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by
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Life History

From F. C. by
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Early Day Cowboy Tales
and Experiences

UVALDE COUNTY DISTRICT #10 ✓

T. N. McKINNEY
Uvalde, Texas.

Thalias Newton McKinney who lives about a mile from town on the Crystal City road is 77 years old and has a very clear memory of things that happened in the early days. He is in very bad health and can only talk with his friends a short time without having to rest. He told the story as follows:

"I was born in Uvalde April 6th, 1881. I was named for my father who was an old stockman here since the breaking up of the Civil War. And one of the very first settlers in the County. My sister, Mrs. Gus Bowles, is the youngest girl in our family but I was the baby of nine children.

"When I was a young boy, my brother and I used to ride horse back to school from the ranch to Uvalde. My father would always tell us when we left home not to let the horses trot but to ride them in a fast gallop. And if we saw any Indians to ride full speed into town. Our ranch was six miles from Uvalde and I have stood on the porch at home lots of times and seen the Indians go across the country close to our house.

"I remember one time the Indians run my oldest brother home. It was one moon-shiney night. He had gone up the Nueces Canyon as far as Bull Head with a herd of cattle that was going to Kansas. He had started back home and when he got to Indian Creek they took after him there. He was on a fast horse, but he rode just fast enough to keep

out of their way and saved his horse. He knew if he rode too fast and his horse gave out, they would sure get him. We heard his horse's feet coming and then there was a shot. Oh, yes, there was a bunch after him. He rode up to the yard gate and jerked the latch on the gate to get his horse in the yard so the Indians couldn't get 'im/^{and} as he came through the gate, he caught the rein of the bridle on it and pulled the rein across his pistol hanging on the horn. It was an old cap and ball pistol and it exploded and shot him through the arm. When the Indians heard the shot they turned and left there. My brother's arm got well all right but it was always crooked afterward.

"One time, me and Dick Weymiller had gone over to the Nunn and Burchfield ranch on Turkey Creek to out a herd of cattle. We stayed all night there with Mr. Nunn at his ranch. And the next morning went over on the Gato Creek west of/^{the} Nunn ranch and got our cattle for the Kansas trail. We started back and was between the Nunn and Burchfield ranch, crossing Wood Slough, and a yearling broke and run off down the slough. So I lit out after him to bring him back to the herd and we were heading straight to a herd of Mr. Nunn's and Burchfield's horses. Well, I was going after that yearling in a big way and a big buck Indian was coming up on the other side to try to steal these horses. They said they saw the Indian coming and hollered at me to come back. I couldn't hear them for the noise my horse was making in the brush. When I got in about ten or fifteen feet of him, I saw him. I went back to the herd and let my yearling go. And the Indian went back to his bunch just as quick. Then we all left our herd and went home. The night we stayed at the Nunn ranch, the Indians had gone over to the Kansas herd and stole all the saddle horses there.

"My nurse was an Indian woman. A bunch of cowmen had captured her and wanted to kill'er. But my father said, No he wouldn't kill

no woman. And he took her to our home and kept her. They said she liked me because I was the baby, but she hated my mother and sisters. She would get mad at mama and the girls and throw her hair over her face and pick me up and say she was going to take me off and it would just scare my mother nearly to death. But my father always said she wouldn't do it. She did run off once or twice and came back. But the third time she left she didn't come back. They caught her and took her to the territory.

"One time, when I was a child, I was hunting the mules for two of my sisters and a couple of young men to come to a dance at Uvalde. The pony I was on belonged to one of the young men and was a race pony. Well, my father had some sheep out there and a young lamb jumped up and run right under my horse. He began to kick and pitch, and threw me off and my foot hung in the stirrup and, of course, that scared him worse and he started to run, dragging me as he went. He drug me a long ways and kicked me in the chest. All the skin was off of my face. Finally, my foot came a-loose and they picked me up unconscious, and I stayed that way for a day and night. In place of them going to the dance they went for the doctor.

