

Oral Roberts'
LIFE STORY

AS TOLD BY HIMSELF

Illustrations by Eloise Gray

ORAL ROBERTS
Tulsa 1, Oklahoma

WHY I URGED ORAL ROBERTS TO WRITE THIS BOOK

FOUR years ago I heard about a young man from the Southwest whose great faith was beginning to stir America. Learning he was pitching his huge tent in Miami, Florida I boarded an Eastern Airliner and flew to his campaign. When I arrived the great tent was crowded with thousands of people who had come from all over the nation to hear Oral Roberts preach. I was lucky to find one vacant chair at the extreme rear of the tent.

I had decided to myself if I didn't like what I saw I would quietly slip out without anyone knowing I had been there. In a few minutes a young man of about thirty was introduced and I had my first look at the evangelist I had flown down to hear. He was tall, broad-shouldered, black haired and was dressed in a light suit. He strode to the platform with Bible in hand, raised his hands upward and without a word the crowd stood up. He began to lead them in what I later learned was his theme song, "Where the Healing Waters Flow." He had them to shake hands with each other and say, "God Bless You Neighbor" and be seated. Then he announced his text, read it in a quiet, modulated voice, gave his Bible to an associate seated nearby, bowed his head and began to pray. In this prayer he told God he was coming to Him, not in his own name, but in the name of His Son

Jesus Christ of Nazareth. He asked God to bind the forces of evil: sin, disease, and demons that tormented human life and to loose the people and let them go free. Then he spoke to the devil and adjured him to take his hands off God's property, commanding him in the name of the Lord to release his hold upon humanity. As he closed his prayer he thanked God that He had heard him and that he knew God would set the people free that night. Then he said, "Amen."

Immediately following his prayer he took the microphone in his hand and began to preach.

I had been used to preachers starting off rather slow and tediously but Oral Roberts preached from the word, Go. He was a human dynamo charged with God's power. His voice took on a vibrant tone as if it were charged with magnetism. He preached like a man possessed with God. In a few seconds he brought Jesus to that crowd and I am sure every person present saw Jesus so real and close that he could reach out and touch Him.

For the first time in my life I lost sight of time in a religious meeting. The huge crowd sat hushed, fascinated, living the scenes of Bible days the preacher was portraying before them. He made them see, hear, feel and actually experience what he was telling them about God. When he was through, he had no conclusion, he simply quit because he was finished. It seemed he had spoken only a few minutes. I learned later he had preached for an hour and forty minutes!

"Every head bowed," he said and instantly every head in that great audience, including my own, was bowed. He prayed for God to save sinners and not let a one who had heard him preach that night go to hell. Then while all heads remained bowed he asked (or was it a command) every unsaved person in the tent who wanted his prayers to raise their hands, then to stand, then to come down the aisles before him and repeat the sinner's prayer.

When he told the audience to look up and see what God

was doing, I raised my head and saw hundreds of people streaming down the long aisles. About half of them were men. Some were sobbing as they made their way to the front. Without the shadow of a doubt they were convicted of their sins and wanted to be genuinely saved.

I was astonished. I had gone to church all my life but I had never seen such a mass move of sinners toward God before. After praying with these people he sent them to a tent prayer room where personal workers prayed with them further.

He then announced he always put first things first in his meetings. "I never pray for the sick," he said, "until I have led people to Christ to be saved. The saving of a lost soul is God's greatest miracle." Then the healing line was called and he began praying for the healing of the sick. This is when I saw Oral Roberts as he really is. I was sitting two hundred feet from the platform but since it was brilliantly lighted I could see the healing scene real well. The public address system was so perfect I could hear the faintest whisper.

As he prayed for the people he seemed lost in his prayer, completely oblivious of the crowd. His soul was in his voice and the words of his prayer rang with sincerity. He prayed for alcoholics, cripples, blind, deaf and dumb, crossed eyes, goiters, the insane and almost every imaginable affliction. As I saw this scene somehow my mind went back to the days when Jesus was on this earth and laid His hands upon the sick and healed them.

