

Jerry McKeiv's
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Prescott, Arkansas Street Scene (ca1926)

I asked readers to tell us their memories of the five and dime stores so popular when we were growing up. Those from Nevada County will remember the Sterling store in Prescott. You may not remember it looking like this photo unless you were around about 1926.

Sterling stores were founded by Sam Grundfest and Dave Grundfest, Sr. in 1922 in El Dorado and they soon had stores in small towns in Arkansas and surrounding states. The company changed with the times in the 1970s and started the Magic Mart Discount Department Stores competing with stores like Wal-Mart and K-Mart until a plane crash in 1979 took the lives of several top company executives. That event helped pave the way for Wal-Mart to take the lead among discount stores. Sterling's announced in February, 1982 that all Sterling's stores in Arkansas would be sold except for one in Little Rock. The company wanted to devote all their resources to their Magic Mart Discount Department stores, but Magic Mart began to lose money and soon faded from the scene after the plane crash and the loss of their top executives. Sterling stores had annual sales of \$130 million according to an article in the *Nevada County Picayune* in 1982. The article mentioned that the Prescott store had been operating in the same location in Prescott for over fifty years.

Evidently, many of you have fond memories of these type stores as evidenced by the mail I received. These memories from other readers across the country will probably jog a few memories loose that you had forgotten about. I guess we can just call this the "Five and Dime Store Issue" of *The Sandyland Chronicle*.

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The Most Marvelous Store in the World

By Cathy Cox Straley

Sterling's Five and Dime in Prescott —The Most Marvelous Store in the World—was a special wonderland for me as a child. I fondly remember perusing the 'millions' of merchandise items at Sterling's so I could make out my "want" list for Christmas or I needed an exchange gift for school, or I had a dime or two from an uncle to spend. Sterling's was the place to go. But it was such a difficult choice to pick something because of all the magical treasures there. Should I buy a box of chocolate-covered cherries, or a neat whistle that sounded like a train, or a tiny jewelry box decorated with ballerinas, or a tiny bottle of kiddie perfume? There were slingshots and BB guns and marbles (which I liked because I was kind of a tom-boy), plus board games like "Sorry" and "Clue" and "Monopoly" and those great paint-by-number sets. I loved those little hand-held games where you tried to roll the BBs into the holes, like a miniature pinball machine. I recall a popcorn machine that made the whole store smell of delectable popcorn, and seems like I recall a taffy machine that pulled and folded the taffy right in front of our eyes. There was all sorts of candy and bubblegum. I remember aisle after aisle of toys, with one whole aisle dedicated just to model cars and airplanes—that's where my brother could usually be found, intently studying which one he wanted to build next, or what color of tiny bottle of model paint or tube of model glue he needed to complete some plastic model he was working on at home at the time.

It seems like our Sterling's had wooden floors and two different entry doors at the front. Being located on a corner, there was also a side entry door near the back. There was a dark and mysterious staircase behind a curtain at the back of the store, which was "off-limits", and therefore more intriguing—we wondered what marvels were hidden there that they hadn't brought out yet? Lots of things hung from the ceiling, dangling very high and out of reach above my youngster-size height, such as hobby horses. Sometimes I just wanted to go in there to "ooh and awe" and handle the rubber snake and touch as many of the treasures as possible and to dream of someday when some of these things might be mine. There were school supplies too, such as 'Big Red' tablets with the Indian in full head-dress on the front, erasers, Elmer's glue, poster paper, fat pencils, Magic Markers, plastic scissors, and ruled Blue and Gold notebook paper (we saved the labels for prizes). Sterling's Five and Dime had it all!

My brother and I played ping pong a great deal as kids, so we got new paddles at Sterling's or sometimes a new badminton set, a new softball or some Sparklers. And puzzles—we loved puzzles of all sorts! We always wanted more jigsaw puzzles, and Sterling's had so many to pick from! I also remember getting Lincoln Logs at Sterling's, plus bags of little plastic Indians and Cowboys, china figurines of horses (which I loved), little cars and trucks, and my brother got an erector set and a magnifying glass from The Most Marvelous Store in the World.

Once when I was only about 6 years old, my mother and I were in Sterling's, but she was in a hurry. I remember (very, very distinctly) coveting a little pink and white make-up kit that had a tiny 'lipstick' and a mirror and a nail file in it. It cost a quarter—only 25 cents—and I begged and pleaded for my mother to buy it, but she refused. I kept exclaiming, "Please, please, it's only 25 cents!" She didn't understand that it was practically a 'life and death' issue to me! And well

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over 50 years later, it's so amazing how clear that episode still is in my memory. Sterling's was The Most Marvelous Store in the World, and it was so very important to be able to partake of its wonders! I swore (but not out loud) that I'd never forgive her, but of course I did. My mother seldom indulged my little tantrums, but I wish I could have gotten it over to her somehow back then of how IMMENSE this particular purchase was to me that day. It brings a tear to my eye even today, because every once in a while, we need to be indulged and to get to have something we hold dear, even at 6 years old. And as silly as it may seem to others at the time! Besides, it was from Sterling's—the Most Marvelous Store in the World (at least in my world, which was pretty limited at the time). It was such a special place!