"One time, two of my brothers was with a cow outfit and they were camped on Turkey Creek. There was W. M. Pulliam, Old Man Pete Bowles and his son, John Bowles, Dock Krebreum, R. C. and T. C. McKinney and a bunch of Mexican hands. They were on a roundup. Well, the Indians raided the outfit while the men were on the range and got every horse they had except the ones they were riding and the old pack horse. Dock Kreoreaum and one of my brothers had had a little quarrel that day when they were gathering cattle. That night my brother was standing around the campfire and he wouldn't go to bed.

It was awful cold and they had a big fire burning. They had all made their pallets down and had gone to bed except my brother and he was up pouting. Mr. Pulliam and John Bowles was bunking together and they had tried to get T. C. to go to bed and he wouldn't do it. The moon was shining real bright and he was still up by the fire pouting. Well, Mr. Pulliam and Mr. Bowles seen an Indian coming toward T. C. and they told him to sit down but he thought they were just teasing him and he didn't move. So the old Indian came on right up to T. C. and put his arm on his shoulder and looked around into his face. Well, when he did that, T. C. went right over that fire. When he got out of the way, both Pulliam and Bowles shot at the Indian but missed him. He run and jumped into a big lake of water in Turkey Creek. He was lost from the ones that had stole the horses and was hunting them. The next morning they trailed him for fifteen miles and they knew they didn't ^{hit} him the night before for they never found him.

"One time, John Wesley Hardin stayed camped on my father's ranch about ten days. I know I used to take him but er and eggs and he would always pay me for them. He used to pay me to put a white piece of paper or board on a tree and put a small black spot in the center of the paper. He could hit it center with a pistol 75 yards and 200 yards with a Winchester. He was the best shot I ever saw.

"I remember mighty well the first man I ever saw shot here in Uvalde. His name was Wilson and he was a bar tender. The man who shot him was Mr. Joe Griner. I don't know what it was about but Wilson meant to kill him. I was just a boy coming from school and when that six-shooter went off, I left there. I didn't stay to see what they done.

"I saw a man killed here once. There was a desperado came through

here. His name was Young and he was a very bad man. Doak Bowles had a store and a saloon down here where the Kincaid Hotel is now. And he kept a barrel of whiskey sitting on the counter and a tin cup chained to the barrel and every time anyone took a drink from this cup, they put a dime in a glass beside the barrel. Anyway, Mr. Bowles got a young man in here to keep his books for him. I can't remember the man's name but he was a nice young fellow. Young got on a tear one day and made Old Man Hugh Griner, Doctor Martin and Sub William drink a bottle of hot peppersauce. And then he went on and got Mr. Blakeney, the school teacher, and made two men, at the point of his pistol, take Blakeney and hang him up by the thumbs and then cut his toe-nails off down into the quick till they made them bleed. And when he did let him down, he gave him just a few minutes to get out of the house. I was 'kinds' glad he did that to Blakeney for he had wanted to be hanged, himself. But Young didn't stop at that. He went on across the plaza and saw this young man who was keeping books for Mr. Bowles going to dinner. Young said to the young man, 'Can you dance?' The man said he couldn't. Then Young pulled his pistol and began to shoot at his feet, and he kept the young man dancing and jumping till he was so tired he couldn't do it any more. Then Young said, 'You are no good anyway.' And he shot him right through the heart.

"Everyone in town was so stirred up about it, that the whole town went after him and they brought him back too. They put him in jail. The jail was a one-room outfit made of heavy, elm logs and the floor was also made of big logs. And in the center of the room, there was rings nailed to the logs and when they had a bad prisoner they always chained him to these logs. And that's just what they did with Young. But he didn't last long that night, a bunch came and shot him to death sitting in that jail. He never did know just who did it, no one tried to find out who it was.

But we always had our opinion as to who it was. Everyone was glad he was out of the way.

"One time I started from Marathon to Snyder Texas, with a herd of 1,000 head of big steers. I never saw a herd so bad about 'stompeding' in my life. They would run once or twice nearly every night. Two men at the time would stand guard part of the time and keep it up all night long, taking turns about. Well, I was on guard one night when they 'stompeded' and I was riding in the lead at full speed when my horse stepped in a badger hole and I got the hardest fall I ever had in my life, and the cattle split and part of them went on one side of me and part on the other. I guess that was all that saved me and the horse from being trampled to death. I finally got up and got back on my horse but the cattle were done gone. So I went on back to camp and let the cattle go till next day, but we got most of them back then.

