

Jerry McKelvy's
WAY BACK WHEN
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MEMORIES FROM CHILDHOOD

I once posted on my Facebook page a list of some things I remembered from my childhood and received many comments from my Facebook friends on the subject. Here is my list followed by their comments:

Looking for doodlebugs
Walking on tom walkers
Girls playing hopscotch
Shooting marbles
Girls cutting out paper dolls from the Sears catalog
Making homemade ice cream in a syrup bucket in a tub of ice
Catching fire flies in a jar

78 rpm records and transistor radios
Trips to the outhouse
An icebox and the ice peddler
Drinking well water from a dipper
Cap pistols and candy cigarettes
Making lye soap
Eating bull nettle kernels
Sleeping on a cot on the porch on hot summer nights



A favorite childhood pastime—trying to coax a doodlebug from his home in the sand by stirring the hole with a twig while saying “Doodle bug, doodle bug, come out of your hole. Your house is on fire” or something similar.



Wash pots were used for doing laundry, making lye soap, making hominy, and any other chore where hot water was needed.

Memories from Facebook friends—You may have to explain these to the young folks.

1. Wringer washing machine –Mary
2. Boiling white clothes with a “stick of blueing” outside in a wash pot with a fire underneath, then transferring to a wash tub. Afterwards, scrubbing on a rub board! This was before we got a wringer washing machine – Nelda

WAY BACK WHEN

3. I didn't make ice cream in a bucket, but did all the other things. LOVE memories of the past.—Christi

4. Telephone party lines – Linda

5. No A/C, milking the cow, RC and moon pies – Anita

6. Putting a pack of Tom's peanuts in a bottle of Coke.

7. Hog killing – James

8. Homecoming at the church with dinner on the ground – Ginger

9. Playing jacks, boys playing mumblety-peg, 5 cent cokes, town on Saturday. Us oldies could go on all day long. – Anita

10. Listening to the "Louisiana Hayride" on a battery powered radio!! –John

11. The attic fan. Loved taking an afternoon nap with the attic fan going – Debbie

12. Cooking and warming on wood stove, cutting wood with cross-cut saw, carting water to water the cow, gasoline 23 cents a gallon, coal oil five cents; no electricity – Vernon

13. Rendering out fat for lard and making cracklings, smoking hams and bacon in smoke house, flying jennies, plowing with the mule, hauling hay using pitch fork and wagon and throwing it in the barn loft, killing and cleaning your own chickens for Sunday dinner, covering food with a bed sheet and leaving til supper, going barefoot all summer long, no heat in the house at night, brrrr – Kay

14. Making sausage, milking a cow and churning butter --- Sally



15. Digging potatoes, sitting on the front porch, playing with neighbor's kids, digging fish bait, fishing with a cane pole, going barefoot, outhouse was out back, we had running water when we ran to the well and drew the water, shelling a ton of peas and beans, going to church on Sunday (and there were no cell phones), you better be paying attention to what the preacher was saying. As limited as things were back then, I sure wish they now would be like they were back then. – Betty

16. Dad ran a YMCA camp each summer until I was 11, and we would take Ivory soap (because it floats) down to the swimming creek and take baths, would do the same thing when camping at the lake – ?????



WAY BACK WHEN



17. Walking the ditches to find enough bottles to go to the store and buy Pop Cola. A 7 or 13 under the cork on the lid would get you a free one. – Linda

18. Running behind the mosquito fogger on summer nights, swimming in Cold Run Creek, Sunday dinners at Grandma's, hanging out the laundry on a clothesline, picking peas and trying to avoid the wasps, the taste of a tomato right off the vine, walking behind Daddy as he mowed with a push mower and the smell of freshly mown grass, my Daddy's deep, boisterous laugh, never running in church, the mill whistle blowing at noon (if it blew at other times, there was an accident and someone was hurt), the sound of baseball cards pinned to bicycle tires, climbing trees to watch the Ferris wheel go around at the fairgrounds, the smell of firecrackers. I could go on and on. What a wonderful time and place to grow up. – Janette

19. Great memories everyone! Thanks to all and to you, Janette, for those Milltown memories. Milltown was a big part of my growing up years at my grandparent's house just up the street from you. – Jim

20. I remember looking for doodlebugs. I don't think I've ever heard anyone else speak of doing that. Seems there was a little song you'd sing to call them up and sort of stir a little circle in the soil. Was that how you remember? I also remember using a barrel to walk/roll up and down our driveway. I lived in the country and we had a long driveway which made it a challenge. I loved to pick up pecans at my grandparent's orchard. I loved to go to my cousin's and slide on a sack down the embankment into the ditch, all the fun things we created to do for fun, digging sweet potatoes, red potatoes, and peanuts. Living on the farm and off the farm made great memories. – Janis

21. My brother and I would tie bacon on a string and catch crawdads, collecting frog eggs in a jar, swatting white-head bumblebees at the old barn – Kathy

22. I fondly recall picking big juicy dewberries that grew wild in the ditches along our gravel road, then washing all the grit off them, mashing them into a pulp with a fork, and adding a bit of milk to make a tasty treat. Did anybody else do this? – Cathy

23. Okay, y'all are making this old girl homesick for a time that we can't go back to. Oh, how blessed we were! – Sandra

24. Bonita and I used to swat at dragon flies (we called them snake doctors). We used cane poles, old brooms, and even old tennis racquets. There would be a lot of them swarming around late in the afternoon! - Linda

25. Making cracklins in the wash pot, making lye soap in the wash pot, battling block and stick used to beat dirty clothes, Monday morning wash day using three tubs, many more – Loy

WAY BACK WHEN

The April Fool – by Don Mathis

The dumbest thing I ever did
was not some stunt when I was a kid.