Three hours had passed since I entered the tent. I had gotten off the plane tired and worn. Now I felt refreshed. My chair was no longer hard. I had witnessed with my own eyes the conversion of hundreds of people. I had seen little crippled children walk away healed. I had heard an alcoholic say, "Brother Roberts, what did you do to me?" and he replied, "Nothing, God has healed you, go and serve the Lord." I had seen a young mother clasp her small child in

her arms while her face was wet with tears. Her child's crossed eyes had been pulled together and were now perfectly straight through the prayers of a servant of God.

The next day I met Oral Roberts. I have only one memory of that brief moment spent with him, he made me think of Jesus. I flew back to North Carolina. When I tried to tell my wife and young son, Sherrod Lee, my impressions I almost broke down.

Two months later I took my family to Jacksonville. I wondered if I was just carried away by my emotions. Norma, my wife, Sherrod Lee and my daughter Barbara sat in the meetings and had the same feeling I had. There we saw even larger crowds and often the tent was filled three hours before starting time.

One night following Oral Roberts' sermon on "A Man's Life" I saw one thousand sinners go forward to be saved. I saw a little boy prayed for who was born without a hip socket. Brother Roberts announced he had never prayed for such a case before but would see what the Lord would do. We saw that boy the next night without his crutches walking perfectly normal without a trace of a limp. It seemed like a dream but his mother testified to the entire audience that he was actually healed and his hip fully restored. I had seen the child before and after. I knew his healing was a reality.

From that time I became a changed man. I was president of several corporations and business enterprises, I was on the City Council and was planning to run for Mayor of my city. I was a member of the church and many civic organizations, ordinarily I would not have been impressed with an evangelist in another part of the Nation. But I saw Oral Roberts had God's formula of faith, the message of deliverance for soul, mind and body. He made me want to seek God, to have compassion and faith for the suffering like Jesus, to go out and do something for my generation.

I prevailed upon him to come to Whiteville for one night

and preach at our church. No public announcement was made except once on the radio. Somehow the news got out and by middle of the afternoon our little city of 3800 was the center of interest for miles around. Cars were parked a mile each way from the church. We had to call all the policemen of the city on duty to handle the traffic. By 6:00 P.M. over 4000 people were trying to get in the church which seated only 300!

Since that time I have attended 33 of Oral Roberts campaigns, either whole or part, from coast to coast. I have seen him in his "Glory" when the big tent, seating 12,500, was filled and overflowed with people wanting his prayers, I have seen him when his back was to the wall, like at Amarillo, Texas when the storm ripped the tent to pieces and the critics said he was through. I have seen him when 2200 came forward in one service to be saved in his campaign in Columbia, South Carolina and I have seen him when it seemed no one would be saved. I have seen him cry over little afflicted children as if they were his own and pray until they leaped out of his arms and ran off the platform healed and well. On the other hand when the going was rough and he was opposed on all sides, I have seen him as hard as steel, unrelenting, uncompromising. I have seen Governors, Mayors, Bishops on his platform but his sermon has not changed one iota. In defeat or triumph he never wavers. He believes God has raised him up and he will finish the work and fulfill the cause for which he was born.

I have walked arm in arm with him down the coasts of both oceans washing America's shores and heard him talk of his burdens, his dreams, his mission in life. I have been beside him on horseback as we rode over his farm just outside of Tulsa where his wife and four children live and where he spends his time the few days each month when not engaged in a campaign. I confess he has baffled me. He is so ordinary, so simple, so unassuming in his private life, yet when he gets in the pulpit he becomes another person.

Then I don't see him, invariably I see Jesus. He seems to turn a spotlight on the Savior.

Perhaps this is why I wanted him to write his story with nothing left out. He didn't want to write it. He felt it was not worthy to be put in book form. I knew he had been born a stutterer and, at the age of 17, was bedridden with tuberculosis, that only his mother and father believed he would ever amount to anything. I have talked with his parents in Tulsa and heard them tell how God told them His hand was upon Oral and that he was born to preach the gospel. I had seen people all over America stirred by his ministry, on the air, in the meetings, in his writings. I knew he had risen by faith over his handicaps to become, at age 34, the nation's greatest soul winner, winning over 50,000 souls a year in his meetings. I felt his story should be read by every man, woman and child in America. I was thrilled last month when I flew to his meeting in Portland and he handed me a sheaf of typewritten pages, saying, "Well Lee, you've asked me to write it and here it is. I do not know whether its worth anything or not but it is exactly what happened to me".