Donna Woodral (Arkansas)--I was raised in Cullendale around the paper mill and there were stores all around there. I remember a five and dime store but can't remember the name of it. I loved going in there and the feel of that little shopping center. Right down the road was the best hamburger stand in the world, not far from that was Dixon furniture and up from that was Topper Hill and a little restaurant called The Corral and right across from it was Pat's Kat and Kow. On down the road from the five and dime was the Tastee Freeze where you could get the best vanilla dr. peppers you have ever tasted. What memories that brings back to me. It was such a wonderful little community and now it's like a ghost town.

Billy McKelvy (Arkansas)—I remember the Sterling store at the corner of Hwy. 67 and Main Street in Prescott, Ark. They had lots of items for five and 10 cents, plus others that cost more. When I was a kid, I remember my parents would give me a few dollars for Christmas shopping and I could spend several hours and get a lot of goodies for just a little money. At Christmas time the store was packed with merchandise and stores were loaded with brightly-colored items. To a kid, New York City could not have been any more attractive.

At the heart of the store was a nut counter where they sold all kind of roasted nuts and mixed nut assortments. The display case had a round disc in the middle where the best nuts were displayed on a carousel. A heat lamp warmed the nuts and spread the aroma throughout the store. A little change would buy a bag of rich, buttery nuts that were warm to the touch.

The Sterling store burned many years ago and was never rebuilt. The world is different now. If you sell items for a nickel or dime, there's not much profit to be made. The ashes of the store were hauled away and a downtown park sits on that location today. An attractive mural depicting Nevada County life is painted on the side of the adjacent building.

Teresa Harris (Arkansas)--Morgan & Lindsey, 120 Adams Ave SW, located where Kristen's is today. The first thing I think of was the big glass candy cases and how all the kids we knew always stopped by there on their way to the Malco. We weren't stupid, you got more for your money if you bought your own candy before you got to the Malco. I also remember my mother allowing me to pick out which doll I wanted for Christmas one year (since I was almost too big for dolls this was to be my last doll as a Christmas gift), and I can still see that doll on the big Christmas display at Morgan & Lindsey's, she was the most beautiful doll I had ever seen! I still have the doll today, by some strange of twist of fate my little sister kept her long after I left home, and gave her back to me several years ago. Needless to say the doll had a bad haircut and no clothing, but nothing that a doll expert couldn't fix.

Ben Franklin Variety Discount Store, 109 Washington St. SW, located about where Stinson's is today and was destroyed in the Christmas Eve fire of 1966. What I remember most of all is the cosmetics counter. All the merchandise was placed on big flat display tables. I remember

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Tangee lipstick and Evening in Paris cologne, and thought those were very exotic things that real ladies used... A friend of mine, Veda Beaver was the manager of Ben Franklin's for a time and I especially enjoyed going in there because Mrs. Beaver was so nice and friendly. This store was formerly F. W. Woolworth's (as shown in the 1961 telephone book, don't know exactly when it changed hands).

I have an old phone book, but didn't find any ads for these stores.

Dick's Five & Dime in Branson, MO is a wonderful place, it reminds me very much of the old stores I grew up with here in Camden. At my last visit I managed to spend \$100+ at Dick's Five & Dime. Do shop there and soak in the memories in you are ever in downtown.

Paulette Weaver (Texas)--One of the first jobs I had while in college was to work part time at a Ben Franklin's Five and Dime in Texarkana, Texas. I remember having to count all the penny candies during inventory. PENNY CANDIES--can you remember them? I remember the little kids coming in with a dime and buying a sack full of candy. They would spend a long time deciding just how they would spend that dime to get everything they liked.

Neva Grauberger (Colorado)--The "five and dime" I most remember was Sprouse Reitz in Grants Pass, OR. The memory that stands out most when I think about it is watching the pneumatic tubes that sped through tubes across the ceiling throughout the store and were whisked to the second level of the store. The second level was not enclosed, but one where you could see the office area from the main floor. There was a large open set of stairs to get to the upper level. I also remember a wood floor and many glass cases under which were all sorts of treasures, but I can't remember any specific item that I took home after someone in my family paid for it.

Lois Evans (Arkansas)--There were two in Arkadelphia (Clark Co Arkansas) where I grew up....Ben Franklins and Sterlings. They were both variety stores and you could get most anything there. They were still around when my oldest son almost 40 was little...he would usually get a little car (hot wheel or matchbox). I remember as a child and young woman getting toys and later perfume...Evening in Paris and make up. I also remember getting fabric to sew a home ec. dress in high school. Interesting little stores. We went in a 5 and 10 store in I think it was Jefferson, Texas last year and they had the old candies, black jack gum and cloves gum and paper dolls and many of the cheaper little things I remember from my childhood. (they were not 5 or 10 cents though). Thanks for bringing back some pleasant memories.

