

Jerry McKeiv's
SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

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THE NEVADA COUNTY FAIR--THEN AND NOW

The Nevada County fair this year was in late August. In earlier times, the fairs were in September or October. At least the heat wave of 2011 had broken somewhat just before the fair began which helped considerably.

I must confess that I haven't attended a county fair in a long time. I always enjoyed them but it seems to me that they are not nearly as big or exciting as in the old days. This year I was in Prescott on the day of the fair parade and decided to stay and watch. I like parades even though they only last a few minutes. A lot of work goes into decorating floats, getting everyone in the proper places, and blocking traffic along the route. I can remember the old days when there were many floats in the parade. Each school in the county and many organizations usually entered a float trying to out-do each other to win the title of "best float". Since schools have been consolidated, we have lost that aspect of the fair parades. Maybe some of the various organizations or businesses in the county need to get involved in future parades. The small towns around the county might enter something in the parade to boost their communities.

It was announced that there would be no midway at the fair this year. That was one of the main attractions in past years. I never cared much for the wild rides, but most of the young folks seemed to enjoy being turned every which way and bounced about at high speeds. Back about 1970 the county schools would take a day off from classes and bring the students to town on school buses for the fair. The parade was a much larger event in those days.

The parade this year had the usual emergency vehicles with their flashing lights and sirens followed by contestants for the fair queen contests. A couple of large fire trucks filled with young children passed by. Candy was thrown to the small kids along the sidewalks. Two or three nice floats went by. The Bypass Diesel and Wrecker Service had a heavy-duty wrecker decorated with moving parts which was very interesting. Every parade needs a band and the Prescott High School band filled that duty for this parade. One vehicle I noticed was a four-wheeler pulling a very young girl held by a lady I assumed to be her mother. The little trailer was filled with gourds and the sign on the front read "75 Years of Growing 'Gourd'eous Girls". I only saw two horses in the parade.

People were scattered along the sidewalks where I was located, but nothing like the crowds I remembered from years ago. Some people plugged their ears as the police cars passed by with their high-pitched sirens blaring. Young children scrambled to pick up candy being tossed to them. I noticed one young boy watching the parade from an antique barber's chair in the back of a pickup truck. I don't know if they planned it that way or maybe his parents had just purchased the chair at an antique shop. He had one of the best views of the parade. Someone commented it would make a nice deer stand.

Mrs. Zettie Griffith Link was the Grand Marshal of the parade this year. She was the very first Nevada County fair queen back in 1937. She rode in a nice little convertible just behind the emergency vehicles at the front of the parade. Mrs. Link grew up in the Gum Grove community

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Mrs. Zettie Griffith Link—1937 Nevada County Fair Queen

near Bluff City. Her parents lived just down the road from us. I know this honor of being the Grand Marshal of the parade this year meant a lot to her and brought back many memories of those days in 1937 when she was chosen to be queen. She told me she was so glad they didn't have a swimsuit competition back in 1937.

While I was waiting for the parade to begin, I went to the library and read the newspaper accounts of the fair in 1937. A large headline on the front page of *The Nevada News* proclaimed "6,000 Attend First Day of Fair". Can you imagine 6,000 people in Prescott to attend the fair? The fair was an important event in those days. The people had been through several years of hard times and needed something to refresh their spirits. There were many farmers in the county at that time and it was always exciting to see the exhibits of things produced on the farms and who had won ribbons for the best of whatever was being judged. There was also a three day rodeo in town in connection with the fair in 1937. The queen contest was one of the most popular events of that fair and has remained so all these years.

Mrs. Link was also pictured on the front page of *The Nevada News* with the headline "2,500 See Zettie Griffith Crowned Nevada County Fair Queen". The event was held in the gymnasium and she was crowned by county judge John Bradley. She was one of eleven entrants in the contest back in 1937. The paper reported that she was a blond with blue eyes, about five feet tall, soft-spoken and quiet. Her dress was pale pink organdy and she had a corsage of pink and white rosebuds.

