

My great grandparents were born in Germany and moved to Russia near Caslov, a Crimean city near the Black Sea in Russia. Their names were Bochmann. They moved from Russia to Germantown, Pennsylvania and later migrated to Illinois. The daughter of Peter and Anna Bochmann married George Wilson who was my father's father. Then my father married Elizabeth Brooks and they moved from Illinois to Nebraska where my father worked on farms and we lived in a sod house on the Brook Ranch north of Kearney, Nebraska.

When I was about four years old we moved to Clay Center, Nebraska where we lived until about 1901. My father and a man by the name of Blevins fixed up a covered wagon with a stove and sleeping accommodations and drove a team of white mules, led a saddle horse beside the covered wagon and drove south to Indian Territory (which later became the State of Oklahoma). They were looking for and hoping to buy some cheap farm land, but it was not cheap enough for the money they had at that time. So my father settled in a little town of Lamont, Oklahoma and bought the furniture and fixtures of a small hotel. He sent for his family and we came via railroad train. At that time I was between 13 and 14 years of age. I went to school in Lamont.

There were four saloons in this little town. After I had been there a short time I managed to get a job washing spittoons at the saloons. This was a job I could do as I got up early in the morning before school and I would clean the spittoons and stack them at the back door as these saloons all had high fences around the back yards in order to take care of the empty beer cases. The bartender would set the spittoons at the back door at night so I could wash them up the next morning. I had to carry the water in a large wooden candy bucket from the town pump to wash the spittoons. Now and then I would find a coin or two in the spittoons which was always a big day for me. I was paid 50¢ a week for washing those spittoons. In addition, I got a job emptying chambers and carrying out empty beer bottles from a larger hotel in the same town. So I managed to make a little money as I went along.

After living in Lamont for about 18 months we moved to a smaller town north of Lamont called Deer Creek. There was only one saloon in this town. I managed to get a job there and after school hours I worked in a grocery store for 50¢ a week plus a bottle of strawberry pop now and then and some cheese and cookies.

When we moved to Deer Creek all we could afford was a very small one room house which was probably about 30 feet by 15 feet. I had two brothers younger than myself and we all lived in this one-room house for about six or eight months. My father got a job driving a dray. This is a wagon pulled by a team of horses, and he would haul merchandise from the railroad station to the merchants, hardware dealers, lumber yards, etc. and would unload carloads of farm machinery and lumber. All the freight came by railway at that time.

A little later my father bought a restaurant and we moved out of the one-room house and into the building that housed the restaurant. There were several rooms in addition to the main restaurant and kitchen. We lived in this home for quite some time. When I wasn't working at other jobs my mother kept me busy stirring up cake dough and helping make ice cream. I shall never forget the five-gallon freezer which I had to turn nearly every day and sometimes two or three times on Saturdays. Everybody came to town on Saturday and we had only the one five-gallon freezer and I would be kept busy on this while the rest of the neighborhood boys were fishing and playing.

Later my father bought a butcher shop. I learned to butcher cattle and cut meat. This gave me broader experience in so far as meeting the public was concerned.

At school in this little town of Deer Creek I met Lola Ann Comstock who I thought was a pretty fine girl. She and I were pretty "sweet" on each other all the time we attended school. In other words, we were school sweethearts. I was somewhat handicapped as I had to be out of

school some times for one day or so because I had to go to the country to do the butchering for my father. An old man who had butchered all of his life, worked for my father. He taught me the art of butchering. When I could do the butchering myself, my father dismissed the older man and I was able to handle the situation without him. We had a buck-skin pony and a long bed spring wagon which we used to haul our equipment out to the country and also to bring back the butchered beef, the hides, etc. for the shop. I also had to drive 20 miles to the town of Blackwell which had an ice plant. I would haul a load of 200-pound cakes of ice in the spring wagon and bring it to our ice cooler to keep the beef cool. We also sold ice on the side.

When I was going to school I had the boys at school bring in their old rubber boots, cooper bottoms of boilers, zinc can lids, brass lamp tops – any kind of junk, brass, copper, zinc or rubber – and I would pay them a small amount of money for those items. At the end of the week I would sack them up in a gunny sack and ship them to Arkansas City, Kansas, to Mr. Henry Burns, a junk dealer. I was a ready market for the boys in this farming vicinity from a junk standpoint.

I also had about 20 traps. In the wintertime I would catch a few skunks, possums, etc. and stretch their hides on the hide boards I had made and then ship them to a fur company in St. Louis, Missouri toward the end of the season. I always looked forward to this as it brought me \$15.00 or \$20.00.

After a few years in Deer Creek I grew larger and stronger and would unload many carloads of coal. It had to be hand-scooped. I got 15¢ a ton. I would scoop this coal into the bins which were alongside the railroad track. I averaged about \$1.50 a day, which was a lot of money in those days.

