

History of the Price Family – Part 2 via John Morris Price

John Morris Price

John Morris was born in the year 1917, in western Oklahoma to John Riley Price and Claudine Laura Russell, on the family farm near the towns of Mangum and Jester. While he was still an infant, his father died during the Spanish Flu Pandemic of 1918 and is buried in the family plot in Ellerflats Cemetery near Canadian, Texas. Claudine Laura next married a man name Marvin Little. A daughter named Mary was born to this marriage.

John did not get along with his stepfather Marvin and at the instigation of cousins, antagonized Marvin and his mother. Eventually when John was around eight or nine years of age, he left the family home and lived and worked on the neighboring ranches and farms of relatives and friends. He claimed he was on his own since age eight, but that is not quite accurate as he was living with extended family members and working. John only completed the sixth grade of school and then worked fulltime, as the laws about mandatory school attendance and child labor were non-existent.

Brown Shoe Army

When John was seventeen, he enlisted in the US Army. The Army of the 1930's, was not the Army like we know today or even the Army of World War Two. The "Brown Shoe Army", so called because they wore brown regulation shoes, was small, under-equipped and not modernized in any major capacity. John was initially assigned Wyoming and then later to Panama, at Fort William D. Davis. He was in the last of the true cavalry units, which actually rode horses.

An interesting story was told by my Uncle Frank. In the 1980's Granddad Price (John Morris), Frank and others went to a military museum, where they had old cavalry artifacts on display. John pointed out what each piece of equipment was and how it was used. A modern soldier overhearing it, looked over and asked, "Just how old are you"?



John at 17 (from F.R. Bob Price collection)



Pvt. John Price (from F.R. Bob Price collection)

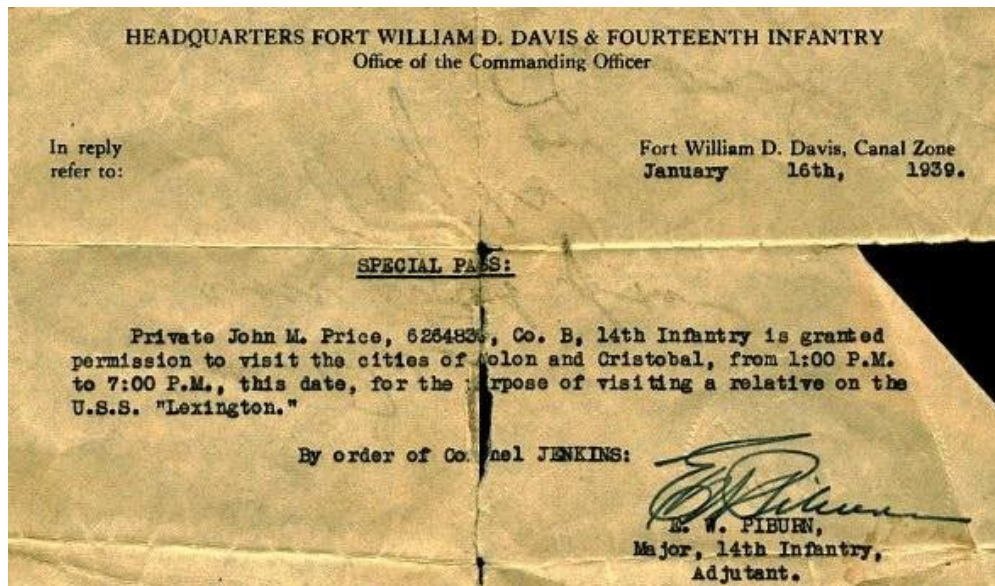


Pvt. Price petting a deer (from F.R. Bob Price collection)

John did not like the military life and based upon the reality of how it was under-funded, under-equipped and generally held in low esteem in those days, I can understand why. He was able to get out of the Army in 1939 using an old regulation that had never been taken off the books from the Civil War days. He borrowed money from his brother, David Houston Price and was able to purchase his discharge. My Uncle Frank confirmed this with folks in the records section of the National Archives and Veteran's Administration and his was the last known discharge using this procedure, which was summarily rescinded.



**Pvt. John Morris Price, official US Army Photograph
(Barbara Price Scobey collection)**



Pass issued to Pvt. John Price (F.R. Bob Price collection)

History of the Price Family

Civilian Life

After being discharged, John returned to the high plains of Oklahoma and Texas. His brother had been dating a nice girl by the name of Lois Winnell Cunningham and they seemed to get along well. In some unknown circumstance, John began to see Lois and in late 1939 they were married. John and Lois moved the "George Tubbs Ranch" north of Canadian, Texas, where John worked as a ranch hand and Lois worked cooking for all the cowboys and other workers. They lived and worked on the Tubb's Ranch for six years, with John eventually rising to become the ranch foreman. They had a daughter named Claudine Ann in 1940 and on 30 June 1942, John Morris Price Jr. was born. Unfortunately, as often times was the case in the days before modern medicines, the baby grew sick of a liver disease and passed away on Christmas Day 1942. John irrationally blamed the death of the baby on Lois and this was something he let eat at him for years. Baby John is buried beside his mother in the Cheyenne Cemetery in Roger Mills County, Oklahoma.



Lois Winnell Cunningham



John Morris Price, Jr.



Claudine Ann Price

In 1944, John was ordered to report to the draft board, but he was exempted from military service due to his job on the ranch, which was considered a vital war support occupation. From partial information gleaned from family letters, it is apparent that the Tubb's Ranch was up for sale and John had been approached to buy it. For whatever reason he did not do so, but instead sought employment on the Santa Fe Railroad. This presented a challenge on two counts. The first was that the Santa Fe required that employees be high school graduates and John had only completed the sixth grade. The second was that John had what is now termed dyslexia and had difficulty with written words and the tests would be challenge for him.

