

Jerry McKeiv's
SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

Vol. 11 – No. 3

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March, 2012

STEPS TO NOWHERE



If only these steps could talk!

These concrete steps are all that remain of the old Harvey's store located near the intersection of Hwy. 24 and Hwy. 299 in Bluff City, Arkansas. E. M. Harvey and his sons, C. C. Harvey and Ed Harvey, operated a general store in Bluff City for many years. I don't remember the store building at this location. By the time I came along, Mr. Con Harvey and his brother, Ed Harvey had separate stores within sight of each other not far from this location.

I'm sure most all people living in the Bluff City area eighty or ninety years ago walked up these steps to enter the general store. Children probably sat on these steps eating some penny candy or some other treat purchased at the store. Old-timers probably sat on these steps or somewhere around the front of the old store telling some tall tale or discussing farming techniques, the weather, or politics.

About the only source of information about this old store comes from the old newspapers since many of the older people who shopped there are now gone. A news item from 1910 mentions that the Henry Brothers had sold their business in Bluff City to Upton and Harvey. Another item in 1913 states that Upton and Harvey were enlarging their warehouse.

There were several stores at Bluff City during the 1920s to 1940s. A news item in 1936 mentions that Harvey and Sons had three peddling trucks on the road and L. M. Carter had two. The news reporter wrote, "If you want to buy anything, just stop a peddler. They are as thick as fleas."

An item in 1936 states that C. C. Harvey, a prominent Bluff City merchant for many years, was ready to open the C. C. Harvey and Co. cash grocery and feed store. It stated that Mr. Harvey and his brother, Ed had been operating the E. M. Harvey and Sons store in Bluff City for many years and would continue to operate the Bluff City store. The store was in the building formerly occupied by Ozan Mercantile Co. grocery and feed store. This name change came about due to the death of their father, Edward M. Harvey in May of 1936.

SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

Mr. Con Harvey's obituary stated that he had been a merchant at Bluff City for 47 years. He died in 1967, so that means he was a merchant there about 1920. Mr. Ed Harvey's obituary stated that he had been a merchant in Bluff City since 1927.

That's about all the information I could find about this old store. As I said before, the two Harvey brothers had their own stores by the mid to late 1940s.

I would love to see a picture of the store building that was located where these concrete steps are today. I'm sure there are some people around who may remember the old store. If you ever shopped at this store, have a picture of it, or can describe what it looked like, please send it to me.

PINE KNOTS

Anyone who grew up in this part of Arkansas is probably familiar with the term "pine knot". If you cut a live pine tree, you will find inside a very sticky resin. Most pine trees that die will decay, but others will become "rich" and are very resistant to rot. Several things cause this including the time of the year the tree dies, atmospheric conditions, etc. The very heart of these trees will remain after the rest of the tree decomposes if the area is undisturbed and not burned over by a wildfire. Since this wood is very resistant to rot, it can be used for a variety of things.

Most of the "rich pine" is found just lying on the ground in the woods although some places have more of it than others. Sometimes the rich stump of a large pine tree will be found. These are not of much use since they can't be uprooted without heavy equipment and are too heavy to move. If a wildfire happens to burn through an area where there is rich pine, it will catch on fire and continue to burn long after the other wood is burned up.

Early settlers in this area used this "rich pine", sometimes called "lighter pine" or "fatwood" to help get their fires started in their wood stoves. Before winter each year a supply of rich pine would be collected from the woods and kept somewhere out by the wood pile. The rich pine would be split with an axe into small strips or splinters and stored inside the house near the wood stove, probably in the wood box or in a container of some type. One of my favorite smells is that of rich pine being split. Only a small amount of rich pine kindling is needed to get the fire going.

The resin from the rich pine catches fire easily just from striking a match. A few of these small pieces of rich pine would be placed in the wood stove with the firewood, lighted with a match, and soon there would be a nice fire going to keep the family warm.

This rich pine also has other uses. Sometimes a piece is found large enough and long enough to make a fence post. A rich pine fence post will last for decades. I can remember when we had several rich pine fence posts, but I guess we finally split them up for kindling.

Another use is to mark property corners. A piece of rich pine is put in the ground like a very short post. Usually when the boundary lines are painted, the rich pine is also painted. This is a good cheap way of marking a property corner that will last for years unless a fire burns through

SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

the area. In that case, the marker would be destroyed. Sometimes a rock or two would be placed there along with the rich pine. The only thing better would be a metal post.

