

**Jerry McKelvy's**  
**WAY BACK WHEN**  
**June, 2024**

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**THIS OLD HOUSE**

Most everyone has fond (or not so fond) memories of the old house where they lived as children. I was born near the end of 1943. In July, 1947, my father purchased a farm near Bluff City from Mr. Berry Martin that included 86 acres of land and a very large old home. I have no idea when the house was built, but it must have been pretty old when we moved there when I was not quite four years old.

I found a deed that shows my grandparents, Charlie and Donie Henry, sold six acres surrounding the house to Mr. Berry Martin in 1913. I'm pretty sure the house was already there when Mr. Martin got the land. Mr. Martin purchased the rest of the farm (80 acres) from E. J. and Agnes Gulley in 1913.



**(front of house)**

I don't have a picture showing the complete house, but these will give you an idea of what it looked like.

The house was typical of old homes in that time period. It sat high off the ground and had porches on three sides. The rooms inside were large with high ceilings. The lower part of the roof had cypress shingles and the higher part was covered with tin. There was a fireplace in the large front room and cement steps leading up to the front porch. A porch swing was at one corner of the porch to catch breezes from two directions. Electric power lines had recently been run further into the rural areas, so we had electricity. I remember light bulbs hanging down by a cord from the high ceiling, and in the bedrooms, we had

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a string tied from the light to the head of the bed so we could pull the string and turn the light off after getting into bed.

Most folks in those days had outdoor toilets. Ours was behind the house near a chinaberry tree. There were the usual outbuildings found on a farm such as the smoke house, the well shed, a shed where a vehicle could be housed, and an old barn that was almost ready to fall down. Five large sycamore trees surrounded the old house. These provided much needed shade, but could be a nuisance. The leaves were huge when they fell in the fall of the year and small dead branches usually cluttered up the yard after a heavy rain or wind. Slabs of old bark also littered the yard. The house was situated on top of a sandy hill and we sometimes called the place Sycamore Hill.

We had a well for water, but it was only about 25 feet deep. The water was clear and tasted good, but it never produced enough water for the family. Even after we moved into our next house in the same location, we could only have enough water to barely cover the bottom of the bath tub to take a bath. We had to let the well recover before the next person took their bath. We made do with this limited water supply for many years. Finally, after I was grown and had a job, I hired a well digger to drill a new well about 25 feet from the old one. He drilled a 30-inch diameter well and went down to a depth of 38 feet. That well produced about 15 feet of water and gave us a good supply for our use and solved our water supply problem. The new well cost me \$300.

We did our laundry outside at first, heating water in a large wash pot. We had a wringer type washer we ran the clothes through and rinsed them in wash tubs filled with water. The clothes were hung on the clothes line to dry. There was a lot of ironing to do in those days and I even did a little of that. I remember sprinkling the clothes with water from an RC bottle with a sprinkler on it before ironing. At least we had an electric iron instead of the old flat irons our ancestors used before the days of electricity.

One bad memory I have of this old house was the time I was running barefoot on the long front porch and skidded to a stop. I ended up with a large wooden splinter in the bottom of my foot. The usual remedy at that time was to make a biscuit poultice to draw the splinter out. So, for about two weeks, I wore a rag filled with bread dough on my foot, but this was one time the old home remedy didn't work. I ended up having to be taken to

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the doctor in Prescott who removed the splinter. I remember he put it in a small plastic box and gave it to me so I could show it to my friends.

We had no air conditioning in those days, so we often sat out on the front porch or under one of the sycamore trees in the summertime to get a little breeze. I don't remember us staying up very late at night. There was work to do on a farm and we needed our rest. The high ceilings seemed to make the bedrooms seem cooler at night.

I have a few more stray memories from those early years in this old house, but they are not strong enough for me to write about. I remember playing with some of my toys while living there such as Tinkertoys, an erector set, and a small toy car I got for Christmas one year. I wish I had kept some of my old toys. I remember playing with the dogs in the front yard and mowing the large yard with one of those old push-type mowers. I have a faint memory of a hobo stopping at our house one day asking for food. My mother brought some food out to the porch for him to eat.

We lived in this old house for nine years until I was 13 years old. It was here that I rode around the yard on my tricycle and later on a brand-new bicycle. I remember it was a very nice bicycle and probably cost a lot of money at the time. I had to use a bale of hay to help me get on it when I was first learning how to ride it. Later on, I had a siren which mounted on the frame near the front tire so that when I pulled a chain, it would make the sound of a siren as it rubbed on the spinning front tire. I enjoyed coming down the steep hill near our house with my siren blaring. The road by our house was gravel at the time and there was not much traffic to worry about.

