


Remembering My Mother on Her 100th Birthday



Robert Edgar Barker

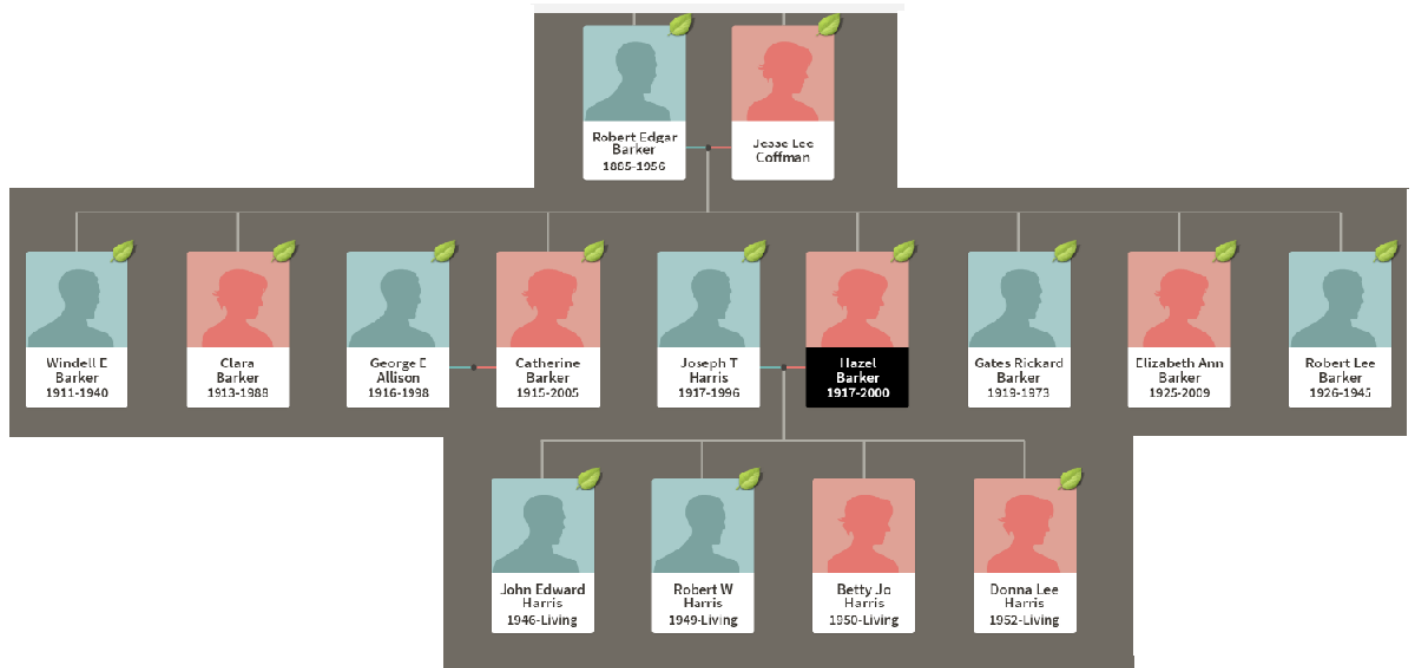
BIRTH 26 AUG 1885 • Wise County, Texas, USA
DEATH 21 JUL 1956 • Ranger, Eastland County, Texas

1885 (AGE)	Birth 26 Aug 1885 • Wise County, Texas, USA 1 Source
1888 2	Birth of Sister Leona Barker (1888–) Feb 1888 • Texas
1890 5	Birth of Sister Nettie Barker (1890–) Nov 1890 • Texas
1893 7	Birth of Sister Ora Barker (1893–) Aug 1893 • Texas
1895 9	Birth of Brother Waine Barker (1895–) Aug 1895 • Texas
1898 13	Birth of Sister Euna Barker (1898–) Oct 1898 • Texas

