

**[Mrs. Mary Jennings]**

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[?] Folkstuff - Rangelore [?] Words

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by

Mrs. Florence Angermiller, P. W.

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From F. C. by

Mrs. Gussie Hale, P.W.

Early Day Tales and Experiences UVALDE COUNTY, DISTRICT #10 ]

MRS. MARY JENNINGS.

I was born in Golied County, in 1853. I dont remember much about my father as my mother and him parted when I was small. My father's name was Jack Holt. My mother, before her marriage, was Frances Ann Vivian and she was closely related to the Vivian family of Carrizo Springs.

"I have had plenty experience with the Indians and have heard my mother tell things that happened in her young days that was even more thrilling than my own experience. When my mother was twelve years old, she kept house for her brothers, as her mother died when she was small, and she took her place as a home-maker. Along about that time, one

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of her older brothers was moving to the settlement where she was living. He had two other men helping him move. One day they had camped for supper and her brother told the men there were Indians close to camp, but they ridiculed him. So he said well, if you can stay I can to. They made up the campfire and when they did, the Indians come up in buffalo robes and killed one of the other men and my uncle. They shot the third man twice in the breast, but he crawled 17 miles with two arrows in him till he reached the settlement where he got treatment. He would lay up in daytime and crawl at night.

“This same day, that my uncle was killed, five Indians went to the house where my mother was. My uncles had gone off early that morning about thirty miles away, to get a beef they wanted. C10 - [?] 41 - Texas

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So along about nine o'clock, my mother said she looked out and saw these Indians. She said she wouldn't allow herself to get frightened. She had two dogs. One was named Jailer and one Joler. She said the old dogs had almost human sense. So she said to them, 'Jalier, Joler, you see those men.' and they would growl. My uncles always kept plenty of guns so she took two guns and put in each side of the door with the barrel sticking out like someone had them ready to shoot if the Indians come close enough. Then she got inside and talked so loud, that it sounded like the house was full of grown men. The Indians stood for awhile and watched but finally left and then come back again. While she was thinking what to do next, they left again and didn't come back.

“In a little while, a white boy came with a note and was in the house before she knew he was around. She said he almost scared her to death. She asked him what he meant by scaring her like that and he gave her a note. She told him she couldn't read. Then he told her, her brother had been killed by the Indians and his parents wanted her to come at once with him to their house. She left with the young boy and went to his parents. And they searched three days before they found her brother's body.

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"I remember the Civil War some, but I was very young at that time. After the war, the Southern men organized what they called the minute company. The North had an organization they called the militia. They would go into the homes of the Southern people and call the man out and shoot him down, or take him off and hang him.

"During the war and afterward too, mother made clothes and we had to help spin and weave. We used to make pretty dresses from the cloth we spun. We would dye part of the thread with copperas, and then there was a weed that grew there called indigo. We would gather that weed and put it in a large vessel and boil it and let it cool and stand for awhile. Then we would churn it back and forth for a long time and let it set for awhile and then 'dreen' the top off and take the settlings and let them dry in the sun. That is what we used for dye also. We could make stripes and other designs.

"I remember one time my brother and I went to church, while mother went across the country about ten miles to get some horses. Coming from church some of the neighbors asked us to go home with them. They said my mother would be back there for dinner, and for me and my brother to come on home with them from church. I didn't want to go, for I felt like we should go home, but my brother insisted and we went. Well, I was riding a horse I had never been on before. A young lady and her beau was riding in front of us. The young lady's saddle blanket slipped and scared my horse. He jumped and threw me off and I fell on my wrist and dislocated it and ruined my new six-dollar parasol and my new spring hat. They took me home and set my wrist and it got all right.

"Not long after that, I went with my mother, brother, uncle and aunt to gather grapes. My uncle and mother always gathered grapes in the fall and made about two barrels of wine each. Girls, those days, were not allowed to climb. But I saw some grapes a little way up on the vine and I asked my mother if I might sit up on that vine and gather those grapes. She told me I could, and about the time I got started, here come my brother and gave me a shove. I threw one leg over the vine to keep from falling, but I was so afraid my uncle would see me sitting astride that grapevine, I went to jump over and fell on my

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right shoulder and broke it badly. That ended the grape gathering that day. Mother took me home and got a big ball of thread that we had spun and put it under my arm and then put it in a sling. Then she sent to town and got some 4 opodeldock and rubbed me with it. It was just as cooling as ice. But it was months after that before I could use that arm and shoulder.

