

Marion Carlos Sharp, Sr.

A Biography by His Grandson, Richard (Sharp) Martin

I met my grandfather, Marion Carlos Sharp, Sr.* (1905-1988) for the first time in January 1980 after my father died. Up until that time I did not know where he lived. My great-aunt, Mary Van Loon, located him in order to notify him of his son's death. After my father's graveside service in Little Rock, my brother Ron, sister Cathy, my wife Karen and I drove up to Norfolk, Arkansas, to see him.



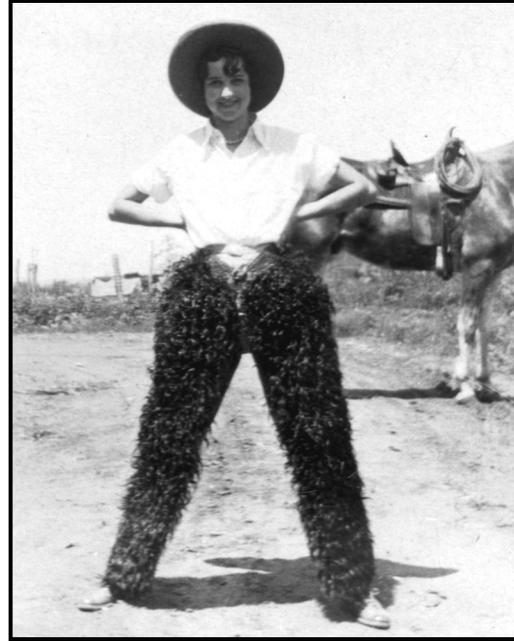
Above left: Marion, age four years and four months, and his sister, Alice Sharp, age two years and five months, in 1910. Above right: Marion Sharp (Grandfather) and Alice Sharp (Great-Aunt), about 1917.

Marion was seventy-four years old when I met him for the first time. He was healthy and active in contrast to my other grandfather, Thomas Bowles, who had been mostly bedridden late in life. For over thirty-one years he had been married to Lillian McCallum, who had a pleasant personality and enjoyed our company. Grandfather told me the story of what had happened to his son, Ronald Sharp, whom he had arranged to be adopted by his aunt, Mabel Barker Davis.

****Marion Sharp was the father of four children (Marion, Alice, Ronald, and Carol Sharp) and the grandfather of seventeen grandchildren: Cathy, Ronald, Nancy, Richard, Samuel and Jody Sharp; Sheryl, Sandy and Christie Herrick; Lincoln, Vickie and Marcia Davis; Sharyn, Debra, Jerald, Susan and Barbara Bradshaw.***

Marion Carlos Sharp, Sr.

He told me that he did not like the way his wife Claire was raising the children and felt that his son would have a better life if raised in a more stable environment. Therefore, he got Claire to consent to the adoption. Claire always felt regret over her decision and if her mother, Cora, had not been out of town at the time, it wouldn't have been



Above left: Marion and Claire (Grandparents) about the time they got married in 1923. Above right: Marion's sister, Alice Pearl Sharp (Great-Aunt; 1907-1938). Alice died after giving birth to her second child in 1938.

permitted. Ronald's name was changed to Lincoln Leroy Davis by his new parents. Marion visited him often, but did not tell him he was his father until he was fourteen. Lincoln thought he was his uncle and even called him "Uncle Marion." Lincoln was raised well and became a good person. Grandfather gave me Uncle Lincoln's address and I contacted him later.

Grandfather had many family photographs. Most of them I had never seen before. He kept his photographs in a large old trunk and he allowed me to make copies. He later said that he was grateful that I had made copies of those pictures because his trunk and all of his pictures were destroyed when his home was flooded three years later.

Grandfather was the only son of Carlos Lee Sharp (Great-Grandfather; 1882-1937) and Sylvia Pearl Barker (Great-Grandmother; 1888-1927). Both of their fathers were railroad men, and his parents met while they were living in Denver, Colorado.