1911 25	Birth of Son Windell Edgar Barker (1911–1940) 1911
1913 27	Birth of Daughter Clara Barker (1913–1988) 1913
1915 30	Birth of Daughter Catherine Barker (1915–2005) 9 Nov 1915 • Ranger, Eastland County, Texas
1917 32	Birth of Daughter Hazel Barker (1917–2000) 17 Oct 1917 • El Paso, El Paso, Texas, USA
1919 34	Birth of Son Gates Rickard Barker (1919–1973) 10 Oct 1919 • Ranger, Eastland, Texas, USA
1925 39	Birth of Daughter Elizabeth Ann Barker (1925–2009) 27 Feb 1925
1926 41	Birth of Son Robert Lee Barker (1926–1945) 6 Nov 1926 • Ranger, Eastland County, Texas

Name:	Jessie Lee Barker
Birth Date:	30 Jan 1888
Death Date:	1 May 1969
Cemetery:	Evergreen Cemetery
Burial or Cremation Place:	Ranger, Eastland County, Texas, United States of America
Has Bio?:	Y
Spouse:	Robert Edgar Barker
Children:	Elizabeth Ann Ball Clara Singleton Landers Windell Edgar Barker Robert Lee Barker Gates R. Barker Hazel Harris Catherine Allison Baby Barker





Mom's family was much larger and more cohesive than my father's. She was one of seven siblings that lived past infancy. There was another baby that died just after birth and was referred to only as Baby Barker. Mom had two older sisters and one younger. And she had an older brother and two younger brothers.

The oldest brother died before World War II and the youngest brother died just before that war ended. Both were type 1 diabetics. Mom was concerned throughout her life that we would be diabetics or our children would be. That to my knowledge has not happened. The youngest brother died when he was in high school when someone dared him to eat a lot of candy.

To the best of my knowledge, neither one of my father's parents went to college. This was not unusual for the beginning of the twentieth century. Unlike both of my father's parents, both of my mother's parents graduated from college. In fact, one of my maternal grandmother's uncles was the first president of what today is known as the University of North Texas. His name was Crumley. From the UNT web site:

<http://maps.unt.edu/places/1125/view>

Named after John Jackson Crumley, president from 1893-1894. Known for putting the "North" in North Texas Normal College.

Grandma Barker, as we called her, was the epitome of a Proverbs 31 woman. She wrote articles that were published in the Baptist Standard, a periodical that was printed and distributed within the Southern Baptist churches.

When you arrived at Grandma's house the first thing she asked you was if you wanted something to eat. And she was ready to feed you on a moment's notice.

My mother had this same trait. Almost as soon as we walked through the door into her house she would inquire if we wanted to eat. And if she knew we were coming she usually had something special waiting. But if

not, she could whip up a delicious meal in short order. Her specialty was deserts. And they were superb. It's a wonder we didn't all weight 300 pounds before we moved out on our own. And apparently, she got even better after we left. Maybe she was holding out on us so we wouldn't weight 300 pounds as children.

Back to grandma Barker. She had developed a speaking disorder by the time I knew her. It took a lot of concentration on her part to get words out loud enough for you to hear. And she said one word at a time. I suspect it was some sort of vocal cord problem. So usually she did not speak much. But I do remember her asking my opinion on something when I was a teenager, a few years before her death.

She told me she was engaged to a man (not grandpa) when she was in college. There was some final exam which she was concerned about. So, her fiancé obtained a copy of the final for her to study. She was offended that he would steal so she broke off the engagement.

After telling me her story, she asked me if I thought she did the right thing. I don't remember what I told her. I probably thought it might have been a better marriage since my impression of grandpa was that he had the disposition of a hibernating bear that had been disturbed. But I was impressed by her desire to guard her reputation. My mother was cut from that same piece of cloth.

Years later someone asked mom or, maybe she was just thinking out loud, if she made the right choice. Her answer was her typical dry humor, "well if the names on the tomb stones match, I guess they did". She was so apparently detached from the happenings in life but in reality, deeply involved with all of her family.

