



Lad Moore writer

East Texas writer Lad Moore's latest book, *Riders of the Seven Hills*, is now available in a literary-trade soft cover edition from BeWrite Books. You may obtain copies directly from the publisher <http://www.bewrite.net/> or at national booksellers, Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million, and others. Joining *Tailwind* and *Odie Dodie*, *Riders of the Seven Hills* is the third collection of Lad's stories featuring his unusual life adventures, rites of passage, and tales of memorable characters he met worldwide. From the red clay of East Texas to the jungles of Indonesia, there is a tale for every fancy.

For signed and personalized copies, the author maintains a limited supply of each book which can be obtained for \$18.00 each, Postpaid. You may order direct from him at pogoranch@aol.com

Friends and associates of the author may remit personal checks or use PayPal. Others please send Cashier's checks, Postal money orders, and/or PayPal. *(All PayPal customers please add \$1.00 for their transaction fee, total of \$19.00.)*

SPECIAL ! Now you can purchase the author's complete 3-book short-story trilogy for \$49.95 Postpaid! All three books are available in stock for a special personalized signing. Contact the author at pogoranch@aol.com *(PayPal users please add \$2.50 PayPal transaction fee, total \$52.45)*

Order the Trilogy today!

Synopses of the books of the Trilogy:

“Riders of the Seven Hills”

“Riders...” completes the trilogy of stories surrounding my life, my rites of passage, and the characters I met here and there that formed a lasting place in my fabric. It is by far the most ranging of the three volumes, and is based on the unique place we called home in Marshall, Texas. Marshall has had its fifteen minutes of fame many times, from temporary Capital of the state of Missouri to the less honored time when violent sit-in demonstrations played a sad and shameful commentary to its past. Likened to Old Rome, which is built on seven hills, Marshall can claim similar kinship. It is a geographical oddity in this otherwise gentle East Texas terrain. Add to that the mystery and lore of Caddo Lake, the largest natural body of water in the state, and you have the ingredients to spark the adventures I write about.

Excerpts from “Riders...”

“I reach for that magazine called ‘Shining Light’. It’s full of scriptures and godly stories, and I recite them to her. Sometimes I purposely tune in the TV evangelist and let Grandma catch me watching it. She really believes that stuff.”

“There’s that Reverend Odie Dodie, for example. He can put his hand on a woman’s forehead, shout a couple of things, and that woman will collapse back into the choir loft like a corpse. Then folks will pick her bawling self up and she swears she is healed. Hell, it might’ve even been polio or something incurable as that. She’ll throw down her walker and cartwheel herself out onto the platform like a pep-squader.

He had himself a big fat Cadillac, you know. Once I heard him say on TV that the ‘Lord didn’t want his favorite apostle riding around in no Nash Rambler’.”

#

In our house you did not buy shelled peas or shelled pecans. You earned the right to eat them by shelling them first. When we shelled peas my grandmother let her apron form a bowl in her lap to cradle the peas and the husks were tossed onto a newspaper next to her rocking chair. I always chose a cup towel for my lap instead of an apron, having an irrational fear of being seen, or worse, photographed in something with a pansy print and frilly edges. We shelled peas to rhythms from the Philco—preferably Lawrence Welk’s Champagne Orchestra.

#

In the places where the beams crossed over the columns, there was an overlapping ledge of bricks, like a shelf. Those were the places I hid my keepsakes so no one would find them. On one brick ledge I kept my coin collection. It was a canvas bag filled with Indian Head pennies and fifteen or so small coins that my mother said were “half-dimes” from the old days. I always thought half-dimes curious, since we had nickels to serve that purpose.

On top of another ledge I concealed my arrowheads in a coffee can. I had two dozen nice ones, plucked from the cotton fields after spring rains washed away their tombs of red clay and sand. I believed that arrowheads were magical and that they contained a tiny piece of the spirit of those who made them. I could close my eyes and see a berry-colored youth, winding the arrowhead onto the shaft of a willow branch with a string of bark. He must fashion it straight and true. The arrow stood alone between him and his very survival; be it hunting or defense.

My collections were important to me, and I sensed they had value. More than once my mother pressed me about borrowing my coins and arrowheads. She said they would “fetch a smart little loan from Old Man Hendry.” If I cried she would leave me alone, but I knew my treasures were not safe in my room.

#

“I smelled the cave before I saw it,” old Tillman said. “The odor was both sweet and sour—a cross between the musk of a buck and wet green hay. I also felt the air change—like one of them electric fans was blowing across my moist face. I made my way up close. The

smell and chill were coming from an opening in the face of the wall.”

“An opening? Opening into what? What was in there?” I asked. Like an impatient reader wanting to skip ahead to the ending of a mystery novel, I leaned forward in anticipation of his next words.

“I had to pull more vines and break the limbs off bayberry bushes. The opening was completely covered over. But I could hear the drip of water falling into a pool. The sound echoed back, like raindrops in a cistern.”