I could scarcely wait until I got back to my room. By the time I had read the first three chapters I felt like hugging his neck for he had written it like I hoped he would, with simplicity and clearness, which gift he seems to possess both in his writings and sermons.

I knew part of the story, some of it I had lived with him but as he told of his childhood days and the strange things that had happened to him and the way God had dealt with his soul while he was yet a stammering, stuttering boy, I began to understand some things about him I had wanted to know. When I got to chapter seventeen I couldn't read any further. It brought me to my knees in tears and there in my hotel room I rededicated my life to God and made a new consecration to help take Bible Deliverance to this world. I know little about theology but I am unshaken in my faith

in God and that He had raised up Oral Roberts to reach our generation with the message of Bible Deliverance.

This story will touch the heart strings of every reader. Once you have begun it you will have to finish it. It won't let you alone. It will tug at your heart for many days to come. I envy you for I would like to have again the chance of reading it for the first time.

Lee Braxton
Mayor
Whiteville, North Carolina

CHAPTER 1

THE LAST MILE OF THE WAY

I REACHED the end of the way when I was seventeen. I faced life with a stammering, stuttering tongue and with tuberculosis in both lungs. I had fought a desperate battle and had lost.

When I was sixteen I ran away from home. If I could only get away, I thought, everything would be all right. The end came in less than twelve months. While I was playing in the final game of the Southern Oklahoma basketball tournament, I collapsed and was carried off the gymnasium floor. Blood was spurting from my mouth and I was coughing with every breath. My coach, Mr. Herman Hamilton, picked me up and laid me in the back seat of his car. "You're going home, Oral," he said.

When we got to Ada, Mr. Hamilton knocked on the door. Papa came to the door. "Is this where Oral Roberts' parents live?" he said.

"Yes. Is something wrong?" Papa asked.

"Reverend Roberts, your son has played his last game. I've got him out here in my car," Mr. Hamilton said. "I'll need your help to get him in the house."

They carried me in and I fell across the bed. Looking up at Papa, I said, "Papa, I've gone the last mile of the way."

I lay bedfast one hundred sixty-three days. A thousand

times I cursed the day I was born. My oldest sister, Velma, had died when she was nineteen, an epileptic and with pneumonia. Now the devil was striking at me, the youngest child of Papa's family.

I do not know where people get the idea that sickness is a blessing and is one of the gifts of God to humanity. While I had tuberculosis I was the most miserable person in the world. I coughed and spit up blood and tossed on the bed day and night, not able to sleep more than a few hours at a time. I went as much as forty-eight hours without a wink of sleep. Food lost its taste and I became a pile of skin and bones. My weight dropped from one hundred sixty to one hundred twenty pounds. I was six feet one inch tall, yet weighed only one hundred and twenty pounds.

My friends no longer recognized me, and when they came to see me they said they couldn't stand to look at me. I was put on a diet of sweet milk and raw eggs. For weeks I tried to live on it, but there came a time when I could not even take that.

One day Papa came over to my bed and looked down at me. His chin was quivering. Since the doctor had just been there and given me another examination, I knew Papa knew the verdict. I said, "Papa, what did the doctor say?"

He said, "Son, you are going to be all right."

Something went all over me. I knew by the way he said it that I was not going to be all right.

