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Foreclosure

Fran Merrill

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depression days Mama worked in the fields with Daddy and us kids — chopping cotton in summer and picking it in the fall. When we finished our own, we worked for neighbors. Night and morning, Mama helped Daddy milk cows and they sold milk. Mama also raised chickens and sold eggs, butter and cream to the produce in Foss. Those were hard times, but we made it through.

Mama found time to sew our clothing — hers and those for us children. She was an expert at crocheting and every new baby in the community had one of Mama's baby sets — a saque, cap and booties. She sold some of her work from time to time, and used that money for something special which she couldn't have afforded otherwise. We kids even yet have some of the lovely quilts which she made from scraps left from her sewing projects.

All three of us kids graduated from Foss High School, and Mama wanted us to have more education so we wouldn't have to work as hard as she had. She used money from her sales of produce to pay tuition for my sister and me at a business college, and when R. C.

was old enough she saw to it that he went to SOSU, where he graduated and received his teaching certificate, and later his master's degree.

During World War II Mama made room in her little house for my sister and me and our babies during the time our husbands were serving in Uncle Sam's armed forces. During that time, Mama had to have a very serious operation and had to stay in bed for a month. Now it was time for us to take care of her. She endured the inactivity with just a little impatience at being a burden to others.

In 1959 Daddy decided to retire from farming, so he and Mama sold the place and bought a nice modern house (the one on the farm wasn't!) with a few acres near Tishomingo, Oklahoma. Daddy was going to enjoy fishing and loafing. But it didn't work out that way! Daddy had been a farmer too long. They sold that place in a very few months and moved back to Foss, where they moved into Grandpa's old house, now empty for several years and in a sad state of disrepair. Mama helped Daddy clean up the house, re-wire it and add a bathroom and a sun porch for her flowers.

When he became discouraged, she was right in there pushing him along. Daddy farmed until he was eighty years old and finally had to retire indeed. His health worsened and Mama was there to take care of him for two years, until she died of an apparent heart attack. She had been out in her flower garden pulling out grass and weeds. She did this in spite of her own poor health, using a small stool to sit on as she worked. That day she came in from her work, prepared lunch for Daddy and sat down to eat. Suddenly she experienced a terrible pain and went to lie down. Before she reached the couch she fell in the floor, and died immediately. In spite of her courage and faith, Death was one enemy she couldn't overcome. She was laid to rest in Page Cemetery, less than a mile from the farm where she had spent fifty-four years of her life.

Yes, I remember Mama! She was quite a lady, "and her children rise up and call her blessed." ■

WENONA L. DUNN of Burns Flat, niece of late Arapaho Laureate Dick Chapman, serves another slice of history to WESTVIEW readers.

Foreclosure

By Fran Merrill

He stands there by the sagging fence
looking over barren fields
where died his dreams.
The heaviness on his heart
restricts breathing momentarily.
He stoops to pick up a handful of soil;
lets it fall to the ground.

Then with head high
he turns and walks toward
an unknown future
where he will again build dreams
from the tiny spark of hope
that will not die.

FRAN MERRILL is a prize-winning writer from Shawnee.