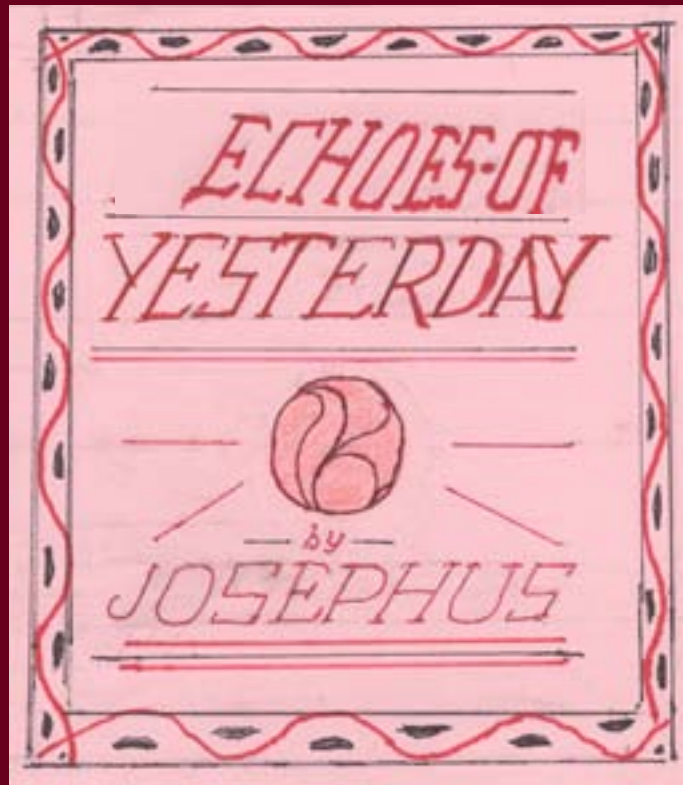


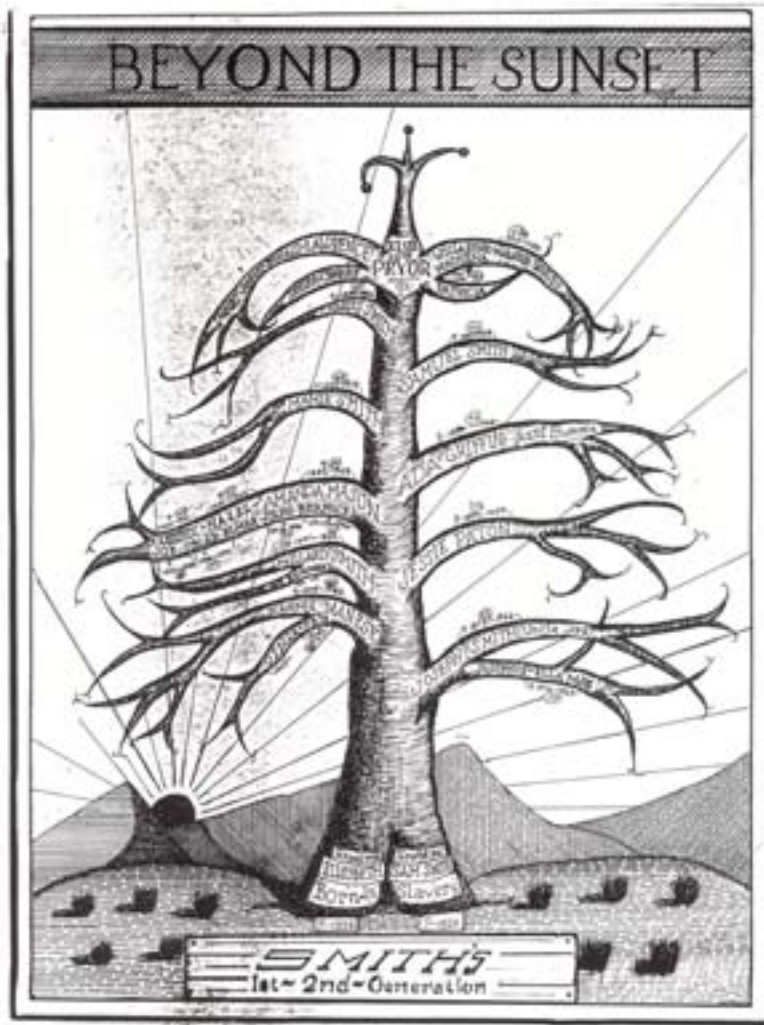
JOSEPHUS



Preface

Echoes of Yesterday was achieved through taped interviews. It reflects some of the high points of my life and is nowhere near a complete autobiography. It is, however, important that I pass on this information to my grandchildren.

