were getting up in tall cotton – living in a brick house with electricity, running hot and cold water, an indoor bathroom, and a gas heater – things unfamiliar to us before. And Rosie was staked across the road in virgin mesquite pasture land that extended up to Zellner Hall and across to the Albany highway.

We brought available food from the farm, especially eggs and pork, and could hitch-hike back to refill our little cardboard suitcase. And Rosie did her part. We were faring well and Bud and I were in hog heaven. But our original bank roll of \$50.00-plus was depleting. Tuition was \$5.00 per hour and there was a \$12.00 matriculation fee. We received the customary 40% discount given to ministerial students, so our obligation to the college was \$57.00 per semester.

Searching for part-time jobs, we finally found one at the Hilton Hotel (later changed to Windsor). We were assigned to wash dishes and pots and scrub floors from 6:00 to 12:00 each evening seven days each week for meals (not from the menu) and \$10.00 per month. Usually we could catch a ride at least to Pine Street, but nobody picked up a hiker after midnight.

When you begin making big money, the government gets involved. So in February 1938 I had to sign up for Social Security so that withholdings could be taken from my \$10.00 monthly check.

Having text-books would have seemed almost like cheating. Bud and I shared a Greek primer and probably four other texts during our four years of college. We relied on listening in class and studying in the library. I did not even own a Bible! Emily lent me her KJV Bible, and I soon bought a pocket-size ASV New Testament. When we worked, we had little time to study but utilized our off periods. We failed no courses but never made the honor rolls.

When we did not work at the hotel, we did all sorts of jobs, some assigned by the college in payment for tuition and others we found or Dean Adams pointed us to. For a while Bud milked the Adams' cow. I spaded their garden, raked leaves, and even baby-sat with their young son. I did a full day of ironing for a family for \$1.50. I washed windows, passed out fliers, helped a surveyor terrace a farm, and kept the rest rooms in the Ad Building. Bud and I painted rooms in Chambers Hall with calcimine. Having no such help as a sanding machine or paint remover, Bud and I used shards of glass to scrape the many initials and carvings from the oak student desktops. During construction of a two-story home just south of the campus, we did many hours of detail work for less than ten cents per hour. In our senior year George and I kept the athletic equipment in the gymnasium.

Less time consuming jobs allowed Bud and me to enter into campus life more. Our participation in extra-curricular Evangelistic Forum and Mission Study broadened our perspectives and fed our zeal. The influence of those associations has spread among our churches in our country and around the world. The college never pretended to be an arm of the church, but it has greatly benefited the church through those it trained and inspired.

In our second year, a football player from New Mexico worked at the Wooten Hotel and only needed a place to sleep. So we rented our bed to him! We had two cotton mattresses, one of which we put on the floor, leaving the bedstead with springs and mattress for him.

Not much of the food for employees at the hotel was appetizing, so I found that larger and untouched portions of food left on the plates of customers was preferable. In our last two years we lived in a little house near the alley by the Arledges whose house was separated from the campus by a vacant lot. They had a barn and a cow; so George got another milking job! No longer working at the hotel, we did our own cooking which was no problem. Bud made great bread using everlasting yeast. When we had none of it, I made biscuits. Two quarts of milk daily allowed us to have butter and extra milk to make country gravy. Ten cents worth of creamed bologna made a good meal. Sometimes we would buy a dime's worth of liver and combine it with potatoes, carrots, and onions to make stew. In our four years of college, George and I never bought a Coke or hamburger, never ate out, ate in the dining hall, or went to a movie. We washed our own clothes by hand and did our own ironing. I had a cheap suit with two pairs of pants, two white shirts, and one tie which I depended upon mostly.

Did we resent being so deprived? Deprived? We felt blessed! Our dreams were being fulfilled! We were not victims! Doors of opportunity were opened. That is all we hoped for. The cotton patch had taught us the value of hard work.

All along, I had spoken in some area churches. In my junior year I preached regularly in Lawn south of Abilene. In my senior year I went to Carbon south of Eastland. Their \$5.00 per week helped much more than enabling me to leave college debt free. I am deeply indebted to those gracious people who tolerated my inadequacies. They helped me much more than I helped them. The rural churches around Abilene added an extension to education which could not be taught on campus. They gave us practical experience leading us

to believe that we could be effective preachers. I am touched even now 65 years later to think how they helped to bring my dreams closer to reality.

The daily chapel with the inspiring singing in Sewell Auditorium was a great bonding element in ACC adding to the camaraderie of students and unselfish faculty. Graduation was not a time of sailing mortar boards in the air in jubilation for being free from college. There were more tears than cheers. We were going separate ways. As the decades have passed and I have seen the names of fellow-students in the news and obituaries, fond memories have been revived continuously.

Who knows? – in the next world we may have some ACC-ACU reunions to relive those happy memories, to thank our selfless teachers and benefactors – and maybe to toast Ol' Rosie and the Adams and Arledge cows – benefactors also.