When I was about 16 years old my dad sold his business and moved to the county Seat of this county, which was about 15 miles from Deer Creek and was a larger town. There my dad bought another butcher shop. I helped in the shop for a while. This was next door to a saloon and I used to take round steak, onions and salt and pepper, chop them up with a couple of knives, chopping the onions, salt and pepper into the meat. We had a large platter and it was my job to keep the platter full of this raw meat concoction as there was a side door into the saloon where they served it free when they sold beer.

A little later dad sold his butcher shop and I went to work in a grocery store as a clerk. They had a combination butcher shop in this grocery store and general merchandise, etc. I worked there for quite some time at \$10.00 a week. During this period I was still “sweet” on Miss Comstock. She lived on a farm about two miles west of Deer Creek. We had an arrangement whereby her father gave her a driving horse and I ordered a rubber-tired buggy and harness from Sears and Roebuck. She furnished the horse and I rented a barn and lot in Medford and kept the horse and buggy there and on week ends, when I had time, I would drive to Deer Creek to spend Sunday at her parents’ farm which they had homesteaded when Indian Territory was open for settlement.

I managed to save a little money as I went along and during this period I managed to buy an equity in a farm near Duncan, Oklahoma for \$500, which amount I had saved. On this I had to pay \$75 interest and principal to the State of Oklahoma which held the loan and mortgage on the farm for \$1,500. The principal crop on this farm was cotton, so it made just enough money to pay the taxes, interest and payment on the mortgage.

After working in this store for a couple of years I then managed to get a job as Assistant Postmaster in 1913 at a salary of \$65.00 a month which required me to go to work at 4:30 o’clock a.m. each day. I made a little money on the side by taking subscriptions to magazines and newspapers and I would buy a calf or two for \$2.00 that people did not want. Nearly everyone had a cow, which was their only source of fresh milk in those days and oftentimes they did not want to keep the calf. So I would buy the calf for \$2.00 and take it to Miss Comstock’s father’s farm and leave it out there and later we would sell it and make a little profit after paying for its keep.

After getting that good job at the post office we decided to get married. We were married on July 22, 1913, and had always planned to go to Colorado on our honeymoon. I would have had plenty of money for this trip but I had loaned a friend \$150 and he couldn't pay the money back at the time we were to take our honeymoon, but I did have \$100, so we went via train to Colorado Springs. We spent a couple of weeks out there and arrived back in Medford. We had a very small amount of money – as a matter of fact, we had 23¢ in cash, which was all the money we had after our honeymoon trip. We rented a six-room house for \$8.00 a month. We had some friend in the furniture business at Deer Creek, Oklahoma, my former home, and these people sold us about \$100 worth of furniture which was enough to start housekeeping. This house was on a corner which consisted of about 10 lots. So we had a place for a cow, some chickens and a big garden. We paid two months rent and I then made a deal with the widow who owned the house to pay \$800 for it, payable so much a month. We managed to pay for this house a little at a time.

After working five years at the postoffice I decided I wanted to learn something about the banking business. So I got a job as cashier in the local bank at \$125 a month. This gave me quite a little prestige and I had a chance to make a little money on the side by writing insurance and buying oil and gas leases now and then for some of the major companies. This got me interested in the oil business.

During this period, near the farm I bought at Duncan, Oklahoma, some people drilled in a large oil well not too far from my farm. I sold a lease for a substantial amount of money and also bought two leases from friends who lived in Enid, Oklahoma. I then sold these leases to several companies and made a nice-sized amount of money. This of course gave me quite an incentive to want to get into the oil business. So after completing five years as a bank cashier, I then moved to Blackwell, Oklahoma which was the center of the oil activity at that time.

In 1928 I bought some leases in Greenwood County, Kansas, I was still working as cashier at the bank but I figured this was a good place to drill some wells and I thought I would try my luck. So on Friday, May 13, 1928, I opened up a gas pool in Greenwood County. I got a good sized gas well. This I made a deal with the City of Eureka to furnish them gas at the gate for 25¢ a thousand. I then drilled a couple more gas wells and laid ten miles of 4-inch pipeline into the town of Eureka, Kansas. I supervised the laying of the entire line. At that time we paid the standard wage of 50¢ an hour. I incorporated a company called Greenwood Pipeline Company and we did very well with this project. We later sold it to one of the larger utility companies at a nice profit.

Later I moved to Wichita, Kansas and have been engaged in the oil and ranching business. I have lived in Wichita for over thirty years and have developed many new oil pools and have sold several million dollars worth of production and properties to major companies.

If this is success, I have always believed that one can start with nothing but a lead pencil, his hands and an ambition to work. Keep honest and stick to whatever he undertakes and not worry about the past. Tomorrow is what is important, and I think success requires an attitude of stick-to-it-iveness, which will carry one right through failure, discouragement and all kinds of difficulties.

Dwight J. Wilson  
1969  
Oil Producer  
800 Bitting Building  
Wichita, Kansas 67202