

SHARECROPPER'S SON
THE STORY OF A BOY FROM OKLAHOMA BORN DURING THE
GREAT DEPRESSION

By Tom R. Cook

Copyright © 2003 by Tom R. Cook
First Edition

All rights reserved. No part of this book shall be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means
without written permission from the author.

International Standard Book Number: 1-59196-287-0

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2003094378

Published 2003 by Tom R. Cook
338 Private Road 2512
Decatur, Texas 76234

Printed by InstantPublisher
P. O. Box 985
Collierville, TN 38027
www.InstantPublisher.com

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	5
-------------------	---

PART I—EARLY YEARS—1935-1957₇

CHAPTER 1-Before School—1935-1941	9
CHAPTER 2-School in Mangum—1941-1942	15
CHAPTER 3-City View School—1942-1943	17
CHAPTER 4-Move to Granite—1943-1945	21
CHAPTER 5-Hay Springs—1945-1946.....	29
CHAPTER 6-Paxton—1946.....	33
CHAPTER 7-Cascade—1946.....	37
CHAPTER 8-Alpine—1946-1949.....	39
CHAPTER 9-Creswell—1949-1951	47
CHAPTER 10-Moses Lake—1951--1953	53
CHAPTER 11-College—1953-1957	59

PART II—U. S. Air Force—1957-1977₆₅

CHAPTER 12-Lackland AFB—1957	67
CHAPTER 13-Scott AFB—1957--1958	68
CHAPTER 14-Osan AFB—1958-1959.....	71
CHAPTER 15-Warren AFB—1959-1962.....	77
CHAPTER 16-Pullman—1962-1964	81
CHAPTER 17-Kunia Tunnel—1964-1967.....	85
CHAPTER 18-MacDill AFB—1967-1969.....	91
CHAPTER 19-Wright-Patterson AFB—1969-1971	97
CHAPTER 20-Elmendorf AFB—1971-1975.....	99
CHAPTER 21-Richards-Gebaur AFB—1975-1977.....	105

PART III—The Farm—1978-2002.....₁₀₉

CHAPTER 22-B. D. (Before the Dairy)—1978-1987.....	111
CHAPTER 23-A. D. (After the Dairy)—1987-2002.....	117
CHAPTER 24-Family Stories.....	125
The Cat in the Barn.....	125
Uncle Henry's New Car.....	125
The Race Track.....	125
Crossing the Mississippi.....	126

Crossing the Canadian.....	126
Playing Bear.....	126
Prize Bull	126
Radiator Problems.....	127
Uncle Ray.....	127
Guess My Name.....	127
Can't Say Rabbit.....	127
Babies Come From Hospitals.....	128
Cat Boo.....	128
Dead Man in the Yard.....	128
Come on in Grandma.....	129
The Four Wheeler.....	129
Mama, Come Wipe Me.....	129
Night School.....	129
Pinch through the Curtain.....	129
911 Call.....	130
The Gas Mask.....	130
The Haircut.....	130

APPENDIX I—Pictures 131

APPENDIX II..... 147

Tom's Family Tree	147
Nell's Family Tree.....	148

APPENDIX III..... 149

Tom's Close Relatives	149
Nell's Close Relatives.....	151

Sharecropper's Son

By Tom R. Cook

INTRODUCTION

I decided to write down some of the things I remember from years gone by. I'm doing this for my kids and grandkids, not because they want it now, but because some day they might. There are a lot of things I would like to know about the experiences of my parents and grandparents but at this time my mother's memory is failing her, and my father and grandparents are no longer in this world. My Grandpa Sullivan came to Oklahoma in a covered wagon before it was a state. My Grandpa Cook's ancestors were citizens of the Republic of Texas. I have heard one talking about crossing the flooded Canadian river in the wagon and the other talking about shooting prairie chickens through the eye on the Texas plains. I have a thousand questions that I would like to ask them now. When I could have asked them, I was too busy or just not that interested. Now it is too late. Mom did write about her life after she was married but she didn't cover her early years. So if I write my memories down, maybe it will answer some questions someone might have after I am gone. I have included the location of some of my old haunts so that my kids or grandkids can drive by them if they are ever in the neighborhood. I have first hand knowledge of most of the things I want to talk about, but I will tell some second hand stories too.

