



# The Davenports

THE UPCHURCH & DAVENPORT FAMILY NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2004

## 2004 Family Reunion Held Saturday May 29th

### INSIDE

Reunion Photos	2
Visit With Thelma	3
Visit with Mildred	3
Book Excerpts	
Carl	4
Annie	4
Ethel	5
Bessie	5
Kermitt	5
William	5
1956 Christmas	6
1956 Photos	6
Billy in Heaven	7
Halloween Bash	8

#### Got E-Mail?

Send your address to get on the family news list:

[mae@coxok.com](mailto:mae@coxok.com)

#### Family Web Site

[www.coxok.com](http://www.coxok.com)

DAVENPORT FAMILY NEWSLETTER

© 2004 MAE COX

922 BARBOUR AVENUE  
NORMAN, OK 73069  
(405) 321-1617

## ... and it didn't even rain!

The reunion went off without a hitch — even the rainclouds cooperated and stayed away this time unlike the previous two reunions. Most folks came early and that gave us all a good chance to visit and catch up with one another.

Some came from Colorado, Illinois, and Arkansas — and the rest of us were *Okies*. It was great to see everyone again and how I wish we could do this a couple times a year.

The fish were wonderful and we're hoping this might become an annual

event (hint hint).

#### *Sunday Morning Genealogy*

The morning after the reunion, several of us got together to share information on our relatives and ancestors. I know I found several documents in Loyce's collection I hadn't seen.

All of us benefitted from the photos that Phillip brought down — photos his mom, Edna had accumulated over the years. There were many we'd never seen. I've scanned those and placed them on my Web site for all to enjoy.





*Davenport  
&  
Upchurch  
Family  
Reunion*



*May 29, 2004*



## A Visit With Thelma

While visiting with Thelma and Kenneth recently, I asked if she had any stories for the newsletter. The following, she said, was one of the most memorable Christmases she ever had.

Christmas Eve of 1954 found Thelma just getting home from the hospital with her new baby, James. Normally they would all have headed to Norman for Christmas Eve, but this year they just wouldn't be able to go and would instead have their Christmas at home in Ardmore.

Christmas morning, still quite weak, Thelma made breakfast and was cleaning up when there was a knock on the door. She was astounded to see one of her brothers and his family standing there with food and gifts in their arms. Then she spied another car pulling up and there was one of her sisters and her family.

### Christmas Day 1954

At 606 A Street, Northeast, Ardmore, Oklahoma — The home of Thelma and Kenneth Griffin. Back row, Thelma, Loyce, and Annie. Front, Carl, Charlie, May, Roy, Edna, and Ethel.



Eventually every brother and sister, their spouses and children arrived bearing food and gifts. It seems they'd decided if Thelma and Kenneth couldn't come to Christmas Eve, they'd take Christmas to them!

There was so much food it was amazing, Thelma recalled. Then there were gifts to exchange and as the day wore on, they gathered on the front porch for photos. Thelma was still so weak she had to hang on to the porch column to keep upright. These would be the last photos taken of their mother, May, with all eight of her children.

"We had no idea they were coming," said Thelma. "Boy, it was a good surprise!"



## A Visit With Mildred

I had the delightful opportunity to visit at the home of Mildred Upchurch Kline earlier this year. She is a cousin to our parents — her father was John (May's brother). There were three children in her family: Mildred, Loyd, and Charley.

She remembers living nearby and growing up with the Davenports, and these are a couple of her stories:

One New Year's Eve, Mildred was visiting in Arthur and May's home. That evening, one of the boys (she couldn't remember if it was Charlie, Carl, or Roy) told some tale about something would happen to one of the cows when the clock struck midnight. Or the cow was supposed to do something inconceivable.

She, Edna, and Thelma were so curious and excited about whatever it was this cow was supposed to do that they took up vigilance beside the cow-pen to be there when midnight rang in the new year. They were quite upset when nothing happened and they discovered they were the brunt of the boy's tom-foolery.

One Christmas she recalled, they were again visiting at the Davenport farm, probably about 1934 or so. Charlie handed Opal a big gift-wrapped box to open. She tore through the paper only to discover another wrapped box... then another and another.

When she finally got to the actual gift, there was an engagement ring. Everyone had a good laugh over Charlie's cleverly wrapped gift.

