

Jerry McKelvy's
SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

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FINAL ISSUE

This will be the final monthly issue of The Sandyland Chronicle. I started this project back in November, 2001. I never thought it would last this long and I appreciate all the positive comments over the years from readers from both near and far. I'm amazed at how the internet makes things like this available to people all over the world. Some come across it online by accident and others happen to find it while doing research on their families who once lived in this part of Arkansas.

I've about exhausted my collection of material to share and I guess I'm getting too lazy to put much effort into doing more research. I guess you can say I'm ready to retire for the second time or at least not have a deadline to meet each month.

I hope you have enjoyed these articles over the years and maybe learned more about this part of Arkansas and our local history. At least a lot of it has now been recorded for anyone who might have an interest in it later on. All of the past issues consisting of over 2,000 pages are available online, so you can always go back and read them whenever you wish. To find them, just do a search for "sandyland chronicle" and it will lead you to the correct place. The website address is <http://sandyland.dreamhosters.com>

I said this was the final monthly issue. I thought about trying to produce quarterly issues (four per year), but I don't want to commit to doing that and not be able to do it. I will just say that if I happen to come across something I think might be of interest, I might produce an issue. I will let you know if I do that. I will also try to keep on with the Way Back When articles which I have been sending out each week to you by email.

SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY

People in the South, especially the old South, were often thought of as being very friendly and hospitable. I haven't traveled enough to compare the friendliness of people in other sections of the country to those who live in the South. I think there are good, friendly people in every state and also some in every state who are not what I would call friendly.

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I came across the following article from the Camden newspaper preserved on microfilm on this subject. The mention of the preacher coming for Sunday dinner brought back memories of my childhood when the preacher came to our house for lunch after services. We always had an extra special meal and we kids had to be on our best behavior. I remember one time our preacher at Gum Grove came to our house after church one Sunday. After the meal was finished and everyone was sitting around, the subject of fishing came up. We had a pond behind our house that had some good fish in it and later on that afternoon, my dad and the preacher decided to seine the pond to see what kind of fish they might bring out. The preacher borrowed some of my dad's old clothes and off they went on their fishing expedition. I don't remember how many fish they caught, but it was an enjoyable time for all of us.

SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY—THEN AND NOW

. *(by Mrs. A. A. Tufts for a meeting of the United Daughters of the Confederacy)*
(copied from microfilm--written about 1910)

The mere mention of the words "Old Time Southern Hospitality" suggests all that is beautiful and precious. The only reflection I ever had cast upon it was when a man said he never felt well the next day after a "big dinner" prepared under the direction of an old-time Southern housekeeper. The preparations for a "big dinner" used to begin several hours in advance. Cake making was a much more strenuous task when loaf sugar, which was made in an immense pyramid, as hard as a rock, had to be pounded and sifted and the sugar, butter, and eggs beaten only by hand. No one had dreamed of baking powder then, and the success of the cake depended upon the amount of beating. Pound cake was the favorite dessert in those days. In the early history, Camden hospitality prevailed to an alarming extent that when a man blew a horn at his front gate, every man, woman, and child in town was privileged to consider it an invitation to a party, and it is said that when some housekeeper had uninvited guests, she passed around a large gourd (home grown) of fresh spring water, which each guest drank in turn.

But this was before my day. My recollection of Southern hospitality is tinged with the melancholy directions of having to "wait" whenever we had company at our house. O, the bitterness of soul to a young child, when told that he, or she, had to "wait"—no tongue can tell it! The only compensation for this disagreeable wait to the small girls of my family was that when we had the forbidden chance to try on the immense straw bonnets the ladies were wont to leave so carefully upon the bed in the guest room. But for the boys, it was an unmitigated woe! I knew of a boy once, who by some chance was allowed a seat at the company table. The chicken pie was served to each one, in turn, and when it last came to Johnnie, there was no more left for him.