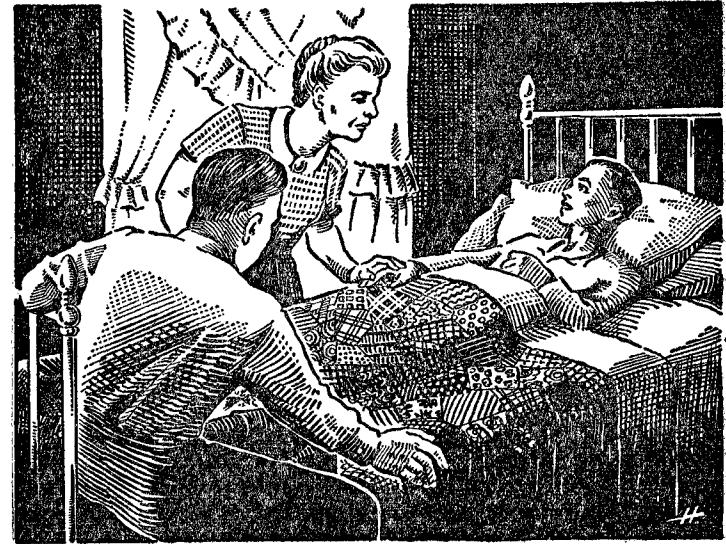
"If I am going to be all right," I said, "why are you crying?"

"Oh, son, you are going to be all right."

"Papa, something is wrong. You are upset. Papa, tell me the truth."

"Son, don't worry yourself. You will get to coughing again. Lie back down now."

"Papa, you've got to tell me. What does this awful pain in my lungs mean? Why do I keep spitting up blood and coughing all the time?"



If I live to be a million years old I will never forget his answer.

"Oral, you have tuberculosis in both lungs."

They had called my brother Vaden, and about that time he ran up on the porch and into the house. I heard him say, "Papa, where is he?"

In a moment he fell across my bed, screaming, "God, put the t.b. on me. I've always been stronger than Oral has. Put it on me, Lord."

I pushed Vaden off my body and told him to stand back. Mama and my sister Jewel came in the room and I saw they were crying. I looked over to the window sill where Papa had my medicine. I reached over, gathered it up in my arms, and said, "Here, Papa, take it."

He said, "What's the matter, Son?"

I said, "Papa, when people take t.b., they don't get well. This medicine isn't going to help me now. If I am going to die, then I will just die."

Papa said, "Son, you've got to take this medicine."

I said, "No, I won't do it."

Mama came over to my bed and held my hand. I looked up at her and remembered that her father had died as a young man and it had been whispered that it was tuberculosis.

"Mama, what did your father die with?"

She shook her head.

"I want you to tell me. Don't put me off now. I want to know."

She said, "Oral, he died with tuberculosis."

I said, "Mama, didn't you say once that one of your sisters died with the same thing that your father died with?"

She said, "Yes, one of my sisters died with tuberculosis too."

I said, "Well, it's in your side of the family then, isn't it?"

She nodded.

It seemed that the whole world came crashing down upon my head. The sun slowly fell from the sky as I faced the end of my dreams. Black despair settled over my soul, and I began to cry. Turning my face to the wall, I let go. I cried so hard I screamed with pain. Papa came over and tried to pull me back across the bed, but I fought him off. I cried until there were no more tears left. My eyes became dry. My lips hard and set. A relative was in the house at this time. When she heard me screaming and crying, she turned and said, "I can't stand it," and ran out of the house.

Every ambition I ever had was crushed in a moment. I felt lost and miserable.

Within a few days I felt death on my body. I wished to die. I didn't want to live. I wanted to die because I didn't want to have t.b. the rest of my life.

During the days that followed, I began to learn some of the queer ideas that people have about God, about religion, about sickness. Nearly everybody who came to see me had a remedy, a philosophy, and a theology. I remember one

day when one of the leading pastors of the city came to visit me. He stayed a few moments and then came over to my bed. He reached down and took my hand in his and said, "Son, be patient. You will just have to be patient with this thing." Then he said a few words of prayer, asking God to make me patient, and went on his way.

He didn't offer prayer to God for the healing of my body. He never gave me any hope that a miracle could save me. He never mentioned the power of faith. He never encouraged me to believe. He left me with his little prayer in which he asked God to make me patient in my afflictions.

I remember how bitter I became. I said to myself, "Be patient. And what will that get me? What will patience do for tuberculosis?"

Had I remained patient with tuberculosis, I would either have been in a sanatorium or in my grave today. Patience does not heal tuberculosis.

