

George & Marie Davis

George Junior Davis was born in Brule, Nebraska, on March 10, 1931. His parents were George O'Brian Davis and Hester Lucy Butterfield Davis. It is probable that his parents intended his name to be the same as his father's, but his birth certificate lists his name as above. He would really like for his initials to spell "G.O.D.," as his father's did. He was born at home, in a house which was originally built on his Grandfather Butterfield's farm, but it had been moved to Brule before his birth. George said the town of Brule, which was named for the Brule Sioux Indian tribe, had a population at the time of 374 and still does according to George. George has a sister who is eight years older. She currently lives in Green Forrest, Arkansas. With an older sister on hand while he was growing up, George said it was like having two mothers ruling over him and telling him what to do. Joyce Pearce, now Simmons, an older cousin of George, stayed with his family during the school week to attend school. He said sometimes it was like having three mothers.

George's dad served in World War I with the 37th Engineer Corps. He saw action in France and Germany. A part of his story was that he sailed to Europe on an ocean liner named the Queen Mary and returned to the states on the George Washington. George said his father did not talk much about his actual war experience. Upon returning home, Mr. Davis did some farming, but when that did not work too well, he worked for a time in a filling station and then began driving a road patrol motor grader for the county. George's mom, with a tenth-grade education, taught school for nine years in a one-room schoolhouse. She also kept books for a hardware store. However, she was best known in the community for her column called "Brule News" for the Keith County newspaper, which she wrote for about forty-eight years.

Even though he lived in a town, much of George's early life was spent on the nearby Butterfield farm with his grandfather. From George's description, it was a classic self-sufficient farm. The land was farmed with the use of two horses to do the work. The crops included alfalfa, corn, wheat, oats, watermelons, cantaloupes, and strawberries. His grandfather loved trees and had black walnut and mulberry groves. Further evidence of his grandfather's love for trees still exists in Brule. His grandfather planted rows of walnut trees around three sides of the local cemetery and some of them still stand. The farm also included turkey, geese, cattle, hogs, and bees. They cured their own meat. George said he honestly doubts if his grandfather ever ate any factory processed food in his lifetime. Family and friends enjoyed the rich proceeds of the farm.

As might be expected a youth growing up in Nebraska, he would spend time hunting. George told of the many times he and a friend would take their .22 rifles and rabbit hunt along the South Platte River. They would take potatoes with them and, after bagging a rabbit, roast the rabbit over a fire and bake the potatoes wrapped in the local black clay know as Brule clay. He said the meal was delicious.

George attended all twelve years of his schooling in the same two-story, brick schoolhouse in Brule. He played basketball and six-man football. The football team had only seven or eight players at any time; so the players often played both offense and defense for the entire game. One example of his and his classmates' mischievousness was when they tied a wire to the teacher's laboratory stool and threw it out the second story window of the schoolhouse. The lab had only enough stools for the students and the teacher. She was left wondering what happened until the stool was retrieved for her. There were five boys and two girls in George's graduation class of 1948.

In February of his senior year in school, George began working for the Good-All Manufacturing Company in nearby Ogallala. The factory's main products were electrical devices such as condensers,

rectifiers, welding machines, etc., but the company also made Good-All fishing reels. Still at the age of eighteen, he was made a foreman over much older workers, some in their forties and even fifties. After a couple of years in a factory, George would move into what would become his life-time occupation, the building trades.

In the meantime, while he was still only nineteen years old, on June 10, 1950, George married the local physician's sixteen year old daughter. His father-in-law was accepting of the marriage, but his mother-in-law was not. She gave him lots of grief over the years. George said that while the marriage was not a very happy one, it gave him nine wonderful children. George does not have any difficulty in naming them. From oldest to youngest, the six boys and three girls are Robert Scott, Shanny, Christopher Joseph, Linda, Marty, Tricia, Mike, Kelley, and Andy. The children haven't scattered much since seven of them still live in Nebraska, but one is in Wyoming and one is in Michigan. Their occupations include a railroad engineer, a railroad crew chief, and a railroad yardmaster, the Coast Guard service, two teachers, a builder, an Indian craftsman, and a rancher's wife. George has twenty-eight grandchildren and twenty-six great grandchildren with more on the way. George maintains a close relationship with his family. He, his sons, and now grandsons meet every year since 2001 for a fall deer hunt in Nebraska.

Soon after getting married, George began work as a builder. In the fall of 1950, he helped build a new multi-use gymnasium, which included an auditorium and home economics classroom, at the school in Brule. He soon became a self-employed builder/carpenter and worked in several Nebraska communities. After starting out at Brule, he and his family lived for a time in Ogallala, Gandy, Hyannis, McCook, and North Platte.

Any of us in Tired Iron who have known George very long have heard him give his story as a "recovering alcoholic." He very openly and honestly tells of his years under the influence and of his continuing success in defeating the drug with spiritual help and Alcoholics Anonymous. His experience with alcohol began when, as a child, he would sample his family's homemade wine and home brew beer, sometimes to excess. As a teenager, he and friends spent lots of time drinking beer at the city park and at the river near Brule.

