

**Jerry McKelvy's
SANDYLAND CHRONICLE**

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THE BRINKLEY, ARKANSAS TORNADO

Arkansas has had its share of destructive tornadoes. They usually are more prevalent in the spring months, but can happen anytime if the conditions are right. One of the most destructive tornadoes to ever hit Arkansas happened on March 8, 1909 when the city of Brinkley was completely destroyed.

Brinkley at that time had a population of about 4,000. The tornado (or cyclone, as they usually called them back then) hit Brinkley about 7 p. m. A heavy rain shower had just fallen. There were no warning systems or weather radars available back in 1909, so people didn't have any advance warning.

The city light plant was completely demolished throwing the city into complete darkness. Fires broke out in some of the damaged buildings but the rainfall helped keep the fires from spreading. Of the 1,000 buildings in the town, only about fifteen were left standing. All church buildings were destroyed except one. All furniture, clothing, and food supplies were destroyed. All communication with other towns was cut off. We can only imagine the chaos as the survivors searched through the rubble in the dark looking for others who might be trapped under the debris. It was dangerous to be out because of exposed nails in boards, broken glass, etc. The only light was from the scattered fires in some of the damaged buildings. A cold wind followed the tornado and thousands of people were exposed to the elements. Two weeks after the storm, physicians reported over 150 cases of pneumonia and pleurisy caused by exposure.

There were many stories about some of the strange things that happen during a tornado such as complete destruction except for some small item that was left completely intact. One family of five crowded into one room of their house which was the only room left standing following the storm. They escaped uninjured. Guests at the hotel had the good sense to go to the bottom floor and escaped injury when the upper floors were blown away.

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It was fortunate that Brinkley is located between Little Rock and Memphis on a major highway and railroad line. When word got out about the storm, supplies were quickly brought in by rail. The immediate need was to provide food and shelter for 4,000 homeless people. Martial law was declared for a time. The mayor said spectators coming into town to look at the damage were hindering the clean-up.

The death toll at Brinkley was 35 with hundreds injured. Property damage was in the millions. About thirty doctors from nearby towns arrived to tend to the wounded and an emergency hospital was set up. Some of the more severely injured were taken to Little Rock by train for treatment. The town's only undertaking business was destroyed. The dead were taken to one of the buildings that had less damage. There were not enough coffins for the dead. Some of the bodies were loaded onto wagons and taken to Forrest City and Helena to be prepared for burial. In the midst of all this chaos, a wagon arrived in town from outside the city with four more bodies.

The governor authorized one hundred convicts and guards to be brought from the state prison to Brinkley to assist in the clean-up. The railroad provided prison rail cars to house the convicts while they were in town. The clean-up took a long time. Months after the storm, a notice was published in the paper about the need to remove all the storm debris still piled up in the ditches and along the streets blocking the drainage. It was feared that the standing water would breed mosquitoes and cause a health catastrophe that could cause more deaths than the tornado.

Some thought this was the end of the town of Brinkley, but the town was rebuilt and in the 2020 census had a population of 2,362. Tornadoes often destroy a portion of a city, but this one practically wiped Brinkley, Arkansas off the face of the earth. That storm system also did much damage in other parts of Arkansas as well. Twenty-five towns in Arkansas in eleven counties reported damage. In our area, in the town of Chidester, three members of the Gaston family were killed and four more were injured when their home was destroyed. Fifteen people in Chidester suffered broken limbs. Fifteen homes, two churches, and the school were destroyed.

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THE HONORABLE SONS OF REST

One of the most unusual fraternal organizations in Nevada County was called The Honorable Sons of Rest. The organization started in 1908 in Prescott and was founded by Dr. R. L. Hinton. Many long newspaper columns written by James Snodgrass were published in the Nevada County Picayune which told about the organization.

I can tell from reading those articles that Mr. Snodgrass was a very smart man. His articles were a mixture of politics, religion, and ancient history. It seems that the main focus of the organization was to raise the price farmers received for their cotton. They felt that too much cotton was being grown and advised farmers to quit planting so much cotton which would cause the prices to rise. They advised women and children to not work in the cotton fields which would result in less cotton being grown. The organization also voiced their opinion on the various national political issues of the day.