Tillman told me how he cut his way past the tangled vines and bushes. He then found himself standing next to an opening in the rock that was as wide as a good wagon, and twice as tall. It passed through the entire mountain, with a similar opening at the opposite end. In the center he said he saw what looked like the entrance to a second cave, leading off at ninety degrees.

“It seemed like the cave was shaped like the letter ‘T,’ but I couldn’t see clear in the darkness. I decided to leave and return the next morning with a pick and lantern. I stacked logs and brush back over the hole I made. I figured if somebody chanced by, they wouldn’t notice.”

Abruptly, Tillman ended his story. “Boy, it’s late. I got hogs to slop. Remind me next Saturday and I’ll tell you more about that crypt.” With that, he hopped off the tailgate and untied his horse’s reins.

“Wait! You didn’t say anything about a crypt,” I exclaimed. I ran alongside his wagon until I caught a pain in my side from being winded. I sat gasping for air on a fire hydrant while his wagon disappeared over the hill.

“Tailwind: Days of Cottonmouths and Cotton Candy”

The collection of memoirs that make up Tailwind were stories I needed to tell. There were two reasons I brought them to life. Most importantly, I wanted a diary that my grandchildren could hold in their hand--as opposed to the barren branches of a family tree whose browning leaves cannot be resurrected.

Secondly, I did it for myself. I spent much of my life in envy of others, whose lives had been more mainstream and boasted of intact family structures. It was not until my fifties

that I began to view my childhood and youth as uniquely valuable. As I began to assess the successes I had in life and business, I recognized I owed the credit for that to my upbringing.

I always knew that compared to my peers, I had an unusual and adventurous youth. I was a pattern quilt—shaped by the years spent overseas among contrasting cultures, and the influences of an absent father and harsh stepmother. What grew from it was stubborn independence and a highly developed self-awareness. These things fueled a creative curiosity and a strong will that I consider to be the core of my spirit.

How can good come from evil? How can adversity reap character? How can the continual testing of boundaries contribute to stable accomplishment? It's all about lessons learned by doing, and the influence of advice offered by wise and respected people. It's about listening and seeing—with senses sharpened to a razor's edge.

So much is said and written today about parenting and its effects. Much fills the news to suggest that blame for one's aberrant behavior should shift to his defenseless mom and dad—sometimes long gone. I want Tailwind to be evidence to the contrary.

Excerpts from "Tailwind"

"In the evenings we sat together on the porch swing, celebrating the red-rouge Texas sky. We shared cookies and iced tea, and to this day I am still fascinated by his ability to safely partition the cookies from the Red Ribbon tobacco in his mouth. There was something confessional about those evenings on the porch, and I told him things about my life that only my pillow knew.

I awoke the next morning to crowing roosters, but something was missing from daybreak's usual sensory cues. Butter-Nut Coffee. I didn't smell that special coffee. I got out of the bed and skipped through the living room toward the kitchen. The Venetian blinds were tilted, and the ribbons of sunlight on the floor inspired my hopscotch gait. On the kitchen counter, the coffeepot sat washed and empty, like we left it the night before. Yes, I knew there was something very different about this day."

#

"The strong breeze from the Gulf of Mexico caused my pants legs to flutter like a ship's flag. Inside those trousers, my legs were keeping time. My stomach grumbled and churned, like when I didn't chew each bite the required thirteen times before swallowing. I looked up at Cadet Sergeant Rivers and noted the firm, tight expression on his well-tanned face. He reminded me of a picture I saw once of a boat captain, looking toward an empty sunset. I would understand soon enough that we would not become friends. We would only be comrades - the relationship that comes from having been tossed together into a sea of like circumstance."

#

"My parents divorced when I was six months old. I don't remember seeing my mother even briefly - until my fourteenth birthday. I studied her likeness in some photos my grandmother saved. As kids in those days sometimes did, I claimed she was a Cherokee Indian. I think it was probably a way to salvage some pride about her leaving my brother and me. Cherokee Indians were the bloodline of choice - maybe because of the Trail of Tears.

My father seemed forever absent, following his dream in the uniform of a soldier of fortune. In my favorite photo of my dad, he is posed in front of the Great Pyramids, arms clasped behind his back. He is wearing khakis - the kind with an excessive number of pockets. I can almost feel the heat and see the dust swirling in the photo. His wry smile almost comes to life as if to narrate. It symbolized the notion of things far away ... the very image I always held of him."

#

"One day something crazy happened in our town. Folks took a stand over who had table rights at the Woolworth lunch counter. Blacks and whites faced each other with raised fists and obscenities--their mass separated only by police barricades dividing the narrow brick street. Even though it was a bright sunny day, it seemed cold and dark where I stood, pressed into a marble alcove in front of the First National Bank. Pretty soon the Texas Rangers showed up, and then the fire hoses. People were washed down the street in wads. Was it really just about a dime-store bowl of vegetable soup and a grilled cheese sandwich? I wasn't too proud of my town that day."