Rich pine was also used in some of the old cemeteries as grave markers. Store-bought grave markers were expensive in the old days just as they are today and people looked for something that would last a long time. Some used native stones to mark graves, some used petrified wood, and some used pieces of rich pine, probably as a temporary marker until they could afford something better. Rocks were preferred over the rich pine, but in some places there was a shortage of suitable rocks. The main disadvantage of using rich pine for grave markers is that if the cemetery ever burns over, every rich pine grave marker will be burned up.

I've heard stories from long ago about young boys and men using pieces of rich pine as torches when they roamed through the woods at night on night hunting expeditions.

The knots of the old dead pine tree are the last part to decay. These pine knots have various shapes and are popular for decorating and wood carving. Sometimes a wood carver will carve faces on these pine knots, although it takes talent, a lot of time, and a sharp knife.

My mother likes to collect odd-shaped pine knots. She sometimes uses them to decorate her flower beds. She once used a thin piece of rich pine for a wind chime with old spoons hanging down to make a tinkling sound when the wind blew. There are many things in nature that can be used for decorative purposes if one has a good imagination and a little creative talent.



Rich pine fence post



Pine knots of various shapes (good for decorating flower beds)



Small piece of rich pine used to make a wind chime

SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

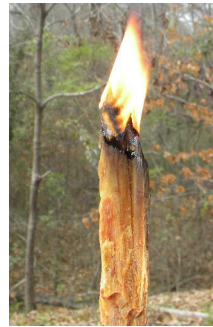


A rich pine knot (painted orange) placed many years ago to mark a property corner. A piece of pipe was recently added to make it easier to find

A barbed wire fence was nailed to a large pine tree many years ago. The pine tree died and slowly decomposed, leaving this piece of rich pine still clinging to the barbed wire.



Scrape away the gray outside and you will find rich pine inside



All it takes is a match to light a rich pine splinter

LITERARY SOCIETIES

David Cummins sent me a hand-written history of the Garland literary society at Prescott High School that was written by his father, D. E. Cummins. This appears to be a copy of a speech given at some school function and it gives us a glimpse of what went on in the schools in Prescott about 100 years ago.

Literary societies were very popular in the early 1900s. Students involved in these societies participated in debates with other schools and learned many skills that would be of value to them in future life. The members chose names for their societies and drew up constitutions and by-laws which governed them. Even many of the small rural schools formed literary societies.

SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

In searching through my files, I see that literary societies were around from 1906 to 1929. Bluff City had one in 1906, 1916, 1928 and 1929. Sutton had three societies in 1916. Gum Grove had one in 1908 and 1926. Ebenezer had one in 1927, and Holly Springs had one in 1916. I expect most all the schools had them during that time period. It seemed to be a time when many students exhibited a love for learning, and by competing with others groups, strived to excel at whatever project was at hand.

The Garland Literary Society at Prescott By D. E. Cummins

In attempting to start at the beginning to write a history of the Garland Literary Society, it naturally carries me back to the time of the beginning of the literary societies in the Prescott schools.

In 1905, Mr. O. L. Dunaway, our former superintendent, saw the great need of a literary society at Prescott, so under his direction, the eighth, ninth, and tenth grades organized one society and gave it the name of Zenith. At this time it was thought unnecessary to have more than one society because of the small number of students in these upper grades.

After the society was organized, committees were appointed who drew up a constitution and gave the society by-laws which govern them at the present time. One program committee gave numbers for the weekly programs that the succeeding program committees varied from only slightly.

This one Zenith society went on without a change until the beginning of the 1909-10 term of school. At this time another grade had been added to the high school department, and it was decided the number of students had grown too large to be enrolled in one society. It was thought that the tenth and eleventh grades should compose one society and the eighth and ninth grades another. So the upper classmen drew off from the others and organized under the same rules that governed the Zenith society, and gave themselves the name that we have today--Garlands. But there is very little connection between the Garland society that was and the Garland society that is. In 1910, there was a complete change in the school. Two boys were appointed by the superintendent to choose from the rest of the school, and so many who had been in one society now had to go to the other.

One of the sides selected the name Zenith, as the name was very popular at that time, and our side, after much debate, chose the name Garland, but in our first meeting every member voted that he or she would try to win back for the name Garland the honors she had lost in her former conflicts with the Zeniths. Acting upon this resolution we did not rest until the old gold and red of the Garlands flew high over the black and yellow of the Zeniths and the silver Bemis loving cup was ours.

