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**WAY BACK WHEN**

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**NOT ON SUNDAY**

The following notice was in the Prescott Daily News in June, 1907:

*Mayor Arnold will strictly enforce the Sunday law. Anyone violating the law will be arrested and fined. A few of the business concerns involved in the closing are meat markets, news dealers, boot blacks, short order houses, telephone exchangers, electric light plant, saw mills, express office, stores of every description, cold drinks, cigar stands, drug stores, ice houses, livery stables, etc. No labor of any character, except for protection of property, will be tolerated. This last item includes all mill hands, except watchmen, all depot force except telegraph operators and baggage men, all livery help except those necessary to feed the stock, and the entire force of the telephone office. In fact, Sunday is to be strictly observed as a day of rest.*

Similar city ordinances were enacted in cities all across the state about that time. These laws remained in effect for several years. Enforcement was stricter in some places than others, but many names are listed in newspapers of people being charged with Sabbath breaking and the fines usually ranged from one dollar to twenty-five dollars.

Forcing stores to close on Sundays became known as "the Sunday lid". If the lid was clamped down tight, it meant that the law was strictly enforced and no stores were allowed to be open.

These laws were very controversial. Business owners noticed that customers were leaving a town where stores were closed on Sundays and going to a neighboring town where stores were open and they complained about that. In Newark, Arkansas, a restaurant owner was fined \$25 for selling a bowl of ice cream on Sunday. He was told he could serve regular meals, but was not allowed to sell ice cream. In Conway, Arkansas, the law stated that no ice could be sold on Sundays and in Ft. Smith, no street cars were allowed to run on Sunday.

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These laws prohibited almost any kind of amusements or entertainment on Sundays such as picture shows, card games, baseball games, pool halls, and other sports.

Gov. Donaghy of Arkansas did not believe in Sunday work. It had been a custom for mail in the governor's office to be opened and gone through on Sundays, but he stopped that when he became governor. He said he believed in the Ten Commandments and was of the opinion that six days is enough work in one week for a healthy man.

Some of the newspapers had a little fun in reporting about the Sunday closing laws. In 1909, the paper in Magnolia had this:

*The Sunday lid is clamped down and padlocked every Saturday night at promptly twelve o'clock. Everybody has to be on good behavior and there is some talk of putting a stop to cows chewing their cud on the Sabbath in order to be sure the peace is not disturbed. Railroad spikes are used, it is stated, to keep the doors of juice joints in place and it would hardly be possible to get the doors of a meat market open with a log chain and a span of mules. The lid is of such a variety that some people claim that medicine taken on Sunday refuses to work.*

These Sunday closing laws came to be known as "blue laws", but nobody is sure why they were called that. Some think it was because the laws were printed on blue paper, but nobody has been able to find any examples.

Gradually, these Sunday closing laws were lifted. The city of Morrilton, Arkansas lifted their law in 1914 and allowed cold drinks and cigars to be sold on Sundays.

By the 1950s and 1960s, especially when the big discount stores opened, some cities allowed stores to be open on Sunday afternoons from one to five, but in most states, the sale of alcohol was still prohibited on Sundays.

The Arkansas legislature passed a law in 1965 the purpose of which was "to provide for a uniform day of rest". It prohibited the sale of certain items on Sundays such as clothing, housewares, building materials, radios, and televisions. This law was struck down by the Arkansas Supreme Court in 1982 as being too vague and unfair. It is still a tradition in some places for stores to be closed on Sunday mornings so that workers can

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attend church, but it is pretty much left to each business owner now to decide whether or not to be open on Sundays.

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## THE PING PONG CRAZE OF 1902

A sort of madness swept across America in 1902. It was the game of ping pong or table tennis. The craze started in London, but soon reached New York City and then quickly spread across the nation. People converted a room of their home into a ping pong room. The well-to-do folks socially ostracized someone who did not have a ping pong table in their home.

Soon there were ping pong tournaments and ping pong clubs everywhere. There were ping pong parties where a drink was served called ping pong punch. It was made with cold tea with brandy, sauterne, and Benedictine added. Ping pong sets which consisted of two racquets, a net, and a dozen ping pong balls were sold in just about every store. Manufacturers could not keep up with the demand.

A jeweler reported that his income from watch repair had tripled since the ping pong craze began. He said people wearing watches while jumping around playing ping pong caused problems with the watch mechanism.

Some made fun of the craze claiming that surgeons were putting ping pong nets on the operating tables and that the morgues would soon be doing the same.

By the summer of 1903, interest in ping pong had dwindled. The craze had left almost as quickly as it came. It was still a popular game, but not as popular as it was in 1902.