Some of the religious people who came to see me told me that the Lord had tracked me down and had put this awful disease upon me for a purpose. One Sunday afternoon the house was full of such people. As usual they were discussing my case. They all agreed that God had put it upon me. Then one of them spoke up and said that if somebody had faith and would pray, the Lord could heal me. Another one said, "How do you know it is God's will to heal him?"

Then they fell into a discussion about its not being God's will to heal my body. I had to lie there and listen to all this. Practically every Sunday I went through the same thing. People discussed my case pro and con. Some believed that God could heal me and some believed that God could not. Practically all of them believed that God had afflicted me.

Yet every time, somebody would speak up and tell me I should get saved. I listened to their conversations with great bitterness in my soul. One Sunday afternoon I got mad. The room was crowded with people and they were all trying to get me saved while in the same breath they were

telling me that God had afflicted me. I raised up off the bed and said, "Papa, I am sick and tired of all this. These people say God put tuberculosis upon me and in the same breath they say that God loves me and wants to save me. Papa, I don't believe it. I don't want to hear any more of it. I don't want to get saved, and these people might as well leave me and let me alone."

These pious people exchanged glances, raised their eyebrows a few times, whispered something to one another, and in a few minutes they were all gone.

The following week I lay in bed thinking about the whole thing. I finally decided that the religion these people had was not deliverance at all. To them, religion was a mental acceptance of life's inequalities. Instead of inspiring me to have faith in God for my deliverance, their religious belief was that I should be calm and patient while disease and other life-destroying forces slowly killed me. They talked out of both sides of their mouth. On the one hand they talked of the great love of God for me and on the other they talked of God's putting sickness upon me. According to them, both sickness and salvation came from the Lord and there was nothing I could do about it.

They had come to accept the afflictions of life as the will of God, and they didn't expect the Lord to change things and bring deliverance. If one had enough religion, he could endure. If he didn't, he should get more religion.

I revolted against this wicked idea and cried out, "If God put this on me, I don't want to serve Him."

God always has someone He can trust and someone He sends to help those that lose their way in life. In my case it was my mother. One day she came to my room, sat down on my bed beside me, and began talking. She said that God had spoken to her about me before I was born, that I was His, and that God's hand was upon my life.

I said, "Mama, all these people say God put tuberculosis upon me."

She said, "Oral, God didn't afflict you."

I said, "Well, Mama, if God didn't, who did?"

She said, "The devil did, Son. He is trying to destroy your life."

I said, "Mama, why is he trying to destroy me?"

She said, "When God calls someone, Son, the devil always tries to destroy him, but if you will give your heart to Jesus and have faith in the Lord, He will raise you up from this bed and heal you."

That was the first time I ever had any idea that God would heal my body. Mama was the first person who put that feeling of hope in my heart.

My sister Jewel came to visit us about a week later. She came straight to my bed and looked down on me. She said she had been praying and seeking God. Suddenly, with tears in her eyes, she said, "Oral, I believe God is going to heal you."

I didn't say anything in reply but hope leaped in my heart. I can still feel it right now—that inspiring touch of hope she gave me that day.

From that time on the devil was never able to take away the faith that I found was in my heart.

Papa, Mama, and Jewel had a conference and agreed that God was able to heal me. They believed He was going to heal me. Papa decided to go into action. He wrote letters to people he knew had faith in the Lord's power to heal: churches, preachers, Christian individuals. In all of his letters he would say, "Pray for Oral to be healed."

About midnight one night a car drove up in our front yard and we heard someone say, "Brother Roberts! Brother Roberts! This is the Lindsay saints."

They were from Lindsay, Oklahoma, from the Full Gospel Church there. They were old-time friends of Papa and Mama. When they got out of the car, the men hugged Papa and the women hugged Mama. They stood rejoicing and praising God.



They said, "Where is Oral?"

Papa said, "Right in here."

They all gathered around my bed, and I looked up into their bright faces. Every one of them had a shining countenance. Every one of them stood with hope in his face and every one of them knew how to pray.