The organization met in the upper story above McDaniel Hardware Co. in 1908 and was considering adding a ladies' auxiliary. Officers elected for 1909 were L. P. Hitchcock, president, Dr. R. L. Hinton in charge of the sanitarium, Dr. Arnold the examining physician, Tom Orr, state organizer, Jack Lavender, warden, C. N. Riddle, secretary, and B. F. Wynn, chairman. Many well-known men in Prescott were members of the group. The organization spread into other cities such as Mena, Eureka Springs, Shreveport, Louisiana, and into the state of Oklahoma.

The organization was said to be the only organization doing business without money. There were no dues to be paid by the members and there was no solicitation for new members. Representatives of the organization traveled over the county to get first-hand knowledge of the plight of the farmers.

In one of the articles, Mr. Snodgrass explained how a person could become a member of the Honorable Sons of Rest. A prospective member must abstain from manual labor for six months before applying for membership. Prospective members must not be addicted to smoking cigarettes, drinking Coca-Cola, whiskey, or other intoxicants. All officers for the organization must be widowers or bachelors and eligible for matrimony. The motto or password for the organization was "Never Work". After a person had been

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a member for six months, the secret would be revealed to him how the members wore good clothes and had plenty to eat without working.

The last newspaper article from the Honorable Sons of Rest was published in September, 1916. A man named Samuel James Snodgrass died in January, 1917 and is buried at Piney Grove Cemetery. I think this is probably the man who wrote the newspaper articles which would explain why the articles ceased. I could find no other mention of the organization after 1916.

ADVICE TO HUSBANDS

This appeared in The Nevada County Picayune in 1929

The key to happy married life
Is – Do your best to please your wife.
If she believes that white is black,
It doesn't pay to argue back.
And if it's hard for you to see
Why two plus two should equal three,
As long as SHE believes it so,
You might as well admit it – Bo.

And if she cannot prove her claim,
That doesn't count. It's all the same.
You shouldn't ask your wife, my son,
To prove her case—It isn't done.
Her intuition stands supreme
However odd her claims may seem.
However wrong she may appear,
Just say to her—"All right, my dear".

Just smile at her, and don't be cross.
But let her think that she's the boss.
And let her run the domicile
To fit her own peculiar style.
And though you may not like her hat,
Don't ever, ever tell her that!
Although it may not suit your eyes,
Be sure to praise it to the skies.

And when she gets a dress that's new,
Admire it, lad—whate'er you do.
However bum the thing may fit,
Don't ever, ever, speak of it.
Whatever tact you try to use,
To tell her that—you're bound to lose.
And if she claims that black is white,
Remember this—she's LIKELY right.

RAINFALL RECORD

September rainfall at my house was only 1.6 inches. Burn bans have been issued for many counties. This is typical of many fall seasons in Arkansas, but is always subject to change. In Arkansas, we can go from a drouth to a flood or vice versa in a short period of time.

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CORRECTION

In the last issue in the article about train accidents, I mentioned that the railroad crossings in Prescott did not have gates. A reader pointed out to me that gates have been installed at some of the main crossings in Prescott.

A COMMENT FROM A READER

I was just wondering about Prescott the other day and even Googled it to see how it was faring. Good to know the trains still run through. Do passenger trains still stop there? My grandmother would occasionally ride the train from Jefferson, Texas, to Prescott to visit us. I grew up with trains coming through Chidester regularly (and in the middle of the night, which I found soothing for some reason!) and don't remember any accidents, but there could have been. I was sad to hear no more trains come through Chidester now and they pulled up the tracks. I still remember that old familiar "bump bump," crossing the tracks to drive back and forth to the Mercantile for groceries from our house.