PART I
EARLY YEARS

CHAPTER 1

Before School

1935-1941

Mom and Dad were married on August 19th, 1933, right in the middle of the great depression. I was born September 23rd 1935, about three miles east of Mangum, Oklahoma. Our house sat on the south side of U.S. Highway 283. Dad was sharecropper on what then was known as the Dearman place. I don't remember this but from hearing Mom and Dad talk, I know they farmed the place with a team of horses and would take a wagon to town for supplies. At some point in time they bought a car. Due to dust storms and depression times, we moved from there to Bakersfield, California. (See figure 1.) Dad never found steady work in California and I think they got homesick for family. Just before my brother Darwin was born in 1937, we moved back to Oklahoma. I have no memory of California, and only vague fragments for the next few years. For a while we lived in what they called the "weaning pen", a small house on Grandpa Sullivan's place that most of Mom's brothers and sisters lived in for short periods, usually soon after they got married. I also have some vague memories of living in a house between the Dearman place and Grandpa Sullivan's, but I don't know exactly where it was located. We lived with Grandma and Grandpa Sullivan for a while and at times Mom and Dad would take care of his farm while he came down to work on the place in Texas that I live on now. I know Dad did some farming, he worked in the gin in season and then he got a "good" job working in the creamery in Mangum. Mom and Dad bought a house on the north side of Mangum and we were living there when I started to school. In those years before I started school, there are several memories burned in my mind; some of them may be scorched around the edges by passing years but I'm going to relate them to the best of my ability.

Not every one gets credit for coining new words. I shouldn't either but I'm going to take it anyway. When I was little, my folks referred to the part of the anatomy that brought up the rear as the caboose. I had trouble pronouncing the word and called it a "boofy". I guess it hasn't caught on much in the English speaking world but it is pretty wide spread in the Cook family. For years my folks used to laugh at me when they remembered the time we were fishing and put a fish in a bucket of water. I had my head over the bucket, watching the fish when he splashed water on me. I picked the fish up by the tail and said, "Fishy, I'm going to spank your boofy." Then I looked him over and after a pause said "Fishy, where is your boofy?"

One of my first memories was living in Grandpa's "weaning pen". I was probably two years old, going on three. I remember looking out the east door one

morning. The door was open, the sun was shining bright, it was warm, and there was no screen blocking the exit. Outside the door, the most beautiful white sand you have ever seen had drifted up. It looked good enough to eat. That is just what I decided I wanted to do. The only problem was that the step down to the sand was about 18 inches high. There was something about my Grandpa and concrete. On that farm today, about the only part of the buildings left are steps, foundations, and concrete water troughs. This step I had to negotiate was a big concrete block and my guess is that over the years, the rain had washed the dirt away, leaving the big step. I thought about jumping but after seeing just how far down it was to the ground, I decided a better attack would be to get on my stomach and go down feet first. That worked fine until I got down to my elbows and my feet still hadn't hit the ground. I couldn't get back up but was afraid to turn loose and drop. After staying in that position for what seemed to be an eternity, fatigue set in and decided my fate for me. I dropped about a half inch with no bodily damage and there in front of me was this big pile of beautiful white sand.

It even looked better up close than it did from the doorway. I knew it was going to taste as good as it looked. I scooped up a handful and put it in my mouth. Need I say more? It was more disappointment than a young boy should have to face. Now, not only did I have my mouth full of this gritty sand that I couldn't spit out but I couldn't get back in the house either. No matter how hard I tried, the step was too big of an obstacle to negotiate. I sat down and cried. Mom came and got me. I don't remember what happened after that but I know I never had an urge to eat sand again.

My Uncle Ray, Mom's brother, had a son, Donny, just a little more than a year older than me. Donny and I were very close. Besides my brother Darwin, he is the only one I ever remember playing with before I started to school. (See figure 2.) Two months before I turned four, he had his tonsils out and died from the operation. At that time, Donny was living in the house I was born in. I remember my Dad and some neighbors helped dig the grave. Before the funeral, he was laying in a baby bed in the southeast corner of the house. The house was full of mourners. I made my way through the crowd and was watching Donny with my face between the bars of the bed. For some reason I felt I had to make sure he wasn't breathing. I watched for some time and every once in a while I thought I might have detected motion. After a while longer I became convinced that he had no breath left in him.

