

## **Memories of Early School Days**

by Missy Cox Jones

I was born in 1930 and started to school in 1936 at Gustine School, in Comanche County, Texas. My sister, Maxine, was born in 1935, and as we were growing up we caught the school bus and rode maybe 5 or 6 miles to the school in Gustine.

I want to share with you some of the memories of going to school. First of all, we lived on a farm, no electricity, and our mother washed clothes in a big black wash pot in the back yard. We wore a starched and ironed fresh dress to school every day. Also, every night before we went to bed, we polished our shoes. Yes, these were leather shoes, there was no Nike or such shoes then, and no money to have bought them if there was such a thing. We got a new pair of shoes every fall for school term, and had plenty of clean socks to wear every day.

There was no school lunchroom, and we took our lunches to school with us. I remember when my mother bought the first roll of waxed paper that I ever saw. This waxed paper was used to wrap up our sandwiches or our lunch every day. This paper was a wonderful invention. Lots of days, we took a biscuit, split it in half, put a sausage in the middle and that was a part of our lunch. Sometimes, Daddy would buy potted meat and sliced light bread. Wow, that was so good.

Our Mother got up early every morning, and in the winter the house was cold. Daddy built a fire in the heater in the living room, and the kitchen stove. My mother cooked us a good breakfast every morning. We had home raised bacon, plenty of fresh eggs, and in the winter, each morning she cooked us oatmeal or rice. We ate the oatmeal and rice with butter, sugar and cream. This gave us a hot breakfast and a little good food to walk and catch the bus in the cold weather.

My mother made wonderful biscuits every morning. Lots of days, she would make extra biscuit dough, and would roll out the dough and make us fried pies to take to school. These were so good, they were sugar pies, and had good butter, sugar and a little vanilla in them. She cut the dough out in a circle, had the sugar, butter and vanilla mixed up, put about a tablespoon of that on the round dough, folded it over and with a fork, used the tines of the fork to crimp and seal the dough in a half circle. She fried these pies in bacon grease from the breakfast. They were so good, and the sugar had candied in the pies.

When we rode the bus to school, and the winter weather was so cold, we had to walk to the north to catch the bus. Sometimes, Daddy would let us take some matches and build a fire while we waited for the school bus to arrive. One time, we got the pasture on fire and Daddy had to come down and put out the fire.

We had to wear dresses to school during the coldest weather; the school board wouldn't let girls wear pants. Maxine and I have laughed so many times about walking to the bus hue. Here it was, freezing cold, and we would jump on frozen puddles of water and break up the ice. We didn't have a thermometer, and would have probably frozen to death if we had known how cold it was. Lots of days, coming home from school in the cold weather, our Mother would have a good fire in the kitchen stove and she had baked sweet potatoes for us. We came in by the fire, and here were those good sweet potatoes, hot, with good butter and sugar for us to eat.

Several years ago, I volunteered to help elementary students with their reading early in the morning at the school here in Comanche. This was probably the saddest thing I have ever done. Probably 75 % of the students that I worked with had not washed their faces and hands before they came to school, they had not combed their hair, their clothes were not clean, and most of them were half asleep, as though they had watched television until midnight the night before. I contrasted this with my Daddy and Mother, and how hard they worked to give us a good start at school.