My other grandmother who lived in Chidester lost a car to a train. If I remember correctly, it was in Columbia County, though. She was driving to visit her brother and his wife outside of Waldo, and her car stalled on the tracks. She luckily got out in time but her car was demolished. This would have been in the 1940's or 1950's. – *Barbara in Texas*

Editor's Note: Passenger trains no longer stop in Prescott. The Texas Eagle Amtrak train stops at Hope and Arkadelphia (one train each day in each direction). The train depot in Prescott is now home to the Nevada County Depot and Museum.

You mentioned train accidents in Chidester. There was a major train derailment in Chidester in September, 1990. Much of the town had to be evacuated due to nitric acid leaking.

A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY

Mrs. Elsie Beaver (now deceased) once told me a funny story about my great aunt, Mary C. Henry Gulley. She was born in 1878 and died in 1965. She was the widow of John Marion Gulley. She was once operated a general store at Theo and also served as postmaster there.

One moonlit night after her husband's death, she was alone in her home and noticed a shadow that was moving at her bedroom window. She became frightened and thinking someone was trying to enter her home through the window, she fired her shotgun through the window to stop the intruder.

Upon further investigation, it was determined that the shadow was nothing more than a large elephant ear plant moving in the slight breeze that was blowing that night.

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O SAY, CAN YOU SEE....?

There are five basic human senses—hearing, sight, taste, touch, and smell. I don't know about you, but I rank eyesight right up there at the top as one of the most important. I recently underwent cataract surgery, and that caused me to think about how our ancestors got by without these modern medical advances. I did a little online research on the subject and discovered some interesting things.

The first eyeglasses were used in Italy in the year 1284. A painting done in the year 1352 shows a man wearing eyeglasses. Early eyeglasses were very crude—mostly just magnifying glasses. Our grandparents and great-grandparents had eyesight problems as they grew older just like we do, but life expectancy in those days was not as long as it is today. A sixty-year-old man was sometimes referred to in the newspapers as “an aged man”. I suppose most of those older folks just got along as best they could as their eyesight worsened.

Even the Bible mentions people who had problems with their eyesight. In Genesis 27:1, it says “It came to pass when Isaac was old and his eyes grew dim that he could not see...” In I Samuel 41:5 we find, “Now Eli was ninety and eight years old, and his eyes were dim that he could not see”.

One exception was Moses. In Deuteronomy 34:7, it says “And when Moses was an hundred and twenty years old, his eyes were not dim, nor his natural force abated”. It makes me wonder what shape Methusaleh was in who lived to be 969 years old.

People generally fall into one of two categories regarding eyesight problems. Near-sighted people can see well up close but have trouble seeing at a distance. Far-sighted people can see well at a distance, but have trouble reading and doing close-up work. Over 71 percent of Americans need some sort of vision correction. Of those, 71 percent wear eyeglasses and 22 percent wear contacts.

Even some children have vision problems. In 2019, it was reported that 25.3 percent of children age 2 to 17 wore glasses or contacts. Near-sightedness among children is increasing rapidly from 25% in the early 1970s to 42% thirty years later and is continuing to increase. Some doctors believe one of the reasons is that children stay inside more. Doctors think that being outside helps develop better distance vision. Another cause, according to some doctors, is that children spend too much time staring at computer screens, video games, and other hand-held devices which trains the eyes to focus on near things. One doctor even said “A generation of real-life near-sighted Mr. McGoos is growing up before our eyes”.

We visit the eye doctor and get prescription eyeglasses to correct some of our eye problems to help us see better. As our eyesight changes, we need a new prescription for our eyeglasses and this continues for many years until finally we end up with problems such as cataracts and new glasses will no longer do the job.

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Cataracts may be caused by several things. They may be hereditary. A person whose mother had German measles when pregnant may develop cataracts. They are also a part of the normal aging process. Some medicines such as steroids used over a long period of time can cause cataracts to develop faster. It is estimated that 75% of people over the age of 80 have cataracts.

Cataracts is a clouding of the lens which interferes with eyesight. The history of cataract surgery dates back to about the fifth century in ancient Egypt. Back then, a needle or sharp thorn was used to push the clouded lens out of the way instead of actually removing it. That helped for a short time, but was not very successful. It was a process called "couching" and it's hard to believe it was done without any anesthesia. This type surgery continued to be used for hundreds of years.