Mom and Dad met at the Baptist church in Ranger when they were young teenagers. Back in the day, there was a night-time meeting in Baptist churches known as Training Union. It was a night time version of Sunday school. And that is where they met.

I don't know if they dated other people during their teen years. But mom did tell me that she had a crush on dad's older brother Bruce when she was in high school. Bruce was outgoing and popular in their high school. Dad on the other hand I believe was somewhat shy during his school years. (By the way, for a small town like Ranger, they have an excellent Alumni web site for Ranger High School.

<http://www.angelfire.com/tx/rangerexes/>)

Bruce graduated in 1932, Dad graduated in the 1935 class of Ranger High School and mom graduated the following year. At the time they attended, high school was only 11 grades.

I don't know much about what happened over the next few years of their lives, whether they dated or even saw one another.

In the summer of 1938 mom went to Hawaii to become a nanny for an aunt (Bates) on her mother's side. The aunt and her husband both taught school in Hawaii. Mom stayed there for two years and returned to Ranger (I assume) in the summer of 1940. Sometime in the 1990's one of the cousins she cared for came to visit her.

Mom brought back a black teak chest which I think Betty now has. As kids, we use to get into that chest and take out her grass skirt and other items she collected from Hawaii.

She once commented about her time in Hawaii that there were a lot of Chinese and Japanese there when she was there and that everyone got along fairly well except for the Japanese. A year and a half after she left Hawaii the Japanese attacked the navy base at Pearl Harbor and brought the United States into World War II.

After her return to Texas she wound up in Abilene. Dad also went there, I don't know if that was by chance or he knew she was there or she knew he was there. It was during this time that they decided to get married, but as I mentioned in my recollections of Dad, Aunt Clara interrupted the marriage plans. And the round-about result of that interruption was how dad wound up in the Army just before the war started.

FORT WORTH STAR-TEL

A Fort Worth Owned Newspaper

FORT WORTH, TEXAS *** Where the West Begins ***
TUESDAY, JUNE 17, 1918

Chiggers Won the Decision in Recent Maneuvers, 70,000 Soldiers Testify After Marching in Woods and Bayous

BY BILL SHERRILL,
Staff Correspondent.

BROWNWOOD, June 16.—The chiggers won Texas' No. 1 "war."

For verification, just ask any officer or enlisted man of the 70,000 participating recently in VIII Army Corps maneuvers in this area.

It's doubtful if there are more chiggers in Brown and Mills than any other Texas counties, but perhaps their viciousness was increased by the rumbling artillery and tramping feet of infantry ousting them from comfortable abodes in the woods and bayous of the section.

However, there's no truth to the report that one soldier, covered with chigger welts (as who wasn't?), died with the regret that he had but one life to give to the home-landers.

It's the futility that gets them.


The 142nd Infantry of the 36th Division has devised a new punishment for violators of minor regulations. It's ditch digging—with no objective.

Formerly, an offender usually mowed an officers' grass or did some other beneficial labor.

Now he digs a ditch, probably 14 by 16 feet and maybe 8 feet deep, and when he finishes—he covers it up again.

They say it works—the futility cures the offender.

Oklahoma's Fort Sill now has about 6,000 Texas boys in training or field artillery, according to Lieut. Carl Hagman, a former Fort Worth resident. Fort Sill was converted into an F. A. replacement center when the 45th Division moved to Camp Barkeley, and many Texas recruits now are being sent there for training.



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Pvt. J. T. Harris of Ranger was a striking example of the place of chiggers in recent VIII Army Corps maneuvers. Here

Photo by Frank Reeves Sr.
he's dousing his "wounds" between attacks. Harris is with Headquarters Company, 144th Infantry, 36th Division.