Marion was close to his father and his grandfather, James Simpson Sharp (2nd Great-Grandfather; 1858-1926). His grandfather lived nearby while he was growing up in Little Rock and they saw each other often. When James died Marion was at his bedside. He also knew his great-grandmother, Sarah Miranda Capps (3rd Great-Grandmother; 1835-1927), well. A year after Marion's first child, **Marion Carlos Sharp, Jr.** (Father; 1924-1980), was born the family gathered for a five-generation picture.

Marion grew up with his sister, **Alice Pearl Sharp** (Great-Aunt; 1907-1938). She was a beautiful girl and Grandmother Claire said that she had a wonderful personality. She



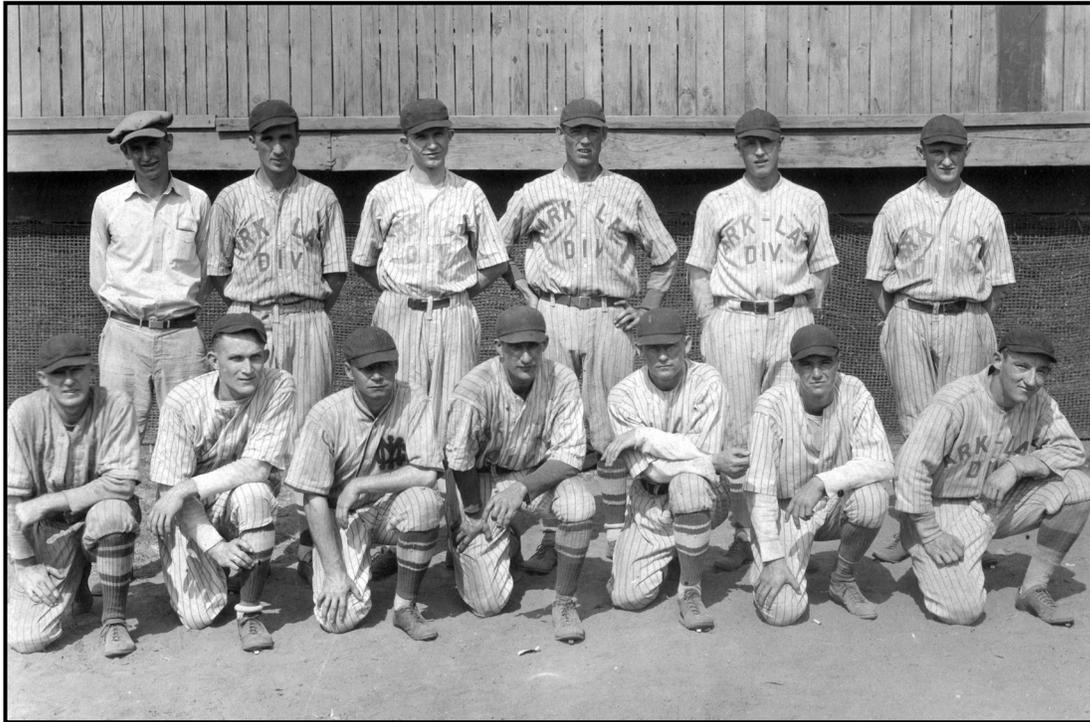
Above: Marion Sharp (Grandfather) played professional baseball for Little Rock in the Arkansas-Louisiana Division in the 1920s. He is pictured kneeling, second row, third from left. His father, Carlos Sharp (Great-Grandfather), is standing, third gentleman in a suit from left. He is standing beside two tall men, which makes him look shorter. Baseball was the most popular sport in America during the first part of the twentieth century.

died after giving birth to her second child at the age of thirty. Her husband, Clifton Brasfield, told me in a 1980 phone interview that he loved her and that she was very special to him.

Alice's aunt, Mabel Davis, wrote an obituary for Alice a couple of days after her death and placed it in the family bible. She wrote, "Died May 11th 1938. Our dear niece, Alice Pearl, daughter of Sylvia Pearl Sharp, passed through the silent door of death at 3 a.m. after giving birth to a little son at 11:15 p.m. whom she held in her arms and named Kenneth Laurence. Alice was the wife of Clifton Brasfield. Her death was unexpected and untimely to us mortals. She loved life and had much to live for. Complete happiness was hers. She leaves beside her husband and son, a daughter, Bonnie Jean, age 5 years. Aunt Helen Martin, her brother Marion Carlos Sharp, Aunt Mabel and Uncle Lincoln Davis of Lawton, Oklahoma. We laid her to rest by the side

Marion Carlos Sharp, Sr.

of her grandfather and grandmother Barker in Roselawn Cemetery, May 12th 1935 at 6 p.m. Services were at Ruebels Chapel in Little Rock, Arkansas.”