"It was always fun to visit with them," Margaret told me.

# The Davenports — Life in the 1910s & 1920s

## Book Excerpts from Arthur & May's era

I'm still working on the family ancestral history and decided to share some of the wonderful stories various family members have shared with me.

In my book, I've featured each generation and gathered stories about their lives. In this particular section, these stories have been gleaned from aunts, uncles, and cousins. Each story was told to me, and I, in turn, wrote it as I best understood it to be.

### Arthur's First Car

While gathering stories for my book, nearly everyone I talked to knew about Grandpa and his car — and, to my delight, again told the story. It was about 1928 when Arthur bought the car — a Model A or Model T with no top on it — no one was real sure just which kind of car it was.

Arthur was just a real gutsy fellow and the fact that he had no idea how to drive a car didn't deter him in the least. He had absolutely no fear of trying to drive up and down the dirt roads and into town.



The story I've cited here is one I remember dad telling frequently. He loved to tell it and would get so tickled he could hardly finish. Anyway, Arthur seemed to be making good progress learning to drive ... until...

### As Told by Carl

Arthur had driven his car into town and was headed back to the farm. As he topped the nearby hill and started down, the car began to rapidly pick up speed. He wasn't that familiar with the braking mechanism but realized he was going too fast and needed to slow down.

He was trying to remember how to make it slow, but it kept going faster and faster. In his excitement, he pulled back hard on the steering wheel hoping that, like a horse, this effort would slow the car. But indeed that didn't work at all. Instead the steering wheel came off in his hands.

He then noticed that the speeding car was headed for the creek bed, so he jumped out — still tightly clutching the steering wheel.

"There he came... walking over the hill carrying that steering wheel." Carl, along with his brothers and sisters have gleefully reported this story all through the years as they rolled with laughter at the remembered image of their dad shuffling along with the steering wheel in hand.

### As Told by Annie

#### Arthur's Sorghum Mill Work

The family lived at the Champeau place about 1933 and from here once again Arthur was seeking work. No one had money to pay helpers and therefore jobs were quite hard to come by.

On the Reich's farm nearby was a sorghum mill and finally Arthur decided to help them with their enterprise. It was rigorous work planting and cultivating the vast fields of sugar cane. When ready, the cane was harvested and ground to produce a sweet dark juice. This was cooked until thick, making sorghum.

The Reichs couldn't pay Arthur for his work, however, they insisted he take buckets and buckets of the thick sweet goodness home with him. The family was delighted as this was the only sweet stuff they had. There was no money to buy sugar, so their only sweeteners were honey and now the wonderful sorghum.

"Momma" (Grandmother May) created a cake using the pungent syrup and thus was born the sorghum cake. As she served 'supper' she slid the pan of cake batter into the oven. About the time everyone finished eating, the sweet smell of sorghum wafted through the kitchen pronouncing the cake done and ready to serve.

She placed big bowls of fresh churned butter on the table and cut big chunks of piping-hot cake.

They slathered on the sweet butter and gobbled down the hot spicy cake. There was nary a crumb left. Annie recalled:

"It just doesn't get any better."





**As told by Ethel**

**The Circus Passes By**

In 1920, Arthur and May were living on, and sharecropping one of the Skinner places. Harmon Skinner owned a large acreage in southeast Cleveland

County in the Box and Corbett vicinity, and it was there that the Davenports settled into one of his houses.

It was also where, one day, Arthur, May, and their children experienced a tremendous thrill! To their amazement, right past their front door, a whole circus troupe — people, horses, animal wagons, and all their paraphernalia — slowly proceeded down the road. There were huge elephants lumbering along too and the Davenports stood mesmerized by the scene unfolding in front of them.

“In 1920 you just didn’t see sights like this come down your road on foot.” Everyone ran to watch as the entourage continued north to the section line and turned east. “It was quite exciting!”



**As told by Bessie**

**Funeral for Baby Chicks**

May and Arthur bought baby chicks one year, and as is typical with all broods, some of them died. Carl and

Charlie were quite small, and were saddened by the demise of the little chicks. They decided the appropriate thing would be to give them a decent burial.