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The Fair Association in 1937 asked each community to sponsor a beauty contest and to send the winner to the county contest. This was done in various ways. Some communities had cake walks or similar events to choose their representative. The contestants in 1937 were: Mildred Park representing Pleasant Hill, Mildred Davis (Laneburg), Maurine Lambert (Sutton), Rosabelle Jackson (Mt. Moriah), Hazel Haynie and Amelia Atkins (Rosston), Gladys Oglesby (Waterloo), Virginia Herring (Willisville), Mary Lou Cadenhead, Fris McGuire, and Rebecca Daniel (Prescott), Zettie Griffith (Bluff City), Dorothy Ingram (Cale), and Mary Alice Buie (Boughton).

The fair queen contest was held in the new gymnasium which was packed with people. Each contestant was presented alone to be judged by men from outside the county. After each contestant walked across the stage, the group was summoned back where the decision was announced by Mr. George Holland, secretary of the Camden Chamber of Commerce. Zettie Griffith was the winner and Dorothy Ingram of Cale was the runner-up. County judge John Bradley placed the crown on Zettie Griffith's head and she was seated on her throne.

There was also a talent contest in the 1937 fair with fourteen entries from six towns. The winner was Mary Lou Cadenhead. She won a trip to Dallas for a screen test sponsored by MGM Search for Talent (sort of an early version of America's Got Talent).

The gymnasium also served as the exhibit building back in 1937 and was filled with exhibits of things made and produced in Nevada County. Folks once said a wall could be built around Nevada County and it could thrive without aid from elsewhere. A whole room was devoted to needlecraft. A 100 year old spinning wheel was shown with quilts, bedspreads, dresses, suits, and shirts, all made in Nevada County. Even the burlap carpet which covered the entire floor of the gymnasium was made in the county. The oil industry at Waterloo had exhibits showing the road asphalt and roofing asphalt manufactured at the plant in Waterloo.

There was no fair parade in 1937, but on the last day of the fair, the three day rodeo began with a big parade uptown. The rodeo was especially interested in female riders riding side-saddle dressed in costumes of "the gay nineties". Any participant in the parade who was properly outfitted with saddle, blanket, riding bridle, hat, and bandana was eligible to attend the rodeo free of charge. The paper stated, "Your horse or pony will be your ticket. You can sit on your ticket and see the rodeo free of charge from horseback in a reserved spot".

The fair this year was billed as the 75th anniversary of the Nevada County fair. However, the county did have fairs as far back as 1910. Back then it was called the Nevada County Farmer's Free Fair. There were no fairs from 1929 to 1937. So the fair in 2011 marks the 75th year of continuous annual fairs in Nevada County.

The Nevada County fair is still enjoyed by many people, but given a choice, I would have rather attended the fair in 1937. I guess people are too busy these days or maybe the hot August weather may have kept some people from attending. I think somewhere around the middle of September would be a better time, but I guess it's hard to schedule a fair in every county in that time period.

While I was at the library, I glanced over and read about the 1938 fair and the headlines said

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between eight and twelve thousand attended in 1938. A picture in the newspaper showed the streets in the business section of Prescott packed with people. I have learned from reading old newspapers that those days of long ago were exciting in many ways. There might not have been much entertainment at people's homes in the rural areas other than the radio and occasional community get-togethers, but the larger towns like Prescott, especially those located on a main railroad, often had things like Wild West shows, the circus, the opera house, and that type entertainment. Evidently, the county fairs of that day brought in huge crowds of people. I think I would have enjoyed attending the Nevada County fair of 1937.

READER'S MEMORIES OF FAIRS

Each time I have told the story of my favorite county fair memory, I've gotten the distinct impression that people didn't quite believe it. I hesitated about submitting it for the *Chronicle*, but today I decided to write it down.

I don't know the exact year this happened, but it was probably 1945 or 1946. My favorite part of the fair was (big surprise) the carnival. However, my parents always insisted we had to walk through the exhibit buildings before we could go to the midway. That year in what was then called the Women's Building, someone was giving away a set of dishes. (I think it may have been Prescott Hardware, but cannot verify that.) My mother really wanted that set of dishes, so she filled out an entry form.

The day drug on as we walked from building to building seeing all the exhibits and the animals. **Finally**, we got to the midway. I was afraid to ride anything wilder than the carousel, so my parents bought tickets and put my little brother, John, and me on the "merry-go-round," as we called it. That was very exciting, but then we had to get back to the main exhibit building where the drawing for the dishes was to be held.