Through his early married years, the drinking became epidemic and hurt his marriage and his physical and mental health. His awakening to the disaster he faced came when, on June 10, 1974, he left work on a remodeling job at a ranch and drove to a nearby town and stocked up with lots of booze. On returning he, while driving down a one-lane road, lost control of his pickup and destroyed about a half mile of fence. The next morning, he began pouring the whiskey and beer on the ground. When a ranch owner asked what he was doing, he said he was through with booze and needed help for his addiction. He has not had a drop of alcohol since. This was only possible through his seeking of spiritual guidance through the Catholic Church and support from A.A. A priest friend of his and, at the time, sporadic attendance at A.A. meetings and his resolve kept him from backsliding. After a time, he realized he needed clinical help to recover from the lingering physical and mental effects of alcohol abuse. In 1980 after a thirty-day treatment, he gained lots of healing at the Valley Hope Center in Norton, Kansas.

All this new order in George's life did not save his almost thirty-five year marriage. In his inimitable way George said of his wife, "She didn't like him as a drunk, and she really didn't like him sober." The marriage ended in divorce and annulment through the church in the June of 1985.

For a couple of years, George stayed in the Nebraska area. He took a job as a manager of a retirement facility called McCook Townhouse in McCook, Nebraska. The job required someone with building skills so he fit well in this work. The owners wanted a couple to manage the home so, when they hired a couple, they offered George a similar job at another of their retirement homes in Rogers

Townhouse in Rogers, Arkansas. He accepted and moved to Rogers on December 2, 1986. Since his sister lives at Green Forrest, he had a relative in the area. And too, he soon met Marie Orbanus Bowers.

At the time, Marie was facing some of the same problems that George had faced for much of his adult life. Because of her husband's alcoholism, she had been a member of Al-Anon for a time. However, when her nineteen year marriage failed, she became fearful that alcohol might rule her own life. She began attending A.A. meetings, and in a meeting in Rogers, she met George, who was by now a regular attendee at the Rogers AA. They had each been praying to meet someone with an understanding of the issues involved with an alcohol history. They matched perfectly then and still do now. After a brief courtship, they married on December 25, 1987. Marie's son and daughter added to the extended Davis family.

George's job with the retirement home played out, and he returned to self-employment as a builder. After marrying Marie, they looked for jobs with more timely paychecks. When George heard that J. B. Hunt Trucking Company was hiring drivers, he soon applied and completed the driving course. Not long after, Marie completed the driver's school, which included over-the-road training from George. She had some trepidation at the start but soon was comfortable as a driver. She said she loved the experience. An added benefit of their travels together was that George was able to meet Marie's family in New Jersey and she was able to meet the Davis family in Nebraska and other places. They drove eighteen-wheelers until 1992.

Another important part of George's work career was when he worked as the support staff manager at Decision Point, a drug and alcohol recovery center located in Bentonville and Springdale, Arkansas. His own background and years of involvement in AA gave him special insight which proved valuable to those he had contact with through those years. After working there from February 2003 to December 2008, George and Marie are now retired and having more time to enjoy their antique tractors and Tired Iron.

When asked how he and Marie got involved with Tired Iron, he said he saw a notice posted on the wall of the Cave Springs post office of an organization meeting for an antique tractor club at the Highfill Community Center. He attended and joined as a charter member of Tired Iron of the Ozarks. He had been interested in tractors since his youth. He stated, "I have always liked old machinery, especially tractors." While still in high school, he bought a John Deere L tractor (see photo) to earn extra money mowing and plowing. Not so coincidentally, he was working on the mower of that tractor when he lost a finger on his right hand. Since suffering a couple of other accidents with dangerous saws inherent in the building trades, he said he now has a damaged finger on his left hand to match. While still he school, he was a member of the very first 4-H Potato Club in the state of Nebraska. In 1989, when he learned that Marie's nephew in New Jersey had a 1940 John Deere L for sale, he bought it. Transportation to Arkansas on a rented truck was expensive so he bought a 1978 Ford half ton pickup, which was about as cheap as truck rental.

George and Marie still have the L along with a 1935 Farmall F-12, and a 1948 John Deere M. Other collections include lots of implements, lots of farm related toys, and tools.

Especially prized is his cousin Joyce Simmon's husband's Kennedy tool box and tools. They have quite a menagerie of animals including pigeons (roller, rock, and messenger varieties), three miniature horses, two donkeys, a cockatiel, bees, two dogs, and four indoor and one outdoor cat.

George was president of Tired Iron from 1996 to 2002. He became the heart and soul of Tired Iron and provided great leadership all those years. During the time, great shows were held at the Rose of Sharon farm west of Gentry. Early on, he noted that the officer election time in May did not fit well

with show preparations; so he had the elections moved to October. This gave a breather to get ready for the spring shows. During his presidency, he and Don Gilbert started the tractor drives. An enjoyable drive to Ozark, Arkansas, led to a drive to Morrow, Arkansas. George, along with Howard Hodson and a few others, attended many area festivals and parades with displays of tractors and engines. Many folks in the region came to know of Tired Iron on these occasions. George also noted the need for a permanent home for Tired Iron. He led the search for a suitable location. He and other members traveled to many possible locations until land was found.

George stated that what he likes best about Tired Iron are the people and their willingness to help with projects and to share their knowledge, time, and “spare parts” with fellow members. He said, “The thing I like best about the shows is that everyone is smiling.” He, with Marie’s help, was and is a great ambassador for Tired Iron of the Ozarks. Thanks, George and Marie.