The family lived close to the Anderson School and there were a lot of trees in the area. They found a shady spot down under the trees and, with their shovel, dug a grave.

They rounded up several of their cousins to come over and attend the funeral service. Bessie, who attended the services, said they performed a funeral service, complete with Biblical verses, and then they all sang a couple of hymns.

**As told by Kermitt**

**Halloween Pranksters**

The Davenports lived at Macomb and the three boys, Charlie, Carl, and Roy, racked their brains trying to figure out what mischief they could do unto their neighbors.



Being typical kids they wanted to become devilish on this devilish night and finally came up with the idea of how funny it would be to overturn the outhouses in the area. From farm to farm the pranksters crept. One by one, the outhouses were upended and turned on their sides. As each one was turned over, the boys got more and more tickled at their mischievousness.

That ended soon though as at one farm they were in the middle of turning over one of the bigger outhouses when the youngest brother slipped and fell into the pit. He scrambled out of the stinky sludge and slime quickly but not before he had become covered in the awfullest smelling mess you can imagine.

Well now, that was just too funny to Charlie and Carl and they whooped so loud that the neighbors heard them and came running to see what was going on. The boys managed to slither away and elude the neighbor, but the odor on Roy was just too much.

By the time Roy’d washed off the foulness by jumping in the pond, the allure of Halloween was gone. They decided to end their night of devilish tricks and tromped back homeward.

**As told by William**

**Fun at Buckhead Creek**

In the Corbett area, Charlie, Carl, and their cousin William frequently headed for Buckhead Creek in southeast Cleveland County. They usually caught a nice mess of fish that they took home and their mom cooked up for supper. Or sometimes they just went for a swim.

They had tied a rope over a tree branch that extended out over the water. What fun it was to swing out across the water, let go of the rope, and cannonball into the water. When they grew tired they would spread out an old quilt, making a pallet, where they could stretch out in the sun and doze — or just talk to one another.



William recalled pleasant days fishing and then “lying on a pallet,” out by that old creek. “Those were good days. I had fun with those boys.”

This article was written 48 years ago by Loyce who was 22 at the time. When they returned home from Christmas in Ardmore, her mom (Grandma May) urged her to write about their Christmas. This is her writing from December 27, 1956:

## Christmas Eve 1956

On December 24th, thirty-one members of the Davenport family met at the home of Carl and Nena Vey for their annual Christmas get-together. The location was 1718 3rd Street, Southwest in Ardmore, Oklahoma.

How lovely everything looked — all so brightly decorated with the pretty and colorful decorations Nena Vey had made. The banquet table, set up in the large den, had white tablecloths and cheerful centerpieces.

Placecards made by Charlie Jr. and Floyd were at each setting for everyone from the youngest, Becky and James, to the oldest and the head of our family, Mother May.

The main courses of the dinner were furnished and prepared by Nena Vey, Opal Davenport, and Thelma Griffin [see photo of hostesses]. Side

dishes and many desserts were brought in by other family members.

When all were seated, there were four empty chairs: for the Reid Family — Edna, Melbra, Deanna, and Robert John. They only had two days for the holiday and couldn't make it back from Colorado. Maybe next year?

The candles were lit and the lights dimmed. The Christmas Spirit started with a prayer by Floyd Champeau for blessings on the food and for those whose hands had prepared it. Now the eating was under way.

The food was served by the three hostesses who were assisted by Mae Frances. I think there must have been enough food there to feed the whole town of Ardmore. It was a feast fit for a king. All that turkey, ham, potatoes, etc. etc.

After everyone had eaten all they could hold, they started drifting to the living room where the Christmas tree stood in the corner of the large room. The colorfully wrapped gifts were abundant and the first ones there—Claudia, Linda, Betty, and David—were anxiously waiting.

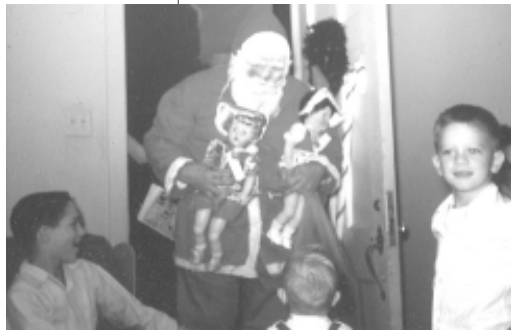
Now, what was next? Who were we all waiting for? Could it be that jolly man in the red suit? Suzanne, Becky, James, Ronnie, and even George sat in the middle of the floor all wide-eyed and breathless. Now this year the *Doubling Thomas* was George, who had been saying all along that he knew Santa Claus was his *Uncle Charlie*.