Donny died in July 1939. I know it couldn't have been too long after that when it happened: I heard a voice. I know it wasn't long afterwards because I was standing in Mom's garden, surrounded by big watermelons, so it was before winter. As I was standing there, I heard a voice say "Tommie" with an inflection like it wanted me to answer. I looked around and no one was in sight. I went in the house and asked Mom who called me. She said no one did because she and I were the only ones at home. This was a house out in the country but I don't remember where. She said I was just imagining things but I knew better and decided it was Donny talking to me from heaven. This is the only time I ever heard voices.

I'm sure that Donny's death had a big affect on my psyche. For one thing, it made me think of God and heaven and death. I knew Donny was in heaven because Mom told me so. She was sure of it, so I was too. One day, again not too long after Donny

died, I found a dead bird in the yard. When I ask Mom if the bird would go to heaven she didn't seem to be so sure. That left me confused and I didn't know what to think. At least I decided the bird needed a decent burial. I went outside, found some soft sand, scooped out a grave and buried the bird. I was still thinking about the bird a few days later when it occurred to me that I could run an experiment and settle the question of animals in heaven once and for all. I went outside, dug up the grave and found no bird. That convinced me that animals *do* go to heaven.

Grandpa had hired a black man named Andy that did a lot of tractor work for him. When Darwin and I would hear him coming in from the field at the end of the day we would run to meet him so we could ride the rest of the way to the house on the tractor. (See figure 3.) When kids come to my farm today I like to give them tractor rides; I know how much I enjoyed the rides when I was small.

I built my first house when I was about four. I didn't really build it; it was more of a remodel job. The house I started out with was a shell my Grandpa Sullivan made to put on the back of his pickup. I closed the back of the old shell with a big block of wood that I rolled down the hill from a place where Grandpa cut his firewood. I put a wheel off some old car on the wood block for a window and then rolled in a wood barrel to fill the rest of the hole in the back of the shell; this was my door. I found parts of old wooden cattle panels to patch up the space around the bottom edge. Then came the finishing touch. REA had just extended electric power lines to Grandpa's farm and he had the house wired for lights. For some reason, instead of having the house wired, I thought they had it "weird", and I have always been teased about that. Anyway, I "weird" the house I built with bailing wire. I think mom was as proud of the house as I was; she got her camera out and took a picture of it with me sitting on the "door". If you look real close, you can see the electric wire coming in the house on the right side of the picture. I have that picture that mom took hanging on the wall today. (See figure 4.) Since then, Uncle John and I built two houses in Alaska, Jerry Myers (my neighbor) and I built a house in Decatur and I built the house we are living in now. In addition, I built another small house on the place in Decatur for a hired man when I was milking.

The only time I remember Grandpa using the shell on the back of his pickup was when we made a trip from Oklahoma to the Texas place to pick up pecans. (Later Mom and Dad bought the Texas place from Grandma after Grandpa died and later still, I bought half the place from them and Darwin bought the other half.) I'm not sure who all went on that trip, but I do remember Grandpa, my folks, Uncle Ray, and some teenage boys from the farm next to Grandpa's. On the ride down, I was in the back of the pickup with several others and we could smell exhaust fumes all the way.

There are two other things I remember about that trip. The first is that we stayed at Aunt Joye's (which was located near the bottom of the hill that you go up just before getting to where my house is now). It rained hard the first night we were there and the roof leaked. It started leaking right over my bed and then there were pots and pans all over the floor to catch the drips. The only thing left of that house now is an abandoned four inch well that is located about ten inches on Darwin's side of the fence and several

feet up the hill from the gate. Once in a while I find scrap metal parts where Uncle Mac had his blacksmith shop in that area.

The other thing I remember about the trip was that when we were picking up pecans, nuts kept falling out of the tree and hitting me...hard. I finally figured out that the boys that came down with us had climbed up the trees and were supposed to be shaking the nuts loose; but when I wasn't looking they were throwing nuts at me. We were picking up nuts from a tree that was near the draw that you face when you drive onto the place now. When I built the house that we are presently living in, a pecan tree from that same area had blown down; using a chain saw, I made it into a curved mantle for our fireplace. It might have been the same tree I picked up nuts under when I was four years old. If it wasn't the same tree, it was from the same neighborhood.

I remember going out to the cow lot where Dad had a block of salt for the cows to lick. I figured it couldn't be any worse than sand so I tasted it; it was good. Every time I was out that way I would take a few licks. Then one day Mom saw what I was doing and scolded me; she said, "If you don't stop licking that salt you are going to grow horns like a cow." That sounded pretty serious to me. I knew this wasn't the first time I had eaten the salt and was hoping it wasn't too late to stop. I felt the top of my head to see if there were any horn buds starting to pop up. Sure enough my head was not perfectly smooth; there were some lumpy spots. It was pretty scary so I gave up cow salt and waited to see what developed. Fortunately the horn buds stopped growing.

