

Jerry McKeiv's
SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

Vol. 11 – No. 9

sandman43@att.net

September, 2011

HE KEPT HIS PROMISE TO GOD

Have you ever heard of Harrison Mayes? Maybe you have seen signs along the highways with such messages as “Get Right With God”, “Jesus Saves”, "Jesus Is Coming Soon", or “Prepare To Meet God”.

I can remember one of those signs along Interstate 30 south of Little Rock that read “Prepare To Meet God”. Some friends of ours were once traveling to Little Rock to visit a relative in the hospital. A major hurricane had just come ashore and Arkansas was in the path of the storm. There was heavy rain, winds, and the possibility of tornadoes. People were being warned about driving through standing water. They were already nervous about being out in such bad weather. One said later that she made it pretty good until she saw the sign "Prepare To Meet God". I'm sure the driver held on to the steering wheel a little more carefully after seeing that sign.

I recently learned that these signs were the work on one man--Harrison Mayes. He was a Kentucky coal miner with only a fifth grade education. One day while working in the mine at age 18, he was badly injured in an accident. A runaway coal car loaded with coal crushed him against the wall of the mine and it was thought he might not live. He made a promise to God that if He allowed him to live; he would dedicate his life to working for the Lord.

Harrison Mayes did survive the accident and did not forget his promise to God. When he recovered from his accident, he tried preaching and singing gospel songs, but that didn't work out for him. He was a man who liked to work with his hands. He then came up with the idea of constructing signs with simple religious messages and placing them along the highways where many people could see them. His first signs were made from wood, but he soon converted to concrete signs, some weighing as much as 1400 pounds. Some signs were in the shape of a cross and some were shaped like hearts. He continued this work throughout his life, erecting signs along highways in 44 states.

He never asked for donations for materials for his signs, but churches and some of his fellow miners sometimes made contributions to help him buy materials. He often worked double shifts at the mine to make more money for his signs. Any extra money left over after supporting his family was put into the sign projects. He usually placed the signs on fence rows so that they would be off the highway right-of-way and not be in the way of a farmer's equipment. He never asked permission to place the signs and would leave a message on the signs saying that if someone decided to take the sign down, it would be between that person and God. He never had a driver's license. Once or twice each year, he would hire a truck and driver to transport the signs to the desired locations.

He even built his house in the shape of a cross and even had a large sign on the roof of the house that read “Jesus Saves” so it could be seen from the air.

He continued his sign projects throughout his life until he was slowed down by old age. He

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died in 1986. He had spent almost 70 years of his life making and erecting signs throughout the country and had plans to place signs in other countries and even on the moon and other planets. He never forgot his promise he made to God back in 1916 when he survived the accident in the coal mine. Some of his signs are still standing, but many have been moved or destroyed.

He also collected bottles of all descriptions. He would put religious messages inside these bottles and place them in streams wherever he went. It is estimated that he set adrift about 50,000 bottles during his lifetime.

A book about Harrison Mayes called “A Coal Miner’s Simple Message” is available from the Bell County Historical Society in Middlesboro, KY.

Have you ever seen one of these signs in your travels? Do you know of any still standing?

SOUVENIR SPOON FROM 1933 WORLD’S FAIR

A few years ago while checking out an old home place, I found this souvenir spoon from the World’s Fair in Chicago in 1933. It was very tarnished—almost completely black like it might have been in a house fire. The other day I got it out and did a little scrubbing. I couldn’t remove all the old stains, but I did improve the looks of it considerably.



This exposition in 1933 was in the middle of the Great Depression. The theme of the fair was “A Century of Progress”. There were all kinds of souvenirs including about five different silver-plated spoons with different designs.

This spoon has a picture of the Administration Building in the bowl of the spoon and the name Chicago on the handle. On the front side of the handle was the name “Century of Progress” and the year of 1933. On the back side was the Hall of Science.

