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# FAMILY *Reunion*

News for Descendants of Henry Hodge, Joseph Mobley, Burl Mason & Albert McAfee

In This Issue: *Hodge's Ark*

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Lucinda Wilcoxen, Editor

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LWilcoxn@onr.com

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## Welcome Aboard

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With this issue of *Family Reunion*, circulation has expanded coast to coast. Over the past quarter, I've been collecting living relatives for a change of genealogical pace and I'm beginning to feel like I've hit the big time. Well, so far as family newsletters go.

Since misery loves company, I think it's time I introduce you readers to each other. No fair banding together to petition for editorial changes, though. All of you, except where noted, are in Texas.

Some of you are, like me, descended from all of the four forefathers listed above. They are the children and grand-children of Lucy and Horace Hodge, namely:

Nettie Hodge West of Bastrop, her son and daughter-in-law, David Wilcoxen and Karen LeFevre of Austin;

Bettye and Richard Patton and daughter Lisa of Austin; H. G. and Gail Hodge, their daughter and son-in-law, Keri and Charles Pekar, all of Elgin;

Larry Hodge and wife Sally Victor of Mason, and sons Tyler of Round Rock and Tomari of Austin; and

Linda and Mike Ging, their son and daughter-in-law, Glenn and Amy, all of Bay City.

Related in both the Hodge and Mobley lines is cousin Jo Branton Butler and husband Luther of Stephenville.

Descended from both Albert McAfee and Burl Mason are sisters Dovie McAfee Lowden and Beulah McAfee Martin, both of Bastrop, and Beulah's son W.D. Martin, Jr., of Eustace.

A Mobley cousin, Maxine Alcorn of Friendswood, is not only a descendant of Joseph Mobley's brother Hezekiah, but also a fellow member of the Mary Hardin-Baylor family. (As are Nettie, Bettye, and Jo.)

Maxine recently retired as one of the top dogs of the Clayton Library in Houston (a genealogical haven) and is one of my research angels. You will be hearing something about that later.

Last quarter I mentioned the enormous help I've received from Nita B. Mason of Boling, the daughter-in-law of Burl's brother John. This quarter I added to our little group three of John Mason's grandsons: Roy Mason and wife Pat of Yakima, Washington; Jesse Mason of Dana Point, California; and Barney Mason, of Bay City. Barney was police chief of Bay City for several years.

The latest family I've added to my files descend from Lucy Mason Hodge's half-brother Henry "Jack" Mason. I answered a query on a GenForum board and met cousin Gene O'Quinn of Crosby, Jack Mason's grandson. Gene has provided me with an article on his grandfather which will be included in these pages

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soon. My mother was glad to hear that we at long last had made contact with Jack's family. She told me that her mother was always curious about what had happened to her brother.

Other members in the Jack Mason family who are now obliged to read my ramblings are: Jack's son Harold Mason and daughter Lorraine Mason Griffin, both of Humble; his grand-daughters Nancy O'Quinn Kennedy of West Fork, Arkansas, and Frances O'Quinn Murders of Pottsville, Arkansas; and his great-grandsons David O'Quinn of Kissimmee, Florida, and Philip O'Quinn of Naples, Florida.

I continue to be pleasantly surprised at the encouragement I've received from all of you to keep this little venture going. Thanks for all the good words and pats on the back, and I'll do my best to keep it coming at you every quarter.

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*Now that you know who all is sharing this little adventure, if you have other members of your family who would like to be added to my mailing list, I will be glad to oblige. You can reach me by phone at (512) 303- 0638, by mail at 803 Jefferson, Bastrop, TX 78602,*

*or by e-mail at LWilcoxn@onr.com.*

*Also, in all the excitement of meeting so many new cousins this last quarter, I have lost track of who I have and have not provided with back issues. If I missed you, please give a shout and I'll get a set on the way to you.*

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### **Keeping My Head Above Water...**

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Due to a lot of extra activity scheduled for the Wilcoxon/West households in December and January, this issue may be a little shorter on news than usual. Mother and I are in the process of relocating to a new home in Bastrop. Needless to say, my research is taking a backseat to packing and purging two houses in preparation for the move.

Fortunately I had recently requested an article from Mother on the subject of our family's relationship with animals. I had been pondering which side of the family to blame for my soft heart (head?) where animals are concerned. As you will see in her article, I probably got double-dipped with that particular weakness.

Some of you were aware that for the summer months I acted as a foster-parent to

5 ducks, one of whom sat on a nest of 15 eggs for most of the summer. The summer heat effectively put an end to her efforts, but for awhile there I was thinking about including a duckling as a bonus gift for everyone on the mailing list.