"Odie Dodie and Other Tales"

Odie Dodie the man was chosen to be the standard-bearer for my collection of short stories that bear his name. Odie was very real—a con man who roamed much of the Southwest hawking his facade of cardboard religion to the 'corn crop faithful.' If I despised his purpose, I loved his charm. He was an enigma at a time in my life when I believed all roads ran true North or South.

Odie Dodie is an assembly of a wide range of tales. Between the covers there is hurt, triumph, sadness, debauchery, and hope. There is a filling for the sweet tooth and a pallet for life's last nap. But among all its varied scenes and portrayals, there lies a theme. Each story was written from something that brushed or startled me in my life. Although technically they are fictional accounts, all have a core of truth. I did not intend them to teach nor pontificate. They are simply images that passed through my eye, and then were stored away without comment until now.

For every "Odie" that you know, I hope you also know a "Happy Jack Davis" or two. I hope you had a "Grandpa Hardesty" and mostly Norman Rockwell Christmases. Lastly, if you knew a "Java Ray Davis," I hope he was not your brother. You can meet all of these characters, and more, in Odie Dodie.

Excerpts from "Odie Dodie and Other Tales"

"At 2:00am, Miss Tanya poked her sharp fingers into Odie's ribs, shaking him out of his exhaustion. He grabbed for his trousers, as her poking was usually the signal that it was

time to pack the canvas and get out of town before daybreak cast the light of truth on them. Instead, she was shouting blue-streak expletives about the heavens - her words punctuated by the wind - as it began to rip the corner-gussets from the tent."

#

At Bee Crossroads, they turned south, and headed for Edenburg. Odie said it was a college town, and he had mixed emotions about those.

"Remember that little snot that asked us to explain how there was only Cain and his brother but all of a sudden they started doing some begattin'? That kid wouldn't take my word that you had to have faith - no, he wanted some sleazy, bird-and-bee kind of explanation," complained Odie, as Tanya shifted her face to press against the cool window of the truck, trying to doze for an extra hour.

"I'd still be there explaining if the crowd hadn't turned on the little jerk and the cops hadn't hauled him out. But it hurt the offering plate, it truly did. His mouthing off did just enough to plant a doubt or two that I might have been caught short in my roaring expertise of the Good Testaments.

"And I know you recall that time when the four sorority girls stood up together like the Andrews Sisters and challenged me on that obscure thing about the pillar of salt," Odie continued. "I had to think fast, and get them defensive about what they had been doing while curled up in the back seats of them Pontiac Firebirds."

#

"Prosperity. I can smell it," said Odie. Put a fresh coat of gold paint on the slop jar, sis. These mountain people have been chasing Mammon a little too hard. They want to cleanse themselves, and I'm their bar of Lifebuoy soap."

#

On the lot they had been assigned, there was heavy grass, and Odie had to unpack his Lawn Boy. Tall grass and weeds always upset him, because he hated manual labor. His big fear was that the sun would give him that dreaded red neck.

"Ever seen a true preacher that had a red neck?" Odie asked. "Can you possibly imagine the talk from the faithful? People will say, 'that there preacher is only part time, look at his neck.' And rightfully so. No man of righteousness has any time left for the outdoors if

he serves the Lord with all his might. It's all indoor work and everybody knows it."

#

Odie and Reba Nell became an effective team, yet maintained their professional distance despite Odie's mouth-watering glimpses of her when they changed into their service robes, and the couple of times he looked down her draping neckline when she bent over. She kept herself cold and aloof, steering their conversations always to the mundane, not allowing a drift to either the left or the right.

Hands-off is better, Odie thought. He was glad of it the two times he had to pinch her ear to keep her from coming a little too close to taking up preaching herself. She had caught on a little too well in some ways, and there was only room in the kitchen for one cook."

#

She sat down in the booth beside him, peering over it as if she wanted the comfort of that barrier between them. Between customers, she would return and fill his coffee cup again, the signal for him to stay. Each time, she looked out at the truck in longing stares.

"Where you headin' next?" She asked.

"God's plans take me from here through ten stops in Texas, then into Arkansas, where the heathens are already puttin' up roadblocks agin' the Lord," he said.

She smiled a smile that married listlessness with awe.

Before he left Alex's Hot Potato Grill, Odie had consumed a short stack, two over easy, two quarts of coffee, and all of Miss Reba Nell Bixby."

#

Each book in the trilogy is available by individual title in literary Trade Paperback at all major booksellers and through the publisher, BeWrite Books, at [www. Bewrite.net](http://www.Bewrite.net).

Personalized copies are available from the author at pogo@shreve.net

© Copyright 2009 by the author, Lad Moore