I had heard many tall prayers during the weeks I had been sick. Some pastors had come and prayed their little prayers, but they never left anything with me. They never stirred me or inspired my soul. But these people from Lindsey had something. They all gathered around my bed, lifted up their hands, and began to pray. I enjoyed their prayers because they prayed with hope, with joy, and with faith.

I didn't get healed. I know now I could have been, but I was so thrilled with their praying and with the joy that I saw in their faces that I just lay back drinking it all in.

When they left about daybreak, I said, "Papa, when I get religion, I want the kind those people have."

CHAPTER 2

VADEN AND I

VADEN and I were the youngest of five children and since there were only two years between us, we were raised almost like twins. When we were small boys, Papa would go away a lot of the time to hold revival meetings. One summer he was away for several weeks. The people did not support him very well and he had not been able to send money home for Mama to buy groceries. Our meager supply kept dwindling away. One evening Mama came out on the porch and called Vaden and me and said, "Boys, come here a minute." We went up to the porch and she said, "Boys, we don't have anything to eat tonight."

Vaden spoke up and said he thought Papa should come home from his revival and take care of us, but I thought it was wonderful for Papa to be preaching so I took up for him.

Presently Mama said, "Boys, we are going visiting for a while tonight."

We went up the street to visit old Sister Campbell, a widow woman who had several children. We got there just as they were sitting down to supper. Sister Campbell said, "Oh, Sister Roberts, you are just in time to have supper with us." But Mama's pride was too great.

She said, "Oh, no, we are not hungry." It is a good thing

she didn't ask Vaden and me because we would have taken her up.

About nine o'clock Mama said she had to go, and Sister Campbell suggested we have prayer. When they got down to pray, I knew what was coming. Mama got shouting happy and started praising the Lord for being so good to us. About that time Vaden rammed his elbow in my ribs and said, "He ain't been very good to me." I told him he had better hush. On the way home he said, "Mama, why did you pray like that? You know God isn't very good to us. We haven't got anything to eat. Papa is gone off holding a revival and you wouldn't even let us eat at Sister Campbell's tonight."

I turned to Vaden and said, "Now, Vaden, you hush. God will take care of us. You just hush and you will see what the Lord will do."

I was not a Christian, but I didn't have a doubt that God would take care of us. Those words just came right out of my heart. When we got home, Vaden ran up on the porch to open the door. He said, "Mama, there is something behind this door. I can't open it."

I ran up to help him and together we pushed the door open and flipped on the light. We looked down, and there was the biggest box of groceries we had ever seen.

Mama began to shout and rejoice and thank the Lord for being so good to us. She said, "Boys, pick up that box of groceries and put it in here on the kitchen table."

We did. Vaden and I dived in to pull out all those good things to eat. Vaden reached down in the corner of the box and pulled out a great big country ham and held it up for us to see. I pulled out a sack of Irish potatoes and a sack of flour. Pretty soon we had the whole table covered. Mama took one look, reached up, and pulled an apron off the wall and put it on. She got a sharp knife out of the drawer and began to slice ham, peel potatoes, and make bread. Near midnight she said, "Come on, boys, it's ready."

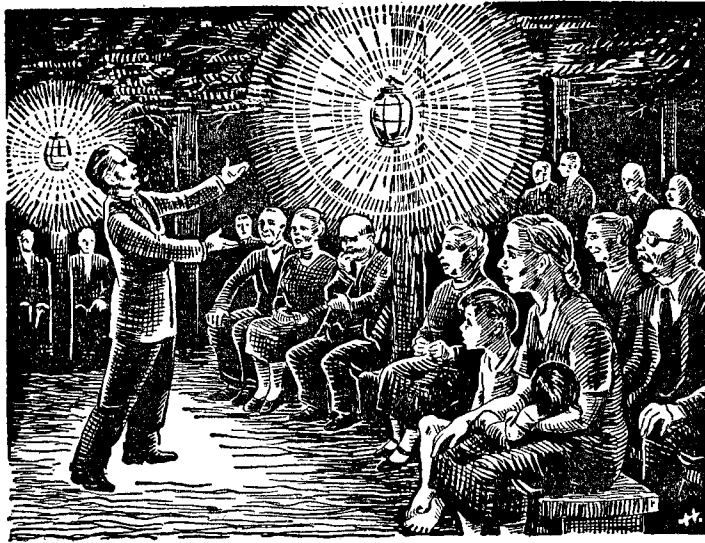
She had a big platter of country ham on the table, a plate of hot biscuits, and a bowl of Irish potatoes. As we began to eat, it seemed like that ham melted in our mouths. The biscuits began to disappear. Right in the middle of it, while I had my mouth full of country ham, I turned and said to Vaden, "See there, Vaden, I told you God would take care of us."