We were also in this house when we got our first TV. That must have been about 1953. It was a major decision back then to spend money on such things as a TV, but other folks were getting them and we thought we needed one also. I remember watching the show Amos and Andy in that house. Since our house was on a high hill, we got pretty good reception on one or two channels, but sometimes someone had to go out and turn the antenna to get a better picture. Wrestling matches on TV were very popular back then (mid-1950s) with wrestlers with stage names such as Gorgeous George, The Crusher, or The Bruiser. They usually paired up an ugly brute of a wrestler with a nice

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clean-cut looking wrestler and we always rooted for the clean-cut guy. The women's wrestling matches were also popular. Some of those women wrestlers were pretty tough.

As I said, this was my home for nine years of my life. There were some good times and some bad times. In 1955, my dad had a job at the naval ammunition depot in Camden (NAD) and was making better money, so a decision was made to build us a new home. We tore the old house down and lived in the outbuildings for several months while we constructed a new home at the same location using some of the lumber from the old house for the interior walls of the new house. Living in the outbuildings during the winter of 1955-1956 was another interesting experience. Finally, the new house was partially completed so that we could move in, and for the first time in my life, we had a complete bathroom inside the house. We were moving up in the world. I was a teenager by that time and we were being exposed to such things as transistor radios, rock and roll music, and all kinds of good shows on TV to watch. It was an exciting time to be alive in the mid to late 1950s.

While I have some fond memories of this old house, I wonder about those who lived there before us. I'm sure Mr. Berry and Mrs. Fannie Martin put a lot of hard work into their farm when they owned it and raised their family there. They married in 1904 and had four children (Leroy, Marie, Myrtle, and Hardwick). Mr. Martin had a large orchard behind the house which produced several varieties of apples and peaches. Their daughter, Marie, married my uncle, Lee Roy McKelvy. I wish I had asked her about her memories of this old house while she was living, but as usually happens, we only get interested in such things as we get older and those who had the answers are no longer with us.

### Some old pictures from long ago



**James Berry Martin and Mary Frances "Fannie" Hardwick Martin (previous owners of the house)**



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Old barn on the property when we moved there in 1947



Me with toy—1948



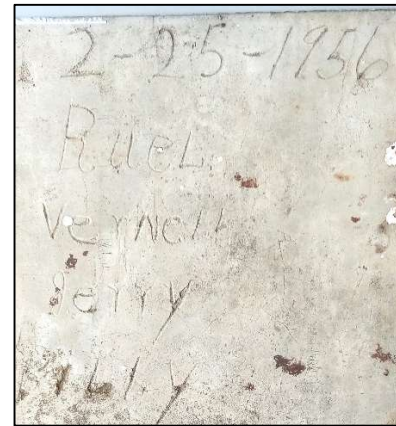
Me with my dog, Smokey  
1949



Me on my tricycle with  
Margie Kirk—1949



Our new home—completed 1956



Our names and date written in  
concrete on front porch



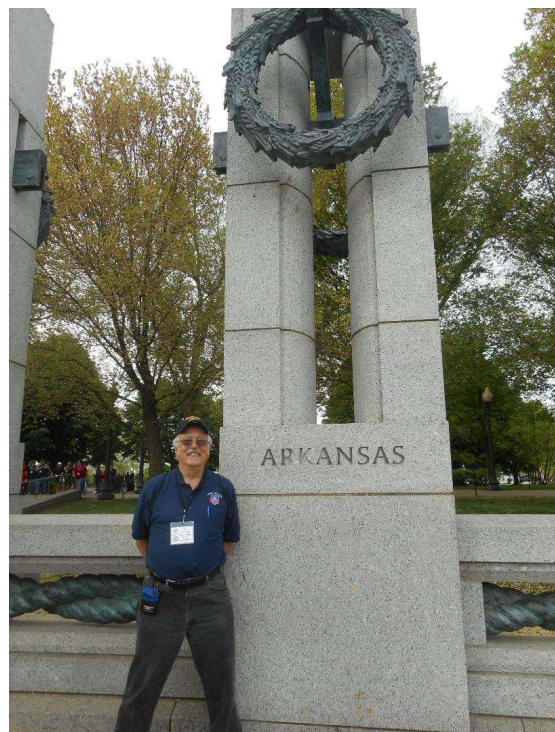
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## Flag Day in Washington, D.C. – by Don Mathis

Flag Day, June 14, commemorates the date in 1777 when the United States approved the design for its first national flag. What better way to celebrate than with a visit to Washington, D.C.

