

When I worked at Starr Variety Store  
On the east side of the square in Comanche  
By Missy Jones

This was probably in the early 1950's. Mr. J. I. Starr owned tins store. It was just north of where John Gleaton's office is now. This was a regular variety store. The building was long and faced west. The store had counters and shelves down each side of the building and down the center of the store were two long counters, with space to walk between them. There were two big glass windows on the front of the store, and on each side of the front door. There was space to display items in the windows, particularly sale items that would be advertised in the Comanche Chief for that week. To the left of the store, right when you walked in, was a large candy counter. This was a glass case, with sections divided for different kinds of candy. We could scoop whatever kind of candy you wanted, and put it in a little sack for you. I remember that candy counter very well, because sometimes when Mr. Starr was gone to lunch, one of the ladies and I would steal a piece of candy, called a peanut log (is there anyone out there that remembers that candy?) and drop the wrapper through a hole about one inch in diameter that was in the wooden floor behind the candy case. I have often thought about the fact that if they ever took up that flooring, there would be a little pile of these candy wrappers. What a hoot

The floors were wooden, and would be swept everyday with something called "Floor Sweep". As best as I can remember, this was probably sawdust with an oil product added to it. The floor sweep product was spread on the floor, and with a long broom, you pushed the broom and the floor sweep and picked up the trash, and the "oil" in the product helped keep the floor in good shape. Also, Mr. Starr took a broom and swept the sidewalk in front of the store every morning. It makes me so mad to go to a store and see trash on the sidewalk in front of the store. Those people hadn't been taught the way we were.

I would like to tell about some of the ladies that I worked with. Of course, when you do that, it is always a chance that you will leave out someone, and for that, I will apologize right now. First of all, one of my favorite ladies that worked there was Margaret Mabra. Her husband was named Ed, and they lived between Comanche and Blanket on the right side of the highway. Margaret was a McDonald before they were married, and was the sweetest lady in the world. She was so pretty, with beautiful complexion and a wonderful personality. The McDonald family was originally from Comanche. Margaret had a daughter named Gladys, who now lives in Comanche and whose late husband was A. C. Crist. I learned so much about working out in the public from each of the ladies that I worked with, and also from Mr. Starr.

Another lady that I worked with was Mrs. Ella Roberson. She has a daughter-in-law who lives here in Comanche named Mrs. (Fred) Edna Roberson. And Edna knows all about me and how much I loved Ella. Ella was an older lady, and so pretty. I remember that she could sing so pretty, and when there was no one in the store but the two of us, sometimes she would sing a song. Her story is told in the Comanche County History Book. Her story

is well worth the reading, and tells us a lot about her and the strong person that she was. I loved her so much.

Another lady that I worked with was married to my cousin, Luther Steward. Her name was Alta and was a Williams before she married Luther. Her family had strong ties to the Indian Creek area, and to the church there. Alta was pretty, and so sweet. She also worked at Baxter's Place, on the very corner to the south of the east side of the square. Lots of good memories there.

Another lady that I remember was Hettie Waldrop. She was married to Fane Waldrop. Hettie was a lady with a great personality, and was wonderful to work with.

Mr. Starr was a tall, distinguished man. I do know that he had been president of the Comanche Chamber of Commerce, and was a good business man. He and his wife were the parents of an invalid daughter named Imogene. Sometimes, after lunch Mr. Starr would stay at home for most of the afternoon and his wife, and I cannot remember her given name, would come down to the store. She was pretty and so much fun. She was always telling funny stories. One time, I remember she told us about when she and Mr. Starr were courting. They lived somewhere in the Metroplex, and she told about her best girl friend and her beau, and she and Mr. Starr going to the State Fair in Dallas. She laughed and laughed, and said she and her friend dressed up in their very best clothes, and wore high heeled satin shoes. She laughed and told us, "Now you understand that satin does not stretch any at all, and here we were, walking all day in those high heeled satin shoes. We nearly died." She told us about Mr. Starr being such a good looking young man. She said, "You may not believe it, but he was very good looking. He dressed well, and always smoked cigars," She told about them riding street cars in Dallas, and we could see them, dressed up and going out on the town.

This is one more thing that I learned in my education of working. I received a large education in working with "the Public". I didn't make very much money, but no working girl or woman working in Comanche was making much money. I have spent most of my life working in the public, and I am still doing that. All of my working experience has taught me a lot. I overcame a lot of my shyness during my working at the Starr store, and I promise you this, I can talk for 30 minutes to people that I have never seen before. I learned that customers need to be welcomed to a store, called by their name (if you know it), and helped in any way that you can. Also, sometimes, people just want to look around, and do not want a clerk following them around. I notice that people working in the business world today, could use some of my small-town education.

Missy Cox Jones July, 2012