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Smilin' Joe / Circa 1889

Dick Chapman

Pat Kourt

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A playful poem by a playful poet

Smilin' Joe

By Dick Chapman

Whatever the reason, whatever the woe,
no difference the heartache —
Keep smilin', Joe!

Your head near bursting,
pain fills you with woe.
Just lay back your ears and —
Keep smilin', Joe!

Friends forget you,
don't see you're a bit slow.
Stand straight; throw back your shoulders —
Keep smilin', Joe!

The way may be rough,
the outlook seem dreary,
the miles getting longer,
no rest seeming near,
with the night coming on.
And weary the soul,
the distance too great for a traveler to go.
But just grit your teeth and —
Keep smilin', Joe!

Famous in their own right

Circa 1889

By Pat Kourt

Staking family claims, they
slept recklessly in covered
wagons or nestled in tents.

Building sod shanties, they furnished
humble rooms but envisioned
their future prosperity.

Searching for fuel, they chopped
locust and cottonwood but
used sun-dried cowchips instead.

Bartering with foods, they traded
eggs and cream for shoes and tools
or swapped for clothes.

Birthing their young, they reared
them carefully or buried them
silently with pain.

Treating their fevers, they rubbed
goosegrease in turpentine and
mashed onions in sugar for coughs.

Laboring in hope, they grew coarse and
sunburned but shaped the stubborn
clay into productive farms.

Hearing the bobwhite, they knew God's
presence and shared His bounty
with grateful neighbors.

Living, loving, working, dying —
they were frontier forefathers,
Western Oklahoma's best!