He grinned and said, "Yeah, He sure did, didn't He?"

In the summertime Papa used to take Vaden and me with him when he preached at brush arbor meetings. In those days, people out in the country would build a big brush arbor and announce services, which they called a "protracted" revival meeting. I guess you know what a brush arbor is. They would cut down young trees and trim them up for poles and stand them up in the ground. They would take smaller poles and make a lattice of them on top which they would cover with branches of trees. Then they would take blocks of wood and put planks of lumber on top of them for seats. Kerosene lanterns would be hung up on the posts and there you had a brush arbor. It could be built as big as necessary for the crowds and it cost nothing to build.

People would come from all over the county to these meetings, bringing their whole families with them. In those days they had large families, and the mothers would bring big quilts and make pallets for the children. They called these heavy quilts "comforters." Mama would take a big comforter and spread it out between the benches and tell Vaden and me to lie down, be good, and go to sleep. All over the brush arbor mothers would tell their children to lie down, behave themselves, and go to sleep.

People said that Vaden and I were the meanest children in the county. We were preacher's children and they declared we were mean. Vaden and I never denied this dubious honor, but if we were, we learned all we knew from the deacons' children. They taught us all the tricks of the trade.



One night Papa was up preaching. Vaden and I were on our pallet minding our own business when a little boy reached over, grabbed our pallet, and gave it a yank. It made us mad. We turned around and told him he had better quit doing that. He kept on. After a while Vaden whirled around and said, "You better quit that."

The little boy jerked his hand back, but just as soon as we turned our heads, he yanked our pallet again. Vaden said, "You better quit that." But he kept on tantalizing us.

Papa was preaching away. In a few moments the little boy reached over and gave another big yank at our pallet. Vaden said, "If you touch our pallet again, I will cut your ear off."

The little boy shook his head and whispered, "You haven't got the nerve." He didn't know Vaden like I did.

Vaden and I had just got settled again when we felt the pallet being yanked out from under us. Vaden whirled around, caught the little boy by the wrist, and yanked him

over on our pallet. When Papa heard a new shout in the camp, Vaden had his knife out and was cutting the little boy's right ear off. The little boy was screaming at the top of his voice. Papa stopped his preaching and turned to locate the wild sound. When he saw it was coming from our direction, he knew what had happened. Now I wasn't doing a thing. I was just holding the little boy.

Papa looked over at us and said, "Boys!" Then the roof fell in. When he said "Boys!" I knew the judgment had



dawned. He said, "Boys, get up off that pallet. Come up here and sit on the mourner's bench." Vaden and I got up and walked down the aisle while the other children laughed and snickered at us. We sat down on the altar bench and awaited the verdict of the judge. In a moment he pronounced the sentence. "When I get you two boys home," Papa said, "I will tend to you."

Papa believed in the stars and stripes. He put on the

stripes and Vaden and I saw the stars. When he got us home he took down his big razor strap. It was made in two pieces. When he got through with us, we believed it had a thousand pieces. Vaden is a good boy, though.

One day Papa sawed a big cottonwood tree down in our back yard. He left a nice stump for Vaden and me to play on. The next day as I came around the house I found Vaden driving some nails in the stump. I walked up.

"Whatcha doin'?"

"Cantcha see?"

"Driving some nails, eh?"

"Yeah."

"Let me drive some."

"I just started driving some myself."

"Aw, come on, let me drive some."

"Get away."

"Aw, Vaden, come on. Let me drive a few."

"No, I told you to get away, I just started driving some myself."