Don Honea (Arkansas)--My memory of a five & dime store was Wackers(?), located over in Kilgore, TX. Mileage wise, not that far from Prescott. If my memory serves me well, it was the great selection of toys. Little lead soldiers - painted of course. Airplanes, cars. Probably made in Japan.

This was in the late 1930s. Christmas time was always great with the decorations and the smell of the Christmas trees. Kilgore was a booming oil town and my dad had a real paying job with Shell Oil. Times were pretty good. As a kid, the threat of war over in Europe was on the horizon but was of no real threat to me. Made for great viewing on the news segment at the Saturday afternoon movies. Nothing that ol' Gene Autry, Buck Jones, the Lone Ranger and the others couldn't handle.

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Sandy Knops (Arizona)--The TG&Y and it was right around the corner from my house in National City, Calif. Oh they had EVERYTHING (or so it seemed back in those days). I especially remember going and buying the candies for just pennies. And just being able to walk there by myself was such a thrill too.

Earlene Mendenhall Lyle (Alabama)--In Minden, LA, where I grew up, there were 3 "five and dimes" == Ellis's, Tullos's and Morgan & Lindsey. Downtown Minden, which was the ONLY place to shop in the 1950s, consists of what was then known as front street and back street even though the streets were named North and South Broadway.

Those stores were absolutely filled with all types of "goodies" that were affordable for adolescents and teens who got any type of allowance at all. I could have spent HOURS in them just rummaging around. Today, I probably couldn't handle the "clutter" very well.

Betty Hamby Bell (Texas)--The five and dime I remember is Sterling's in Prescott. Every Christmas Eve my mother and Irma and I would inevitably be there to purchase that last Christmas present...usually a pair of socks or stocking stuffer. In 1942 when I turned 16, my first job was as a clerk at that Sterling Five and Dime. It made me feel so grown up.

One of the clearest memories of Sterling's is a mother hunting for her little girl there, and her calling out "Maybelline, Maybelline". I had never heard the cosmetic name as a name for a child, but I thought it was such a pretty name for that little girl.

James Hairston (Arkansas)--I have fond memories of the Sterling Five & Dime store, located at Main and Hwy 67 in Prescott. Every so often, my Mom would allow me to pick out some *little* something from the store (mostly toys!). I have guilty feelings to this day about the time I shop-lifted a small pocket knife from Sterling. I became so guilt-laden; I took it back (before I'd even gotten to the street corner!). The memorable thing is, I was almost caught putting it *back*! I've NEVER stolen anything else since then! So....I suppose you could say, Sterling Five & Dime taught me a valuable lesson: Never, NEVER steal anything! The guilt is unbearable :)

Barbara Dyson (Arkansas)--The first thing that comes to mind is the smell of popcorn and the ceiling fans blowing. I think the store was Sterling's and it was in Magnolia, although we also went to Prescott's (Sterlings?) and Hope -- I think it was Morgan & Lindsey. I'm not really sure of the names. I know in Texarkana, there was a Woolworth's and they served sandwiches, etc.

Dr. A. B. L. (Arkansas)--Malvern, AR (Main St.) Ben Franklin and Sterling's 5 & 10
When I was a young girl, I earned my "spending" money by picking blackberries in a Mrs. Tucker's lard can and sold them for \$1.00 per gallon to my Aunt Eva. I saved and saved all summer, and a "big deal" for me was to "go to town" on Saturdays (we lived 16 mi. in the country), to Ben Franklin and Sterling's and buy a bag of jelly beans and saunter down both sides of Main St.- window shopping, planning how I would invest (reluctantly) in a new sweater or skirt before school started. At the dime stores, I remember the wide, open, flat BINS, separated by short, glass dividers, in both stores, displaying all merchandise and the pop corn machine ever steaming, and how LONG the red and white striped popcorn sacks were. I have something yet that my Auntie bought me at Sterling's the year I married in 1966. It was one of the sweetest gifts I received. I treasure it in my cedar chest forever. STILL!!!

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Also in Hope, AR- MORGAN & LINDSEY'S 5 &10

At the end of summer every year I went to visit my cousin LBG in Hope, AR. before the school year would start. Sometimes her mom would drop us off at MORGAN & LINDSEY'S to day dream at the perfume counter. We both had the same favorite fragrance: Evening in Paris, of course, in the glorious heart shaped, cobalt blue, exquisite bottle. There were no sampler bottles in those days, and we thought NOTHING of popping the lid, DOUSING the wrists and back-ears, only to leave the store while REEKING of Paris fumes, rhinestone earrings, and chomping Clove chewing gum.(oh, the MAGIC of the 1950's). Those old, oak hardwood floors creaked our every step toward the exit, in great relief, I am sure.