Cataract surgeries done in the early 1900s involved large incisions with stitches and required the patient to lie perfectly still for 24 hours following the operation with a bandage over both eyes. It was not until 1950 that the first intraocular lens was implanted following removal of the cataract. Improvements continued to be made in the procedure. In 1967, Dr. Charles Kelman perfected a technique that used ultrasonic vibrations to break up the cataract into pieces which were then removed through a small opening. In 1978, the first foldable silicone lens implant was used which allowed the new lens to be inserted through a very small opening.

Cataracts usually began to form about age 60 and the average age for cataract surgery in America is 73. I put off having the surgery for a year or two after I was told I needed it and I probably should have had it done earlier. The surgeon said my cataracts were "mature". In fact, she told me the last one she removed was the largest cataract she had removed from the twelve surgeries she had done that day.

The procedure is relatively painless and only takes ten to twelve minutes. Here's the way my surgery went. Of course, the patient has to be prepared for surgery, eyes dilated, and drops to numb the eye are introduced. A surgical bonnet is placed on the head, a blood pressure cuff attached to one arm, and electrodes attached to the chest to monitor heart rate. A port is placed in a vein of one arm so that anesthesia can be administered. A mark is placed on the forehead above the eye to be worked on and a wrist band with your name is placed on the arm on that side of your body. This is important since the surgeon operates on several people each day. One patient will have surgery on the right eye followed by another patient having surgery on the left eye. They sure don't want to do the wrong eye.

Then you just lie in the bed and wait your turn. In my case, the anesthesiologist, a registered nurse, and the surgeon all came by and talked to me before the surgery. The amount of anesthesia given depends on the patient. Most have light sedation so that you can still hear them talking and tell them if you need more anesthesia. I remember her telling be once to be still and once to took up. I heard her tell someone how good some tool was in removing these mature cataracts. I could see some flashing lights during the

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surgery and feel my eye being washed out. In a few minutes it was over and I was rolled out to a recovery area where all the wires, tape, etc. were removed. The surgeon came by and said everything went well. I was given some paperwork with instructions on how to care for the eye at home. I was given a Coke to drink which was good since I had not had any food or drink since midnight. I was then led out of the building for the ride home. Each patient must have a driver to drive them home following surgery.

The patient must wear an eye shield at night over the surgical eye for one week. You are told not to rub the eye and not to lift anything heavier than ten pounds for about a week. The eye may feel scratchy for a day or two. Most doctors still require eye drops to be put in the eye each day following surgery following a schedule. My surgeon no longer uses the drops but puts medicine in the eye during the surgery that takes the place of the drops. The medicine causes some floaters to be noticed for a few days until the medicine wears off. A follow-up appointment with an optometrist is scheduled for the day after surgery and another one a week after surgery for each eye. About five weeks after the last eye is done, it's time to check to see what type glasses are needed. In most cases, glasses are only needed for reading.

Laser cataract surgery is also available now which is said to be more precise. A patient has a choice of several lenses that can be implanted to correct different eye problems. One type is said to correct vision to a point where glasses are not needed, even for reading. These are expensive and may not be covered by insurance.

One thing you immediately notice after cataract surgery is how bright things look and how vivid the colors are. You will need to wear sunglasses outside for a while.

Cataract surgery is said to be one of the safest surgeries done and has a 98 percent success rate. Each patient is different and has different medical issues. They will ask you what medicines you take and give you instructions on how to take them on the day of surgery.

It is recommended that we continue to have yearly eye exams after having cataract surgery to check for other vision problems such as glaucoma and macular degeneration. We all need to remember that we only have two eyes and we need to protect them. Remember to wear eye protection when doing things like weed-eating, grinding metal, jump-starting a battery, using power tools, or anything where something could fly into the eyes.

We are fortunate to live in a time when these modern medical advances are available to us as we get older. We have knee replacements, hip replacements, pacemakers, new lenses for the eyes, hearing aids, and other things to make life better. We can't turn back the clock and make ourselves younger, but we can look forward to a better quality of life in our old age because of these modern medical advances.