Some people still collect these old spoons and other souvenirs from world fairs. I have seen spoons from the 1933 fair for sale on the Internet priced from \$5.00 to \$35.00, depending on the

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condition. I have decided that there are people out there who collect just about anything you can name. As they say, "one man's junk is another man's treasure".

It makes me wonder who in Arkansas might have had the money to spare during the Great Depression to make a trip to the Chicago World's Fair in 1933. I guess someone could have sent the spoon to a family member as a gift. I can't even remember now exactly where I found the spoon, but evidently it got tossed out with other things being discarded or maybe someone lost it. Oh well, it's just something else to add to my collection.

In case you are wondering, the next world's fair will be in South Korea in 2012. The last one in the United States was the 1984 fair in New Orleans. They are held about every two years.

I asked readers in the last issue what they collected. I received these replies:

I collect-ED USN ship Zippo lighters with good identification, usually name, number and crest and USN ship Japanese hizara (cigarette ash trays) with ship insignia or crests in the bottom and name and number on the rim. I always had a pile of Zippos from my ship and there was always swapping when nested, alongside underway and of course in the clubs. In those days, the Japanese made a lighter that you could not tell from a Zippo and their decoration talent was very good. (*David Cummins*)

I have collected miniature, ornamental shoes since I was a child. I don't even know how many I have, but my granddaughter wants to take them and keep the collection going. (*June Hines Moore*)

Since my ancestors never seemed to be able to throw away anything and I still have most of it I could claim "collections" to a lot of "stuff". I used to try to bring home something from each place we visited on trips: a pressed glass rose bowl from Tombstone, hot pads from Creed, bear figures from Glacier National Park and Yellowstone, a small rock from Loch Ness (washed my hands in the water there hoping it would cause me to go back--didn't work), lots and lots of photo slides from everywhere. I figured out fairly early that all that had to be dusted except the slides and dusting isn't my favorite activity, so I started collecting Christmas tree ornaments. Since both my husband and I are pilots and love the activity the collection leans heavily to aviation themed items. I have no idea how many I've collected but after we get all the ornaments on the tree each year, you don't see much greenery. The most precious ornament is one that the grandchildren gave me. We had stopped to fuel the motor home at a truck stop when we had taken all three of them and a cousin to Tucson for Spring Break. They found a little stained glass airplane, pooled their money, and bought it for me. My husband drags all that down from the attic; we talk about where the ornaments came from and hang them on the tree. There are ornaments that were given to me by my students through the years and one that I especially like of the old Nevada County Courthouse that my cousin gave me. Everyone enjoys them over the holidays then we take them off the tree and tuck them away until next Christmas. The grandchildren are all grown up now but they still look for ornaments that they remember our selecting and buying when they were on trips with us. (*Betty Kirk Thomas*)

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MAN'S FOOD SUPPLY FOR SEVENTY YEARS OF LIFE (published in *The Nevada County Picayune* in 1927)

If a man of seventy years were starving, it would probably be of little comfort to him to reflect that he had consumed in the course of his life 53 $\frac{3}{4}$ tons of solid food and 42 $\frac{3}{4}$ tons of liquid, or about 1280 times his own weight in both solids and liquids, but it would be quite true.

Being a man of average appetite, he would have eaten 15 tons of bread, which would have made a single loaf containing 1200 cubic feet and appearing about as large as the average suburban home, and on the bread, he would have spread one ton of butter. If his bacon had been cut in single slices, the strip would have been four miles long, and his chops, placed end to end, would have extended two miles. Twenty ordinary-sized bullocks have supplied him with beef, some 18 tons of which he has eaten, along with 5 tons of fish and 10,000 eggs and 350 pounds of cheese. If he elected to have all his vegetables served at once, they would have come to him on a train of cars, the pod containing all his peas being over three miles long. He has had 9,000 pounds of sugar, 1,500 pounds of salt, 8 pounds of pepper, and 100 cans of mustard. Three pints of liquid a day would have amounted to 76, 800 pints or a little over 42 tons.