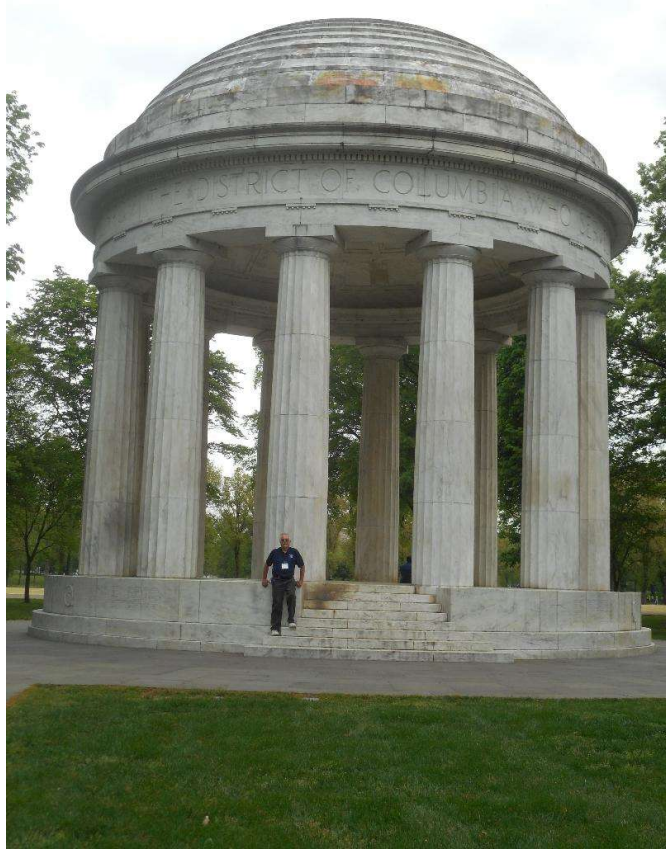


A cigar-chomping character, dressed up like a five-star general, greets visitors to the WWII Memorial. The day of my visit, an Honor Guard composed of service men and women from the five branches of military showed respect for the symbols of our country.



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During WWII, my dad (Daniel H. Mathis, from Fordyce) was a sailor in the Pacific and my step-father (G.F. Gillespie, of Camden) was a GI in Germany. I carried a dozen American banners in my backpack – and I left a flag for my fathers.



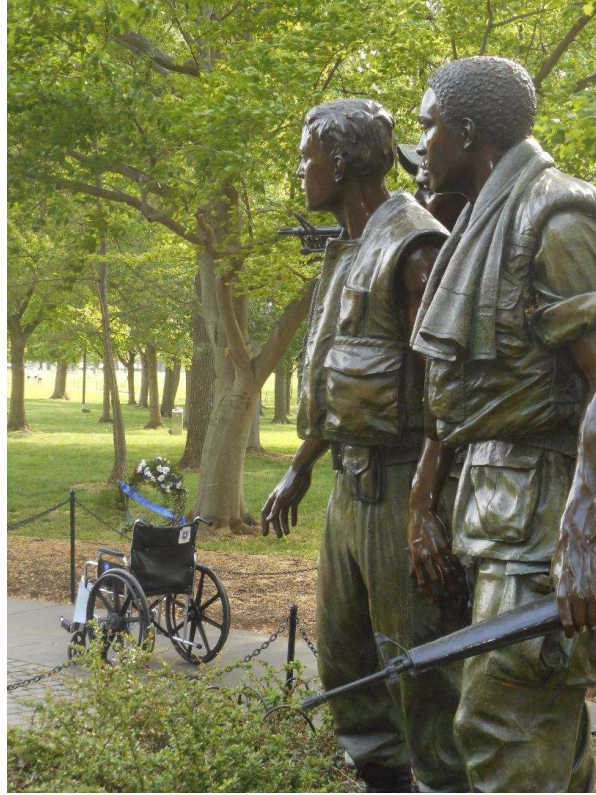
The names of the men and women from the District of Columbia who gave their lives in the First World War are inscribed in an open-air Doric structure near the Reflecting Pool. The grandfather of my guide served in the Great War for Civilization. I left a flag for his service.





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One summer morning 60 years ago, my grandmother (Rose Walker, of Camden) rustled me from sleep. “Son, wake up,” she said, “We’re at war.” I left a flag for those early casualties at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.



A nearby statue depicts three American servicemen and the things they carried. An empty wheelchair sat next to the sculpture – a reminder that some veterans came home in a wheelchair; some didn’t come home at all.