"My father used to keep the stage stand out on our old ranch out on the Nueces. We kept all the passengers who were traveling on the stage. The line run from Uvalde to Fort Clark west, and east to Sabin. Old Man L. M. Peters kept the stage stand at Sabin.

"I know a couple of times during the time my father kept the stage stand, the coach was held up between Uvalde and Turkey Creek. It was robbed by masked bandits and they were never caught, but they robbed both the mail and the passengers.

"Mrs. McKinney and me have moved away from Uvalde a time or two for a short time but we always come back. We moved away a few months ago. We lived in Beeville and Corpus Christi, both, a little while. But we soon got homesick and moved back and if our health permits, I think we will stay this time."

Mrs. McKinney who was Miss Mary Jane Walker, was born in Gonzales County September 2, 1884, and came to Uvalde with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Walker, when she was seven years old.

"I hardly remember my father but I believe he was a farmer. He died soon after the breaking up of the Civil War. And my mother married a man by the name of Goodwin a few years later.

"My first schooling and only schooling was right here in Uvalde. It was a picket school-house with board windows fastened on to the wall with hinges, home-made shingles and a dirt floor. We only had about three months school. Blakey was my first teacher, and I remember what a big tease he was. He would take his knife and spit on it and put it on our neck and tell us we were bleeding to death and it would almost scare me to death. Mrs. Benson, Miss Kate Benson's mother, taught me after that and I sure did like her. Her daughter, Kate, taught all of our children.

"My stepfather had a little grocery store right down on Main Street, across from where Ray Motor Company is now. He was also a rock mason and he helped build the old jail here.

"When I was a child, I remember the grown ladies used to wear hoop skirts. They would have three hoops at the bottom and two in the middle and two at the waist. The ones at the waist were made to fit. These hoops were worn under the skirt and the skirt was made real full, with about four widths of the goods in one skirt. They wore a real tight-fitting basque waist. You think they were funny-looking, but they were sure pretty then. And all the women had beautiful, long hair.

"The little girls all wore long panties with embroidery on the bottoms and about an inch of this trimming was allowed to show. I remember one time a little girl came to visit us and her panties were too long and that seemed a disgrace to us so me and another little girl got her out

and panned them up with mesquite thorns.

"I remember when they used to go out and capture wild Indians and take them to ^{the} territory. The government wagons used to stop and camp under that big live-oak tree where Beth Watkins lives now. As we children come from school, we would see them. One of the captains picked me up one day and lifted me up so I could see inside the wagon. The old Indians began to pull their hair down over their faces and grunt and twist. I began to twist too, to get out of that captain's arms and get away from there.

"When the Indians came into the country to make a raid, the ranchmen would always send word into town to give us warning. School turned out and everything else stopped, for everyone was scared to death. The men went out to hunt them.

"I was sixteen years old when I married Mr. McKinney, and I think he was twenty in the year of '80. We were married in Uvalde at the home of Mr. McKinney's parents. We had a big dance and supper and danced all night, that is, all except Mr. McKinney and me and they made us go to bed at twelve o'clock.

"My wedding dress was made of white silk and I had a long, white, silk veil. My shoes were white kid and the little, white flowers on my veil were white kid. My dress was made a princess style and had little white ruffles on the skirt. I was so young they said I looked like a dressed-up doll. I kept that dress and veil till it fell to pieces and in 1913 it was in a flood/^{and} washed away.

"I remember the first house we lived in after we were married. It was on the old McKinney ranch on the Nueces. It was a big, four-room, log house with a porch across the front. It was an ideal ranch. The McKinney family lived there for many years. Our two first children

were born there.

We have lived in and around Uvalde ever since. We went to school here together when we were children. We have six children living. They are: Albert of Uvalde, Bertha of Corpus Christi, Bertrude of Joaquin, Newton of Beeville, Myrtle of Sabinal and Jimmie of west Texas.