We got as close to the front as possible. The man in charge selected me to draw and held me up so I could easily pick from the large box of entries. I was reaching for one of the slips on top when the man told me I'd better reach way down if I wanted to draw my mother's name because she signed up early.

Well, I reached way down, and I did draw my mother's name. A lot of people thought it was rigged somehow, but it really was just what happened. My mother was so proud of that set of dishes. We used them daily over the years until gradually all of the pieces were broken or chipped except the large platter, which I still have.

Charlotte (DeWoody) Woody

My memories of the fair are: If I remember correctly it was in 1945 that we had Fair Day at the Schools in Lamar County Texas, which was in October. At that time I was a freshman at Roxton High School. The school bus took us to the fair in Dallas and we were there by the time the fair opened. Oh, how that cotton candy, hot dogs and a cold drink tasted to us. We walked the fair ground and saw everything there was to see, not costing an arm and leg like today. We rode rides, the merry go round every though it was for the young ones, however they never could get

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me to ride the Ferris wheel; that was scary to a little country girl from the community of Harmon, Texas. We did not have to worry about being kidnapped and we had to behave for, Mr. Mason, our Superintendent of Roxton High, would have punished us. He and the teachers made sure we behaved as we were taught at home as well as in school. Oh, I wish we had some of that in our schools today. We were told when to be back to where the buses were parked to return to Roxton and all of us obeyed. This is my story of Fair Day in 1945.

Wanda Weaver Carter

The worst sunburn of my life was due to the Nevada County fair. I rode my school's float (Cale High School) and I remember sitting on that float in the hot sun waiting for the parade to begin. It was before effective sun screens came along and there was no shade. Of course, I didn't hide from the sun after the parade so I was well-cooked before the day was over. After the parade I checked out the exhibits and the carnival rides. I remember eating a foot-long hotdog with all the "fixins" and then getting on the Caterpillar, a contraption that went in a circle faster and faster and had a cover that went over the riders and then off and all the while the platform tilted in different directions. I regretted that hotdog the rest of the day.

I attended the fair almost every year and the years sort of meld together. I do remember entering a rug that I had made and winning a blue ribbon for it one year. I was so proud of the check I received with the blue ribbon. My dad took me to the Bank of Prescott to cash my check and I remember Mr. Gillis Lee helping me. I think the check was for \$5.00. I still have the blue ribbon.

For several years after I retired I was asked to serve as a judge for Youth Fairs in Glen Rose, Granbury, and Decatur, Texas. I tried to keep in mind how thrilled I was to get a blue ribbon and tried to be a good judge.

Betty Kirk Thomas

FIESTA TIME WITH DR.T. (A True Story)

In 1966, I taught my first year of school about 30 minutes south of Little Rock, Ar. in a small rural pocket in a fine community. It was the custom of that district to "turn out" the whole school at STATE FAIR time. We would load up ALL the students from grades 7-12 on school buses and caravan to the STATE FAIR in Little Rock for an all day excursion. (Mind you, in those days no cell phones, no sophisticated electronics at all.) I required ALL of my students to personally sign in on a list when they boarded our bus, as an accountability measure for myself and the bus driver. When we arrived back at school, I personally checked off their names on my list as they exited the bus. About one hour after arriving back at school, I was still in my school room preparing for the next day, grading papers, etc. The buses had already made their routes and delivered kiddos back home for the day. My SUPERINTENDENT entered my room in a full panic, "Mrs. Lemons, you have left G.M. and R.B. in Little Rock at the STATE FAIR!!!" (EVERY teacher's horror.) Checking my list, I assured him that those two students NEVER entered my bus, nor did they exit it. He was adamant that something was awry because the

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parents were in a panic when the two 8th grade boys did NOT return home from school for the day, but had "gone to school to go to the fair." I assured him that we had not transported those guys on OUR bus. Alerts were made, County Sheriff contacted, and community helpers were set in place. Now there was a small country store directly across the highway from the school. Many of the students would drop in early in the a.m. before classes started to purchase snacks, etc. The store owner thought it a bit strange when G.M and R.B. entered that morning very early and purchased a "goodly" supply of Dr. Tichenor's mouthwash. (They had "fair money" in their pockets!!)