Above: Marion Sharp (Grandfather) first row, second from right. Marion played professional baseball for about seven years. He had to retire from baseball because of his railroad job, but he continued to love the sport for the rest of his life. I assume that his favorite major league team was the St. Louis Cardinals. Left: Photograph of Marion in the Rock Island Railroad Magazine, announcing his promotion to a new executive position in January 1951, age 45. Below: Marion’s father, Carlos Lee Sharp (1882-1937) and half-sister, Lee Ann Sharp (born 1935).



Marion also lost his mother at a young age. Sylvia Pearl Barker Sharp (Great-Grandmother; 1888-1927) died when she was thirty-

nine years old. His father, Carlos Lee Sharp, missed Sylvia and later married a much younger woman, Anna Mae Dilbeck (1910-1999). Carlos had a sister who had moved with her husband to Sun Ray, Texas (located east of Dumas in the Texas Pan-

handle), because of an oil boom. So he took an early retirement from the railroad and bought a liquor store in Sun Ray. Sadly, Carlos began drinking heavily and within a year or two had drunk himself to death. He died in 1937 at the age of fifty-four.



Above: Marion Sharp was a world-class diver and swimmer. Top right: Marion and Lillian, Christmastime 1960s. Right: Marion with his pet cat.

Marion worked all his life for the Rock Island and Pacific Railway Company. In 1950 he was Superintendent of Automotive Equipment for the company in Chicago, Illinois, and was listed in *Executives of the United States* in 1952. He lived in El Reno, Oklahoma, in 1961. He received several promotions and retired as a top executive for the company. He decided to retire in north Arkansas (even today many people from Chicago retire to northern Arkansas) and bought a home on the Norfolk River near Norfolk, Arkansas. He loved boating and fishing and was an officer in a national boating organization.

Marion was handsome and athletic. He was a lifeguard and was invited to compete in the 1928 and/or 1932 Olympic diving competition that was held in St. Louis, Missouri. He also played baseball for the Little Rock team of the Southern Association Baseball League, a Class A professional baseball league. Marion played for six or seven years

Marion Carlos Sharp, Sr.

and he only quit because the Rock Island gave him a choice of either playing baseball or keeping his job with the railroad. This was about 1932.



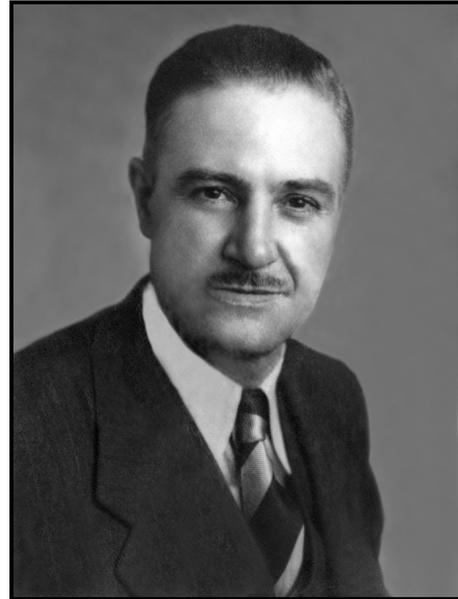
Above: Marion in his railroad uniform. Top right: Marion lived here at 1868 Arch Street, Little Rock, Arkansas, from 1933 to 1934. Right: Marion and Claire lived in this house at 1010 East 8th Street, Little Rock, Arkansas, from 1926 until 1927.