"Aw, come on, let me drive just a few."

"Get away!"

"All right. If you don't let me drive any, you can't drive any."

"Get away!"

Putting my hand on the stump where he was driving, I said, "You can't drive any more until you let me drive some."

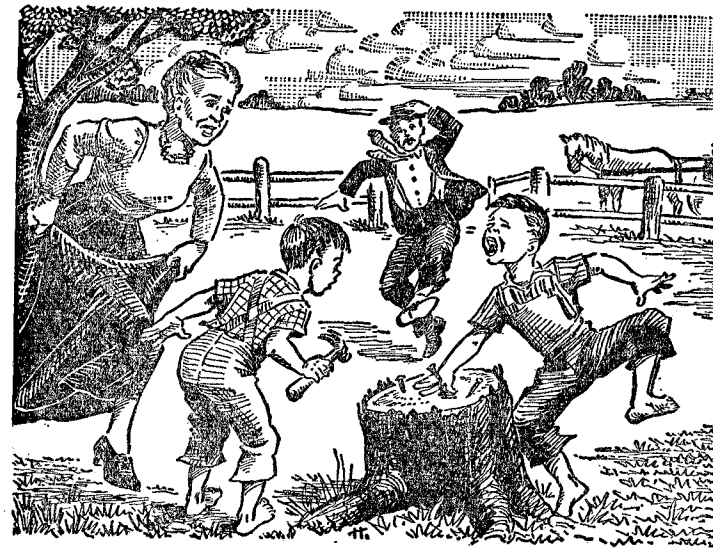
Looking at me, he said, "If you don't get your hand off, I'll nail you to this stump."

I said, "Go ahead. You haven't got the nerve."

He promptly nailed my right hand to the stump.

When he saw what he had done, he jumped up and down and began to holler. When I saw what he had done, I began to jump up and down and holler. Mama heard us and came running out of the house. When she saw what was done, she began to jump up and down and holler. About that

time one of my father's brothers came riding down the country road in his buggy. He heard us shouting at the top of our voices. He didn't know what was wrong, so he jumped out and ran up and found that I was nailed to the stump. He began to laugh. He laughed so hard I thought he had forgotten me completely. Pretty soon he came to himself and took the hammer and pulled the nail out and turned the victim free. Vaden is a good boy, though.



CHAPTER 3

THE KING AND THE STUTTERER

WHEN I graduated from grade school to Junior High I was elected king of the school. I was to be presented with the queen in the final assembly program at the end of the school term.

I went home and told Papa I had to have some new clothes. He didn't bat an eye. He just gave me that hungry preacher's look, and I knew by that, the offerings from the church that week were too small to buy new clothes for me.

I got a job selling newspapers after school. I would get my roll of papers behind the newspaper plant, run as fast as I could down the streets of Ada crying at the top of my voice: "Ada *Evening News*—three cents!" I sold enough that spring to buy me a completely new wardrobe: a ninety-eight-cent pair of tennis shoes, a sixty-nine-cent pair of overalls, and a forty-nine-cent shirt. On the final morning I walked into my home room with this new outfit on. I said, "Miss Henderson, I'm ready for you to put the crown on my head!"

She took one look at me and said, "Oral, you had better run home and get dressed!"

I said, "Miss Henderson, I'm dressed."

She said, "Oh all right, you'll have to do. Now in a few

minutes you'll hear a little signal. That means you are to meet the queen out in the hall."

Mary Lou White, daughter of a rich family, had been elected queen. I didn't know how she would be dressed. Had I known, it wouldn't have mattered because I had on the best I had. When I got out in the hall and saw her coming toward me, she was dressed in a beautiful white satin evening gown! And me in my overalls!

I gave her my arm, and we marched into the assembly room at the sound of music. We were crowned and presented. After the queen made her bow, I made mine. I was every inch a king.

One of the tragedies of my boyhood was that I was a stutterer. I stammered all my life. It was an awful thing, and yet it had its lighter moments. When I got excited I just couldn't talk at all. However, when I was by myself I could talk real well. When I would fall in love with a little girl, I would go off to myself and make up a nice