“I was always getting hurt when I was a child. Once my uncle made a molasses mill, and we made molasses. My mother fed the mill and my aunt would catch the cage as it came out of the mill. On the fourth day of July, my mother and uncle wanted to go to a celebration they were having, so my aunt said she and I would run the mill. Well, we started to work and I was feeding the mill and caught my finger in it and almost cut it off. My aunt stopped the horse just in time to save my finger. It was badly mashed and cut and she took me to the house and tied it up and put so sugar and camphor on it and it grew back.

“Not long after that, my grandfather came to visit us from Missouri. He rode a big, gray horse and he was such a pretty thing, we children used to love to ride him and just as many as could get on, could ride for he was so gentle. Well, we were so glad to have our grandfather visit us, one day a cousin and myself were running to the house to see who could get to him first and I stumbled over something and fell and broke my shoulder over again. It was a long, long time again before I could use it.

“When I was about nine years old the doctor told us we must travel for my mother's health. We landed on the Leone River in Uvalde County in 1862. We stopped on the John Hill ranch and stayed there about four years. The Indians made regular raids all the time, and always on moonlight nights.

“Once, the Indians came close to our house, but on the other side of the river. My mother was a widow with four children and she told us all to come in the house and keep quiet, that she saw the Indians. My 5 two uncles and three or four hired men had gone out that

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morning to catch some wild, mustang horses. Mother was brave about it, she put on one of the boy boy's hats and jackets, took a gun and went outside where the Indians could hear her. She would holler back like she was talking to men in the house, 'Don't come yet, John. Wait awhile, Bill, till they cross that river then we will got 'em.' She said she thought two or three times they were going to come across on the foot log but they never crossed the river. Instead, they went on down and killed one of my mother's calves and cased it.

“The way they did this, they would take the hide off of the calf without cutting it down the center — just as we skin squirrels by 'peeling' the animal from the tail on back over the head. Then they cut the meat up and put it back in the hide, and that is what they used to call casing a calf.

“Then they went to her bee hives and ate all the honey they could and scattered the rest of the honey and bees all over the place. After awhile, my uncles came in, but mother didn't tell them till they had got the wild, mustang horses in the pen. Then she told them about the five Indians she had seen. They said they had warned her that morning that the Indians were in the country and that she had better keep the children in the house.

“These same Indians went on down the country and captured a white woman, her baby and little boy. They killed the baby and threw it in some brush close to the house. But they took the mother and little boy on with them. A posse of men followed them, and one night they camped right close to the Indians and when the Indians saw the campfire, they fired on the white men and told them if they got the woman and little boy they would sure fight for them. The Indians had picked up 6 more of their men and the white men were badly outnumbered and they never got the woman and little boy. My uncles always said there was a white man leading the Indians.

“In a little while after that, we moved from the Leona River to Pendencia Creek about thirty-five miles east of Eagle Pass. It was a wild country, oh my! My mother had been sick when we first moved there and she could barely walk with a stick. Mother had lots of stock

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and had sent them on ahead of us. A man named Bill Bruton was foreman of mother's outfit and he was her nephew. One of my uncles , Tryon Vivian , had given Bill a big, white horse and had trained him to understand when he talked to him.

"Bruton come in one morning and said, 'Aunt Ann, can't you go down to the stock Pens? I want you to look the cattle over and see how many you want to sell. We have a lot of fat cattle.' Mother said she would try and she told me to give her a hoe handle that was laying in the yard. She took it and walked on down to the stock-pens , they decided to saw some of the cow's horns off, so they sent one of the boys to the house after the saw. When he started back with it, my little baby brother, about three years old, wanted to go with him so he took him along. Well, when they got there and started to saw the horns, my cousin, Bill Bruton, told the old fellow that drove the chuck-wagon out there, to take his six-shooter and lay it up somewhere where it would be out of his way while he was sawing horns. About that time they looked over the hill and saw about a hundred Indians coming straight for those stock-pens. Of course, Bruton called for his six-shooter, but the men was so scared he forgot where he had put it and couldn't find it. Then Bruton called for an old, Mexican man that had been with mother for years to come and take mother home. But mother was looking for her baby. He had crawled up and was lying 7 on a board across the top of the gate. Mother and Bruton grabbed for him at the same time, and just as they got him down, an arrow hit the ground right under him. Bruton had hitched Billie, the gray horse, to the fence but someone had cut the bridle reins and he ran off. By this time, the old Mexican and my mother and little brother had gotten well on their way home, and in a few minutes reached home safely. Bruton was still there without a gun. He looked for Billie and he was away off just looking on. So Bruton hollered, 'Billie, God d— you, come here.' Well, it was a pain for Billie to face those Indians but he bowed that neck and came galloping up to my cousin. He jumped in the saddle and run to the house and told me to bring him mother's shot-gun. He took the gun and made for his home which was about a mile away. It was a rock house, just being finished. He wanted to see about his men, and sure enough when he reached his place, the Indians were there and had his men