It is true that in the two years of the society's existence, the Zeniths have won over us once, but it is by defeats that anyone learns to love victory. And so perhaps it is best

SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

that we do not win every time.

We shall not boast here tonight of what we are going to do in the coming contest between the societies, for it is impossible to say now which shall be the winner.

But our hopes grow brighter when we think of the stable work the Garlands are doing. Some of the most efficient and strongest pupils in the school have worked in the Garland society and have passed out of her ranks into the work of life, or into higher institutions. Our members have acquitted themselves nobly in the oratorical contests at Little Rock. And at the Camden contest, they have made high marks and won honors. Two of our young men won the debate over the Hope High School in 1910, and it was Garland debaters who won for Prescott over Texarkana Texas High School last year. It is not my purpose to boast, but to give solemn facts in regard to our past. The Zeniths have had some strong stalwart workers, debaters, declaimers, extemporaneous speakers, and it is a friendly rivalry that prompts us to excel. Though fewer in number, we mean to be known by the character of our work. At present we have a membership of loyal workers. Some inexperienced ones, it is true, but ones who are ready to learn, and that is the one great purpose of our society work. We have worked under difficulties this year greater than we ever thought of meeting, yet we have come out more than victors. Victors, because in debate, we have never given up, in loyalty we find joy, in work we find pleasure.

Since Xmas, we have come to feel toward the Zenith society as we have never felt before, that in her ranks we have school mates and class mates who are broad-minded and large-hearted enough to watch with satisfaction our success, and befriend and encourage us in this undertaking tonight. To them we extend our most appreciative thanks, and we hope to meet some of them in the great world arena of life to compete with them and befriend them.

And for the members of our own society, we look into the future, and encouraged by the past, we see Garlands going out from this institution into all the world, reaching the higher places in every line of life and shedding around them the influence that makes for all that is good and great.

CHURCH SERVICES IN LAPLAND

The other day I was scanning through an issue of *The Nevada County Picayune* from 1887 when an article caught my attention. It was about Laplanders and their church services. I'm not too familiar with Lapland, but I know it's somewhere in the far northern parts of Finland and Sweden. The area has snow on the ground about six to eight months of the year and is sparsely populated.

According to the article, the Laplanders were very religious and rarely missed a church service in 1887 despite having to travel by sleigh pulled by reindeer. Some traveled as far as fifteen miles by this method to reach the church.

SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

While their dedication is to be admired, what really interested me was what happened after they got to church. It seems they didn't want the preacher's message interrupted by crying babies. Instead of having some sort of nursery like many churches do these days, these Laplanders had another solution.

When they reached the church and had their reindeer secured, the father would scoop out a little bed in the snow. The children, of course, were all wrapped in warm clothes and then usually covered in a bear skin. The father then placed the child in the bed of snow. The article said it was not unusual to find twenty or thirty babies left in snow beds around the church building. The snow acted as insulation and the bear skins kept the moisture away from the child. The babies soon went to sleep in their beds of snow. When the service was over, the fathers would go out and get their babies from their beds, get in their sleighs, and travel home. The article stated that no babies ever caught colds from this practice. Most of the babies slept peacefully and the church services were not disturbed by crying children.

I thought this was an interesting little story. You must remember that this was written over a hundred years ago. I'm sure things may be different in Lapland these days.

RED EYE GRAVY

Here are the responses I received from readers regarding red eye gravy. I remember this growing up when my father would cure his own hams after we butchered a hog. It might not have been too healthy, but food sure tasted good back in those days.

I did a little checking to try and find out how it came to be known as red eye gravy. The most common explanation according to legend is that Andrew Jackson and his men were once camped out in the woods. He told one of his men who had been drinking too much to fix him some gravy that was as red as the fellow's blood-shot eyes. From then on, it was known as red eye gravy.

After my mother fried ham slices in the skillet, she would remove the meat and pour in boiling hot water and let it simmer while stirring until the residue of cooking the ham was dissolved into the hot water. We ate it on biscuits and baked sweet potatoes--I guess on other things, too. That may have been "depression" gravy, but it was called Red-eye Gravy at our house.—*Betty Thomas (Texas)*

The only thing I remember about red-eye gravy was from my mother and she used ham grease and poured coffee in it, I do not know the amount etc., so sure hope you have some great cooks out there to tell you so that I can have it.—*Wanda Carter (Texas)*

Don't use much grease or oil when you cook the ham, (I like using my cast iron skillet). After the ham is done pour coffee into the pan, bring it to a boil, just to mix the coffee and grease, then remove from the heat. Put on hot homemade biscuits, and serve with the ham and fried eggs.

SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

That is the way my Mama and Grandma made it and the way I was taught to make it.--*Betty Lawrence (Arkansas)*

Just use the cooked off oil of the ham or whatever meat I am cooking and use flour /season with salt and pepper and chili powder. When it browns pour water in and cook to consistency you want..... if I want the white gravy I use milk....instead of water.... That may not be right...--*Donna Dixon (Arkansas)*

My husband made it for New Years.....had coffee and brown sugar in it. Fry ham in a skillet to use drippings. Remove ham. Finely chop small piece of ham and return to skillet. 1/2 c water to 1/2 coffee with a teaspoon of brown sugar. simmer --*Karen Moon*

Well...I put a little bacon grease in a black iron skillet and get it pretty hot....throw the ham in there...brown it pretty brown then take it out and set aside. Turn the fire down a little then take a cup of black coffee put in there and stir...scrapping up all the goodies off the bottom "Red Eye Gravy"!! And maybe a little salt and pepper...but you won't need much salt because that kind of ham is pretty salty!—*Bill Barham (Arkansas)*

You keep the grease in the pan. add some coffee grounds from the bottom of the sauce pan you boiled the coffee in, some black and or red pepper, a splash of coffee—left over...and a little flour if you want thickening. That's it—*Dan Westmoreland (Texas)*

RED EYE GRAVY

(This will serve 12 people or so.)

- 4 Tablespoons of fat or drippings from cooked ham
- 1 cup black coffee
- 1/2 cup water
- 2 Tablespoons butter (margarine)

Add fat from cooked ham to a black iron skillet. Add coffee, water, and stir with wooden spoon. Add two tablespoons of butter to melt. Let simmer. Serve gravy over ham, potatoes, etc. This is a thin, thin, gravy traditionally. (Thicken with corn starch if you want it to be thicker.)

SORRY about the iron skillet and wooden spoon. Just can't cook without my momma's traditions!!!!—*Dr. A. Lemons (Arkansas)*

To make red eye gravy, you need a slice of real cured ham. Fry, save the drippings, add a little flour, as to how much drippings you have, let the flour brown then add water as needed, careful about salt, as ham is salty. This is like cream gravy. Some will just add water to drippings. We always preferred the cream style--not as greasy.—*Jeanette Beaver (Arkansas)*

The way I make it is like my parents made it. Fry you ham in an iron skillet. Remove the ham. Add a small amount of water to the skillet which will have its own drippings and stir until it comes back to a boil and turns reddish brown. Let it boil or simmer until it cooks down to the amount of gravy you want and pour into a bowl. Serve it over biscuits and scrambled eggs. Delicious! PS: No need to salt as the ham will have enough salt in it.—*Clara Freeland (Arkansas)*

SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

Several readers mentioned various web sites where you can find the recipe:

David Cummins (Florida) suggested these:

<http://www.cooks.com/>

<http://www.southernfood.about.com/cs/gravyrecipes/>

<http://www.homecooking.about.com/condimentrecipes/>

<http://www.foodnetwork.com/>

<http://www.myrecipes.com/>

<http://www.visualrecipes.com/>

Charlie Weaver says this site has more recipes than you could hope to use:

<http://www.cooks.com/>

Duncan McKelvey (Georgia) says "Here's a site where I've found many a fine recipe for practically everything, including red eye gravy"

<http://www.cooks.com/>

Thanks to all who those who responded to my request.

A DOG NAMED SLIM



I know Slim is not a very dignified name for a dog, but he got stuck with it. Slim just showed up at my mother's place a few years ago and decided to stay. Sometimes people dump dogs out in the rural areas and they find their way to the nearest house in search of food. It's hard to turn away a hungry animal that shows up at your door.

He was full grown when we first saw him, so I'm not sure about his age or his background. He is just a long-legged dog with a slender build--a mixture of breeds, maybe part hound and part something else.

Slim is a peculiar dog. He is very particular about what he eats. If a scrap of food falls on the ground, he refuses to eat it. He loves to be petted like most dogs. Every time I drive up, he runs to meet me and before I can get out of my truck, he puts his front feet on the door frame when I open the door which means his face is about even with my face. After I pet him a little, he goes on about his business.