I appreciate our grandson's mother, Joan S. Williams, who interviewed and taped my story. Also, I'm grateful to Rita Pearce of the *I, Witness to History Program* at Larksfield Place for the tedious editing and design work in bringing this book together while she works on a doctorate at Oklahoma State University.





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*ECHOES OF
YESTERDAY*

BY
JOSEPHUS

JOSEPH M. SMITH

as told to Joan S. Williams

Dedicated to my children:

Orcenith Harris Smith

Jozel Alfreda Smith Eckels

my grandchildren:

Darius Jeffery Smith
April 15, 1962

Brenton Jon Eckels
July 26, 1967

William Joseph Eckels
December 27, 1970

Travis Dean Eckels
September 14, 1972

Kedra Jozel Smith Bazilio
February 29, 1974



Ella Smith, Mother

My parents named me Josephus Smith, but I changed it later on down the line because I didn't like the "Sephus." When I went to school, most of the kids would always be singing, "Josephus was a name and Bohunkus was another." So after the eighth grade at Horace Mann, I dropped off the "Sephus" and became Joseph.

I was born in 1910 in Weatherford, Oklahoma. My mother's name was Ella Cowan, and she was born in 1873. My father, Joseph William Smith, was born in 1873 also. Both were born in Kentucky.

My mother's mother, my grandmother, and my grandfather were slaves. In 1865, after slavery was over, they left Lexington, Kentucky and moved to Atchison, Kansas. They came by covered wagons, oxen-driven covered wagons. My mother and father

were both five years old. They said that they walked behind the wagons all the way. They settled in Atchison, Kansas until the Oklahoma Land Rush. That's when my grandfather and they moved, left Kansas, and settled in Oklahoma to farmstead.

My father and his sister were born in Lexington, Kentucky. Five others were born in Atchison, Kansas, and I think the last two were born in Weatherford, Oklahoma. There were nine children all together.

We stayed on that farm with my grandparents until we moved to Wichita, Kansas, where my sister was born in 1914.

I can remember when I was in the sixth grade at L'Ouverture School in 1924 or 1925, when we started up the first Black scouts, Troop 75. It was quite an occasion.



Ella Mae, Mother, and Joe

Back then we would always go for a week at a time, before or after the other troops would go. The scout troops weren't mixed like they are now. We had our own scout camp. We'd hike to Camp Tawasenta near Oxford, Kansas, and camp out in



*Cousins: Ozella Manise , Joe,
and Orie Manise*

the summertime. A lot of us made First Class Scout, and I made Star Scout. We had ten merit badges for that. Quite a few of us went to scouts. It was quite a deal.

We went to L'Ouverture School until eighth grade, to Horace Mann School for the ninth grade, and to East High for the rest of school. There was only one high school when East High opened up about 1928. I stayed in high school



*Keenan Grocery
at 13th and Washington—
My Grandmother Lived in the
White House*

majoring in art until 1932. Things were a lot different. Black people couldn't do too many things back then. I was the second black in the band at East High. I went to band because black people were not allowed to play sports, and I could go to all the football games for nothing.

I remember that things were different then. Light bread hasn't always come sliced—you had to slice it, and everybody had a bread knife. Later on, when it was already sliced, that was something! Bacon was like that, too. You had to do your own slicing. Eggs were 12 to 15 cents a dozen. If you couldn't afford butter, you had to mix the color in the oleo and make it look like butter. Milk was in glass bottles with the cream at the top. There weren't any paper cartons. When paper cartons first came out, everybody thought that

milk in a paper carton just tasted different. Now, everything's in paper. I can remember the cereal. Most of the time it was cooked cereal. Post Toasties was the main dry cereal then. You didn't have all your fancy kind of cereals, all sweets, and all different kinds; just Post Toasties. We'd have mush a lot of times in the morning, and sometimes, mush the night before. That was really something.

There used to be Campbell's Dairy right there at Ohio and 13th Streets. They had cows all in the back. We could go over there with our gallon cans and get a gallon of fresh milk. Everything was cheaper then.

When we were kids, it was McKinley Park then, not McAdams. There was no swimming pool; nothing for us to go to. There was a gazebo there where the traveling bands would

come in and play.