Helen Medlin (Alabama)--Oh me! Jerry, I worked in Woolworths store in Huntsville, Al, it was located in the middle of town at that time and later moved to a Mall on the west side of town. I never worked at the Mall store, I was married at that time.

The first address was on Washington Street, I worked there during my high school days but I also met my husband John, while working there. I worked every department of the store and at Easter, I was one of the girls who filled Easter baskets. Back then when there was a holiday, we had to fill all the counters with the holiday specials. I guess the best area I worked in the store, was at the candy counter, at one end of a long, long counter that specialized in candy on one end and hardware (electrical) on the other, in- between, were socks and gloves for girls and ladies, underwear for boys and men, handkerchiefs for men, and the electrical end had sockets for lamps and electrical wire we sold by the foot.

Times have really changed. Every section in the store was divided into departments such as dishes, pots and pans to cosmetics for ladies, candy, and clothing. There were 3 lines of counters in the store and the middle one was divided with breaks so the people could have access to everything. The office was elevated in the back so the manager could view all the employees at work. I made all of 65 cents an hour. That was pretty good for a school girl in those days, (1940's)

The first thing that comes to mind is how we got paid, in an envelope with a form telling us how much we had earned and the tax taken out. We did not have Social Security tax taken out until later in my working life. The store hours was 12 hours a day, with 2 hours off for lunch and dinner, we did get 20 minutes break after the government made a law saying all workers that worked over 8 hours a day had to have 20 minute breaks per 12 hour shifts plus lunch and dinner hour. Some say those were the "good" old days, I don't think so.

Mary Anna (Oklahoma)--When I was a little kid I thought that the most important stores for shopping were the 5 & Dime and Sears. (I remember the name of the 5 & Dime. but I cannot recall how it was spelled. The store was in Little Rock, Ark., with the same name as a guy who was a senator for the State of Arkansas for many long years. Perhaps you know who I am talking about. I still have jewelry bought at that 5 & Dime. I still wear those pieces of jewelry.

Wanda Carter (Texas)--I remember riding in the rumble seat of a Model A with my dad, mother, little sister, Bobbie and little brother, William and going to Paris, Texas to the SS Kressee store and we would have fifty cents and would walk the aisles looking at all of the pretty things to buy for one cent, five cents and ten cents. The store was so clean and a lady would follow us around to help with our selections. I usually would buy a stick of candy, jewelry,

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handkerchief, comb and hair clasp and then would have ten cents left over for the next time we were able to come. When I think of that type of store I think of my mother who was so pretty and my handsome daddy. They were so happy and had their health, now both are gone on to glory.

Peggy Lloyd (Arkansas)--My first job was at Scott's Five and Ten in Hope, Arkansas, in 1960. The store was located near the corner of Main and Second in downtown Hope. After taxes, my take-home pay was \$3.10 per day. I just worked on Saturday and a few days around Christmas. I had the toy department and surrounding areas. I got down lampshades for people and measured and cut oil cloth. The manager was Mr. Emil Kaddin, a native of Missouri. I learned one amazing thing about mankind when I worked there. The poor folks who were working for \$15.00 or \$20.00 per week bought the fanciest, biggest Easter baskets for their children (\$3.98, \$4.98 and even (holy-moly) \$5.98!). The better-off folks bought the \$.98 basket. I also remember how my legs felt after standing for 8 hours. Even leaning on a counter was frowned upon. I quickly struck "Retail Sales" from the list of things I wanted to do.

My grandfather called ten-cent stores "racket stores". He is the only person I have ever heard use that expression, but I have seen the term in newspapers from the 1890s. He grew up in Columbia County around College Hill, Lamartine and Waldo.

Darenda (Ingersoll) Stringfellow--The wonderful "Sterling's 5 & 10" store that was in Prescott. As a child we would go to town on Saturday's with our grandparents to grocery shop, Saturday's was town day...Papaw would give us each a \$1 bill to go to Sterling's while him and granny took care of the grocery shopping...What seemed like hours of looking at all the fun toys and deciding which one we could get for a dollar was actually only a few minutes..The toy section was in the back of the store. We always would find a yoyo, plastic snake, or coloring book and always had change left over. We would sometimes go to the "front" section of the store, that's where the candy in the bins was located, we could get "some" but not a whole dollars worth cause that was too much candy to eat before the grownups got back to get us. Was really sad when Sterling's closed...It was a wonderful childhood memory to cherish...as those days are long gone, and you would never let a kid loose in a store now "unsupervised" (back then all the cashiers in their red aprons would keep an eye on us while in the store, we just didn't know it till years later)..