The ducks were actually the property of our neighbors and they recently found them a good home in the country, so I'm out of the duck business. For awhile I fed their kittens, but they've all been recently relocated as well. So I'm down to the 3 dogs and 4 cats (unless you want to count the extra neighborhood cats who show up for breakfast every day). I'm hoping that it will take awhile for any strays to find me at the new house, but I've already heard that the deer are plentiful in the area. My cat food budget may soon be converted to deer corn money.

Oh well, if I have to have a vice I would just as soon it be where animals are concerned. Most of my best friends get around on 4 legs. Keeping them fed and dry is a small price to pay for the purest love and loyalty that can be found.

## The Family Trait

*by Nettie Hodge West*

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My first baby sitter was a big yellow tom cat. Mother would place me on a pallet in a shady spot with the cat beside me and he would stay there while she worked in the garden. Perhaps this helps explain why to this day I prefer the company of animals to that of people. There are points in their favor: animals rarely slander their neighbors, cheat on their taxes, desert their mates, abuse their children, use profanity, lie to each other, or pretend to be what they are not. They are loyal without limit and love without reservation.

I have at times felt guilty about the fact that stories of the neglect or mistreatment of animals affect me more strongly than do reports of human disasters. My first thought on hearing of earthquakes, floods, tornadoes and other terrible catastrophes is not of human loss, but to wonder how many helpless animals may have been injured or displaced, lost with no one to care. If I should hear of a car colliding with a cow, I'd be the one to ask "How is the cow?"

Someday I might be chastised for my weird ways, but if I am, I'll probably have company. Evidently this trait may be somewhat genetic, judging by some of the stories that have come down in oral family history.

There was my grandfather Burl Mason who left his jacket hanging on a fence for weeks until the wren couple who built a nest in the pocket hatched their young and raised them to the age of flight.

Burl's favorite horse on the ranch he supervised was Old Henry, who worked every roundup with zest. He was riderless due to a back injury he had received in chasing a wayward cow right over a cliff, landing on top of her. He could not carry a rider ever again, but that did not stop him from going along on every drive, working as hard as any of the cowhands.



*Nettie Mason with unidentified puppy*

Burl's daughter, my mother, had the gift of healing hands. All our neighbors routinely brought their weak, sickly, or undersized member of a new litter to her. Usually by the end of the season they would be bigger and fatter than their siblings.

It was not unusual for her to miss a night's sleep sitting up with an ailing animal (calf, pig, dog or whatever) who had gotten into the wrong feed or injured itself in some way. Once a mother sow stepped on one of her new piglets, splitting its belly. Mother picked it up, washed off the dragging intestines, sewed him up with thread, and bandaged him. He not only lived, he flourished.

Even plants seemed to grow better for her. When they retired and moved into town, she soon had the prettiest yard in the neighborhood. She never visited a nursery or purchased seeds or plants. All were propagated from cuttings and seed gathered from old homesites or cemeteries.

Dad also had a way with animals. He could not bear the sight of an underfed creature, and as a result, Mother had to be in charge

of feeding them. Otherwise they became too sleek and fat. Even the barn cats had all the milk they wanted.

He once carried food and water daily to a mother dog and her three newborn pups that had been dumped by the road a few miles away. Finally he gathered them all up and saved himself some time by bringing them home with him.

Nor were there any objections when he went to pick up his freshman daughter to bring her home for the summer vacation and they came in with the campus stray dog who had been living under the dormitory steps, existing on food smuggled to her from the college dining hall.

We were always bringing home strays and birds with broken wings or legs. Baby rabbits were kept in a cage until well or old enough to fend for themselves.

Sister Linda outdid all of us with her pet raccoon, Rory. We still laugh recalling her antics. Rory would climb on Linda's bed in the night and carefully remove the curlers from her hair. Many times she would wake up to find curls on only one side of her head. We remember how Rory washed

all her food in the dog's water dish and her bewilderment when the ice cube she washed simply disappeared. She was an accomplished robber of the cookie jar, carefully replacing the lid each time she helped herself.

Brother Larry has left his mark on the family record with his definitive volume on travelling Texas with your dogs, a humorous look at the problems of people who do not leave their pets in kennels or with friends, but take them along on trips and vacations.



*H.G., Jr., & Larry Hodge  
with Bobby*

In my lifetime I have observed some interesting examples of animal behavior.

For example, chickens are not generally considered to

be intelligent creatures.

One incident gave me pause to reconsider. We always kept a flock of laying hens and one year we also had a hogpen between the house and barn. In that pen were a couple of sows, one of whom was especially fond of fresh chicken. If an unwary hen flew down into the pen to peck at grains of corn fed to the pigs, and was unlucky enough to get stuck in the mud, she became instant pig food.

In those days, I was mostly leg and could outrun everybody in school. When a hen squawked, it was my practice to head for the pigpen and yank the hapless chicken to safety by whatever part I could reach. This happened two or three times a day. One afternoon I was out in the yard and a Leghorn hen began following me closely, talking friendly chicken talk and rubbing against my legs as a cat does. At first I paid no attention, but then noticed that her legs were crusted with gray pigpen mud. She was expressing her gratitude for my rescue of her that morning.