Another Woody Black outhouse cartoon and one of his wood carvings of an old shoe

Correction: In the last issue on page 9, I incorrectly named Woody Black's friend as Paul Wilson Weaver. It should have been Paul Dayton Weaver. I apologize for the mistake.

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PRESCOTT 100 YEARS AGO--SEPTEMBER, 1911

---John Hale and Bert Stovall caught three fish in Terre Rouge Creek that weighted 76 pounds. The largest one weighed 48 pounds.

---N. H. Dye who lives seven miles from Prescott, brought in two nice specimens of apples from his orchard. He has 150 apple trees of the York Imperial variety.

---A telegraph class is offered at the high school. The demand for telegraph operators has never been so great.

---Work has started on the foundation of the new court house.

---Prescott is enjoying a steady growth. Many new people are coming in and it is difficult to furnish the necessary dwellings for them.

---Work on the new Presbyterian church has been started.

---Advertisement for a big railroad show in Prescott. The world's most curious creatures will be displayed. Male and female riders, aerial artists, tumblers, leapers, death-defying feats of skill and daring, trained elephants, man-killing lions, and Mary, the largest living animal in the world. There will be seats for 5,000 people. There will be a street parade each day at noon.

---The highest temperature in September was 99 degrees and the lowest was 55 degrees. Total rainfall for the month was .52 inch.

THINGS COULD BE WORSE

This has been a year of extreme weather in our nation. Back in April, we had record flooding and the bad tornadoes that devastated many places in the Southeast. Joplin, MO was hit by a super tornado in May destroying a large part of that city. We missed the really bad storms here in the Sandy Land, and for that we are thankful, but then the dry, hot weather set in. Day after day of temperatures hovering around 100 degrees and night-time lows over 75 degrees. Our lawns turned brown. Our gardens wouldn't set fruit under those conditions. Tomatoes bloomed but had very little fruit. Tender young squash would dry up and fall off. Even peas didn't produce as well as they should.

I can't even remember the last time we had a good soaking rain that lasted two or three days in our part of Arkansas. Many stock ponds have dried up and cattle farmers already have to buy hay for their cattle. The little pond on our old home place is lower than it has ever been. It was stocked with some nice sized catfish, but one day we found them all dead and floating on top.

Our air conditioners are constantly running trying to cool our homes. We dread seeing the next electric bill. Many people tried watering their gardens and flowers until they finally just gave it up as a lost cause. The family dogs are digging deeper holes trying to find some cool dirt.

Some may think this is the global warming we always hear about. I tend to think it is just the normal cycles the weather goes through--some years are dry and hot, some are cool and wet, and most are what could be considered "normal".

It could be worse. Just to make you feel better, here is something you might not know. The

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highest temperature ever recorded in Arkansas was 120 degrees on August 10, 1936 at Ozark, Arkansas. And they didn't have air conditioning back then! I'm hoping that record has not been broken by the time you read this.

We hear the stories of the hard times during the Great Depression. I can only imagine what those people had to endure. Many more people were farming in those days. They experienced year after year of extremely dry weather. Poor farming practices resulted in what was known as the Dust Bowl. Clouds of dust covered everything. It was much worse in the center part of the country, but the dust even made to Arkansas. It must have been very discouraging to a farmer back then, wondering how he was going to feed his family with no income. They did all the hard work of planting their crops just to see them wither up. There was not enough grass and hay for the cattle. Many wells went dry. Many families gave up, sold their farms at a loss, and tried to move somewhere else where conditions were better.

The weather was not the only problem back then. Unemployment was at record levels. A headline from 1930 stated that 3,700,000 men were out of work in the United States. The drought covered much of the nation in 1930 and temperatures over 100 degrees was the rule. The Prescott water department turned off the city water from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. with a city employee patrolling the streets at night in case of a fire. The newspaper reported that July was the hottest month the country had ever seen. The state of Arkansas recorded only .01 of an inch of rain in July.