Betty Thomas (Texas)--I remember going through my dad's pocket change, picking out all the pennies and saving them by putting them in my mother's sewing machine middle tilt-out drawer. On Saturdays when we would go to town I had my money to spend at the five and ten cents store. Most of the time I bought candy since you could get violently ill on five cents worth if you picked wisely--those pieces that were two or three for a penny. As a very young child I remember "furnishing" a very tiny doll house with the pieces of very tiny ceramic furniture (made in Japan) that I could buy for less than a dime. As time marched on my allowance got larger and I can remember buying my first tube of Tangee lipstick at the Ben Franklin store in Prescott. I also remember my Grandpa buying his eyeglasses there. Since he was a carpenter he was rather hard on glasses, especially the earpieces. When they broke off he tied a piece of cord on the frame and a nail to the other end of the cord and draped the cord over his ear. I recall that he always had a pocket watch that he bought at the five and dime and he would break the crystal and then just buy another watch. He gave me one that still kept good time and as a seven-year old the watch went wherever I did. I just hung it on a tree branch or laid it on a rock and knew what time I had to be back home. As a young bride I remember buying utensils for my kitchen there: measuring cups and spoons and, of course, Pyrex pie plates. Lace and eyelet trimmings, thread, and buttons were available to make our feed sack dresses pretty. You

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could buy crochet hooks and knitting needles, yarn, and books of directions for whatever you wanted to make. Embroidery scarves and pillowcases were pre-stamped with a design and the embroidery floss and hoops were available, too. I sure do miss those stores!

Brenda Barham (Arkansas)--I can remember Ben Franklin and Sterling stores in my hometown of Stuttgart. They were both downtown like all the other stores we shopped at back then. I had a quarter a week allowance and it went a long way in them. Ben Franklin was dark and lots of wood, crowded aisles, tall shelves, kinda scary. Ben Franklin had lots of embroidery thread and Barbie dolls and all her clothes. I can remember buying Barbie clothes and dolls there. I tried to embroidery at an early age and bought lots of thread.

Sterling's was my favorite store. It was more modern and open. Sterling's had fingernail polish, which I loved and Evening in Paris cologne in that tiny blue bottle with the silver cap. They had Shadowline lingerie, which was so pretty. My mom got lots of it for birthdays and Mothers Day.

I miss them and have lots of memories of them. There is or was a store in downtown Texarkana that reminds me of both of them.

Ann Wylie (Arkansas)--A five and dime store brings to mind a place where one can find all kinds of items that a child or an adult could ever want. There would be toys, dolls, candy, jewelry, cowboy boots, hats, cowboy pistols and all kinds of games in the store.

Our dime store in Prescott when I was growing up was of course, STERLINGS on the corner of Main Street and Highway 67. I probably never had more than a dime to spend at once, but a kid could get a sack full of goodies for that price. Today's version of the Five and Dime would be the DOLLAR STORE. Things cost more these days.

One year around Christmas time, my mother got a job working at Sterling's for the Christmas rush. Times were different then. She was instructed to wear dresses, heels and stockings to work. She stood up all day, walked around the store waiting on customers and wrapped presents for \$3.00 a day. Yes, I said \$3.00 a day was the salary in 1948. She was very glad to get that job, even for the short time of three weeks of work. That job allowed her children to have presents for Christmas. I remember getting a new pair of red shiny cowboy boots and a few clothes. Sterling's Five and Dime Store gave our family a big happy Christmas that year.

Ed Bryson (Arkansas)—Sterling's in Prescott was located on the corner of west main and Hwy 67. This was a large store with two entrances facing Hwy 67 and a third door on Main Street. The store manager in the '40s and '50s was Mr. Hanning, who had a son David. As you entered the corner entrance, there was a huge candy counter with great deals on "double bubble" (5 for a nickel). Also I loved the jelly beans and corn candy. This store had a large department of small toys and was a prime supplier of "caps" for your cap pistol and BBs for the Red Ryder BB gun.

Across the RR tracks at the corner of East Elm and East 1st was another five and dime, B.F. Franklins. They also had a big candy counter and seemed to handle more dry goods.

Sallie Purifoy Graham (Arkansas)--My maternal grandmother, Bertha Westmoreland, lived about a block off Highway 24 near the turn to go to Blevins. When my sister and I would visit her, we always walked to the Sterling Store in Prescott. It was a short walk. The store had a fairly large toy section, but I was usually looking for doll bottles. They had small glass replicas of the large Evenflow baby bottles. I used them to raise orphan kittens. Coming from a large farm with a lot of barns where different types of feed was stored, we always had a number of cats for

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mice control. Sometimes the mother cat would get killed or simply disappear and I would raise the kittens using a doll bottle. I also remember the Woolworth store that was in Camden. A fire near Christmas one year burned that store, Stinson's Jewelers, and the old West's Department.