Slim has very good eyesight and a nose like a bloodhound. I've seen him stick his nose up in the air getting a good sniff of something off in the woods. He then takes off and soon I hear him barking. This happens several times a day. If someone worked with him, he might make a good hunting dog. He needs a few lessons on what to hunt because I've seen him barking at all kinds of creatures--armadillos, squirrels, rats, birds, lizards, and even once I caught him barking at a buzzard that was flying overhead.

One of his bad traits is that he sometimes likes to run cars, but only certain ones. All the dogs seem to think the mail carrier is fair game. They don't seem to bother cars passing by, but if one happens to stop or slow down, the dogs think it is part of their job to descend on the vehicle like it is some sort of trespasser on their turf.

SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

Slim likes to go with me when I'm working on the place. He sees me get in the truck and watches my front wheels. If I start toward the woods, he takes off ahead of me like a bullet and will usually stay nearby while I work except for his usual hunting expeditions.

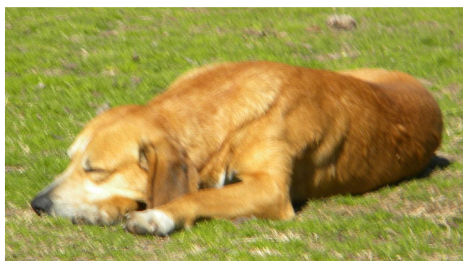
Slim absolutely refuses to ride in the back of a pickup. Most dogs love to ride in the back with their noses turned to the wind, but not Slim. Once each year, we take the dogs to Bluff City to meet the veterinarian to get their rabies shots. I have to ride in the bed of the pickup holding Slim to keep him from jumping out and he shakes like a leaf when the truck starts moving. He had much rather walk than ride. Maybe he had a bad experience with trucks when he was young.

I usually pack a lunch when I'm working about the farm and Slim and the other dogs usually join me for lunch. I usually end up giving about half my lunch to the three dogs that are sitting there making me feel guilty for not feeding them. As I said, Slim is pretty particular about what he eats. He gives all the food a good sniff before he eats it and sometimes just refuses it altogether. He loves those peanut butter and cheese crackers and his eyes light up when he sees me bring out a package. He is not too fond of barbecue potato chips. Maybe they are a little too spicy for him.

Slim may not have the intelligence of many breeds of dogs, but he is not dumb. He had no problem learning to sit on command when I am feeding him a snack and he has learned to "shake hands" (if he is in the mood). If he has something else he wants to do, he just ignores me. A bite of food works wonders in getting a dog to do some little trick. I think he has learned not to perform any tricks unless he is rewarded with food. As I said, he is not dumb.

I sometimes wish we had given him a better name, but it might be hard to change now. He knows his name is Slim and might even be proud of it since one of the other dogs is named Goober.

Slim is a good dog. He's good-natured and rarely gets into any scrapes with the other dogs. He keeps me company when I'm working and it always makes me feel good when he comes running to meet me when I drive up. Slim is definitely a country dog and wouldn't be happy penned up or tied to a chain. I think he knows the location of every armadillo hole on the farm and the surrounding countryside. He gets plenty of exercise because he is always on the go and when he gets tired, he does like most dogs--curls up in his favorite spot and enjoys a good snooze.



Slim doing what he does best!

SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

READER PARTICIPATION QUESTION FOR NEXT MONTH

It's time for another reader participation question. I'm giving you a choice of two questions to consider. Choose one or both and send me your comments by March 15 so I can get them in the next issue.

1. Grapette—What memories do you have about this well-known Arkansas product?
2. Do you have a "bucket list"? What is something you would really like to do before you get too old to do it? Or, what is the most exciting thing you have ever done?

Grandmother's Cookies (an old recipe)

1 cup soft water	1/2 tsp. salt
1 cup sugar	1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
1 egg	5 Tablespoons sweet milk
4 cups flour	1 teaspoon baking soda

Mix all ingredients together and work into small balls. Place on cookie sheet and press flat with a fork. Bake at 400 degrees until brown.

Recipe for a Happy Family

1 husband	1 portion of understanding
1 wife	1 portion of forgiveness
children	generous portions of prayer
1 Bible (for each)	3 cups of love, firmly packed
1 pkg. work	1 cup of kisses
1 pkg. play	1 small paddle

Mix thoroughly and sprinkle with awareness. Bake in moderate oven of everyday life, using as fuel all the grudges and past unpleasantness. Cool. Turn out onto a platter of cheerfulness. Garnish with tears and laughter in large helpings. Serve God, country, and community.