By September of 1930, plans were being made for drought relief in Nevada County. Men from each township were chosen as contact persons for anyone needing relief. The cotton crop in Nevada County was only 25 percent of normal that year. From June 19 to September 1, there were 57 days with temps over 100 degrees in Nevada County. The highest temperature was on July 29 at 112 degrees.

To help get men back to work, President Hoover asked Congress for millions of dollars to spend on construction of highways, public buildings, parks, etc. (*a stimulus package--sound familiar??*)

There was a financial crisis back then also. The stock market had crashed in 1929. Many banks were forced to close. There was no FDIC, so a person could lose their bank accounts if the banks failed. Two Arkansas banks (Gurdon and Foreman) suspended business for five days in 1930.

Unemployment was even worse by 1931. It was suggested that a five day work week might be necessary as unemployment increased. The national debt was increased by 500 million dollars. The summer of 1931 brought more high temperatures. Over 600 people died from the heat in July and grasshoppers destroyed crops in the Mid-West. The Prescott schools started charging \$2.00 per month tuition due to the economy. Miller County in Arkansas went broke with only \$125 left in their general fund. The courts closed and the grand jury adjourned. Billions were spent for relief of unemployment. The president called for a tax hike to prevent a four billion dollar deficit. A four billion dollar deficit sounds good compared to the 14.5 trillion dollar deficit we have today.

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There was more of the same in 1932. Over 700 Arkansas schools closed due to lack of funds to operate. Some school departments were eliminated. Teachers were forced to take a second pay cut. The city of Prescott planted turnip green patches to help feed the destitute.

The country elected a new president in 1933 and conditions were no better. The governor of Tennessee called a bank holiday. If you had money in an Arkansas bank, you were limited to withdrawing only 5% of your money or \$15.00, whichever was greater. Forestry camps of 100 men each were opened in Arkansas as part of the unemployment relief program. This was the CCC--Civilian Conservation Corps. So many government programs were being started that many accused President Roosevelt of being a dictator.

One of the programs that caused much controversy was the one in which the government paid farmers to plow up their cotton crops in an effort to raise the prices for cotton. Imagine being a farmer in Nevada County and being told to plow up your crop you had worked so hard to plant. Nevada County farmers plowed up 16,000 acres of cotton in July of 1933. The farmers were paid about \$12 per acre to plow up their crops.

One good bit of news in 1933 was the opening of Ozan Lumber Co. in Prescott which would employ 75 men. Over 500 Nevada County men were hired by the CWA to work on the county roads. Wildcat Rd. was the first project. Women were involved in sewing projects. There were 32 CWA projects going on in Nevada County in 1933.

The new Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation allowed the Bank of Prescott to insure bank deposits up to \$10,000 in 1934. The CWA distributed items to Nevada County residents such as potatoes, blankets, sorghum, peanuts, clothing, garden seeds, cheese, eggs, lard, flour, cabbage plants, and onion plants.

Many of the cattle farmers in the Mid-West were hit hard by the extremely dry weather. Animals were dying from lack of food and the heat. The government bought many of these animals from the ranchers. Many animals had to be immediately slaughtered and buried. The rest were shipped to other parts of the county in an effort to save them. Some were shipped to Arkansas with about 1600 cows shipped to Whelen Springs in our area. The farmers were paid from \$4 to \$20 per animal depending on the age of the animal.

The year 1935 brought the Dust Bowl. Some people died or were hospitalized with breathing problems. The summer of 1935 brought more intense heat. Dry weather continued especially in the summers. One resident in Nevada County said the creeks were lower than ever before for that time of the year (June, 1936).

The weather changed in 1937 at least for part of the country. There was a great flood on the Mississippi River. The government came up with a plan to evacuate five million people from a 50 mile wide strip of land on each side of the river from Cairo, Illinois to New Orleans. The governor of Arkansas declared martial law in Arkansas due to the flooding.

As you can see, the 1930s was a difficult decade for everybody. The combination of extreme weather patterns, high unemployment, financial problems, and rising debt caught the

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country by surprise. Even with all the government programs, the depression lasted for about ten years with much suffering by the American people.