Grandpa Sullivan had an old ram sheep that was as mean as he could be. If you got in his pasture and didn't watch him, he would sneak up from behind and knock you down every time. One day Uncle Earl put him in a pen by the milk barn and got him all stirred up. Then Uncle Earl would stand against the concrete wall of the barn; when the ram would charge, Uncle Earl would wait until the last second, jump straight up and spread his legs. The ram would hit the wall at full speed, his rear end would bounce off the ground, he would shake his head, back up and do it again. I guess he thought he was really getting his licks in. It's a good thing that Uncle Earl didn't lose his sense of timing.

It was about this time when Grandpa Cook's house burned down. They said one of the kids left the fire on under a skillet of grease and left the house. It burned completely and they didn't save anything. A little later he bought a house in Mangum and moved it to the farm. I remember watching them move the house the last quarter of a mile or so. They had the house on rollers but had to go over a strip of sandy soil. It kept getting stuck in the sand so they got all the tractors they could find in the neighborhood and hooked them together like a train. There were probably eight tractors there. I remember wheels spinning, sand flying and the house just barely creeping along. They finally got it where they wanted it. Grandpa Cook moved to California a few years later.

I don't remember when we moved to north Mangum but I do remember several things while living there. I don't know the street name or number but after looking at a computer map, I would guess it would be about the 200 block of Friendship Street. I think Mom and Dad bought this house. It was a small house. Darwin and I slept together

in a bed in the living room. I can't remember if we had indoor plumbing or not. I do remember Dad building a kitchen cabinet with a sink in it but I don't know if it had running water; if it had a drain, I imagine it was just to the outside. There was a small shed in the back and we kept a cow there for milk. I can't remember if we had any chickens or not. Dad worked in the creamery while we lived here.

There were at least two things that mystified me about life while we lived there. One was airplanes; I couldn't understand why they looked small in the sky but as they approached the ground they got bigger. One day we were in the car, near the airport and I made a special effort to watch a small airplane, high in the sky, come down and land. The closer he got to the ground, the bigger he got until he finally came to a stop and these normal sized people got out. The only explanation I could think of was that everything shrunk as it left the earth and then returned to normal size as it returned.

The other mystery was Santa Claus. One day, shortly before Christmas, Mom was in her bedroom making up the bed. I was in there with her and happened to see a little metal tractor, a disk and a harrow in one of her open drawers. I got them out and started to play with them when Mom told me I had to put them back and leave them alone because Santa had left them there. She said if I didn't, he would take them back and I would never see them again. So I put them back, but I couldn't figure out why he brought them in the first place. Why didn't he just wait until Christmas to bring them? On Christmas morning, the tractor and harrow were there but the disk was missing. I didn't say anything about it to Mom at the time because I figured I had been just a little bit naughty. Years later, when I better understood the ways of Santa, I asked Mom what happened to the disk. She couldn't remember anything about it. I guess there really is a Santa.

CHAPTER 2

School in Mangum

1941-1942

We lived in north Mangum when I started school. They didn't have kindergarten in Mangum then so I started first grade in the fall of 1941. Shortly after starting, I came home with measles and whooping cough at the same time. It seemed like I was sick for a long time. While I was sick in bed one evening, Mom and Dad were sitting at the table playing dominos. I told them there was a big spider going across the floor. They told me not to worry, he would go away. They were absorbed in their game but after I finally got their attention they saw it was a tarantula. That was enough to interrupt their game, and dad dispatched the spider. I don't remember if Mom gave me castor oil when I had the measles but she used it to cure every other ailment I had. It tasted so bad just the thought of taking it would cure most things. She would mix it with tomato juice to help make the medicine go down. I was in high school before I could drink straight tomato juice and not taste castor oil.

Dad had a lot of trouble with his teeth. While we lived here, he finally ended up having them all pulled and he bought false teeth.

It was in north Mangum that Mom and Dad gave Darwin and me some fancy tricycles. We had them for quite a while and then one day I left mine behind the parked car. Dad backed over it and I never had my own wheels again until I was a junior in high school when mom's cousin gave me a used bicycle.

