

Looking into Diboll's past

Mrs. Hogue's boarding house

By ELLEN TEMPLE
Special Press Writer

Arthur Temple Jr. used to love to sit on Mrs. Hogue's front porch after lunch and visit with his old friends like Dred Devereaux and Hamp Bylerly until 1 when they'd all head back to the office.

And Lottie Temple reminisces about the meals: "For 75 cents at lunch time a typical meal would include two kinds of meat, like fried chicken and roast beef, cornbread, salad, beverage and dessert. And all of it was delicious."

Eighty seven years old this Nov. 2, Mrs. Alice Hogue no longer serves those big meals to 50 or more people a day, but she still lives in her house with the porch on the corner of School St. and Hines with one of her three daughters, Ruby Austin Powers. And she still occasionally takes in a boarder.

Mrs. Hogue shares her memories. After moving to Diboll in 1928, she married Jim Hogue who worked on the TSE Railroad local train and later on the log trains.

The Depression hit in 1929, and Mr. Hogue would sometimes work only two or three days a week and was hardly making enough to feed the family. A garden and cows helped. But determined to have more money for the things that she needed and wanted, Mrs. Hogue opened her home to boarders.

There often seemed to be a shortage of housing in Diboll. Sawmill workers, loggers, construction workers, families, all needed places to stay in the bustling little town. Mrs. Hogue was filling a real need when she launched the business that she'd be in for 50 years.

Her first house was across the street from the present Temple-White handle factory. She opened one bedroom to boarders — kept four men in one room, two to a bed. And one time she even had five men for two beds. How did they manage? One boy's father was a night watchman who worked seven nights a week. The father slept during the day while his son got the bed at night.

And she kept expanding her business. When one of her "boys," Joe Bob Hendrick, married, he and his wife Anna Laura roomed in what had been the master bedroom while Mr. and Mrs. Hogue took over the sun porch.

When the Hendricks moved on to their own house, the Kennards moved into the room with their small child and lived there for two years. But when Mrs. Kennard had another baby, she moved home to Beaumont and waited there for her husband to finish his job of converting the Diboll sawmill to electricity.

Mrs. Hogue served three meals a day to her boarders and included some of that same crew from Beaumont and some Lufkin men for lunch.

And she had another job too. "After Mr. Hogue got on the log train, I fixed his lunch

every day that he worked and carried it out to the log train when they came in with the first load of logs. And I fixed John Martin's and John Dial's — four dinners in all and carried them out to the train every day."

When Henry Temple, who was Southern Pine Lumber Company manager in the late 30's and early 40's, built his home on Hines, he encouraged the Hagues to move into a new house nearby. Although the house wasn't as large as their old one, Mrs. Hogue still kept two or three boarders.

In 1941 when the company closed down the Fastrill logging camp and moved the people to Diboll, they all needed living quarters. Housing was really tight. Although the "log cabin" (Antlers Hotel) existed then, its rooms were too expensive for most men. It would have cost them more for one night's lodging than they earned in a day.

So Mrs. Hogue took in as many as she could and "packed them around in the house." She recalls, "My neighbor next door lent me a bedroom, and we put two beds in it. She put four men over there. In those days the men would sleep together, but you couldn't get people to sleep together now." And she managed to sleep and feed most of the Fastrill men who needed accommodations.

Mrs. Hogue liked her home; she didn't want to move. But her good friend Henry Temple wanted her to operate a larger boarding house for Southern Pine employees and convinced her to move to the house on the corner of School Street and Hines where she's lived now for 30 years.

Southern Pine had originally built the house for P. H. Strauss, a co-manager in the early 30's, and then Albert Jackson lived in it and other families occupied it through the years. Mr. Temple remodeled the house for the Hagues — added rooms and bathrooms and glassed in the back porch. There were five bedrooms in all.

The original plan was for Mrs. Hogue to serve meals only to guests who were boarding with her. Her dining room table would accommodate eight. But, "First thing I knew everyone was coming in for lunch and I got crowded out and just kept letting them come. Then they got an extension for my dining table where I could feed 12 people. That didn't do. And I also fed a bunch of the school children in the kitchen or on the glassed in porch."

And still the people came. "Then they had Mr. Otis build another table. And I had two tables in the dining room that I could feed 24 people on — 12 on each table. I served one meal at 11. People kept coming in. I'd barely have a chance to put on clean cloths for the group that we'd serve from 12 on." Hard work, even with help. Eventually she added another table at one end of the living room.

Today, in spite of her infirmities, just as sprightly as ever, Mrs. Hogue can say: "I never did get tired. I just enjoyed it. We always had plenty of food."

Mrs. Hogue rarely used processed foods.

Instead she'd buy a carload two or three times a week of fresh vegetables, milk butter, eggs and lots of chickens from a family who operated a farm near Burke.

For 12 years, Vada Lee Adair, who's since passed away, cooked for Mrs. Hogue. She was excellent help — could take care of everything including the cooking and buying if Mrs. Hogue had to be out of town. Other people who worked there included Maureen Bray and her sister Audrey Lee Rogers who could make the "best biscuits in the world."

Besides serving at the boarding house, Mrs. Hogue and her staff would serve hospital patients at the clinic (now Dr. Eddins' office) their noon and night meals. "Dr. Steve and then Dr. Rice would send someone after it and the nurse would serve it out to them."

Suppers at the house were quiet; she'd serve her boarders then. But on weekdays travelers and almost all of the Southern Pine office employees would come to enjoy Mrs. Hogue's tasty meals.