You can see some similarities in the problems we face today and those from the 1930s. We have high unemployment today although not nearly as bad as in 1933 when it was 25%. We have had a financial crisis and bail-outs. We have had extreme weather recently and much of the country is now in a severe drought. They say history repeats itself. Let us hope we have programs in place to prevent another great depression like in the 1930s. Many countries in the world are almost bankrupt and we have seen the problems in Europe. Our country is deeply in debt and programs like Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid are almost bankrupt. I heard the other day that 7,000 people were reaching age 65 each month and being added to the Medicare program. Health care costs, fuel prices, and grocery prices continue to rise. If we were to have ten years of extreme weather like in the 1930s along with all our other problems, we could be in serious trouble.

Most people don't give these things much thought as long as they have money to buy what they need. There could come a time when the stores might not have the groceries you normally buy due to shortages, or perhaps your town's water supply might go dry and there would be no water when you turned on the faucet. I'm just suggesting that we might need to be a little more thankful for the things we take for granted and maybe have an emergency plan in case things get really bad. Who knows what might be in store for us? Our economy is in bad shape, we have been experiencing extreme weather recently, and there is always the threat these days of more terrorist attacks from people who have stated they plan to destroy America.

We could just put our trust in the government to take care of us no matter what might happen like many people do. They say 46 million Americans (one out of six) are now receiving food stamps. That number has doubled since the recession began. From what I can tell, some of these people on government assistance are eating pretty "high on the hog" judging from what I see in their shopping carts. Something tells me they wouldn't be happy with a chunk of government cheese and a big jar of peanut butter, although they probably get those also.

In a time of great national emergency, we can expect such things as rationing of some items and laws to regulate just about everything we do like it was in the 1930s. We won't like it, but we might not have a choice. Some of you remember the days during World War II when things like sugar, coffee, tires, and gasoline were rationed. History could repeat itself.

The presidents always end their speeches by asking God to bless America. We need to do that also, but we need to pray like we really mean it because I'm afraid He might be our only hope. Many of us have been reminded this summer how much we depend on Him for things we take for granted like rainfall.

MORE BAD NEWS

As if things are not bad enough, I learned this week about a new ant that is invading the state of Texas. It is called the Rasberry crazy ant, named for Tom Rasberry, an exterminator who first

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noticed this ant in 2002. They are called crazy ants because of the way they move around. They just seem to dart every which way and there are not just a few of these ants. There can be millions or billions of them running around on top of the ground. They are very small and do not sting like fire ants. They even feed on fire ants, but also attack lady bugs and other beneficial insects and can suck juices from plants. They will eat or run off any living thing. It is said dogs will not go into a yard infested with these ants. They prefer to stay outside but sometimes millions of them can invade a home searching for food which causes serious problems for the occupants. Some people sweep them up in dustpans like mounds of dirt or even try to collect them in vacuum cleaners. One man said to imagine sitting on the commode with thousands of ants crawling all over you. One of the main complaints about these ants is that they like to get into electronics or electrical equipment causing it to short out. They have already infested at least 18 counties in Texas, mainly around Houston. They are spreading at the rate of about five miles per year, but can be transplanted to other areas accidentally causing new infestations. Tom Rasberry says he expects them to eventually cover the entire southern part of the country. They are very hard to control. They do not make mounds like fire ants and the common ant baits on the market have no effect on these ants. Some say these are the most dangerous and devastating insects to reach our shores. Even though these ants can eliminate the fire ants, most people say they had rather have the fire ants than these crazy ants.

TEN YEARS AGO

September 11 will mark the 10th anniversary of the attack on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and the attempted attack on another target which was aborted by some heroic passengers. I'm sure you remember exactly where you were when you first heard the news. I was in my office at work that day when I heard the news. I remember that there was a run on the gas stations in Camden as people scrambled to fill their tanks in case there was a gasoline shortage. Flags were soon prominently displayed just about everywhere and many people turned to prayer for our country.

