All six children of Iris Geraldine and Farice Bruce were on hand to share childhood stories with their descendants and their spouses Friday during the weekend-long Bruce Family Reunion in Liberal. The siblings are, back row form left, James Bruce, Farice Bruce, Glendel Bruce, John Bruce, and front row from left, Gwendolyn Bruce Webb and Sharon Bruce Dent. Daily Leader photo/Earl Watt

By EARL WATT • Daily Leader For many, the barren space between Texas and Oklahoma was a no-man's land for a number of reasons. It was a dry, arid land to many, and no one wanted to lay claim to it. But for Geraldine and Farice Bruce, who made their move to the panhandle about a mile and a half north of Tyrone in the 1920s, it proved to be a decision that would affect their family for generations to come.

The couple had six kids, four boys and two girls, and they all learned how to carry out their farm responsibilities. They shared their stories with the living generations of the Bruce descendants Friday during one of the weekend events planned for the reunion of about 70 that included a visit to the old homestead. Sharon Dent shared the story of ironing clothes with an iron that had to be heated on the stove.

"We didn't have electricity," she said. "This is the kind of light we used," she explained as she lit an old kerosene lamp.

Her dad would eat horehound candy and use cin-cin breath mints.

She also shared some of the other daily items the family used including lye soap.

“We made this when we butchered a hog,” she said.

The girls still had their childhood dolls, and the boys had stories of mischief out on the farm.

The kids recalled the routine of getting up at 4 a.m. so they could get their chores out of the way before sunrise, including cleaning up after the chickens and milking the cows.

After school, it was prepping the hay and working the fields.

“The city kids would go home and ride their bikes or play games,” Farice Bruce said. “I always resented that. But then I think back that what we did, it was the best thing for us. It probably kept us out of a lot of trouble. And it taught us how to work.”

Growing up in a small 600 square foot, four-room home without electricity gave the Bruce’s a different perspective than the techno-age of today. And perhaps, a little more appreciation for the modern conveniences.

“Thinking back, I don’t know if people today could have done it,” Farice said.

The hard work paid off, and the Bruce children were able to go to college and develop careers of their own. Some have scattered, others have stayed, but the respect for the two pioneers who made the move to the high plains continues with their children, and their children, and their children.

The Bruces worked the land from the 1920s to the ’60s,