Sometime after she returned her mother paid for her to go to the Baylor College of Nursing in Dallas. Mom told me her mother cashed in a life insurance policy to get the money to send her to nursing school. When she was in Dallas, she lived on Gaston Ave and attended the Gaston Ave Baptist church. When I worked in Dallas in the summer of 1968 I also lived on Gaston Ave and attended the Gaston Ave Baptist church. We discovered this coincidence when I returned home for Tech in the fall of '68 and we realized we had both lived in the same part of Dallas and attended the same church, just 25 years apart.

Mom commented on a few occasions about how hard it was going to nursing school. Besides the academic part of the training, they also had to function as the janitorial staff at night – as in mopping the floor and other cleaning duties.

ONLY TEXAS CERTIFICATES ARE TO BE RECORDED

This Certificate of Identity together with your Certificate of Registration must be recorded with the County Clerk of the County in which you reside.

Certificate of Identity

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT I AM PERSONALLY ACQUAINTED WITH

Stazel Barker

GRADUATE OF Baylor University SCHOOL OF NURSING

HOLDING REGISTERED NURSE CERTIFICATE NUMBER 2-3026

Whose address is 3709 Wirth - Dallas, Texas

I believe her to be truthful, reliable and of good moral character.

SIGNED

1. NAME Sallye St. Germaine Treadwell R.N.
ADDRESS _____

2. NAME P. G. Phillips
ADDRESS Baylor Univ. Hosp.

TEXAS LAW REGULATING REGISTRATION OF NURSES—(Section 13)

Upon receiving a certificate of registration the person to whom it is issued shall within thirty days thereafter have same registered with the county clerk in the county where such person resides, in a book kept for that purpose, together with a certificate of his or her identity, as the person to whom same was issued, and his or her place of residence at the time of examination and registration.

Mom graduated as a Registered Nurse and worked in Dallas as a nurse during World War II. At this time, Dad was somewhere in the United States in the Army. I don't think he actually left the US until sometime just before the Normandy invasion in June 1944.

While mom was in nursing school she dated a man, who was a Mormon. His family owned a furniture factory in Dallas. She also had a female roommate (maybe also another student nurse).



Dad wrote mom letters from Europe and maybe Betty has some of these letters. Some of his letters are sarcastic about the Army's secrecy requirements of not including anything in a letter about where they were, where they came from, where they were going and what group they were in, or what their function was.

After the defeat of the Germans in May of 1945, he arrived back in Texas in July. The Army kept the returning European veterans on active duty in case there would be a land invasion of Japan. They were told to stay in touch and be ready to ship out if necessary. During this waiting time, on July 21st they got married, I believe in aunt Clara's house in Ranger.



NO Participation Trophies

Their generation was different from mine and different from the current generation known as Millennials. They did not get, nor expect to get, and would probably look with contempt at “participation trophies”. Today we have the concept that everyone is a winner at everything they attempt and there are no losers. And if you do lose, you need therapy and reassurance that you are worthy. Their day was focused on reality and dealing with it. And not just surviving, but coming out ahead.

Notice this team assessment report from the 1935 Ranger High School football team. In it the writer compares members of the team; stating who is the better of the two. This is something that would probably not be allowed in today’s schools where we only say positive things about people and don’t compare people. But in the real-world employers do compare people. And in 1935 they did the same.

A Word or Two About Ranger Players:

The fourth man in the backfield will be either Jimmie Westbrook, 135 pound senior, who plays a blocking position entirely, or Maurice Agnew, who is about his twin in height and weight but a much faster man. Both are good on defense being deadly tacklers but Westbrook is probably the best blocker. Agnew carries the ball seldom, though he is the fastest man on the squad. He has never seemed to hit his stride as a ball carrier for some reason.

Coach Moore will probably try out Joe Rhodes, 165 pound backfield candidate who was not eligible during the early fall and who will likely be a starting back next year. Little is known about his ability other than that he has looked exceptionally good in practice.