I went to an estate sale about two years ago and noticed a bundle of magazines for sale. These magazines were all about the attack on Sept. 11. I purchased the whole bundle for about \$5.00. It's a part of our history and needs to be remembered. The front covers are chilling with headlines like "America Under Seige", "America at War", "America Unites", "America Under Attack", and "God Bless America". The cover of Time magazine had no headline. There was only the picture of the huge fireball when the planes hit the towers with the date, September 11, 2001. The pictures inside these magazines are hard to look at.

Ten years have passed and we can reflect back on what has changed in our world since September 11, 2001. We have been involved in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan resulting in the loss of many lives. The word "terrorist" has become a part of our vocabulary and we wonder when the next attack will come. This war on terrorism is unlike any war fought in the past. We have seen and maybe experienced the security precautions taken at airports which greatly inconvenience passengers. Security is heightened for any large gathering of people and several planned attacks have been thwarted by these improved security practices.

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The open show of patriotism has dimmed somewhat since 2001. Not as many flags are flying these days, but we still see stickers on cars in support of our troops. Many in our military have served in Iraq or Afghanistan. A large number have given their lives in service to their country and to protect the freedoms we enjoy in this country. Recently, thirty of our best trained men lost their lives in Afghanistan when their helicopter was hit.

It would be nice if we could just erase these last ten years from our history and go back to the peaceful times before the terrorist attack. We see what has happened to our country in the last ten years and can see how much this one event in history changed our country, our world view, and our personal lives. We must realize this war will not end with a treaty of peace like former wars. It will go on for a long time. There may be a period of time of relative calm, but we must be prepared for other attacks. These people who want to do us harm are very patient people. We must be careful and report any suspicious thing we see. We don't need to be like the proverbial ostrich that sticks its head in the sand. We live in a violent world with people who have ideas very different from ours. I suppose as long as this world lasts, there will be wars. Wars require weapons and people are killed. About all we can do is to pray for peace on earth and good will toward men, pray for our country, our leaders, and even for our enemies.

I expect there will be many observances marking the tenth anniversary of the attack on Sept. 11, 2001. It is good to take time to remember these things and to honor those who have been most affected—the families who lost loved ones during the attacks ten years ago, those who happened to be close by and were injured or suffered medical problems as a result of the attack, those in the military serving in these far-off places, the troops that have suffered injuries, and the families of those troops who have been lost in the last ten years.

MYSTERY OBJECT

Dr. Annette Leamons has an unusual object she purchased at an estate sale auction several years ago in Washington County, AR. She is offering a small prize (a package of her heritage seeds she collects) to anyone who can guess what it is.

So put your thinking caps on and send me your guess as to what this contraption is. I'll tell you what it is and print the name of the winner (or winners) in the next issue. I'll also print all the other answers I receive without your names, so go ahead and take a guess even if you don't know what it is.

The quilt in the picture belonged to Dr. Leamons' grandmother and is almost 100 years old. The pattern is called "Garden of Eden". The white church pew is from Old Zion church on Ridge Rd. near Malvern, AR. Dr. Leamons has had it for about 50 years.

Check out the object on the next page and send me your answer by September 15. If you have an unusual object, send me a picture of it and we'll put it in a future issue.

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DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS?



THE SOUTHERN TRANSLATION OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

- (1) Just one God.
- (2) Put nothin' before God.
- (3) Watch yer mouth....
- (4) Git yourself to Sunday meetin'.
- (5) Honor yer Ma & Pa.
- (6) No killin'.
- (7) No foolin' around with another feller's gal (or 'nother gal's feller).
- (8) Don't take what ain't yorn.
- (9) No tellin' tales or gossipin'.
- (10) Don't be hankerin' for yer buddy's stuff.

Now that's plain an' simple.

Submitted by: Bobby Newman
Altus, AR.

QUESTION FOR NEXT ISSUE

This is the time of the year for county fairs. Send me your memories of going to the county fair when you were young. What did you like the most? What did you not like? How do the fairs today compare with those in the past?