MY BEST MOST FUN JOB EVER

(The luckiest boy in town—Hody Butler)

Open note to reader. I cannot guarantee ever name and event detail but this is not fiction. Comments and corrections are welcome. This is just the way I remember it some many years later. The lucky boy's final word and I stand by it.

Growing up, starting in 1933 following the great depression, in the late 40's early 50's was a thing of wonder and such a blessing. Growing up in a small community where things, I will just call old morals and values, abound was truly fortunate. To be blessed with the loving parents I had was a start in life that was more than one could ask for. To all you mother's and father's out there, what you do is such a challenge and so important. You hang in there.

The first earned income I remember was at the age of 4. A grand total of 50 cents for 50 pounds of cotton picked. My mother made me a small sack, which I pulled alongside of her row and I saw on several occasions she tried to slip some cotton she had picked into my sack. This was a weeks worth of picking and I was super proud of it. Since it was our patch and others were picking I got to get into the wagon for all weigh-ins and my father wrote the weight by each name. I would check and ask each day how much I picked. My top day was 15 pounds. My cotton fortune was spent with the local peddler man who came to our home on a periodical basis. When all cotton was picked my father went to the bank and got a sack full of new shinny coins. All the pickers gather around a stump in our back yard and one by one stepped up when their name was called. He poured out all of the new coins, shinning and sparkling in the sun, while I am thinking we must be the richest people in the world. I was first and he gave me 50 cents. The part I did not like or understand--he kept giving away our money until it was all gone. Don't think I ever forgave him for this. Lucky boy.

At the age of 6 we had moved from the sandy land of Union near Bodcaw to the town of Prescott. Here I started to receive a 25-cent weekly allowance paid at noon on Saturday. Now I did not call it an allowance as I had chores like yard maintenance to perform to earn this money. I learned money management from this fund. The price of the movie at the Gem Theater in Prescott was 12 cents, a coke for 5 cents, popcorn 5 cents and 3 cents left over for 3 orange colored marshmallow candy peanuts at Sterling's 5 and 10 store on the way home. Yes if you do the math all my money is gone and I did say money management not money responsibility. As this day comes to a close I just don't see how it could be any better and I now look forward to next Saturday and the next chapter in the good guys vs. the bad guys at the Gem Theater. Lucky boy.

I became an expert at yard work keeping our lawn and the widow lady's next door. She paid cash plus all the muscadines I could eat. This seemed like an easy way to make money so I went looking. As luck would have it another widow woman hired me to mow her lawn. Her name was Mrs. Rice and her husband had been a Medical Doctor while she ran Rice Drug Store, which she still had. This drug store was to prove to be a treasure source for me during the war years. It was old and musty and few shopped there anymore. Her husband had died a few years before. Here I found items like play pistol caps, BB's, firecrackers and chewing gum. All my supplies worked except the Juicy Fruit gum was brittle and broke apart like a cracker. If you

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stayed with it you could get it soft and chewy. These things you could not find during the war years. I never told anyone about this place. One day she asked me to clean out her garage. I found two like new Dodge cars. One had less than 500 miles on it. She said she never learned to drive and her husband bought two new cars just a few years before he died. Have always wondered what happened to those cars.

Soon another widow woman, Mrs. King, the county librarian, hired me to mow her lawn and my business was growing. I could tie my push mower and sling blade on to my bicycle seat and off to work I go. It was now time to buy a billfold and find a good hiding place. Don't know whom I was hiding from as we slept with doors unlocked and windows wide open. Yes, the car keys were in the car. I became a regular customer at the local Western Auto store upgrading my bike with accessories. The playing card with a clothes pen had been my only addition to this point. Now I added reflector lights, bike handle grips with streamers, a tube patching kit and a horn. Now it was an old bike and a girl's bike at that, but I was sure proud of it. Mrs. King introduced me to the wonders of the library and such treasures as *Tom Sawyer*, *Ivanhoe*, *Huckleberry Finn* and *Call of the Wild*. My father once told me that on a church night during a winter snow he helped her up the steps at the First Baptist Church. The moon shinning on the snowflakes in her gray hair sparkled like diamonds and she looked like an angel. I do think that sometime in the 50's I heard that she had been struck and killed by an automobile in Prescott.

By the age of 12 a friend told me about the Prescott *Picayune* starting a daily paper. I ask and now I have a year round income. At 10 cents per week per customer, 50 of them, I am hitting the big time. Factor in tips for porch and behind the screen delivery, an occasional cookie or glass of lemonade the good times and money is rolling. I keep my mow jobs while giving up my weekly allowance, but parents feel I should continue my home chores. Well there are things like food, housing, birthdays, clothes etc to consider so this seemed reasonable to me. Bet some are starting to wonder if I am spending it all. Not on your life. Mr. Yarbrough at the Bank of Prescott has me set up with a checking account and World War II stamp and bond saving program. I still have one of my bonds. Lucky boy.