The preacher, who was the guest of honor, tried to smooth matters over by saying kindly, "Well, my son, I suppose you don't like chicken pie, do you?" "Yes," said Johnnie, "I reckon I like it just as well as any blamed boy, and git about as little of it." In one family of my acquaintance there was an old lady who had a habit of prolonging her annual visits for two or three months. She always brought her cat, in a basket, and expected the boys

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of the family to feed the cat and see that the dogs did not chase or annoy it. Finally, the cat disappeared mysteriously and it was suspected that the boys assisted in speeding the departed guest.

It was a great event in those days when the preacher and his family came to spend a few days. Perhaps it was a circuit rider on his way from conference to a new field of labor. They lived on next to nothing or “boarded around” but counted it all joy if only they could win souls to Christ! The first question they asked was about the children and the next thing we know we were standing by the good man’s side, with clean, smiling faces and fresh aprons, one of us handing him the family Bible, for we knew without being told, that he would read a few precious verses and then kneel down and pray for each one of us by name.

The “company supper” in those days was apt to be boiled chicken, waffles, and hot coffee. The last batch of waffles was always the best. I wonder how they managed to keep them so hot, with kitchens as far away as the houses of our next-door neighbors are today.

During the war when flour was scarce and coffee not to be had for love or money, I can recall “company suppers” of delicious spoon bread made of corn meal, served with clabber with a kind of dressing of cream. This, with a generous supply of sorghum, was a regular feast, at least to the girls and boys. Southern hospitality during the war would be a delightful theme for a poet. How gladly each one shared with the other the scanty store of good things. What a privilege and honor it was considered to have a Southern soldier for a guest. How tenderly were they nursed in sickness, and how often were slender means taxed in order to give them a decent burial. And when the war was over and families reunited, and Southern women bravely took up unaccustomed burdens, then it was that Southern hospitality was tried and not found wanting. In the absence of a spare room, the family feather bed was cheerfully laid upon the parlor floor for the guests, and although occasionally in the exuberance of his welcome, the family dog would run in and awaken the guests by licking their faces, still no true born Southerner was ever known to complain, and if the “newly-wed” Southern girl’s biscuits were a trifle heavy, her husband and friends were too loyal to notice it.

But now things have changed, I do not presume to say whether for better or worse. But, at any rate, if the preacher and his family expect to go visiting, I’d advise them to write a letter at least a week ahead of time, for fear they might find their friends out on an automobile trip. And any old lady, no matter how kind and sweet she may be, would better beware of bringing her cat to visit a home where there are boys. And nowadays I’m sure our boys get all the chicken pie they want and no one has to “wait” when company comes. The last time I saw this tried, it resulted in the grown-ups having to “wait” till the table was made large enough to accommodate the children.

Our sugar comes already pounded or cut into lumps of the correct size. We have Dover egg-beaters and fireless cookers for our cakes, and Mrs. Rorey has taught us how to utilize all the “left-overs”. Still, we are so busy answering the telephone, scolding the

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plumbers, writing club papers, and getting ready to vote, that we haven't the time, I fear, to be hospitable in the old sense of the word

PROGRAM AT COUNTY LINE SCHOOL IN 1915

In the old community of Foss in Nevada County, there was a school known as County Line School, so named because it was near the Ouachita-Nevada County line. A program was held at the school in December, 1915 and Miss Gertrude Knight gave a recitation which was printed in the Nevada County Picayune. I don't know the origin of this piece, but it has some good thoughts to ponder.