On Election Day they would come out and have pop and barbeque and stuff for the elections; that's when there'd be the big bands, and everybody was there. Old Chisholm Creek run through the park, and when it'd rain, we'd have floods. When the ditches would fill up, that's where the young kids learned to swim.

Later on, they built us a swimmin' pool. It was small. I think it was six feet deep at the deepest end. Those who weren't already swimmin', that's where they learned to swim. They had a tent for the girls to dress in. The boys didn't have a tent, so we'd go down by the side of the canal to get dressed in our swimmin' suits. Later on, they built a house where each one could go in and dress. But at first it wasn't that way. The swimmin' pool would open up at

one o'clock. The man who took care of everything, his name was Rissett. When it first opened up a lot of the teachers would come in and swim of a mornin', but then about one o'clock, the local kids would come in and swim. We'd get to swim in the heat of the day. Later on, they built the tennis court there.

On the fourth of July there would be swimmin' contests, and it would really be something. We'd go over to the boathouse at Murdock on the Little River. We were at a disadvantage, and the White people had a high diving board at the regular boathouse. Even though we got in the contest, we weren't a match to the other kids there. Most of the White kids went to high school, and they had swimmin' year 'round with a diving board. We had swimmin' just three months of the year in the

summer. Oscar Williams, Glen Williams, and several of us were pretty fast. We went over to the boat house for contests there, but we knew we didn't have the advantage, because they had been swimming year around, and practiced diving from a high diving board. We were tickled to death to even have a swimmin' pool, and we had a lot of fun. Of course, now you wouldn't know that a creek had run all through McKinley Park, and now it's McAdams Park.

Glen Williams, who we called the Red Devil, was the best diver around. His famous dive was to get up on top of where we changed clothes, right at the end of the swimmin' pool. Then, he would dive from there, they put gasoline on the water, set it afire, and Glen Williams would dive into the swimmin' pool. That was really the famous dive, and then they had the

regular contest. Oscar Williams was the fastest swimmer.

There was one contest where I won a gold badge for divin' and Oscar won it for swimmin'. All summer long, there would be contests on different days of the week.

After I went on to high school, I got in the East High band. We just had two high schools then, so we played football against North High when it got started after 1929. I went to the band 'cause I didn't play football, and I could go to all the football games for nothing. I began music when I was ten years old playing the trombone, and continued singing and playing several instruments through high school.



*1932 H.S.
Graduation*

Back in those days, we all went

to the movies. In high school, we didn't swim or play tennis. We were not allowed to play sports in high school, but now you can. But, of course, there's a lot of things different.

We stayed in high school 'til around '32 and graduated. Afterwards, the Depression was on, and so there weren't any jobs to be had. The WPA started and I worked on it. We worked in the cannery, cutting up meat, and then we worked out on the roads. I worked on the old Island Park, just west of Broadview Hotel.

KFH was the first radio station here in Wichita. It used to have amateur contests here at different times. I almost won one of them with my singing. I think Steffen's Dairy was putting it on. I came out second in that and missed a New York deal. Once or twice I was on

a radio station in those amateur contests after high school.

There were times at the end of the day after band practice when I'd walk from East High at Douglas and Grove to North High at 13th and

Rochester to see my girlfriend, Zelma Harris.

That's when they had Negro men's singing groups.

Bus fare was just a nickel then, but there were lots of places where we'd walk. I went to St. Mary's, but I met Zelma in 1932 when I was rehearsing for a musical at Calvary Baptist Church



*North High, 1928
Left to Right: Milton
Kilpatrick, James
Long, Joe Smith,
Alonzo Mills, W. L.
Hutchinson, and
Grover Dotzer*

where she was a member.

I can remember her old porch swing, that's where we dated. I went with her four years through the Depression and everything, which was hard. I had to go back and forth that distance. Back then you dated a girl maybe once a week. You went home when ten o'clock comes or the news come on. That's when the mother would come by and say, "Ahem, ahem." She wouldn't have to say nothing else. You'd hear her clearing her throat before she'd get there. I'd



Newlyweds

start getting my hat and everything, so by ten o'clock I was leaving. You didn't see your girlfriend until no eleven or twelve o'clock. Whether it was hot or cold, you'd sit out on the

swing.

I joined Calvary under the leadership of Pastor, John Wesley Hayes, after we were married in 1936, and am still a member today.



1st Home 1936

We were fortunate enough to get our own house, and have always owned our own home clear on up until now.