All is well until the *Picayune* gives up this daily paper. I add storefront window washing starting with Joe Boswell's and soon other employers are calling. Think I washed every window storefront in Prescott at one time or the other.

When summer rolls around I spend a month visiting and working on my uncle's farm. Now I had picked cotton once but never clearing ground, working in the hay, pulling and loading watermelons, slopping the hogs, building fences, and the toughest of all, chopping cotton. We chopped my uncle's cotton and then the neighbor farms around. Long hot days but the pay was good. Not sure but it was two or three dollars a day.

Fall and back to school plus a Saturday job at the grocery store. One of my favorite jobs there was cutting a 5-cent slice of bologna and cheese. With a little practice you learn to judge the thickness to weigh ¼ pound. A lot more fun than the stocking, sacking and delivering of groceries plus I got a free slice of bologna, cheese, small sack of crackers and a Nehi Grape soda. This is living. Lucky boy.

The next summer I got to run The John Eagle feed and grocery store for 5 days while Mr. Eagle took a short vacation. I was the only employee so this was a great big boy experience for a now 10th grader. I was given the key and a list of instructions. The hardest part of this job was the loading of feed sacks and the responsibility of hiding the money each day. Such a relief each

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morning to make sure no one was around looking and then to locate the money sack and put out the daily cash amount into the cash register.

Lot of summer left so got to find work. You never know until you ask. The local hotel owner agreed to let me sand and paint all his chairs in the hotel. Man what a job and was I glad when it was over. I dug a ton of chewing gum off the bottom of those chairs and a super job or sanding the paint off. Got a free lunch each day and good pay but I earned it. Stopped by to visit my past employer at the *Picayune* and he gave me a job delivering sale circulars--one cent each and I had 300. Took most of the day but easy \$3.00 if you don't count the pesky dogs along the way. In the future when he needed a delivery boy he called me. Lucky boy.

One day while washing the windows at Joe Boswell's Dept. Store the manager came out to inspect my work. I ask him if he would hire me to work as a janitor and part time sales clerk. We worked out a deal for Saturdays and Christmas holidays at \$3.00 per day. Soon I was sweeping up, cleaning bathrooms, taking out trash, unloading freight, stocking, and the hardest of all, working the lay-a-way section. This was kept in an upstairs attic-like place and was it a mess. When payments were made on this merchandise I had to go record it on the ledger attached to the item. Finding it was a big problem but I worked out a procedure that made it easy for me. The manager noticed and finally began to give me store sales work and \$4.00 per day. I loved this store, easy work, good pay and it was one of the first to have a/c. They installed a 5-ton York a/c and was it cool. This also led to one day of work at the end of the year doing inventory. I soon added the Ford Motor Co. to my year-end inventory jobs. We are talking tons of parts but the pay is good.

Interstate 30 is coming and I land a job with a surveyor team for the summer. Good work and good pay but lots of chiggers and ticks. Think the snake threat and the poison ivy was just as bad. My pay was now a whopping \$5.00 per day. We finished the county part of the survey just in time to start a new school year.

Before I know it school is out and I got to find a summer job. I still had money in my jeans as my Saturday and holiday job at Boswell's was still good. I don't want any more hay field or cotton chopping. To my surprise and pleasure I find a job for the entire summer at the local pickle shed. At one time Prescott had a pickle shed located just off U.S. 67 town side of Wildcat Road near Pittman's Garage. This was a place where the local growers would bring in their cucumbers by the truckload. We graded the cucumbers by size and stored them in large wood vats packed in salt water. On schedule a refrigerated train car would be set nearby and loaders would transfer them to the Brown and Miller processing plant in Texarkana. Here they became your Bread and Butter wonders that went great with your meals. The hours were long, around 10 each day, 6 days a week. The pay was seventy-five cents per hour. Notice I am now being paid by the hour. Big money. Lucky Boy.

Maybe my most unusual job occurred at Christmas in 1951. I had a full time job selling shoes and work clothes. One day during the holidays a boy in his late teens came in for a pair of dress shoes. He, as most people did, called them Sunday shoes. He worked in the log woods down near Cale and had a big foot. I found the shoe he loved in a size 12 triple E width. This was the biggest shoe we stocked in this French toe bronze colored Johnnie Walker dress shoe. With or without socks we could not get it on his foot even after I put it on the shoe stretcher. He bought it against my recommendations. A week later he came to show me he could wear it. He had cut a two-inch strip down each side from the French toe to the tongue and was happy with it.