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National Family Literacy Day is November 1 – by Don Mathis

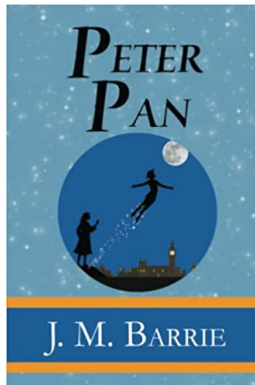
Families who read together succeed together. Reading to your child develops vocabulary skills, expands attention span, improves the ability to listen, increases imagination and creativity, and opens a dialogue between parent and child. The capability to read can never be unlearned. A book is portable, it doesn't require batteries, and it's practically free. What were your favorite books as a child? What books were your kid's favorite? Don Mathis reviews the best of 'Kid Lit' (children's literature) of each decade.

Children's Books of the 20th Century – by Don Mathis

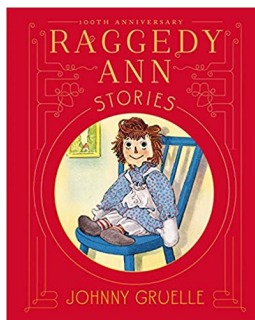
Through the centuries, there have been some great bedtime tales for children. James Finn Garner, in his "Politically Correct Bedtime Stories" (MacMillan Publishing Co., 1994), lampoons such favorites as "Little Red Riding Hood," "Cinderella," "The Pied Piper," and others. Politically Correct, they are; children's stories, not!

Stories like "Chicken Little," "The Ugly Duckling," "Jack and the Beanstalk," and "The Ginger Bread Man" do get a child-pleasing twist by author John Scieszka and illustrator Lane Smith in "The Stinky Cheese Man* and Other Fairly Stupid Tales" (Scholastic Inc., 1992). These fractured fables will please young and old.

Through the years of the passing century, there have been some terrific tales for the sleep- and age-deprived. When my son Charlie was little, we had our favorites from each decade. Most are still in print. All are perfect for gifts.

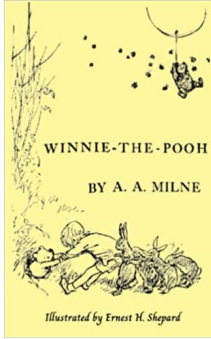


The character of "Peter Pan," by J.M. Barrie (Charles Scribner's Sons), dates back to 1902. Disney's adaptations of the Boy Who Never Grew Up are still timely. Freudian thinkers have a field day with the Lost Boys and Never Land. The story of Wendy, telling the stories of Pan, creates a story within a story as timeless as childhood itself.



"Raggedy Ann Stories," written and illustrated by Johnny Gruelle (Bobbs-Merrill Co.) in 1918, features a figure more famous as a doll than as a literary character. The way Ann and her friends talk and play (when humans are not around) predates the premise of "Toy Story" by generations. This first of many volumes continues to this day with tales of flying on a kite, a washing, a candy heart. All retain their power to interest and amuse children.

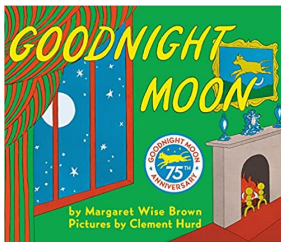
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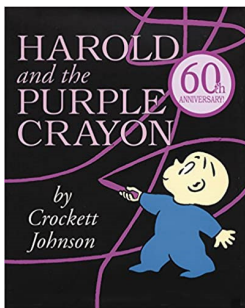
The story in which Pooh Goes Visiting and Gets into a Tight Place* from “Winnie-The-Pooh,” by A.A. Milne, illustrated by Ernest H. Shepard (E.P. Dutton & Co.), first came out in 1926. Like Raggedy Ann, Pooh was authored by a father for his child, the plaything’s owner. What is so endearing about a bear of little brain? Again, the Zen of Christopher Robin’s friends provide a playground for psychological analysis.