And on Sundays she'd often serve dinner to as many as 100 people. People would sit on the porch or in the living room and wait their turn for what she called their

"setting." They'd serve boarding house style — set all the food on the tables and people could eat as much as they wanted.

Through the years many company trainees, for \$10 a week for room and breakfast, roomed at Mrs. Hogue's. She says, "I spent half my time moving beds around. People were desperate for places to stay. I may not have had the biggest boarding house in Diboll, but I had the most people. And often I had so many come in to eat that I didn't know where to sit them, but I always got them fed."

Praising her help and her kitchen, Mrs. Hogue says: "We got along so good. We could just shove that food out there, just like we were running a big hotel!"

The days in America when boarding houses flourished are past now. They've been replaced with hotel and motels and fast food restaurants. And those are often fine, efficient places.

But I imagine that many people in Diboll cherish their memories of the owner's cheery welcome, the windowed, airy rooms, homecooked vegetables and biscuits, and a peg to hang their hat or coat beside the front porch door of Mrs. Hogue's Boarding House.



MRS. JIM (ALICE) HOGUE
And daughter Ruby Austin Powers (right)



MRS. HOGUE'S BOARDING HOUSE TODAY
Home to many a boarder and diner in Diboll

Education week observed

"Education Can Turn Things Around" is the theme of American Education Week, November 12-18.

The 57th annual observance of American Education Week will be recognized in different ways by the Texas public

including open houses, special programs and other events.

The nationwide observance is sponsored by the American Legion, the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, the National Education Associa-

tion, and the U.S. Office of Education.

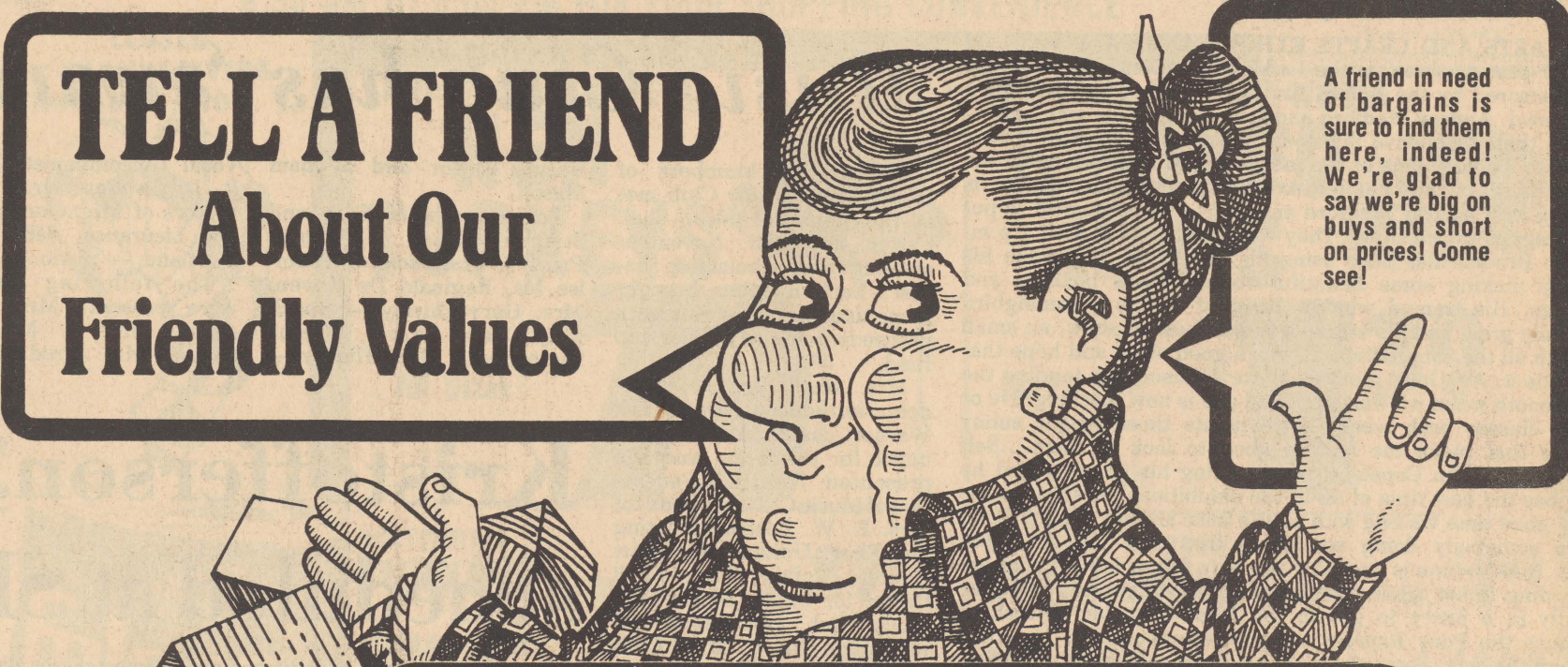
American Education Week began in 1921 through the cooperation of the American Legion and the National Education Association. The observance was originally planned as a response to the concerns of the military, which found that one of every four young men called for service in World War I was illiterate.

The purpose of the observance today is to increase public understanding and appreciation of the schools, to encourage parents to visit their children's schools, and to help students appreciate what the schools do for them.

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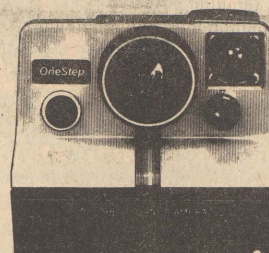
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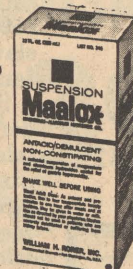
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