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It was now Christmas time and the local funeral home, Cornish Funeral Home, had a rash of funerals. They got a call to go to Dallas, Texas and pick up a deceased male that was to be buried in Prescott. Now they had an ambulance available but no drivers and were required to have two on out-of-state transports. Once a mature married adult male driver was located he suggested me for his helper. He had known me all my life and felt comfortable making this trip with me along. As I was to find out I would end up doing all the driving which was about a 10 hour round trip on the roads of the time. My employer released me early afternoon so I could earn \$25.00 for my effort. I agreed to be back at opening time the next morning. This was more than I would make all week selling shoes. The drive to Dallas went well and we located the funeral home without trouble. I felt a little uncomfortable and was glad I was not doing this alone. Dairy Queen's were getting real popular by now and we stopped for a late supper. This establishment was located somewhere in Texas near Hwy. 67 and offered car hops on skates. Soon all the young high school girls on skates and in cars were gathered around wondering what we had in the back. I told them and it was an open door for more conversation. My driver partner insisted we get a move on so ended my opportunity to visit with all these beautiful Texas girls. I guess the funeral home knew what they were doing sending along this mature male married driver. By the way he would not allow me to use the flashing lights or sound the siren. Still a Lucky boy.

NOW FOR MY BEST JOB EVER THEN AND NOW. ABOUT TIME, RIGHT.

Five and Dime stores.

The first thing I remember is the great smell and counters loaded with many wonders. If they didn't have it you didn't need it. The decorations, at the holiday seasons, were a sight to behold. Having spent most of my adult life in Dallas and enjoying the decorated shopping malls seems to be an expanded version of our five and dime during the 40's, 50's. Prescott was lucky to have two of them. The largest and oldest was Sterling's and there was Ben Franklin near the movie house. The toy department, comic book section and the candy counter were my favorites.

I was lucky enough to work at The Ben Franklin store for about a year while in high school. I landed this job with my storefront window washing. One day the owner paid me for my window washing and asked if I needed Saturday work. This was before I started working on a regular basis for Boswell's. On day one I was assigned to the candy section, as it's only clerk. In fact no other employee was allowed to come behind the counter. I had my own cash register, candy scales and necessary supplies. We sold all types of candy from one cent to bulk candy by weight. My favorite was chocolate covered peanuts. The owner instructed me that employees paid full price for candy but that I could eat all of any and every type of candy free. This blew me away. I was a growing, always hungry, teenager and he must be out of his mind. Can't explain it, but I limited the volume I ate. I did try all types but ate very little. I made a special effort to give him my best effort and made sure all candy and money was accounted for.

A few months later I go in one Saturday and he has installed a donut-making machine. All sorts of decorations and toppings with chocolate coating, nuts, coconut and the like. Yep, this is added to me and with his blessing I can eat all I want. Easy to cook them as we had a prepared batter that went into the hopper. Electric fryer that the donut shaped batter dropped into and flipped over half way through the cooking. I then coated some of them based on sales results. I ate all mistakes and a few extra.

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Summer comes and he puts in a Dairy Queen soft mix type ice cream machine next to candy and donut counter. No way, yes I get this also and like the candy and donuts I can eat all I want. The restocking my candy, cooking and decorating my donuts and keeping my ice cream condiments stocked keeps me busy. I made a special effort that no customer waited for service at any of my stations. The owner installed a bell I could ring if I got backed up and he would come and help. This was not so difficult as our customers required a lot of think time as they decided how they would spend their hard earned money. Think it would have been a bit easier if I had worked on skates. Going to the icehouse to get milk cans filled with mix for the ice cream machine is a treat as I went inside where it was so cool. The clean up at the end of a busy day was not. I kept waiting for him to assign the comic book counter to me but he did the next best thing. I was allowed to take any book home as long as I returned it the next day. At the end of work on Saturday I would often drive to Hill Top, a local truck stop, and get us a foot long chilidog. My boss loved them as much as I did. Lot of beautiful memories. Mr. Pete Escarre, owner of Ben Franklin five and dime, you were special. I remember, appreciate and think of you to this day 60 plus years later. THANK YOU MY FRIEND. Lucky boy.

Now tell me, was this a great job or what?

ANOTHER MYSTERY PHOTO



One of my readers sent this picture to me. She said it was in her mother's photo album, but was not identified. She thinks it might be someone from the Nevada County area and was wondering if anyone might recognize this person. If you can help, let me know and I'll pass the information on to her.

NEWS ITEMS FROM 1910

Bodcaw—Next Saturday we will have a debate at the school hall. The subject will be whether man has done more for the advancement of civilization than has woman, with Mr. Ray Tompkins representing the mere man standpoint and Mr. Johnson Camp defending the woman's cause.

Prescott--A. E. McGuire, rural mail carrier on route 2, has one of the largest owls ever taken alive. Its wings measure five feet across. Its eyes look as large as silver dollars do to a man in the morning when he wakes up broke.

Bluff City—The school term will open Sept. 12 under the leadership of Prof. Garland Starnes, one of the best young teachers in the county. The school is located in the eastern part of the county in one of the healthiest sections.