During high school, Marion began dating **Claire Smith** (Grandmother; 1907-1991). They married when Marion was almost eighteen and Claire almost sixteen. Less than a year later, my father, Marion Carlos Sharp, Jr., was born. Claire and Marion had a tempestuous marriage and both were ill prepared for family life. Marion was gone much of the time with his railroad work and Claire wanted to live the life of a young girl without important responsibilities. In spite

of their problems, they had three more children: Alice Joyce Sharp (Aunt; 1925-1996), Ronnie Sharp (Uncle; 1928-1988), and Carol Sharp (Aunt; 1931-present).

After Marion married Claire he was employed as a machinist helper in the Biddle Shops for the Rock Island Railroad in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1925. That year he and Claire made their first home at 821 East 8th Street. In 1926 they lived at 1010 East 8th Street. In 1928 they lived at 1107 Barber Avenue and Marion was a machinist. Claire's

mother, Cora Bratton Smith (Great-Grandmother), lived with them on Barber Avenue. In 1929 Marion and Claire lived at 712 West 6th Street. The following year they



Above: Marion in his fifties. Left: Marion with his great-grandson, Jonathan Martin (son of Richard [Sharp] Martin), at his home in Norfolk, Arkansas, 1985. Below: Little Rock East Side High School, which Marion, Claire and Lillian attended.

separated and Claire lived at 2506 High Street with her mother. In 1933 Marion and Claire divorced and Marion lived at 1868 Arch Street and Claire lived at 2504 High Street.

Marion later married Nina White while living in Chicago, Illinois. She was a Federal Bureau of Investi-

gation agent. They were divorced, but married a second time and then divorced again. He later married Lillian McCallum in 1948 and they were happily married for thirty-nine years until her death in 1987. Lillian had known Marion and Claire at Little Rock East Side High School.



In politics Marion was a Democrat until 1948. Marion said, "Harry Truman made a Republican out of me."

I visited Marion and Lillian a number of times at their home in Norfolk. We had some nice visits and I liked Marion. He seemed to appreciate my telephone calls and visits. I was glad that before he died he was able to see two of his great-grandchildren, Jonathan and Sarah Martin. During our last visit my son, Jonathan, walked hand and hand with his great-grandfather.

Marion Carlos Sharp, Sr.

When a hurricane made landfall near Houston in 1984, he and Lillian were concerned for our safety. After Lillian died he made an attempt to drive his car down to Houston



Above: Marion Sharp with his grandson, Richard (Sharp) Martin, in front of his Norfolk home in 1983. After Marion died I found that he had this photograph displayed in his home.

to see us, but gave up after forty miles because he realized he could not drive that far by himself in his old age. Two months before he died we spoke for an hour on the telephone. We had a comfortable, family kind of a conversation. He mentioned on his own that he would like to read the Book of Mormon and requested me to get him a copy.

On February 8, 1988, while checking the mail, Marion had a heart attack and died instantly. He was found with his cigar still in his mouth. After Marion died I discovered among his papers a number of detailed daily journals that he faithfully wrote in every day. All of his entries were common every day events such as when he changed the oil in his car or when he went to the grocery store. However, one journal did reveal his concern and love for Lillian when she was ill.

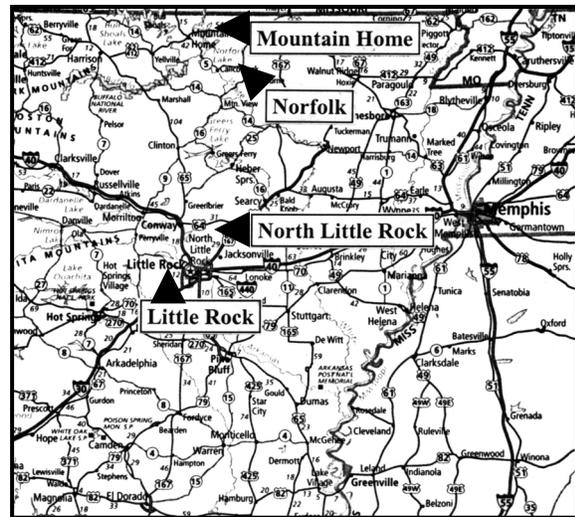
My brother and I drove up to Norfolk and then to Mountain Home, Arkansas, where the funeral was held. We were alone when we viewed his body in state. We both felt a

calm, peaceful, spiritual presence in the room. We sat for a long time next to our grandfather and I received the impression that not only was he alive in the spirit, which



I never doubted, but also that his spirit was close by us and that he was happy. The light in the room seemed to shimmer and I felt a special feeling in my mind and in my heart. I know that my experience was real and not imagined.