“My day has all gone,” ’twas a young woman who spoke
As she turned her face to the sunset glow.
“And I have been busy the whole day long,
Yet for my work there is nothing to show.”
No painter nor sculptor her hand had wrought,
No laurel of fame her hand had won;
What was she doing in all the day long,
With nothing to show at the set of the sun?
What was she doing? Listen!
I’ll tell you
What she was doing in all the day long.
Beautiful deeds, too many to number,
Beautiful deeds in a beautiful way.
Womanly deeds that a woman might do,
Trifles that only a woman can

see,
Weilding a power, unmeasured, unknown,
Wherever the light of his presence might be.
Rejoiced with those who rejoiced,
Wept with the sad and strengthened the weak,
And a poor wanderer straying in sin,
She in compassion had gone forth to seek.
Unto the poor, aid had been given,
Unto the weary, the rest of her home;
Freely her blessings to others were given,
Freely and kindly to all who would come.
Humbly and quietly all the long day,
Lovingly had her sweet services for others been one,
Yet for the labor of heart and of hand,
What could she show at the set of sun?
Ah! she forgot that our Father in Heaven
Ever is watching the work that we do,
And a record He keeps of all we forget,
Then judges our work with a judgement that’s true.
For an angel writes down in a volume of gold
The beautiful deeds that all do below;
Though nothing she had, at set of sun,
The angel above had something to show.

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FAMILY INTERVIEW

One of my treasured possessions is an audio tape of an interview my brother, Billy, did in 1988 with our Aunt Myrtie McKelvy Irvin and her husband, Hartwell, at their home in Camden. In this interview, they tell in their own words stories of how things were when they were growing up in the Goose Ankle community of Nevada County. Here is a portion of that interview I transcribed from that audio tape.

Billy—Tell me about how things were during the Depression days.

Mr. Irvin – I remember Mr. Gee (McKelvy), Myrtie’s dad, and my dad were the first to get a car in that neighborhood. Mr. Gee had a '27 Model T and Papa had a '26. We made one trip to Galveston, Texas in it. That’s what Papa bought it for. When they got back, he got rid of it. He didn’t want an automobile cluttering up the place. People back then who had one didn’t use it for pleasure. If they were going on a trip less than five miles, they would use a wagon, buggy, horse, or walk to save the car. They didn’t have money to buy gasoline.

When I was a kid, one of my sisters lived at Boughton about 16 miles from the place where we lived. Me and Clinton Robinson, my sister’s husband’s brother, would walk up there and when we left, we would want to go by Prescott which was five miles out of the way and that made the trip about 21 miles. We would walk it non-stop and if it was in the summer, we would pull our shoes off and go barefoot to save our shoes.

Things were tight back then. Everybody used kerosene for lamps and it was a nickel a gallon, but it was hard to get hold of a nickel. Back then, a lamp that was not being used was turned off and we would sit in the dark with only the light from the fireplace. If the kids were studying, a lamp was used for them to study by.

Mrs. Irvin—We had an Aladdin lamp which gave off more light, but they said it used more kerosene.

Mr. Irvin – We had one of those, but Papa wouldn’t let us use it because it burned too much kerosene.

Billy – I understand your 50th wedding anniversary is coming up. Tell me about when you got married.

Mrs. Irvin—We married April 3, 1939. Homer Gentry married us. He was our mail carrier and a Presbyterian preacher.

Billy -- Where were you married at?

Mrs. Irvin—In the car. Hartwell had been sick and not able to work when we got married.

Mr. Irvin—I was bed-fast for six months and not able to work.

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Mrs. Irvin—He had typhoid fever and pneumonia. I was working then up at Prescott in a café (Buchanan's) and I saved every penny I could because I knew what was coming up. Hartwell had some money saved, but had to spend it when he got sick. So, there wasn't any money for us, so we decided to get married secretly. I was working at Prescott and he would come up there to see me. He had already spoke to Homer Gentry and he said he would marry us. So, we married the third of April and nobody knew it until the 19th of August. We acted just like we did before we married. He stayed at his house and he would come up to see me every chance he got.

Billy- Where did you first live after you married?

Mrs. Irvin—At the little house on Papa's place. We all started out there. We called it "the weaning house". Then we moved to Mr. Irvin's place. He had a new two-room house we lived in for a while.

We went to Chidester to get our furniture. I think I had \$140 and we bought a wood cook stove, two straight chairs, and a bedroom suite and that was about it.