No, I was a completely grown elder,
one who should have known better.



It started (and ended) the month before May
with thunder and rain lasting all day.



The windstorm came and broke my tree
and left the clean-up for little old me.



It's not a duty that I really love,
but I got out my old saw and work glove



and began cutting up chunks of wood.
I thought I could handle it, I could.



I drug a 14-foot branch to the street.
I would not give up or admit defeat.



It was hard work, and I worked like a dog,
cutting up the tree, log by log.



I should have drunk more water,
I really should have, I really ought'er.



It would prevent stroke or dehydration.
But I was feeling exhilaration.



I worked up a sweat in my backyard.
I kept on working, working really hard.



I should have taken a break from work
instead of toiling on like a jerk.



The 13th log I carried did the trick.
I didn't know I worked myself sick.



In my exhaustion, I slipped and fell,
and hit the ground hard; hurt like hell.



But that was not the worst of it.
The branch hit my head and it split.



I laid on the ground, my head all dizzy.
I realized I shouldn't have been so busy.



Stars in the daytime, isn't that odd?
What's this red stuff, looks like blood.



My heart pumped wildly in my chest
and I thought I'd better give it a rest.



But my head kept spinning all around
and my heartbeat made a horrible sound.



And so I laid right there in my yard and cried
at the dumb thing I did. Then I died.



WAY BACK WHEN

THE PHONE BOYCOTT

Prescott, Arkansas was still a growing town in 1914 with a population of about 2700 people. Telephone service was still in its infancy. The city only had about 300 telephones in 1914. Southwestern Bell Telephone Co. was the provider of phone service to the city. The cost of phone service at that time was \$2.50 per month for businesses and \$1.50 per month for residential customers.

In May of 1914, the phone company announced that telephone rates would increase on June 1 by fifty cents per month. Customers felt this increase was not justified. Meetings were called at the court house to discuss the situation. They organized a Business Man's League. A resolution was passed to notify the phone company that unless the phone rates remained the same, they would organize a new phone company. About 180 of the 300 phone customers notified the company that they wanted the phones removed from their homes and businesses. The newspaper printed a list of names of all those who agreed to give up their phone service rather than pay the increased phone rates.

Several meetings were held with a representative of an independent phone company who said they would be willing to set up a new phone company for Prescott. They offered stock for sale for the new phone company and promised to pay dividends to those who invested in the new company.

When the phone company saw that residents were serious about starting a new telephone company, they agreed on June 17 to keep the phone rates the same. The people had won their battle with the phone company and the Prescott phone boycott ended. It was reported that only two business houses in Prescott did not have their phone disconnected. The rest had been without telephone service since June 1.

GONE TO THE BLUFF

My grandpa "Gee" McKelvy lived in the Goose Ankle community of Nevada County about four miles southwest of Bluff City. I never did learn how he got his

WAY BACK WHEN

nickname since his real name was James Columbus. I always figured it probably had something to do with the commands farmers gave to their horses like “gee” and “haw”. That is one of the many things I forgot to ask him while he was alive. I am sure there is a good story behind how he got the nickname.

Grandpa drove an old green International pickup in those days. These were known as tough trucks, more suited for farm use than for pleasure driving. He parked it in a shed across the road from the house which my grandmother always called the “car shed”, even though it was a truck--not a car. Their first vehicle was a car so I think that is why she called it the car shed.

The shed was really a barn with a hallway and open on each end. Grandpa parked his truck in the hallway which was more convenient because he could drive in one end and drive out the other. I have learned over the years that it is always best to drive forward instead of backing up. There is less chance of a mishap.

Grandpa’s truck (I forget what year model it was) had the starter in the floor next to the foot-feed. When was the last time your heard of a foot-feed? You had to sort of turn your foot sideways so you could mash the starter while giving it a little gas with the foot-feed while adjusting the choke to get the thing started. When it finally started, there was usually a big puff of black smoke from the tailpipe. I don’t remember ever having a mosquito problem around Grandpa’s house.

I don’t remember Grandpa ever going on a long trip in his old pickup truck. He probably drove the truck to Prescott in his younger days, but as he got older, he avoided big cities like Prescott. Bluff City had the closest store in those days. I have heard him say “I’ve got to go to the Bluff and get some nails” or something like that.

Grandpa died in 1959 when I was about sixteen years old. I can’t remember what happened to his old International pickup.

I live about 25 miles from Bluff City and still go there several times each week. I use the same expression my grandpa used and tell my wife when I leave that “I’m going to the Bluff”.