My first real job was at Grayson's Dress Shop on Douglas. From Grayson's, I went to another dress shop, and I stayed there for a couple of



*Joe at Ft.
Leavenworth,
1942*

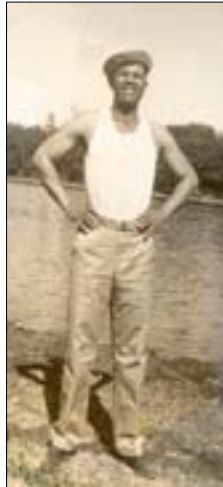
years. Then I went to Vandyke Fur Coat Company in the Allis Hotel where I cleaned fur coats. From Vandyke's, I went to another place called Robert Hall's. That's where I learned to press clothing. From there, I went to Lewin's Clothing Store as a



World War II

janitor, and I cleaned fur coats, too. Then, I went into the Army.

In May 1942, the draft came up. They took a bunch from here on Mother's Day and booked us in the Army. We ate breakfast in the 500 block of Main Street. Then the bus took us to Leavenworth where we were initiated in. From Leavenworth, we went to infantry training school in



Camp Walters near Mineral Wells, Texas. We took our basic training there from May up until August. Then they sent us to Fort Leavenworth and then to Fort Devens, Massachusetts to a truck drivin' outfit;

that was the outfit I was in. I drove trucks for them.

In November of 1942, we loaded up for overseas. We moved out on



November 18th. On January 17th, 1943, we landed at Casablanca in French Morocco, North Africa. We stayed in port there for two or three months before our trucks came. We were in the North African Invasion. We did all the



hauling. We hauled bombs and gasoline from the port there out to the halftrack. The halftrack would take the bombs and gasoline to where they were fighting.

We were stationed around Casablanca for almost a year before we started moving over to Spanish Morocco. We jumped over to Sicily, and from Sicily to Rome, Italy. We stayed in Rome and

hauled supplies. I saw Mt. Vesuvius eruptions in March, 1944. We moved up to Florence in the western part of Italy. Then up to Venice.

By that time, we were almost ready to go over to the southern part of France, we heard that the war was over. We stayed six months there and hauled German soldiers back to Naples. That's where the port was. We sent truckload after truckload of German soldiers after they surrendered; they put big convoys of them on boats and sent to the United States. I heard that they were put up in nice bunks with everything while we were living in tents back in Italy. We realized that they were living in the states and living better than we were living at that time. After the war was over, we came back to Rome.

When the Blacks joined up, they

were sent to a quartermaster unit in the Army infantry. They were cooks; they took care of the parks; they took care of the forts. Every black was a quartermaster. They didn't go into the infantry until about the last part of the war after the invasion. The 91st or the 92nd companies demanded that we unload the first Black infantry, and it was really something to see Blacks driving tanks and everything else. We'd never seen that before.

It wasn't until later on that the Army was integrated. After the war was over, they started mixing White and Black in the infantry. After that I was lucky to get out of the Army. A few of us were at the age, according to the point system, that could get out. We were the older bunch. Some of the rest had to go back, and a lot of them had to go to Korea when we were fighting

them.

There were nine out of Wichita that went with me. They were from Newton, El Dorado, Augusta, and Winfield. Most of them were taken in the same trucking outfit clear on through. There are three of us left out of that original bunch. All the rest have passed.

When I came back from the Army, I went to wash cars at that car place on South Broadway. From there, I got a job with



*1956
Three
Generations,
Joseph
William
Smith,
Josephus
Smith, and
Orcenith
Smith*

Echoes of Yesterday



While I was working, I went to Wichita University on the GI Bill from 1946 to 1951. I majored in commercial art.



This is one of my English themes:

*every attention
please!*

Dinner in Morocco

I was full of anticipation that evening in Fes, Morocco. I was invited out to my first Moroccan dinner. I had been reading that when American soldiers can be kept off, for they invite only their friends to their homes.

I had known Fatima for quite some time, but had never met her family. So when she told me that her dad wanted to meet me, I knew that I had to make a good impression, or I wouldn't be able to see Fatima again. In Morocco the father has complete control over his family and his word is not questioned.

I was taking some cigarettes for her father and candy for her mother, and trying to remember all the things Fatima had told me on how to act, as stated for Casablanca.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon when I arrived. Fatima met me at the door. She pointed to the house where, beside the door, I immediately took off my shoes and ~~removed~~ washed my feet with Moroccan powder which she brought out to the house. ~~It~~ was a different set for the house only.

