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William Scott Brackeen

William Scott Brackeen was born on October 27, 1912. On a Sunday in August 1927, 14-year-old Scott arrived at the Tishomingo County Agricultural High School (TCAHS) to begin five years of experiences and gain an education. His brother, Roger, came with him. Scott and Roger Brackeen were “farm boys.” They were students with year-round work assignments, which included the farm activities of the summer. Their compensation was an education and free room and board. They received work assignments from Superintendent W. R. Nettles and the Professor L. D. Edwards.

Scott Brackeen came from Prentiss County near Booneville. His family was large, and he lost his mother at the early age of 5 years old. A brother, Carley, delivered Scott and Roger to TCAHS with the admonition that they were to get an education. Scott’s possessions were two pairs of overalls, two shirts, underwear, and a flour sack as a container.

Scott soon turned 15 years old, and his first year was spent in the elementary school completing the 8th grade. Scott’s weight was a hefty 90 pounds, and his height was 5’3”. Scott had suffered through polio at the age of four and attributed his small stature to the disease.

Scott had a room in the boys’ dormitory. This was his home for the next five years. The rooms were furnished with a bedstead, mattress, springs, two chairs, table, dresser, and a bowl and pitcher. Heat came from a small Franklin Stove burning either wood or coal. There was one small light bulb (20 or 30 watts). Water was available from a central source in the dormitory. The toilets were outside and usually several yards away. Scott stated that his room was much better than his room at home because it had no cracks to let in the cold air. A large window was available to let in the cool breezes of summer.

The first year, Scott cleaned the Grammar School as a work project. In the summer of 1928, he began a farm work routine that would be the same for the next four years of high school.

Scott was awakened at about 4:30 a.m. by a thump on his wall by the Agricultural teacher, Professor L. D. Edwards. Scott began his day by taking care of the animals in the barn and fenced lots, located near the boys' dormitory. Pails for milking were secured from the kitchen located in the girls' dormitory. There were usually three or four cows to feed and milk, producing from 4 to 8 gallons. Since there were no mechanical milkers, the milking was done by hand. "Little Sweetie" was Scott's favorite cow since she produced the best and greatest amount of milk. It was a school tragedy when "Sweetie" died of old age; milk was in short supply at the dining room table until she could be replaced.

Feeding the two mules (Granny and Sorghum) was a task that followed milking the cows. Next Scott fed the hogs, using a combination of grain and slop obtained from the mess hall. The hog pen, located near the barn, usually contained Simon, the boar hog. There was only one bull to feed. His registered name was Darce's Cid, but students called him Domino. He had a shed, pasture, and fence of his own, and Scott quickly fed the bull grain and hay. A poultry house for 300 laying hens was also near the barn, but due to time restraints, they were fed grain later in the day. The harvest of eggs usually resulted in one or two large buckets of eggs. After finishing his chores, Scott carried the milk to the kitchen at the girls' dormitory where a bountiful breakfast awaited. After breakfast, he proceeded to work at assigned tasks which varied from day to day.

Scott's summer activities included maintaining the campus which included grass cutting, removal of limbs and rubbish, and the maintenance of roads and drainage ditches. He was also involved with planting, cultivating, and harvesting crops—both from the vegetable garden and the research plot. There were also apples and peaches in an orchard. Of course, during the school semester, Scott's routine changed somewhat. Animals still required attention, but he also was involved with classes and extra curriculum activities including football, a quartet, and the Music Club.

On April 26, 1930, Scott brought recognition to himself and the school by attaining fourth place in a literary contest at Mississippi A&M College in current events. He followed this achievement in 1932 when he received a gold medal from the Interstate Trust and Banking Company of New Orleans, Louisiana, as the best senior writing a thesis.

Scott graduated from TCAHS on April 12, 1932, and departed the school campus by foot for his home in Prentiss County the next day. He joined the U.S. Army on January 31, 1936. There were very few jobs during the depression years. Scott had a great career in the service and retired in 1957 as a Lt. Colonel in the U.S. Air Force. Scott returned to school and received both a B.S. and a M.S. degree from Memphis State University in 1962.

Scott married Jennie Maude Gardner in 1940. They had a son and three daughters, nine grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

Note: The information was obtained from W. R. Nettles' *Tishomingo County Agricultural High School: A History*. It was transcribed by RaNae Vaughn on July 2, 2006.