



REFLECTIONS

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What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

James 4:14

Era Gone By

The sunset casts golden shadows across the open range. And not so distant memories can still hear Gene Autry singing *I'm Back in the Saddle Again* and Roy Rogers wishing *Happy Trails* to all who ever lived in the era of the old west. Only a shrinking few still belong to this era gone by. Walter Ramsey was one of them.

Described by those who knew him best, Walter was a man of the land. He farmed and ranched all of his life and he looked the part. He was not wrinkled and leathery as many ranchers are at age 98, but his large brimmed cowboy hat, saucer-sized belt buckle, and fashionable western boots defined not only what he did, but who he was.

And what is a genuine cowboy without a horse? Walter had one. He often mounted his golden steed to proudly join others in the Santa Rosa Palomino Riding Club. The riders loved to show off their distinguished mounts at parades around the area. They rode them astride silver laden saddles befitting the majesty of their horses and complimentary to the pristine western regalia that set them apart.

A resident of Foard County, Texas, Walter's land was just outside the rural north Texas community of Thaila. Few aside from readers of Larry McMurtry novels will recognize the name of that small town intersected by U.S Highway 70. Approaching the town, signs dictate motorists to reduce their speed when passing through, but few of them do. But it was the place Walter called home. He was an honored leader there.

Walter's passing and the few like him who still remain mark an era gone by. Farming and ranching continues on, but more as an enterprise than a way of life. The sunset now casts golden shadows on country born and bred cowboys that once defined the western culture. Industrial innovations and technology developments in various forms have been changing the way life is lived since it all began. But the changes do not erase the lasting influence those times and those people have on all who have followed.

Our lives *are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes*. But those who witness the way we live, the values we embrace, and the love we express will live on to carry the marks made on their lives into the lives of others. And so the story goes.

The life of Walter Ramsey is marked among the branches of my family tree. But no matter the number of branches that separate his limb from mine, his life and the way he lived it has made an enduring mark on the way I live mine.

And though you may have never known Walter Ramsey, just maybe someone much like him has also left at least a tiny mark on your life too.

You are the light of the world,

Richard +

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