When I was in high school in the late 1950s, the Agri. building had several ping pong tables set up and on rainy days, boys would meet there and play ping pong during lunch hour. Some boys even built ping pong tables as a woodworking project in shop class at school.

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## WHEN ELVIS PRESLEY RAN FOR OFFICE IN ARKANSAS

The above headline is true, but a little misleading. The name Elvis D. Presley appeared on the ballot in one congressional district in Arkansas in 2018. This Elvis was from Star City, a small town of less than 3,000 people. He was an Elvis impersonator in his spare time. We wore a white jumpsuit and aviator sunglasses and had sideburns. He said he thought about using an Elvis song in his campaign and suggested the song “Are You Lonesome Tonight?” for his fiancé because she would be home alone while he was away campaigning.

He had legally changed his name from Joey Ashmore to Elvis D. Presley and had previously run unsuccessfully for land commissioner and as a write-in candidate for governor in 2010. His opponent for Congress in 2018 was Rick Crawford. When the voters were tallied, Elvis D. Presley got 4,581 votes which was 2.28% of the votes cast.

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## A Turkey Farmer Almost Defeated Bill Clinton for Governor

Another unusual candidate in Arkansas you may remember was Monroe Schwarzlose, a 78-year-old retired turkey farmer from Kingsland. He ran for governor of Arkansas in 1980 against the incumbent governor, Bill Clinton. Bill Clinton was a young ambitious politician running for his second two-year term as governor. It looked as though he wouldn't even have an opponent in the Democratic primary, but on the last filing date, Monroe Schwarzlose walked in wearing his overalls and paid his filing fee.

Schwarzlose traveled around the state in his rusty old pickup truck handing out recipes for home canning as campaign literature. He had been a candidate for governor in 1978, but didn't receive many votes. Bill Clinton's first term as governor was not without controversy. Many voters were upset with some of the things he had done such as raising the fees for vehicle licenses. Some accused him of being a draft-dodger during the Vietnam War. Another sore spot with the voters was his wife, Hillary, using her maiden name of Rodham as her legal name instead of taking Clinton's last name.

Once during the campaign, reporters were at Schwarzlose's home doing an interview with him when a copperhead snake came out of the woodpile. Schwarzlose promptly

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killed the snake while the cameras rolled. He told the reporters if the snake had been in Clinton's woodpile, Clinton would have called in experts to identify what species of snake it was and by the time he finished, it would have cost the taxpayers \$40,000 to \$60,000.

When the votes were tallied in the primary election, Monroe Schwarzlose received 31% of the vote against Bill Clinton which was a 30-fold increase in votes from his race two years earlier. He had only spent \$4000 on his campaign. Bill Clinton lost the general election that year to Republican Frank White. Monroe Schwarzlose died in 1990.

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### **They Voted for a Dead Man**

An unusual situation developed in the race for mayor of Lewisville, Arkansas in the last election. One of the candidates, Jules Meyer, died a few days before Election Day. It was too late to remove his name from the ballot and choose another candidate.

The incumbent mayor, a black man named Ethan Dunbar said he felt some people would vote for a dead man, so he kept campaigning just as though his opponent was still alive.

When the votes were counted, Ethan Dunbar got 62% of the vote and Jules Meyer, the dead man, got 38%. The actual vote was 235 for Dunbar and 183 for Meyer.

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### **Youngest Black Mayor in America**

Voters in the small town of Earle, Arkansas elected Jaylen Smith as mayor in the last election. Jaylen was 18 years old, and had just graduated from high school. He is taking online college classes while doing his job as mayor. He won the election by a vote of 235 to 183. He is currently living with his mother.

Earle is one of the poorest cities in America with about one third of the population living below the poverty level. The town of about 1800 people does not even have a grocery store. While most of his classmates left Earle after graduation, Jaylen decided to remain there and work to make the town a better place to live. He plans to work to get a grocery

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store in town, have a police force on duty 24 hours per day, and work to get jobs for the people. He said he was “a different kind of teenager”. When he was in high school, he even started wearing suits to class because “I knew if I wanted to get somewhere, I had to dress like I wanted to go somewhere”. He said his classmates often called him “Mr. President”. He has aspirations for higher political office including governor, U. S. senator, and president.

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**ROCKY HILL METHODIST CHURCH -- 1975**

### **Nevada County, Arkansas**

Alexander Fletcher McKelvy, my great-grandfather, donated two acres of land for this church in 1907. The church served the Rocky Hill community, also known as Goose Ankle, until sometime in the 1980s when the community had pretty much died out. The building remained unused for several years until 2008 when it was demolished—another Nevada County landmark gone.