Mr. Irvin—When we first married, we didn't have a radio and didn't take a newspaper. The only thing we could do for recreation was play checkers. We had a homemade checkerboard. Eventually, we got a deck of cards and we would get together with other couples and play pitch. Other than that, we just stayed at home. Up there where we lived, they didn't have church but once a month. It was a pretty dull life but we never had known anything any better, so as far as we were concerned, it was all right.

Mrs. Irvin—We were as happy as we could be.

Billy—Tell me again about the lights you could see from your place.

Mr. Irvin—At one time, we could sit on our front porch and count lights in eight different houses at night—people using kerosene lights. That was before electricity. Now, there are not any houses anywhere around there.

Billy—When you told them in August that you were married, how did you tell them?

Mr. Irvin—I think some had already suspicioned it, I guess Mama was the first person I told. The roads were almost impassable back then from my house to Myrtie's. I had a '29 A Model then and sometimes I would take it and go to Myrtie's house and sometimes I would slide off in the ditch and have to get somebody to help me get it out. Mama would say, "I don't know why you don't you go on up there and get that girl and bring her home with you?" And we were already married at the time. It made we wonder if she knew we were married, but she never let me know if she did.

Mrs. Irvin—He would come to see me every chance he had. When he came to see me, we would go to Hope and spend the night. I think we spent three nights together during the time we were secretly married. See, I had a roommate at the time and we had to be careful or somebody would find out our secret.

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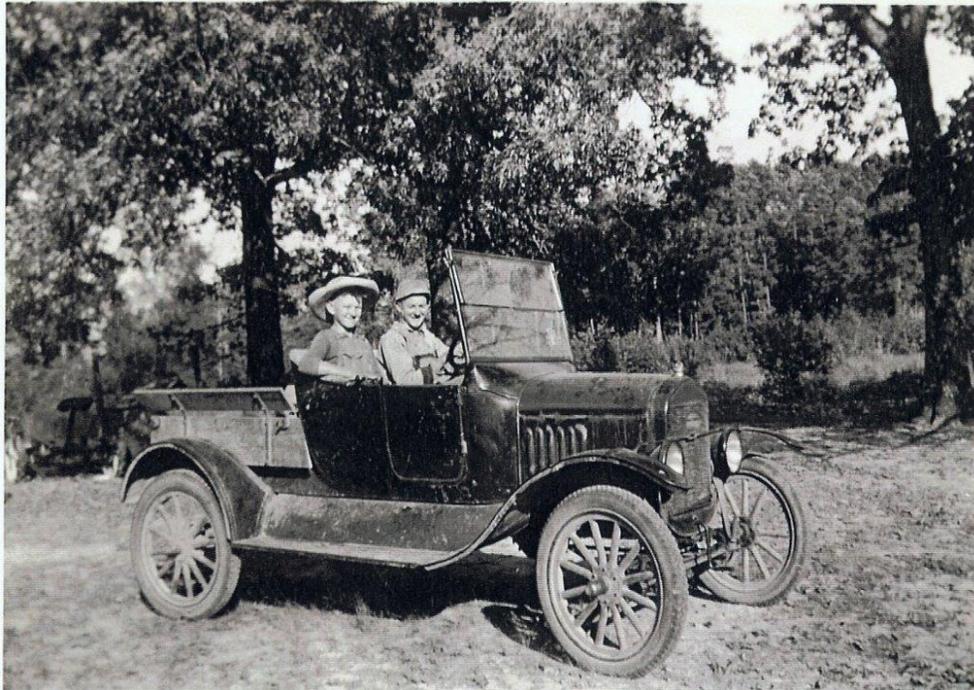
Billy—I learned something new today. I didn't even know you worked in a restaurant. Were you a waitress or a cook?

Mrs. Irvin—A waitress. I started off at \$2.50 a week working 14 hours a day seven days a week.

