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COMRADE, A PONY

as told by Helena
Bergman Holliman to
Clariss Robinson

The first prize for taking a newspaper subscription was a horse, saddle, bridle, buggy, and harness. I won second prize consisting of a Shetland pony, bridle, and saddle. I don't remember the name of the newspaper; I was nine years old and living in Minneola, Kansas.

Comrade, my pony, already had that name when I got him. He came in a crate in the baggage car on a passenger train from Minnesota. He had very long hair of a beautiful black color in the winter and very short hair in the summer.

I was born a mile north and one-fourth of a mile east of Korn (that's the way Corn was spelled then; it was changed when the United States entered World War I in 1916). When I was five years old, my family moved to Kansas in a covered wagon, and we lived in Western Kansas where my dad homesteaded. The closest town was Lakin, which had a post office and a grocery store. The largest town near us was Syracuse.

And in 1915, when I was eleven, my family wanted to move back to Oklahoma; in fact, my father wanted me to ride Comrade all the way into Oklahoma. When I got tired of riding my pony, I would ride for a while in the covered wagon. Now I wish I had stayed on Comrade so I could say, "I rode my Comrade all the way into Oklahoma!"

My father's name was Henry, and my uncle's name was Jake. Jake bought me a buggy. I had sent subscriptions from Kansas before I came to Oklahoma and the money to Jake. He bought me a small buggy and harness (he may have made the harness).

We lived just two miles from town. I would drive Comrade, leaving home about 8:00 and then paid to put my pony in a shed at the Clarks' place across from the school.

I would bring feed, hay or fodder, for Comrade and my lunch too. I would unharness my pony so he would be in a dry place and out of the wind, and I would put the buggy into the shed. When school was out, I would water and harness Comrade, hitch him to the buggy, and drive home.

When I first started hitching Comrade to the buggy, he was afraid of cars; I would have to whip him to get him to pass the cars. But he soon got used to them.

Until I finished the eighth grade in 1919, I continued to ride in my buggy. Later, many classmates told me how envious they were of a little girl who had a beautiful Shetland pony to pull her carriage to school.

When the harvest hands were here, they would try to ride Comrade; but I was the only one whom Comrade would let ride him. He always bucked off other people, especially adults.

Those good days came to an end, however. We traded Comrade to Jake for a touring car. I didn't want to part with him. Later, Jake sold him but never could collect the money. So he took Comrade back and put him out to pasture, where he eventually died. 🐾

(CLARIS ROBINSON was born in Weatherford in 1906. It was at her family residence that Mrs. Holliman as a girl left Comrade during school hours. Mrs. Robinson has five children and seventeen grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Her interests are many: she's a writer, an artist, gardener, and a spectator at several Weatherford events, including SOSU theater productions.)