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surrounded. He turned loose on them with that shot-gun and they ran. He ran into the house then, and there was a fire in the fire place. He had a lot of cartridges in boxes in the house and he threw several boxes in the fire. When they began to explode, the Indians thought the house was full of armed men and left. But they had killed a Mexican who was cutting tall grass for a neighbor of ours who was building a house. This Mexican was cutting grass down near our stock-pens and the Indians just run upon him suddenly and killed him.

"I remember my uncle, Tryon Vivian, was a fine man and had he lived , my life would have been different in later years. I was his favorite of all his nieces. When he was quite a young man, the gold rush in California was on and he went there and made a fortune. After he made his fortune, he came back to Texas and stopped at San Antonio.

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He married a beautiful, young girl there, her name was Miss Adams. He had been in San Antonio about four years and decided to go back to Nevada, California. So he wrote my mother to be ready that he was coming to take her and we children with them. Mother was all excited and wanted to go. It was close to Christmas time and she went to work and cooked up pies, cakes and all kinds of good things to eat till she had the old safe full. But in the meantime, my uncle had gone across to Old Mexico and bought a big bunch of fine horses and brought them over to his ranch. Well, some Mexican bandit bandits followed him across and had slipped up to his ranch and was in the pens where he had the horses, ready to steel them. When my uncle and his men heard the commotion, they hitched their horses in the brush close by and slipped up on the bandits and got the drop on them, and took their guns. They put the guns up by a tree and went on about their business. I will never understand what made my uncle do it but he left those bandits and they got their guns. So of course, they started shooting at my uncle and his men. One old fat Mexican shot my uncle and broke his arm and back, and after that, my uncle grabbed his pistol and shot the Mexican. But he had a silver dollar in his shirt pocket and the bullet hit this dollar and it turned and the shot didn't hurt him. That is what he told the rest of the cowboys

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when they caught him. He didn't last long after that. Those cowboys cut his head off right there and stuck it up on a post for the rest to look at. My uncle only lived an hour after he was shot, but he talked to the last telling the other boys what to tell his wife and my mother.

“When I was seventeen years old, I was married in Eagle Pass to a school teacher by the name of John Johnson. That is, he told me his name was John Johnson. It was in January 1870. After we were 9 married, we lived in Carrizo Springs and he got seventy-five dollars a month for teaching school. He was never good to me and about four years after we were married, he left me with two small children. He came in one day and told me he was going back to Mississippi where he had come from, that he had a letter from his uncle saying his father had died and they wanted him to come home to help straighten up the estate as he was the oldest child. I told him to go on , so he left and I didn't hear from him any more. But he was killed several years later.

“After that I went back to my mother and lived with her seven years till I met and married Mr. Jennings. It was funny how I met him. One morning, I was washing aprons for my two children, when a man came dashing up to the gate and says, Good morning, does Charley Bruton live here?' I told him no, across the river. He told me later that he said to himself as he rode off, if she is single she is mine. That afternoon I went over to Charley Bruton's to try on a dress Mrs. Bruton was making for me. So when I got ready to come home, Charley and my future husband came home with me. Things went on like this and one day my mother wanted someone to kill a cat. She sent for Charley to come and kill it and he was gone so Jennings came instead. After that, he would come over every night and rope the calves off for me when I went to milk. One evening, he threw the calf rope over me and said, 'I've got you now.' I said, “No, you aint,' and threw the rope off. He said, 'Well I will get you!' Then he propose proposed marriage and I accepted, and we got married shortly afterward. It was August 30, 1878.