With a ringing of bells and a jolly Ho-Ho-Ho there was a knock on the door and in came Santa with a pack of toys on his shoulder. With a gentle nudge, Charlie asked George, "Who is that?" Ohhh!

continued>



These photos were taken by dad (Carl Davenport). He produced slides and from those I had photographs made.





## IN MEMORIAM

**Billy Arthur Davenport**, born August 22, 1936, was the first cousin in our clan, and the first son of Charlie and Opal.

He was a bright, smart little tyke and had the cutest name for his mom. I understand he always called her *Hon* instead of *Mom*.

Billy developed leukemia and died in November 1942 at six years of age.

continued from page 6

Santa talked with each and every child and handed them what they had asked for. When his pack was empty, he helped pass out gifts from under the tree. Then with a *Merry Christmas to all*, Santa left us until next year.

Now it was time for fun and games, the smaller ones hunting for somewhere they could play with the toys and be able to keep Uncle Roy and Uncle Kenneth away. (Sorry, guys, maybe if you are real good, Santa will bring you a toy next time.)

It was time for Ann and Cliff to gather up their family and head back to Norman as Ann had to be at work at 11:00 p.m. Don was to spend the night with Charles, but Mike was anxious to get home so he could with his new chemistry set. (Careful now, guy, don't blow anything up!)

Things began to slow down. Over in the corner sat Bessie, Ethel, and May. Were they too full or just too tired to talk? Also with us that night was a new member of the family. Darrell had married Eunice Ann that year — Welcome, Eunice — Shirley was telling us all about her experience in college. The first of the cousins with this experience.

I want to add right now how much we missed our regular Santa who could not be here tonight. Little John, after all those many years of faithful service, it seemed a little odd not to have you here. Of course the part played by Doug Patillo, a friend of Charlie and Opal's, was greatly appreciated.

Mom (Nena Vey) penned this poem a month after Billy's death and during the Christmas Season.



## Billy's Christmas in Heaven

Nena Vey Davenport, 1942

We miss you so much here tonight,  
Your bright eyes beaming with delight.  
Your frightened face as you waited for Santa Claus,  
In your remembrance old Santa will pause.

We have a tree with trimmings and toys,  
Dolls and dishes for the girls, toy guns for boys.  
Gifts for Granddad and Grandmother,  
Aunts, uncles, cousins, and your little brothers.  
And for Mother and Daddy who with heavy heart  
Are wishing for you here to take part.

We're having a happy Christmas here on Earth.  
The glorious celebration of Jesus' birth.  
But in this troubled world of pain,  
We wonder if you'd be happy here again.

What kind of a Christmas are you having today?  
Did you get lots of toys with which to play?  
Did you have a Santa to give you a thrill,  
And a sock by the chimney for Santa to fill?

Every day is like Christmas up there in heaven.  
Up there in peace where you are living  
To hear songs that the angel sings.  
And you chime in; You, wearing golden wings.

I know if we could only hear you say  
You'd say, "I'm so happy up here today.  
It's so peaceful, so wonderful, and so gay.  
And I hope to see all of you here some day."

I'm watching all of you there 'round the tree.  
Laughing and thrilled and full of glee,  
Toys for Darrell, Shirley, and little Don,  
Mae, Charlie Jr., Floyd Gray and Charles John.

Although you don't see me, I'm really there too.  
Don't you feel me here, right here by you.  
I'm happy, so glad and well content.  
This is the merriest Christmas I've ever spent.

So don't be so lonesome for me down there.  
Enjoy your Christmas and then all of you prepare,  
So we can all have a wonderful Christmas that's given  
Up here in this beautiful, glorious heaven.

Darrell  
& Eunice's  
**Annual  
Halloween  
Bash**

Saturday,  
October 30, 2004

For details and more photos,  
go to [www.coxok.com](http://www.coxok.com)

