

LOWRY FAMILY REUNION

by R.H. Lowry

The family of Marvin and Della Lowry, formerly of Pembroke, now deceased, held their reunion in Virginia Beach, Virginia the third week in July. They came from five states to Virginia to continue a custom begun in the early seventies of getting together every two years to strengthen family ties, brought up to date on family news, to some family type recrea-



Shown above, from left to right, are Marvin, Murrill, Harold, Cuzliss, Tolbert, and B. Foreground-The Mule drawn "Sweep" Plow, a relic of the family farm. [Photo by Phillip Andrew Lowry]

tional activities and stomach stuffing, and retell some of the stories relating to life on a small family farm in Robeson County in the thirties and forties.

Our roots lie deep in Robeson County. Our dad was the youngest son of Haynes Lowry and Ida Strong Lowry. Haynes was a son of Thomas Lowry and Ida Strong was a

daughter of Andrew Strong. Our mother was the oldest daughter of H.H. Lowry and Julia Revels Lowry. H.H. Lowry was the eldest son of Calvin Lowry. Thomas and Calvin were older brothers of Henry Berry Lowry and sons of Allen Lowry, the progenitor of a prominent Indian family in Robeson County during the pre-Civil War Era.

Our dad's mother died during his infancy and his mother, Fannie Dial, raised and guided him during his youth in and around Pembroke. After serving in France during World War I, he was discharged in Norfolk, Virginia and remained there to become a street car motor man after the end of the first World War. Our parents were married in Norfolk on September 21, 1921, and moved to Richmond, Virginia shortly after marriage to continue his occupation because a strike shut down the Norfolk Transient System. Their first child was born in Richmond in the summer of 1922, the only one to be born in a hospital. The rest of us were born at home in Robeson County by the railroad tracks about half way between Pembroke and Lumber River at two year intervals.

Our dad's Aunt Fannie died in 1923 and he was named sole

heir to her property. He gave up his job in Richmond and returned to Robeson County to raise his family on a family farm. During the twenties, he taught school in Robeson County's one-room school system while he formed his Manpower Organization to take on farming full time. He chose to ride out the Depression Years of the early thirties full time on the farm, and remained there for the balance of his lifetime.

We were raised on the farm under a strict disciplinary system which placed emphasis on lots of work, minimal amount of waste, and the development of a good moral character. During the summer vacation from school, we would average a 16-hour workday on the farm, including the chores and the three meals, for six days each week. We got our half day of rest on Sunday afternoons, after going to Sunday School and church on Sunday mornings. We got two cooked meals on Sundays, as there was always enough food left over from Sunday dinners to satisfy hungry appetites on Sunday nights. All the work was provided by mule and manpower and we began the day at 4 a.m. by doing the chores and feeding the mules so they could be in the fields pulling plows at daybreak. The farm was almost totally self-sufficient, providing us with most all the food we consumed, wood for heating and cooking, and nearby Lumber

River provided a recreational setting for fishing and swimming.

Home remedies were used quite extensively for sickness and injuries. Examples of some used on us included: for mumps-suck them well with warm-sardine oil, tie a baby's diaper around them and remain inactive until the swelling goes down; for infections and injuries caused by stepping on rusted nails-start a fire in an empty lard can, smother it with wool rags and hold your foot over the smoke to draw out the germs; for pregnancy nausea, our mother would chew hardened rosin from the sweet-gum tree.

The Railroad served as a clock, a source of revenue, an energy source, a pathway, as well as a communicative outlet. During the steam engine era, the North Bound Freight Trains would stop South of Pembroke while the engines would get their boilers filled with water. Farm produce was sold to the men riding the caboose. Friendly relationships were established with railroad personnel. Wasted coal along the tracks and discarded crossties were used for fuel, posts, and for building bridges and hog pens. Besides the sun, passenger train schedules determined when certain events took place on a daily farm schedule. The railroad was a direct pathway to Pembroke and to Lumber River. Railroad hoboes were

quite active during the thirties, and between hitching rides on freight trains, some would stop by the house to ask for a free handout of food and the privilege to camp for the night in a pine thicket. On cold nights, hoboes were allowed to sleep under the tobacco barn shelter in the hay, once our dad made sure they had no matches. Sometimes they would be required to work for their meal by cutting wood or a ditchbank. If they did a good job, some extra food would be given to them to take along on their journey along the railroad.

Our life on a family farm provided the setting for the origination of many anecdotes. Our parents' frugal nature and the desire to produce a family of good moral character resulted into a situation which denied us the luxury of owning a bicycle, a rowboat, going to the movies, loafing in Pembroke on Saturday afternoons, or spending nights away from home with boyhood friends. Later on the younger members of the family did acquire ownership of bicycles, after they proved to be an asset for running errands and a means of transportation to school.

The highlight of our reunion, as always, is the telling of events which occurred while we were growing up on the farm. Stories of how we learned to swim in Lumber River, while our parents thought we were picking cot-

ton for a neighbor, how we went to our first movie in Pembroke, without our parents' permission, when they thought we were going to a carnival, and how we missed attending our first Robeson Fair in Lumberton because our dad refused to pay a 25c parking fee, are some examples. To explain the parking fee incident, we were near the gate to the fairsgrounds, and our Dad not believing in having to pay to park his car, was going to pay our way into the fair and then drive his car to a free parking area. The attendant demanded his parking fee, and after a short heated exchange of verbiage, we were ordered back into the car by our Dad and went home. I had to wait until the County Fair moved to Pembroke, before attending my first one.

We were encouraged to take advantage of all educational opportunities available to us. As a result our family earned 14 degrees from 10 colleges and universities representing 6 states, including 2 degrees from former Pembroke State College in Pembroke, North Carolina.

We had 37 people at our Virginia Beach Reunion, including the entire family of Mrs. Delton H. Lowry of Pembroke, who was invited to join us in our gala family affair in Virginia. We were sorry that our only sister, Barbara of Matthews, North Carolina, could not attend. We have already initiated plans for our 1982 Reunion in California, after having had them in North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee and Virginia.

A 10 POUND CANTALOUPE!



Mary Lynn Jacobs is shown displaying a 10 pound cantaloupe grown in the garden of her parents, Howard and Mary Lee Jacobs of Route 1, Rowland. Mary Lynn said that the family was planning to eat the cantaloupe. [Bruce Barton photo]

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