His sister-in-law Doris (wife of his brother David Houston) was a teacher and faked school record to show he had completed high school. Lois then read the study guide for the test to him and he memorized the entire thing and passed the test. This method would also later be used for him to pass the engineer's exam. Once he was hired in 1946, the family moved to the Canadian, Texas area. On 11 February 1946, Lois gave birth to their third child, Barbara Winnell Price (my mother). They continued to live in the Canadian area for a number of years and my mother has memories as a young child from that time.



Barbara Winnell, 1 y/o



Barbara Winnell, 3 y/o



Claudine & Barbara

History of the Price Family

John began work with the Santa Fe railroad in 1946 and eventually rose to be a Senior Engineer. Eventually the family moved to Amarillo, Texas, which is the major Santa Fe hub for the Southwest Division. For whatever reason, John did not like to settle down anywhere long and the family was always moving to new homes, sometimes two and three times per year. In 1952, they had their fourth and final child, Frank Robert Price.



Frank Robert Price, newborn



Barbara & Frank



Frank Robert Price

The Madame Queen

John was the last of the “Steam Railroaders” and actually was the engineer on the last steam locomotive to operate commercially in Texas in 1953. This train engine is the one-of-a-kind, Texas Class, 2-10-4, model 5000, steam locomotive. It was one of the largest and most powerful steam engine ever produced. It is currently on display in Amarillo, Texas and was the subject of a History Channel special on the “Mega Movers” series, when they relocated it to its current location. 2-10-4 refers to the wheels; it had 2 lead wheels, 10 driving wheels and 4 follower wheels.



The Madame Queen in August 2006



John Morris Price in the cab of Madame Queen on last run in 1953



The Madame Queen in service



The Madame Queen in service



The Madame Queen in a roundhouse



The Madame Queen pulling freight

History of the Price Family

The Madame Queen is now on the National and State of Texas Historical Registries. John lived to see the engine enshrined but he passed away before she was restored and moved to her current location.



John Morris Price

John continued to work for the Santa Fe Railroad until his retirement in 1976, with 30 years of service. He eventually rose to be a Senior Engineer and trainer for the line. In 1972, John divorced Lois and then had a string of serial marriages. His last wife was named Ruth Corder and I only met her once and remember her as a nice woman. As per his previous ways, he continually moved around a great deal, living at Lake Whitney, Texas; Elk City, Oklahoma; and ending up back in Amarillo, Texas where he passed away in 1999.

• Obituary, 16 May 1999, Elk City, OK. John Morris Price, 82, of Amarillo, died Sunday, May 16, 1999.

Services will be at 10 a.m. Wednesday in Boxwell Brothers Funeral Directors Ivy Chapel, 2820 Virginia Circle with Bill Lane Williams, grandson and a Church of Christ minister of Topeka, Kan., officiating.

Graveside services will be at 4 p.m. Wednesday in Ellerflat Cemetery at Prairie Dell.

Mr. Price was born in Durham, Okla., and had lived in Amarillo on and off since 1954. He was an Army veteran who served in the Panama Canal.

In 1976, Mr. Price retired after 46 years as an engineer with the Santa Fe Railroad. He was a charter member of Tascosa Masonic Lodge No. 1375, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post No. 1475 and a former member of Canadian Masonic Lodge No. 855.

He married Ruth Corder in 1982 at Tucumcari, N.M.

Survivors include his wife; two daughters, Barbara Scobey of Austin and Claudine Schuttz Price of Elk City, Okla.; a son, Robert Frank Price of San Antonio; two stepsons, Charles Earl Cade of Commerce and Thomas Henry Cade of Dallas; a brother, Houston Price of Pampa; a sister, Annie Laura Strickland of Cheyenne, Okla.; a stepsister, Mary Holt of Amarillo; six grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren; and one great-great-grandchildren.

History of the Price Family

Personal Reflections on John Morris Price: The following are my personal thoughts about the man who was my Granddad Price.

John Morris Price was an enigma to me. As a grandchild, I was never very close to him and neither were any of his other grandchildren or family. He could show exceedingly kind traits, what I term as “Random Acts of Kindness” and he could also show a mean nature that was difficult to deal with. He did very kind things, such as buying a house for his daughter Claudine and her husband; reaching out and helping my mother when she needed it; or dropping by and be amazingly grandfatherly. At other times, he was a physically, emotionally and verbally abusive man to his own relatives, including small grand-children. John was a Mason who would help raise money to help orphans, but would sometimes strike out at the people closest to him in very hurtful ways. As an adult, I have pondered his life and what made him tick. The behaviors I personally observed as a child and as an adult seemed to be hallmark symptoms of a bipolar condition, coupled with some deep inferiority complex. Like all people, he had flaws and he also had virtues. However his anger and abusive nature drove most family away from him.

Looking back at 42 years of age, I can appreciate how he shaped the lives of his children and grandchildren and I only wish someone could have got him help when he was younger. His son Frank, my uncle, wrote that based on his research anyone remotely related to the Price’s should and I quote, “Leave alcohol alone, go to church and learn to control your temper”. I cannot agree more, especially in the alcohol and temper issues. I have watched my mother deal, unsuccessfully for a number of years with the abuse she suffered at his hand and with growing success in the last few years. As well, I cannot but think that the hellacious environment he subjected his wife and children to had a great deal to do with the problem marriages and lives they have dealt with. I made a conscious effort to break this cycle, as my mother also did.