

Tribute to Irvin Dewitt Ingram

July 12, 1900 – February 10, 1986

Irvin Dewitt Ingram was born at the beginning of a brand new century. He, like all mortals, was unable to choose whenever and wherever his life would begin and end. Yet it is truly amazing that one person's life could witness so many and varied milestones of history. There were wars. World War I and World War II. The Korean War and the Viet Nam War. There was the dawn of the Nuclear Age and the proliferation of nuclear powered ships. Nuclear powered electric generating facilities. There was the first airplane flight by the Wright brothers and the ensuing development of the aviation industry. The development of the automobile industry from a "horseless carriage" novelty to a luxury car necessity of practically everyone. No, he was not able to choose, but had it been possible, it would have been exceedingly difficult to pick a time with so many exciting events to witness.

Much could be written about Irvin Dewitt Ingram if all the facts were known. But Alas! Time is our enemy. It robs our memory and steadily and stealthily claims those who knew all the facts about Irvin Dewitt Ingram. As one of his four sons, I had the honor of growing up under his guidance. I can remember many of the things that he taught me and told me. However, I shall regret for the remainder of my days that I did not make an effort to record some of the many stories that he related to me. Most especially so in his declining years. One of my favorite stories that he related to me a number of times was when he worked as a logger. He and Marvin Walker were teamed together cutting logs when a mishap with an axe sliced off the big toe of his left foot. Though in a rush to get him to the railroad (which was used for hauling out the logs), Marvin nevertheless took time to give his toe a proper burial in a hollow stump. While recuperating at home he took his rifle and hobbled off to a big hickory tree near the house. He killed thirty-six squirrels from that one tree. This was a time when there were no game laws or seasons limiting hunting.

Irvin Dewitt Ingram was not a man of great accomplishments. He was not a talented musician. Nor was he a great artist. He was not a community leader or successful businessman. But, he was a great fisherman and a good hunter. He was a hard worker



Irvin Dewitt Ingram

Picture taken about 1920

and provider for his family. He was a good man and he dearly loved his family. By what other measure can greatness be determined?

He was a strict disciplinarian. Yet he was lenient. He believed that children should obey their parents without question, and should never be told twice. But as strict as he was, punishment in the form of whippings was rare. Using fingers to count, I can count on one hand all the whippings I received. And I might add, I deserved each and every one of them.

In many ways his life was tragic. His mother died when he was two or three years of age. He married Sophie Holladay at the age of twenty. After thirteen years and five children, she died. Two years later, on his birthday, his oldest daughter, Bernice, died. He married Ada Agent in 1937 and had two more sons. In 1972 Ada died. Two years later his oldest son, Johnnie, was shot and killed. A few months later his youngest son, Wayne, died of cancer. His burden was heavy, but he prevailed, passing on at the age of eighty-five.

No monument will ever be built attesting to his greatness. No giant skyscraper or memorial highway shall ever bear his name. They aren't needed. His legacy shall live on in the genes of his many descendants. It will live on.

--- Kenneth K. Ingram, May 6, 2004



Dewitt Ingram's family – August 1971

Left to right: Charles Gerald Ingram, Johnny Dee Ingram, Louise Ingram Duncan, Dewitt Ingram, Ada Beall Agent Ingram, Mittie Ingram Nowell, Kenneth K. Ingram and Jerry Wayne Ingram