The guys exited, and the store tender thought how curious for these two guys to be in possession of so much Tichenor's and on their way to the STATE FAIR. Well, to make a long story longer, they NEVER embarked on the journey to the STATE FAIR, but hid out behind the store and drank Dr. Tichenor's to their hearts content. Obviously, no one had ever mentioned to those eighth grade guys that Dr. Tichenor's was sold, in those days, in CONCENTRATED form, normally diluted for home use and MOST OF ALL, that it was 70% ALCOHOL. They KNEW it had alcohol, hence the motivation for their purchase, but didn't expect such a bang for their buck. They had both PASSED OUT behind that building and were still in place, fully enjoying a long day's "nap." (Rip Van Winkle couldn't have slept more soundly himself.) Life is hard; life is painful. Guess they just fell out, dealing with the agony of FULL STRENGTH Dr. Tichenor's, and the jalapeno-laced fiesta in their mouths. Pain teaches us lessons, and I am sure those guys were better equipped to cope with the ups and downs of life after those parents took hold of the seat of their pants. Or perhaps they were just trying to numb the pain of dealing with me as a pretty tough teacher who expected her students to BE what they were CAPABLE of becoming. Have you ever had a mouthful of old time, FULL STRENGTH Dr. Tichenor's mouthwash? It will rip the hide right out of the top of your mouth!!!!!!!!!!!!

Dr. A. Brosius Lemons (Cornelius)

P.S. I love you R.B. and G.M., wherever you are. (They are now 57 years old.)

CONTEST

Back in 1951, the Chamber of Commerce had a contest for students to come up with a slogan for Nevada County. The slogan had to be four words or less and must concern pine timber or trees. They offered a prize of \$50 to the student who came up with the winning entry. There were over 800 entries and six students came up with the same winning slogan. The six winners had to split the prize money which was donated by Ozan Lumber Co.

Just for fun, let's do this contest again. Those of you who are not familiar with Nevada County will be at a disadvantage. Send me your idea of a good slogan for Nevada County. If your entry is the same as the winning entry in 1951, I will give you a prize. I can't afford a \$50 prize, so let's just say the winner will receive a small prize yet to be determined. Deadline—Oct. 15, 2011

Check back next month for the results of the contest and to find out the winning entry from 1951.

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Mrs. Vernell Loe

I don't know of anyone who has more fair ribbons than Mrs. Vernell Loe of Bluff City. Most of them are pictured here—enough to cover a full size bed. These were won for things she has entered in the Nevada County fair over the last 25 years or so. She was a member of a 4-H club in her younger days and was always active in the Home Demonstration clubs. Each year, she usually entered some craft she had made, produce she had grown, or jars of home canned food.



A crocheted item Mrs. Loe made that won First Place and Best of Show a few years ago.

Mrs. Loe has made and sold many of these tin men made from vegetable cans of various sizes with a couple of sardine cans for the feet and a funnel for a hat.



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**Bench at Liberty Cemetery in the Troy community of Nevada County
Only in Arkansas---Razorback Country!!**

PRESCOTT 100 YEARS AGO—OCTOBER, 1911

---A large county fair was held at the city park. Governor Donaghey was present the first day.

---A team of mules fell into an abandoned well and drowned while plowing on the E. DeLaughter farm at Boughton. The value of the team was \$350.

---There was a meeting of farmers to discuss the possibility of raising strawberries in the Prescott area.

---R. P. Arnold of Arnold's Café advertised all kinds of fruit, a lunch counter, ice cold drinks, oysters (any style), and a ladies parlor.

---An item in the Cale local news column stated "Mr. Waters, the tonsorialist, was very sick last week and during this time, Mr. Sawyer converted the barber shop into a butcher shop".

4-H CAMPS

Whatever happened to the 4-H camps like we had in the 1950s? These were attended by 4-H club members from all over the county. And whatever happened to 4-H clubs? There may still be a few around, but nothing like fifty or sixty years ago. Could it just be a lack of interest in such things? Maybe it's because of the decline in the number of families living on farms or the lack of adult volunteers. Many people like to live "in the country" these days, but not very many seem to be interested in farming, gardening, or caring for a farm animal or a flock of chickens.

About sixty years ago the annual 4-H conservation camps were big events. The Arkansas Forestry Commission nursery at Bluff City was the site for many of these camps. These camps were sponsored by the Agricultural Extension Service, the Forestry Commission, the Game and Fish Commission, the Chamber of Commerce, and various timber companies in the area. The Bluff City nursery had what they called "a visiting day" in 1947 with over 300 4-H club members attending. Paul Adams was the nursery superintendent at that time. This was the first event of this type at the new Bluff City nursery, but they continued annually for several years.