The Depression Generation That Fought and Won World War II

Notice in this video that the teenage boy being interviewed is not crying, not shaking and not overwhelmed having come through a life-threatening experience. In fact, he instantly reacted and attempted to save those who were hurt or killed in this disaster. When interviewed he was calm and collected and in control. This kind of common leadership got us through World War II.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N11JW6epbc4>

And their generation invented the transistor which led to the integrated circuit which led to microprocessors. They invented or created the internet, the global positioning satellite system, and the interstate highway system.

The war with Japan ended on August 15, 1945 and was formally over on September 2, 1945. I expect that dad was released from the army by the end of that year – otherwise the army would have to keep paying him. I don’t know when he finally got the job with the FAA (at that time known as the Civil Aeronautics Administration). So perhaps mom continued to work as a nurse for some time after they were married. But I’m fairly certain she was through with nursing by the time I was born in December 1946.

They set out to start a family and like Grandma Barker’s family had a new baby about every two years.

John - 12/15/46, Walter - 1/26/49, Betty - 11/3/50, Donna - 5/21/52. By the end of 1952 mom had a baby, two toddlers and a preschooler.

As to raising children, Mom and Dad had probably been indoctrinated by Dr. Spock. He advocated – at least in Mom’s opinion, that the children should not be disciplined. She told me dad had said he would never spank me, and to my recollection he never did. But mom did. And that’s because mom dealt with us day to day and knew who we were and what we needed. Which at sometimes was a good spanking.

Benjamin McLane Spock (May 2, 1903 – March 15, 1998) was an American [pediatrician](#) whose book [Baby and Child Care](#) (1946) is one of the best-sellers of all time. The book's premise to mothers is that "you know more than you think you do."^[1]

Spock was the first pediatrician to study [psychoanalysis](#) to try to understand children's needs and family dynamics. His ideas about childcare influenced several generations of parents to be more flexible and affectionate with their children, and to treat them as individuals. However, they were also widely criticized by colleagues for relying too heavily on anecdotal evidence rather than serious academic research.^[2]

Spock was an activist in the [New Left](#) and during the 1960s and early 1970s. At the time, his books were criticized for propagating permissiveness and an expectation of [instant gratification](#) which allegedly led young people to join these movements—a charge that Spock denied. Spock also won an [Olympic gold medal](#) in [rowing](#) in 1924 while attending Yale University.

The last time she spanked me was sometime in my teenage years. I had watched some sort of judo or kung-fu movie where people were thrown around. I decided I could do that and thought I would experiment on Betty. Bad idea.

Mom ran the family when it came to the children. I think that because dad grew up essentially without a mother or a father, he did not know how to deal with children. His time in the Army probably provided him an opportunity to see what structure in a family might look like. But he did not adopt the military philosophy of being the commander with the rest of us being under his command.

Before we moved to Lubbock in 1951 when I was 4, we lived in Tucumcari, New Mexico. As a child, I had a wander lust. I would leave home and roam in that small town. I don’t know if this upset dad, but it probably upset mom. Perhaps dad, without having any real sense of how to deal with small difficult children, came up with a solution. And mom would have to implement it.

The back yard had some sort of wire fence, not quite as strong as “cyclone fencing” but with larger openings in the wire fabric. It was more substantial than “chicken wire” fencing. We also had a clothes line for drying clothes in the back yard. They bought a dog harness and leash and leashed me to the clothes line.

I don’t remember this happening more than once. Today they would both be put in jail and I would be farmed out to some “progressive parents” who would probably totally corrupt me for life.

It must have seemed to mom to work well. I could run up and down the clothes line and be outside and play. But when mom went back into the house, one of my friends, who was probably older, climbed over the fence and unleashed me. Before mom could get back out, we climbed over the fence and were probably gone for the rest of the day. I’m guessing mom told dad his idea did not work and they would have to try something else.