During the fall, Mom would go to the country and pick cotton. (Actually, she would pull bolls. When you pick cotton you leave the burs on the plant; when you pull bolls, you harvest burs and all). When she did this on the weekends I would go with her, but during the week I would go home with the Tinsleys after school. The Tinsleys were in-laws to my Uncle Ray. It was on one of these weekends when news came over the radio that would change the life of just about everyone in the United States. When the cotton sacks were full, everyone would listen to the car radio as the cotton was weighed. That is where I was when I heard about the Japanese bombing Pearl Harbor.

We had air raid drills in Mangum. Mom made black-out curtains so the enemy bombers couldn't see our lights. At that time it never occurred to me that Mangum was not the number one target in the country. In the months that followed, we had scrap drives. People turned in old tires, inner tubes, shoe soles and anything with rubber in it. Tin foil was a premium product. Grandma Sullivan always took the string from the feed sacks and made string balls. She always had two or three balls around, each of them several inches in diameter. I think the string was for her use and not the war effort. Gasoline, tires and sugar were rationed. Everyone, including the kids had ration books which had stamps in them that allowed you to buy a limited amount of things over a certain period of time. Grandpa Sullivan always kept bees to make up for the shortage of

sugar. On Grandpa Cook's side of the family, five of eleven uncles were drafted or volunteered for service. On Grandpa Sullivan's side there were none of seven; he was on the draft board but I don't know if that was a coincidence or not.

Dad must have been doing pretty well at the creamery. We bought a bigger house on North Byers Street in Mangum, closer to the middle of town. It had indoor plumbing and two bedrooms, Darwin and me in one and Mom and Dad in the other. The walk to school was a lot shorter. There was a laundry not too far from our new house, and it was owned by a blind man. I can remember helping mom carry our dirty clothes to the laundry. She would wash them in one of maybe 15 or 20 wringer type machines. We would then take them home and she would hang them out to dry because there were no dryers at the laundry. Before we started using the laundry, Mom washed the clothes using a rub board in a big tub.

Mom bought a Singer sewing machine while we lived here; she paid \$5 for it. I don't know why I remember that but I do. She had always made clothes for Darwin and me with needle and thread so this was really a time saver for her. She used it for years. It had two drawers on each side and was powered by a foot treadle. When Nell and I moved to Texas, she still had it but the machine and the stand were separated and stored in the wood shed. I made a nice ash table top for the stand and now one of my brothers or sisters use it for a table.

Our neighbor lady gave me the shock of my life one day. She was sitting in her back yard smoking. Up to that time I didn't know that a woman would even consider smoking. I didn't like her to begin with because she had a dog that barked at night and kept me awake. After I saw her smoking, I *knew* she was evil.

I think I finished the first grade while we lived in this house and I know I started second grade while we lived there. That fall, like the year before, Mom and Darwin would go pick cotton while I was in school. One day after they got home Darwin showed me a hand full of coins he had earned in the cotton field. I'm sure it was less than twenty-five cents but there were several coins and it looked like a fortune to me. My eyes must have turned green because I felt jealousy come over my whole body. I wanted to pick cotton. Unfortunately, I got my wish before the year was over.

CHAPTER 3

City View School

1942-1943

Dad started having health problems. He was working long hours, he had a bout of pneumonia and he always had a cold. The doctor said he needed to get out of the steamy environment of the creamery. So we moved in with Grandpa Sullivan and Dad went to work for him. I transferred to City View School. This was a school that Grandpa Sullivan helped establish when he first moved to Oklahoma; it was the same school Mom and Dad went to when they were kids. Unlike the school in Mangum, this was a country school. The school year started in the middle of summer and then when the cotton was ready to harvest, they would take a break until the cotton was out of the field. They were on fall break when we moved so I got to pick cotton. Kids were paid the same rate per pound as adults. It didn't take long to figure out this was hard work. Some of Dad's brothers, Grandpa Cook and a neighbor family named Larson were all working in Grandpa Sullivan's cotton field. Two of Dad's brothers, Uncle Hap and Uncle Ernest were known as some of the best boll pullers in the county. They would get over a 1000 pounds a day on a regular basis. The Larsons had a girl my age and her grandpa in the field. There was a lot of competition between the grandpas to see which one of us would pick the most cotton. Her grandpa would put some cotton in her sack and my grandpa would put some in mine. I was so tired I really didn't care and, as far as I know, she didn't either. Every time we got paid, Grandma Sullivan would encourage me to save my money. She said if I would buy a \$25 war bond, I could use it to buy a good suit when I got out of high school. Of course I didn't have the \$18.75 it took to buy a bond that would be worth \$25 when it matured in ten years. But they had what I think they called "savings books". You could buy stamps for 25 cents and paste them in the book. When the book was full, it had \$18.75 worth of stamps in it. I did save enough for the bond and the picture in my college year book is taken in that suit. I can't remember exactly what I paid, but it was right at \$25.