This is just a small portion of the audio tape they recorded that day back in 1988. Hearing them tell these stories in their own words brings back good memories of the days when they were with us and we discovered some interesting things we didn't know by doing this project. Some of you might consider doing something like this to pass on some of your life stories to your children and grandchildren. If you don't want to make a recording, you might write down some of your memories in a notebook for your descendants to read after you are gone.

Rainfall Record -- October rainfall at my house was 4 inches making 42.2 inches for the first ten months of the year. Normal annual rainfall for our area is 52 inches.

Here are a few of my favorite old pictures from previous issues



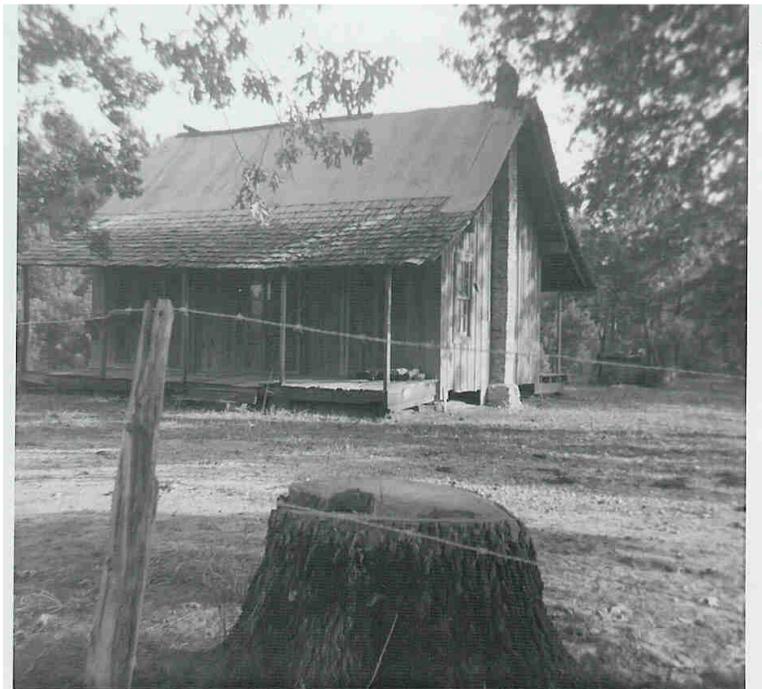
Perry and Jake Westmoreland – two boys having fun

(more information in the April, 2015 issue)

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**My great uncle Walter Moore and his old truck
(from the November, 2009 issue)**



**The “weaning house” on my grandfather’s place – the first home for all three
children when they married.**

(mentioned in the Family Interview article in this issue)

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'Stille Nacht' / 'Silent Night' -- A study in contrasts -- by Don Mathis

"7 O'clock News/Silent Night" by Simon & Garfunkel came out in the mid-60s, about the time I began to think. The traditional song starts out strong but then a voice-over comes in with the evening news. The events of the day (crime, politics, war) become louder as the carol grows fainter until only the news is heard. The end is a Walter Cronkite-type voice bidding all a good-night.

"Silent Night" by Johnny Cash provides a traditional melody, but his harsh voice offers a juxtaposition in this folk song. A dozen seasons later, my neighbor's son sang it in the original German at a Christmas concert. The voice of a 10-year-old child is heartrendingly beautiful while the Germanic language is so opposingly guttural, yet Chad Wood combined the words and music so hauntingly.

Years later, I heard the story of the Christmas truce during World War One. German troops singing "Stille Nacht" were answered by British soldiers singing "Silent Night." The suspension of hostilities that followed allowed enemies to become friends for a spell. Cigarettes and stories were shared. Each viewed the other's photographs of loved ones. And, for a while, the combatants saw each other as human.

Again, I appreciate the friction in this 200-year-old song, this time between war and peace, between enmity and fraternity.

What is it about this song -- what is it about me -- that finds the antithesis of "Silent Night" so fascinating? I think it allows me to see the peace that should be, the compassion that lives within each of us, and the love that is. May your Christmas be calm and bright. And may you sleep in heavenly peace.