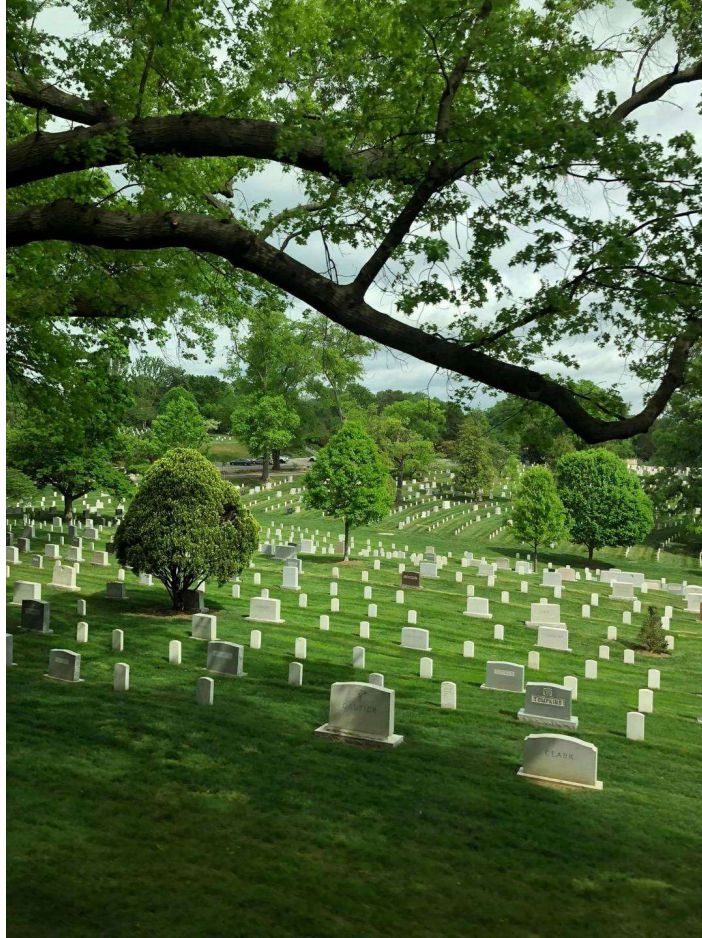




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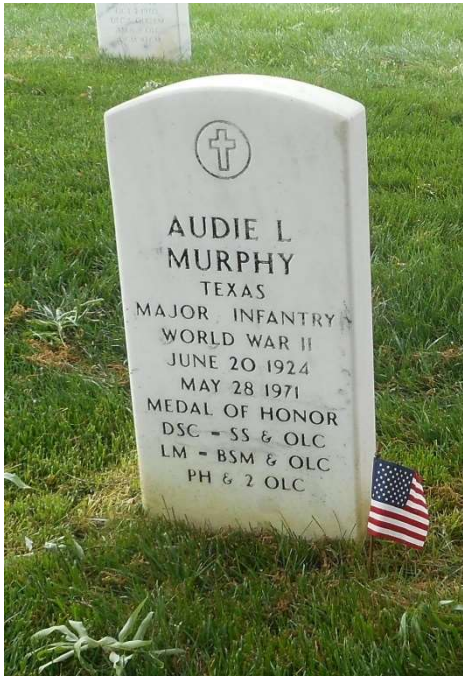
2023 was the 70th anniversary of the end of the Korean War. D.C.'s streets were festooned with the flag of South Korea to welcome President Yoon of the Republic of Korea. He and President Biden left a wreath at the Korean War Veterans Memorial a few days after my visit.

1954 is the first memory I have of my dad when he returned to his two-year-old son after the war in Korea. I left another flag for my father.



Arlington National Cemetery is a place of solemn beauty, with headstone after headstone in a row. It is a peaceful place befitting those who have seen the horrors of war. The sound of a flag ruffling in the breeze causes the heart to beat a little faster.

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While at Arlington, I left a flag for an Army major and a Navy captain. The service I receive at the Audie L. Murphy Memorial Veterans' Hospital in San Antonio merited a memorial for its namesake. And the father of my best friend is buried nearby; so, I left a Salute to Captain Arellano.

The Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph of the flag rising over Iwo Jima was the model for the US Marine Corps War Memorial. My guide brought to my attention an optical illusion. The flag at the Marine Corps Memorial seems to rise as you drive around it. There is no such thing as an ex-Marine. I left a flag for those who served.





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The Air Force Memorial honors the service and heritage of the men and women of military aviation. It's located near a new section of Arlington National Cemetery. I left a flag for my mother's brothers. Staff Sargent Hollis Walker and Lt. Col. Dick Walker (both from Arkansas) served in the Air Force in WWII and Korea. Salute to my uncles!



The fountain at the United States Navy Memorial is filled annually with waters from the seven seas. After touching the waters of the world, I left a flag for my father's service in the Pacific during WWII.

One can celebrate the flag by displaying it at home or work. We can honor the meaning of Flag Day by remembering those who served under it. Or we can bring glory to Old Glory by visiting a history museum or memorial. And in Washington, D.C., there are many memorials to aid our memory.