I see the same sort of free wanderlust in Paul and Caia. I used to wonder if Paul would ever make it to adulthood. Perhaps we had the same guardian angel watching over us.

Though mom did not do nursing as a career after she had the four of us, she somehow had access to drugs – at least penicillin. She kept a bottle of penicillin in the refrigerator. Whenever we got a severe cold or sinus infection she would boil a glass syringe and needle and then hit us with a shot of penicillin. No co-pay or referral required.

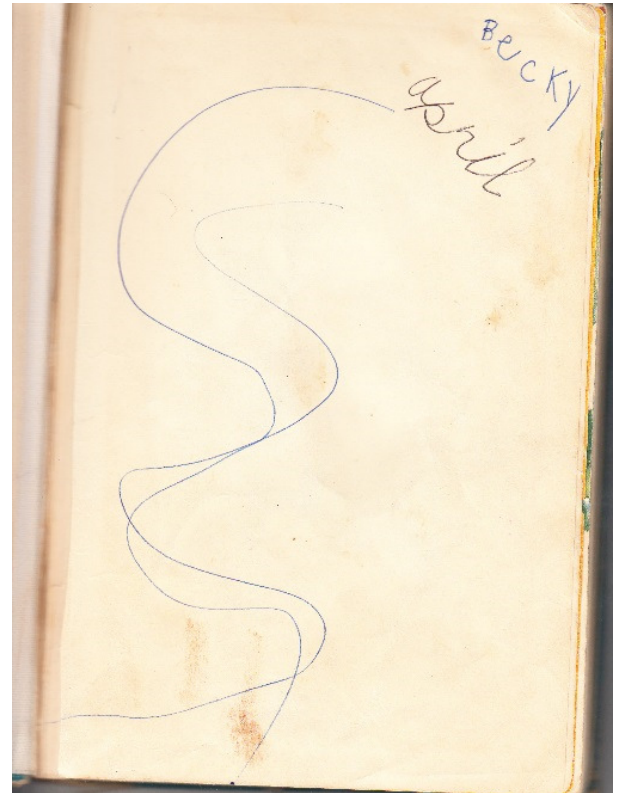
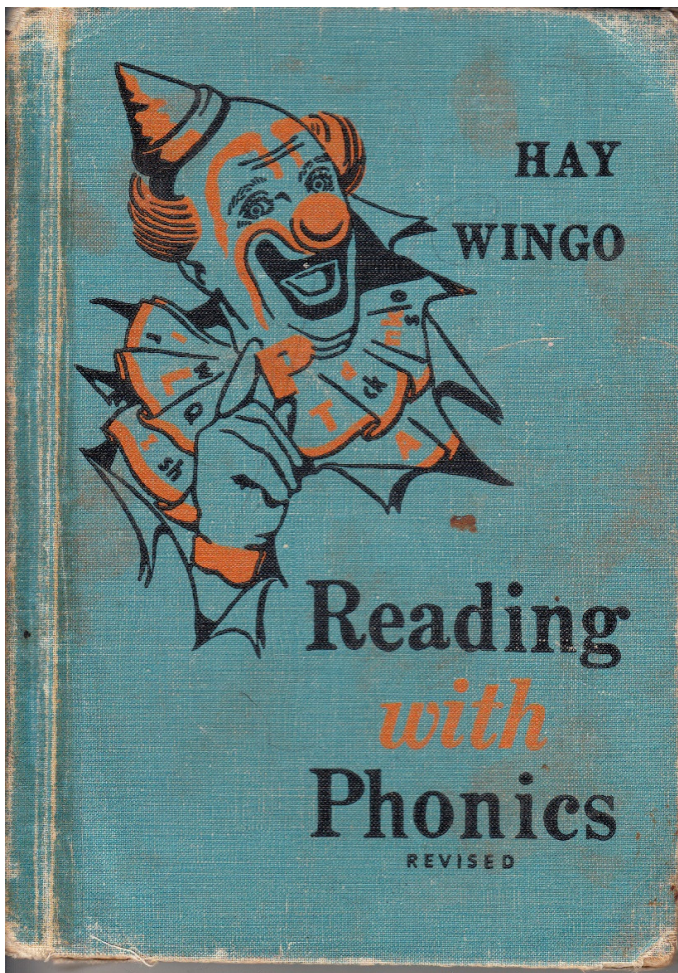
When I was in the second or perhaps the third grade, the Salk vaccine for polio was introduced to the public. It was used to prevent polio. We were given an injection at school by a nurse. At Arnett Elementary at that time the lower grades had a bathroom between rooms. Everyone in my class went thru the bathroom hallway into the next class room. I had friends in that class so I moved into that one to visit. They ran everyone in that class thru the line to get a shot, and I went with them. There was so much boo-hooing as some of the kid got their shot. But not me. It was old hat by that time. Then they lined up our class and I went thru again. No big deal. Then someone, maybe one of the teachers or one of the nurses, realized I had gotten two shots. Today it would be grounds for a law suit. But I just figured if one was good, two were better. And maybe mom thought as resilient as I was it was no big deal.