She led me into the house and after meeting her father and mother, I sat on a cushion or pillow on the floor. There are no chairs in their houses. The father sat ~~across~~ from me and as soon as ~~the~~ ~~conversation~~ he asked how his health was and how was the health of all his family. He then asked me the same.

It was mandatory what to say next. Fatima's mother, Cadouch, brought a plate from about high as a foot stool and placed it between us. Fatima brought a plate of small grapes and figs which she placed between us on the little table. The father motioned for me to take some. I did. By the time ~~he~~ ~~had~~ finished, Cadouch brought a plate of salt eggs with a small pile of salt in the center of the plate. He took an egg, checked it, peeled it, and slipped it in the salt and stirred it with the salt.

was brought out, but I didn't know what it was,
then. It looked like moated plants. I looked
after dinner, from Yalley, that it was locust. She
said they were plentiful there. I asked her to show
me one, the first time she saw one, after she fed,
it might have been locust to her, but it was
grass hoppers to me.

The locust was mixed pineapple and orange
canned with sugar and the things were white. There
are several Mexican cigarettes while Yalley and
Cadenach ate what was had left. The women
and children always eat what is left after the
men have eaten.

I bid them good by about a half an hour
later and went directly to camp where I had, hoping
I would be able to sleep the night through.

very interesting - look
it up as biographical
incident, if you find
a photo - too detailed
see note

*1955
Young family:
Joe, Zelma,
Orcenith, and
Jozel*



McVicar's as a janitor and presser, and learned tailoring. Then I got a job at Macy's downtown as a presser. I worked there for many years. From there I went to Wolff Brothers as a tailor.

Our first grandson, Darius Jeffrey, was born in April 1962 when our son was in the Navy at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. He and his wife drove back with the new baby. My father could hardly wait to get up here from Weatherford, Oklahoma, because that was his first great-



*1962
Four Generations:
Orcenith, Darius,
Joseph William, and
Joe*

grandson. It was quite an occasion. We had four generations of us altogether. My wife was at Topeka with a club; so she didn't get to see Darius for a day or so later. She never has lived that down. Now we have four grandsons, one



2000—Ninetieth Birthday Bash

granddaughter, and we have nine great-grandchildren.

Life today is a little different than it was when we were trying to survive. You don't have as much to do as you did when you're workin'. After you're retired, it's a little different. Of course, you have more grandsons to come by to help you and there are more things goin' on. When you get older, you don't get around as fast, so you don't go as many places as you did. You can't eat as much. I used to eat plenty of anything, now when you get older, you have a special diet—and you don't eat so many things. When I was younger, pancakes were the main thing that I liked for breakfast. I could eat six, seven, or eight pancakes, and they weren't little bitty ones. My other favorite breakfast was fried apples, biscuits, and sausage.

We practically raised my oldest

grandson, Darius, so I guess he never will forget that. We've always had a cookie jar and a candy dish, and that's one thing that most of the grandkids remember—'cause when they'd first get to the house they'd open the candy dish to see what was in there, or go back in the kitchen and look for the cookie jar. They would always have something



sweet to eat.
My daughter,
Jozel, always
thought I could do
anything. Any
time any of the
kids' toys would
break down,
seems like I was
always lucky
enough to fix

them. Anything that was broken,
they would bring over to me.
Later the grandkids did the same.

I wasn't all that good at fixing, but it seemed like I could patch it up some way in the basement or the garage.

I can remember we always had swings for them outside, and the batter thing for the kids to practice batting, basketball goals, and targets for archery.

The parties we had! I'd dig a hole and we'd roast wieners and things. That was fun for all of us. I built a tree house for the kids to climb into. We always had something for them to do.

I always got a kick out of having our grandsons with us, whether on trips or in our home, and no matter what we were doing. What a joy they've been.



*1996
Standing, Left to Right: Brent,
William (Joey), Joe, Darius, Brad,
and Travis*

Music—it's always been an important part of my life.



*Walton Morgan, Jim Haupt, Joe, and
unidentified trumpet player*



1997—Morgan Midtowners Band



Joe, Jim, Walton., and Mrs. Jessie Foust



1991—Joe, Tom Green, and Shirley Green

Echoes of Yesterday



Fortieth Anniversary, 1976



Fiftieth Anniversary, 1986



Sixtieth Anniversary, 1996



Sixty-fifth Anniversary, 2001



Joseph and Zelma Smith