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“Mr. Jennings was an ex-ranger and when he went to Eagle Pass, Mr. Miller, a ranchman there, wanted him to go up the trail, but he told Mr. Miller he had seen so much murder and blood-shed he didn't want to go. In his young days before he was a ranger, he was an engineer back 10 in Missouri. He had run the train from Wabash to Saint Louis. So he took a job to drive a train over into old Mexico and he was the first man to ever take a train across the Rio Grande into Mexico. He said he thought he would never get across as the train was loaded with iron. But he soon had to quit driving the train to Mexico, as he had a bad stomach and the doctors told him he would die if he did not stop drinking the water over there.

“While we were living between Eagle Pass and Carrizo Springs, I went out to milk one night, as my husband was gone and I didn't expect him back. But he came back before I had finished milking and told me he would milk the other two cows. I sat down on some logs and waited till he had finished. I suppose that is where the centipede got into my clothes although I never did see it, nor did I feel it then. After we had finished milking and gone to the house, I began to feel chills coming on and after going to bed, I couldn't get warm. Next morning, I noticed a red spot on my breast, but didn't think much about it. My husband went back to Eagle Pass to work and was away for several days. I was alone with my children and about noon that day, I passed into unconsciousness. The children went for a neighbor woman and she came and then they sent for my mother. When mother got there, she got a team and hack and took me to Carrizo Springs to a doctor. When we got there he was gone. So she turned back and went home. Next morning, we started/ out ag again and this time it was to Eagle Pass. We met my husband on the way over there and he went back with us. He took me to the doctor and the doctor said it was a centipede. He worked with me for two days and nights and I got a little better and they took me home. After I had been home a week or two, the bite turned perfectly black. In a week or two after that, a piece of flesh dropped out of my breast that you 11 could have put a hen egg in.

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“After that we moved to Mexico, but to a different part of the country to where Mr. Jennings had been working, when he was running the train. Mr. Jennings run a mill over there, that is, a water mill. He ground corn and wheat on this mill. It was while we were there that my two youngest children took cholera and the oldest died in the evening and the baby that night. They wouldn't let us bring them out of Mexico to bury them. It was terrible but we had to bury them over there. We left Mexico then and moved back to Pendencia Creek.

“My husband used to tell me things that happened while he was in ranger service. He said one time he was at a house where the old man's first wife had died and he had married again and he also had a married daughter living with him. Well, the two women had walked off down in a little field close to the house. While the women were down there the men saw some Indians slipping up on them. So the old man told his son-in-law to run to them, but he said no, he was afraid to go, afraid the Indians would kill him. So my husband said he had to go fight the Indians off of the women and bring them back to the house. He said after it was all over, the old man told his son-in-law he felt like taking him by the seat of the pants and throwing him out the back door.

“He said once at Llano they were in a little battle with the Indians, and he shot the old chief. The rest of the Indians didn't seem to know their chief was wounded and they / left him. My husband had two other men with him. One was a half-breed Indian and the other a white man named Jack. So they went up to where/ the old chief was and pulled the blanket off [?] him. He wasn't dead, and no one would finish him. Finally, the half-breed said, 'Turn your backs ,' and he shot him and killed him. Then Jack said he wanted his scalp to send to his mother back in the east.

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My husband said he told him he could have it, that he certainly didn't want it. But he took the chief's big, dun horse. He said he helped clean up this country from Austin to the Rio Grande.

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“Once he was coming from Llano up this way and the Indians were running him and they shot him in the breast. But he stayed with his horse and got away from them till he got close to a widow woman's home and he became unconscious and fell from his horse. The woman and her daughter came out and icked him up and carried him inside and put him to bed and doctored him till they got the blood stopped. They kept him till he was well and able to go again. He said one morning after he had gained consciousness, the girl came in to bring his breakfast and he noticed she was barefoot, with one foot all tied up. He asked her why her foot was tied up like that and she said, 'When you fell from your horse and we went out to bring you in, I stepped on a piece of glass and cut my foot badly! He said he took a five-dollar bill from his pocket and gave it to her and told her to buy her some shoes.

“We moved from Pendencia Creek to Uvalde in '96. My husband had been an invalid for about seven months. He was crippled with rheumatism. Well, I had to wash to make a living, for my husband, self and children. I liked a neighbor to Aunt Edie Fenley and she was sure a dear friend and neighbor. [?], her daughter, used to keep my baby while I washed for a living. My husband died in 1918 during the World War, and I have lived here ever since.

“We have four children living they are; Vinnie of Alpine, Viola of Portland, Arizona; Myrtle of San Antonio and Malinda of North Uvalde.”

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