Many kinds of animals are observed to have a "pecking order" and insist on its be-

ing followed by all. There are bosses and underlings from leaders to lowest in rank. We had a milk cow who reigned supreme in her world. She was the first through the gate either coming in or going out. She was first to be fed and first to be milked. Everything changed abruptly when her daughter had her first calf. She stood guard at the gate and saw to it that her daughter was milked first from that day forward and she herself took second place.



*Buff*

Another case of maternal pride was that of the barn cat who produced a new litter each spring. We always had to guess at the number born to other cats until they were old enough to come out of hiding. This one never failed to bring

each one of her newborns to lay at Mother's feet for admiration and congratulations. She would proudly bring out another until all had been petted and admired. Then they were returned by her to their nest under the barn not to be seen again until they were old enough to ramble.

Now I am watching the younger generation show signs of a similar weakness for animals. Every morning and evening sixteen pairs of eyes wait at my daughter's door, confident of being fed and watered. She runs a kind of soup kitchen for disadvantaged cats, dogs, ducks, and opossums. Niece Lisa has her own menagerie of rescued and rehabilitated dogs, goats, sheep, pigs, turtles, cats, birds, etc. She could stock a small zoo.

My favorite story about my most admired American hero, Abraham Lincoln, is of the day he ordered his carriage stopped beside a laughing, jeering crowd to wade into a mudhole and rescue a helplessly mired small pig. Mrs. Lincoln is said to have written to a friend in a letter that cats were "Mr. Lincoln's hobby". It is a matter of record that

he allowed his boys to bring a pet goat into the White House for some riotous play times, hitching the goat to an upturned chair for a cart.

There has long been debated the question of the presence of animals in heaven. Do they have souls? I don't have the answer, as the scriptures have very little to say about it. The apocryphal tale of Jesus cradling a stray kitten in his cloak may or may not be true. It does not sound unlikely.

Robert Browning said in a poem that "a man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?". His idea was that in heaven we would be able to achieve the things we most desired but were never able to attain on earth. Sometimes in time of forced inactivity due to illness, I daydream about my ideal of heaven and its possibilities.

I would like to be assigned a planet of my own, to live in a snug cabin furnished with comfy chairs slipcovered in faded chintz, rag rugs on the floor, and shelves filled with yet-to-reads. I'd like wide, low windows overlooking a pleasant lake, misty blue hills and green meadows

populated with the souls of animals living in peaceful coexistence. We would welcome the company of some like-minded human souls who could live out eternity without ever missing the presence of guns, traps, or hunters. That would be reward enough for me.

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### **Albert McAfee, Indian Fighter**

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I am presently in hot pursuit of Albert McAfee's post Civil War military records. Thanks to my research angel, Maxine Alcorn, the question of Albert's missing pension records has been solved. At times one develops blind spots when looking for an ancestor and it certainly helps to have an assist from an objective bystander.

Maxine thought to check the records for Federal pensions, which had not occurred to me as a possibility since I knew that Albert had fought for the Confederacy. To my great surprise, Albert had a second military experience, serving the United States government during the winter of 1868-1869.

To whet your appetite (until those slowpokes at the National Archives get the pension application to me), Albert served as a volunteer in Kansas during a campaign to repel Indian attacks on the Kansas and Oklahoma frontiers.

Furthermore, Albert's regiment was assigned to none other than General George Armstrong Custer. Fortunately for the majority of those reading this newsletter, his service was several years prior to the massacre at the Little Big Horn.

I was lucky enough to locate a diary written by one of Albert's co-volunteers which describes in great detail the hardships and adventures experienced by this group of soldiers during an especially bitter winter. The stories attached to the Kansas volunteers are fascinating and will probably be the cornerstone of the next quarter's epistle.

Maxine also found a Federal pension application for a Jacob McAfee out of Arkansas, who may or may not be Albert's father. I have also requested that file in hopes of securing another loose end in my records. I am crossing my fingers that the pension

papers arrive as a bonus Christmas present.

Albert has been playing hide and seek with me for a very long time. I have long been frustrated by that gap between 1861, when he enlisted in Louisiana, and 1878, when he married in Arkansas. Now at last I have tagged him in the middle of that gap. And who knows what other doors may open as a result.

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*Christmas is weird...*

*What other time of the year do you sit in front of a dead tree and eat candy out of your socks?*

*My goal in life is to be the kind of person my dog thinks I am.*

*Always do right. This will gratify some and astonish the rest. ....Mark Twain*

*There's a reason a dog has so many friends. He wags his tail instead of his tongue.*

*If at first you don't succeed, do it like your mother told you.*