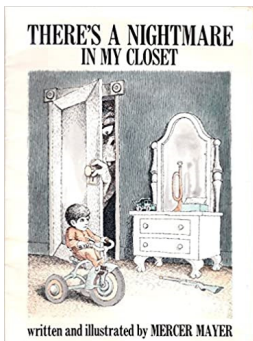
“The ABC Bunny” is a lesser-known work by Newbery Award winning writer and illustrator Wanda Gag (Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1933). This is a great letter-learning song and a wonderful bedtime book. It has pleasing pictures too. Charlie was two when he could finish the rhyme for each letter. “Y for you, take one last look; Z for zero, close the book.”



Another rabbit tale is “Goodnight Moon,” * by Margaret Wise Brown, illustrated by Clement Hurd (Harper & Row, 1947). Lucky is the child (and parent) who discovers Brown at an early age. To stall the inevitable coming of sleep, this bunny says goodnight to everything; bears, chairs, even the night air. This book is a classic in every sense of the word.



“Harold and the Purple Crayon” (Harper & Row) was written and illustrated by Crockett Johnson in 1955. Though markers might have replaced crayons, nothing can replace the creativity and imagination of Harold as he draws himself in and out of some strange predicaments. As the story draws to an end, he finally finds his way home. Charlie loved to draw and we loved this book.

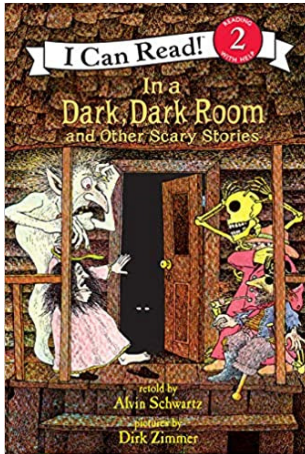


Fears of the dark are dispelled – no, made fun of, and welcomed – in an early work of the “Little Critter’s” creator. Mercer Mayer is the author and illustrator of “There’s a Nightmare in My Closet” (Dial Books for Young Readers, 1968). Mayer’s books are popular. This one should not be missed.

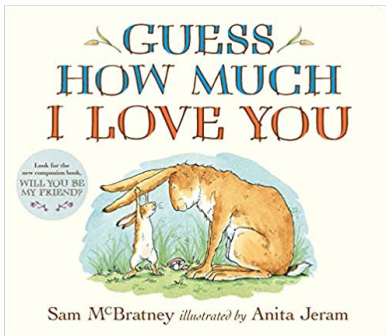
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A boy's dream adventure will take you "In the Night Kitchen," written and illustrated by Wild Things' creator Maurice Sendak (Harper & Row, 1970). Images of old movies and New York of the 30s abound. Is this book controversial? Does frontal nudity bother you? Is it good? Have you heard of the Caldecott Honor Books? The New York Times also named it the Best Illustrated Book of 1970. Every library should have a copy. Check it out.



"In a Dark, Dark Room," by Alvin Schwartz, illustrated by Dirk Zimmer (Harper) came out in 1984. Many experts say young children should not be told frightening tales. My son is the exception. He found this collection of scary stories at Grandmother's house and began to 'read' it to me at age three. And why not? It's from Harper's 'I Can Read' publications. It's perfect for a mature toddler to a second-grader.



"Guess How Much I Love You," * by Sam McBratney and illustrated by Anita Jeram (Candlewick Press, 1994) is a modern classic. Charlie and I were already into the game of topping each other in 'How much I love you' when we discovered this book. Big Nutbrown Hare holds his arms wider than Little Nutbrown Hare in demonstrating the quantity of love he holds for his son. Love "all the way down the lane as far as the river" is not as far as "across the river and over the hills." Babies will like the pen and ink and watercolors by Jeram. Toddlers will attempt to top the

competition when you ask, "Guess How Much I Love You?"

Through the years since the millennium, quite a few bedtime stories have been published that will make a child feel safe, happy, loved, home. Somewhere, sometime this evening, someone is reading the best bedtime book of the 21st Century. What do you think are the contenders?

**Books marked with an asterisk are included in "The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury" (Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1998), a compilation of more than 40 great stories for young or old.*