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SOME KIND OF KIN

by Orv Owens

Some relatives don't know the meaning of respect. If they did, they'd appreciate the fact that I'm human, gonna live X number of years, and finally die off—leaving a few shirrtail relatives behind who never claimed they knew me, never wanted to, and tried to make out like I didn't matter a mote when it comes to kin.

I had my start a long, long time ago—back when women kept house, husbands lasted more than six months, and took care of wives—some reasonable facsimile of that particular code of human conduct.

And that brings up my background. I'm not being facetious when I say that Granny didn't want Mama to marry that low-life from across the tracks, which made the

situation positive rather than negative. Mama didn't say no to Papa.

If Granny had bragged about how good a man Papa was, Mama wouldn't have married him in the first place, and I wouldn't have ever been born. That alone would have been pleasing to some of my relatives.

The trouble with relatives who thought that they were better than I was and called me black sheep when I was all white all the way to the bone is that they were color blind.

I'm not so bad. In fact, I've done right well, all things considered in my immediate family. Some of my uncles were carpenters, some roofers, some office workers, and some too lazy to work. They called me blacksheep, but they took advan-

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tage of taxpayers and took life easy on welfare. They were executive types without an office to fit them. But everybody has known somebody whose life looks like a perpetual vacation at taxpayer expense.

They take it for granted that life owes them a living. I'm glad that Papa told me that if I got myself into a jam, I could get myself out as well. He said that a little elbow grease added to bootstraps makes the world a better place for others.

I mentioned in the beginning that Papa, because of his economic background, wasn't likely to be accepted by Mama's mother. I think, however, that Gramps finally did accept him—but not Granny. She couldn't understand why her daughter married that thing in the first place. That was my granny! She was always nitpicking instead of having faith in a person.

Despite her characteristics that bothered me, I loved her. Neverthe-

less, I got no respect from her, but she didn't get mine either. I suppose as far as relatives went, we deserved each other.

Underneath her witchy behavior, she seemed to care (at least I thought so), but she didn't know how to share her caring with others. Actually I think that such an inability is the greatest fault a person can have. My engine runs better on love than it ever did on hate, and love's octane is my cup of tea. ■

ORV OWENS writes a column for the WATONGA REPUBLICAN and submits to WESTVIEW. He started in newspaper business at the DEWEY COUNTY NEWS in Seiling in 1949, taking three years off for duty with the 45th Division during the Korean Conflict. He had previously served with the U.S. Navy during World War I.