In the first week or two of school in the first grade we were shown the alphabet, probably on a wall display, and instructed to write the ABC's. I knew what the alphabet was and most of the letters, but I could not recite the alphabet. No matter, I felt I knew it well enough to not be forced to write the ABC's. We all had Big Chief tables which were made of paper about the grade of newspaper. We were supposed to write an entire page of the alphabet. It was probably the teacher's intention for me to write the entire alphabet on one or two lines and then repeat the exercise until I had filled a whole page. Well, I had a better idea. I wrote the 3 letters A, B, C each about 3 inches high on one page and I was through. This did not help by academic standing nor sit well with the teacher.

The teacher in my first-grade class was straight out of college and this was her first teaching assignment. We both failed miserably – though I was promoted to the second grade, but couldn't read a lick. At that time in the Lubbock school system and in many schools in the United States, site reading was in vogue. This meant you memorized the spelling of the word and how it was pronounced. This was in contrast to the previous technique taught in public school which was phonics. Site reading was an educational disaster.

Mom took matters into her own hands. She decided to teach me to read. She bought a phonics book and started teaching me phonics after school. This saved my academic career and changed my entire life. By the time of the third grade I was one of the best readers in the school.

When Christina decided to home school her children, we offered her that book. Below is a photo of the book and a page showing that April and Becky both used that book at some time. Until we offered the book to Christina I thought Hay Wingo was the name of the clown on the cover. When I scanned this book cover I discovered **Hay** and **Wingo** were the two authors of the book.



Mom did not have the same “I can build that” construction skills that Dad, Walter and I had. When she helped build the backyard fence, she accidentally nailed thru one finger. But she was always willing to try, and at least support dad in some the “creations” he would undertake.

Though mom was not the social talker that dad (especially in later years) was, she did come up with some memorable sayings.

In the middle of my first semester at Texas Tech, mom and I decided to paint the front living room at 705 Stanford. When I came home from school, probably around noon, we prepared the room to paint. I had been painting as a union painter during the summer for a couple of years at that time. We got all the furniture out of the room or covered and took off all the outlet covers and switch covers. In a couple of hours, the paint was dry so we began to put the covers back on. When we couldn’t find one of the covers she said, **“Oh well, whatever we can’t find we’ll just throw away.”** To which we both laughed.

Mom had angina for several years in her later life. Both her parents died from heart disease. One of the last times I saw her she had a mild attack. I think we were about to add a border of wall paper at the top of the walls to the house on 61st street. Her comment was something like, **“I haven’t got time to die today. I’ll have**

to do that some other day”. Always downplaying the seriousness of her own situation. What an extraordinary mother you were. We were all fortunate to have you love us for all those years.

< Ronnie Milsap: What a Difference You Made in My Life >