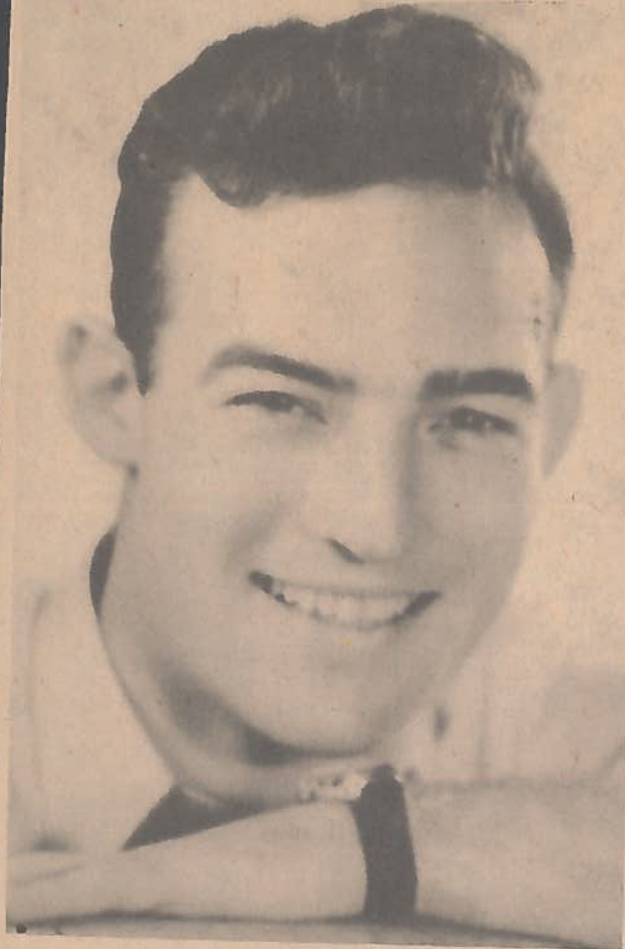


6-17-92
**Bethinking of
Old Orleans**

C.W.Lattin • County Historian



Vol. IV

"ACROSS THE MILES TO FATHER DEAR"

No. 23

The following is a letter written by William J. Barnum (1916-1944) to his father Everett Barnum of Gaines for Fathers Day in June 1942. "Bill" Barnum graduated from Albion High School in the Class of 1934 and then attended Cornell University. Before being drafted into the World War II in July 1941 he taught agriculture at Lavonia High School for one year. He was killed in action in July 1944 just five months prior to when his brother Gene met with the same demise. I'd like to thank Janice Barnum Thaine for sharing her brother's letter which expresses so much love for his father.

Across the Miles to Father Dear

In spite of miles between us, Father, I am there in thought with you,
Telling you of my affection, Ever deep and ever true;
Wishing, too, as always, DAD, All the best life has to give
To you who did so much toward making My life happier to live.

With Lots of Love, Bill

"My dear Dad,

First thing off...the sentiments expressed in the little verse on this card are not reserved for one special day called "Father's Day"...I'd like to say the same thing every day of the year, and if I did that, it would always be just as sincere and genuine, as it is on this one day set aside for you.

It's funny how a guy starts to thinking back...and how he remembers certain little things that happened...Some of these things seemed comical when they happened; some of them seemed serious. Some of them appeared important; others didn't seem to amount to much. It's fun to look back upon all of them, however, and to recall the contribution each experience has made to me.

Do you remember, Dad, one cold day a long, long time ago when you were drawing stove wood, to the farm house where grandma Barnum then lived? You jumped off the wagon, and thinking, that I'd help you, I tried to lift a big chunk over the rack. Just about then the darn thing got away from me and hit you right square on what is now the bulls eye of your bald spot. And then I can vividly recall one Fall when you were taking the heads out of barrels...A telephone call came for you and Mother and I came to the barn to tell you about it. Just as we got to the barn door, you hit your hand with the hatchet, and you said something that sounded like "Darn" (and probably was).

Then one time we had a candidate preacher at our house, and one Sunday morning he found you preaching a sermon to one of the horses which had crowded into the stall with another one. That sermon must have been a good one, for they made you a Deacon soon after.

Everytime I see a kid learning to drive a car, I'm reminded of one time when I tore around the barn in our Model T and ripped a spike clear into a new tire. Most fathers would have walloped the daylights out of me for that but you didn't. Instead you and I sat down on the running board, and you put your arm around me and explained how tires cost money, and how hard it was for you and Mother to buy tires for us. I've thought about that a lot of times since then, especially when I got to buying tires for my own car.

I'll bet you've forgotten all about the time you ran your head through a hornets nest down in the Ben Davis orchard, and then went back to see what stung you. Boy, you looked like a guy with three double chins when you came to the house, and all of us thought you were playing a joke on us.

Nineteen years ago next week, Dad, you and Gene and I took a load of livestock to the stockyards in Buffalo. It rained hard all that morning, and the old canvas top on the old Ford truck wasn't exactly rainproof either. But we had a swell time together just the same. On the way home we stopped at the hospital and saw Mother and our new little sister, Eida.

After that came the fun trips around the fair circuit and culminating in the big trip to the State Fair when we slept in the car. Man, but those were fun and years later when I took my F.F.A. boys to Syracuse and we slept in the comfortable barracks, I wished I could be right back there sleeping in the Model T with Dad and Gene.

Oh, there are so many pleasant and happy things to remember Dad. The Christmas we found a pony in the barn. Those married men against single men baseball games, when "MY DAD" was the all important catcher; the fun we had in the band, my departure for college, the Farm and Home Week we had together, and finally that morning last July when we said "SO LONG" in front of the Court House as I left for service in the Army. These are just a few of the things Dad, but every one of them has left a lasting impression on me.

I've often thought lately, about a story you told Mr. Hoy one time when we were drawing in hay. Another hired man had had some boys of his own and when you told him: (Mr. Hoy) that some day Gene and I would be big enough to help you, he had said "Hell when they are big enough to be of any good, they'll move out." I never thought that observation would prove to be a prophesy Dad. Maybe some day things will be different. Let's Hope!

Love, Bill