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Some of the early camps involved an overnight stay. The 4-H camp at the Bluff City nursery in 1955 was open to boys between the ages of 10 and 16. Each boy was instructed to bring his lunch for the noon meal the first day plus three eggs, two pounds of potatoes, knife, fork, spoon, plate, cup, toothbrush and toothpaste, towel, soap, and bathing trunks. The afternoon was spent studying soils and timber followed by a good swim and supper. A movie was shown that night and a religious service was held before turning in for the night. After breakfast the next morning, there was nature study and a program on gun and driving safety given by the state police. This was followed by a forestry quiz with an awards program. A nice bow and arrow set was given to the one chosen as the best camper.

Here is the program for the camp at Bluff City in May, 1958. The students were divided into four groups, each in charge of two sergeants and four corporals. The groups toured the nursery under the supervision of R. P. Plyler who explained how pine seedlings were grown at the nursery. Various programs were presented to the young people on such topics as water safety, forest conservation, selecting a camp site, building a camp fire, the rescue of a drowning person, artificial respiration, types of swimming strokes, soil judging, using a compass to find your way in the woods, and how to use various types of fishing equipment. Each person brought his own lunch, but drinks were provided. The day was filled with many activities and contests were held in tree identification and identifying species of birds.

The prizes for some of the contests were silver dollars. The evening program consisted of a talk by an exchange student from Ireland followed by a wildlife motion picture. A short devotional was given by a minister from Prescott.

One of the meals provided to the group that day consisted of 500 hot dogs with chili and onions with jelly rolls for dessert.

I think it would be good if these type events had been continued. They provided a little practical experience for many young people. I can remember attending one of these camps. I lived just one mile from the nursery, so it was not too much of a trip for me, but it was educational. I remember being part of a team that won a prize using a compass to locate a buried treasure.

The 4-H club is still a good organization, but it seems to me that it was much more popular fifty years ago than it is today. I guess the young people today are more interested in cell phones and computers. Does your area still have an active 4-H club? How many of you know what the four H's stand for? The answer is at the bottom of page 10.

DEATH

Mrs. Elloene Moore McBride, age 90, passed away September 14, 2011. She taught in public schools for over 40 years in Bluff City, Chidester, Norphlet, McNeil, and Camden Fairview. She also researched and compiled a genealogy of the Meador and related families. She was one of the few remaining offspring of Civil War veterans. Funeral services were held at Bluff City with burial in Bluff City cemetery.

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A MORNING VISITOR TO MY HOME

Re: Contest: Only four readers made a guess as to what the mystery object was in the last issue. Several others wrote to say they had no idea what it could be. Dr. Annette Lemons said if anyone even got close to the correct answer, she would give them a prize. The correct answer is a nail sorter. Don't ask me to explain how it works, although there are pictures on the Internet that show it. The answers I received were: (1) a letter holder; (2) a sorter for peas and beans; (3) some sort of sifter and (4) a seed sifter. So, readers #2, #3 and #4 at least narrowed it down to a sorter or sifter. We decided to give a package of heirloom seeds to these three readers. The winners are: Billy Joe Meador, Duncan McKelvey, and James Nelson. Thanks to all those who participated and thanks to Dr. Lemons for providing the prizes. We may try this again sometime.

QUESTION FOR NEXT ISSUE!

A reader gave me a poem printed in the *Newton County Times* entitled "Remembering the Flour Sack". It told of all the uses for cloth flour sacks. I'm sure many of you remember those days. I also remember when our family bought 100 pounds sacks of chicken pellets in cloth sacks of all colors and patterns. The trick was getting enough of the same pattern for the sewing project you had planned.

For the next issue, tell us what your family used cloth flour sacks for or what they made from cloth feed sacks. Did you ever wear clothes made from feed sacks? Did your mother have a favorite brand of flour? Tell us your memories of cloth flour sacks, sugar sacks, or feed sacks.

***I pledge my head to clearer thinking,
my heart to greater loyalty,
my hands to larger service
and my health to better living,
for my club, my community, my country, and my world."***

HEAD, HEART, HANDS, HEALTH