I remember a lot of fun while living at Grandpa's house. He gave Darwin and me each a goat. We played with them all the time; one day we decided to hitch them to a little red wagon. We made a baling wire harness but couldn't control the goats. It was full speed ahead; the faster they went, the more noise the wagon made; the more noise the wagon made, the faster they went. It didn't take long to get tired of the game because the ride was so rough and usually ended in a crash.

Grandma told us about a snake she found in the chicken house. She had gone out to gather the eggs and there was a snake in the nest. Actually he was in two nests. He had eaten the egg out of one nest, crawled thru a knothole to an adjoining nest, and eaten another egg. The eggs in his belly were too big to go through the knothole. He couldn't back up or go forward so he was trapped.

Another time, Grandpa, Darwin and I were out in the pasture when the dogs alerted to some animals den in the ground. Grandpa went back to the house, got a piece of heavy wire about twelve feet long, doubled it and twisted it from one end to the other. We then went back to the den; he inserted the wire and started turning it. The end of the wire became tangled in a possum's hair and he pulled it out of the ground.

I found a way to entertain my self while shut in during the winter. The house was heated with a wood burning stove. The stove had little adjustable vents in front to control the amount of air getting to the flame. I found that if I put a piece of bailing wire in the vent and waited a few minutes, it would be bright red when I took it out. The longer I left it in, the brighter it was. It would get real soft and was easy to bend into any shape when it was red. One day after I got tired of playing with it, I let it cool until it was no longer red and laid it down in a chair. Dad's brother, my Uncle Henry, came in from outside and sat down to warm up. Evidently the wire had not cooled to the comfort zone because Uncle Henry yelled and jumped out of the chair. When he figured out what happened, in a pretty gruff voice, he accused me of trying to brand him.

Crows started roosting in the trees that grew on the river bank on the north side of Grandpa's farm. Grandpa and several of the neighbors decided they were going to put dynamite bombs in the trees and, after dark, while the crows were roosting, they would set the bombs off. Afterwards, they were going to go in with lights and sticks to finish off any crow that had just been wounded. I don't think I ever wanted to go any where in my life as bad as I wanted to go crow hunting. No matter how hard I pleaded, Dad would not let me go. So I missed the excitement. From what I remember, they didn't kill many crows but they claimed they did scare them good.

Sometimes we would wear shoes to school and sometimes we would go bare footed. Sometimes we would wear shoes to school and come home bare footed. We just had to be careful to remember to bring our shoes home on Friday in case we went to church the following Sunday. The last day of school (I think it was second grade) I forgot and left my shoes. I knew Mom was going to be mad at me because I didn't think I could get them back until school started next term. When I finally got up enough nerve to tell her what happened, it was no big deal. We just got in the car, went to school and picked up my shoes.

One of my favorite songs at this time was "Home on the Range" because I thought it was a song about "us". I liked the fact that the song stressed the high morals of cowboys and the fact that they didn't cuss. I came to this conclusion after I ask my mother what "discouraging" meant. She was busy at the time and kind of brushed it off; she said "Oh, it means something bad". Well, I was familiar with "bad words" because I had tried to use some of them before and got my mouth washed out with soap. So I knew when the song said "Seldom is heard a discouraging word", it meant that seldom is heard a bad word. In other words, cowboys didn't cuss, or at least, it was very seldom.

There was another song we used to sing in church that would bother me every time we did. It had the words in it "The angels beckon me from heaven's open door, And I can't feel at home in this world any more". In the first line, I thought "beckon" meant the angels were waving me off, not in. And I thought the second line confirmed this, meaning that I was so miserable from being waved off that I couldn't even feel at home.

Speaking of church, Mom would take Darwin and me to a small Methodist Church on a pretty regular schedule when we lived in town but when we lived in the

country, it was very seldom that we went. It was a rare event indeed when Dad went with us.