Uncle Lincoln and his wife Judy were also at the funeral. The morning of the memorial service we were having breakfast together and Lincoln told Ron and I that something special had happened to him the previous evening. He told us that he was sleeping in Marion's bedroom at his home near



Top left to right: Lillian, Richard (holding his son Jonathan Martin), and Marion (holding his great-granddaughter, Sarah Martin). Karen Martin, my wife, took this photograph in 1985. Above left: Bonnie Jean Harris, daughter of Alice Pearl Sharp (Great-Aunt; 1907-1938), sister of Marion Sharp, Sr. Bonnie was only five years old when her mother died. Above right: Marion spent the early part of his life in Little Rock and retired in Norfolk, Arkansas. He did his business in Mountain Home and was buried there. His father lived in Little Rock and his grandfather resided in North Little Rock. Map courtesy of Rand McNally.

Norfolk. He said he awoke, looked down the hall and saw his father walking towards

Marion Carlos Sharp, Sr.

him. He walked right up to him and touched him on the head and then disappeared. Lincoln cried as he told us of his experience. He said it really happened, but he did not



Top right: Gravestone of Marion Sharp (1906-1988) and Lillian McCallum Sharp (1907-1987) in Baxter Gardens Cemetery (top left) in Mountain Home, Arkansas, where Marion is buried in the foreground. Above: Richard (Sharp) Martin at the grave of his grandfather in March 2009. Right: Marion's obituary in *Baxter Bulletin*, Thursday, February 11, 1988, page 3A.

Memorial service Friday for Marion Sharp

A memorial service for Marion C. Sharp of Norfolk will be held at 2 p.m. Friday at Roller Funeral Home Chapel with the Rev. Wilton Goudeaux officiating. Mr. Sharp died Monday (Feb. 8, 1988) at his home. He was 82.

In addition to the religious service, there will be an Elks service at 2 p.m. Friday by the Mountain Home Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks 1714. Burial will be in Baxter Memorial Gardens.

He is survived by one son, Lincoln Leroy Davis of Abilene, Texas; two daughters, Carol Lee Sharp of Germantown, Tenn., and Alice Joyce Herrick of Sioux City, Iowa; three grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents and his wife who died Feb. 3, 1987.

Formerly of El Reno, Okla., Mr. Sharp had been a resident of Norfolk since 1970. He was a retired mechanical superintendent for Rock Island Railroad. He was born Sept. 27, 1905, at Denver, Colo., to the late Carlos Lee and Sylvia Pearl Barker Sharp. He and the late Lillian Sharp were married Aug. 7, 1948, at Oak Park, Ill. He was a member of the Norfolk United Methodist Church, Twin Lakes Power Squadron and Mountain Home BPOE 1714. He was a veteran of the U.S. Navy serving in World War II.

Arrangements are by Roller Funeral Home.

know what it meant. My dear Uncle Lincoln died just six months later at the age of sixty years old.

It is strange to note, but my great-aunt, Mary Smith Van Loon, of Little Rock, Arkansas, also died about six months later. On our drive from Houston to Norfolk we had stopped by to see Aunt Mary. They say that some things happen in threes and this was certainly such a case.

I spoke at Marion's funeral, giving the main address. The funeral and the circumstances surrounding it gave me some of the most powerful spiritual experiences that I have ever had. My grandfather will always have a special place in my heart.

See Marion Carlos Sharp, Jr., Father.

Sources

- 1910 and 1920 Pulaski County, Arkansas, Census; Roselawn Cemetery burial records; Barker Family Bible in possession of Bonnie Harris of Reseda, California; Personal Knowledge of Marion Carlos Sharp, Senior, Lincoln Leroy Davis, Richard (Sharp) Martin, Claire Smith, Nell Watson and Herman Luetke.