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Going to Bobbie and A.C.'s

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GOING TO ARD

"Mama, can we go to Bobbie and A.C.'s?"

That was a familiar request back in the fifties. Papa worked at the carbon black plant at Borger, Texas, at that time, and as a result we saw him only two days a week. But because we hoped it would be only a temporary position that would support his family until someday the farming would begin to pay off, we stayed on the farm near Erick and tried to keep it going.

The days and nights were long to the five of us kids while Papa was away, especially during the summer months. So about once a week, we would cajole Mama into going to visit our neighbors to the east, Bobbie and A.C.

The Joneses lived about a mile away as the crow flies--or as the Snowdens walked (we were without a vehicle while Papa was away). So after the milking and other chores were done, we eagerly began the trek. It took us across the cowlot where ole Daisy and the other cows stood around chewing their cud and watching us without much interest. Then there was a sandy lane where stickers and sunflowers grew, an even sandier field where were planted watermelons and peas in season, then a shinnery patch crisscrossed with cowpaths we could follow.

In the duskiness we would pick our way across the next sandy patch in which cotton was sometimes planted (yielding two or three bolls per scrawny stalk). The plot lay on the gentle slope of a hill and by then we were getting a little tired as our feet (bare in warm weather) sank into the loose soil.

Next came another strip of shinnery and a rusting barbed-wire fence which indicated we were almost there. The tangle of shinnery was worse on the downhill side, but in the gathering darkness we could see the stovepipe thrusting out from the roof of the little tarpaper shack (much like our own). We could see the lamplight beckoning from a window and we began to hurry, knowing there were light and laughter just inside those walls.

Wanda, the Joneses' daughter, was always as glad to see us as we were to see her. Sometimes we huddled for girl talk; sometimes

-By Margi



Illustration by Olivia Ortiz

Production by Brad Snow

BOBBIE A.C.'S

Snowden North

we all played dominoes or forty-two, and I can still see A.C.--quiet, unassuming, frowning just a little in concentration before he triumphantly slapped down just the right combination of dots to "catch a hand." I can hear Bobbie's laugh and her offer of a bowl of home-canned yellow elberta peaches. Sometimes she pincurled our hair, or we helped her shell black-eyed peas.

"We knew from the start that we were never to mention that war around A. C."

Once A. C. got out his Hawaiian tremola, and we were allowed to strum gently on the strings. How I wished I could take it off to myself and attempt to learn how to play it. A. C. was too shy to play the instrument for us. Bobbie whispered that he had gotten it during the war--a war which he wouldn't talk about. We knew from the start that we were never to mention that war around A.C.

There were often hot tea and popcorn, maybe a puzzle to work, jokes to tell, back-dated magazines to read. Whatever transpired during those frequent visits, we never once questioned whether it was worth the long walk there and the even longer walk back home through the pitch darkness.

We didn't know back then that Bobbie and A.C. were poor--maybe even poorer than we were--because of the wealth of good times we had at their house on many a summer's night. ☘

(MARGIE SNOWDEN NORTH, who formerly lived on a ranch north of Erick, now makes a ranch near Texola her home. Her first book, *TO CHASE A DREAM*, which was reviewed in the Summer 1990 issue of *WESTVIEW*, was recently nominated for the National Western Heritage Award in Literature.)



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