

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

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THAT'S THE WAY IT WAS!

Back in 1996, I interviewed some of our older citizens for a project I was working on. I asked them questions about what life was like back when they were growing up in the area around Bluff City, Arkansas during the 1920's and 1930's. Those interviewed were:

Mr. Harland McKelvy—son of Orland and Ollie Turner McKelvy. He grew up in the Rocky Hill community about four miles southwest of Bluff City. Most of his adult life was spent in Washington and Arizona, but he was living at Hope when I interviewed him. He was killed in an automobile accident in 1999 and is buried in Ebenezer Cemetery.

Mrs. Aline Claus—daughter of Orland and Ollie Turner McKelvy. She has spent all of her life in Nevada County. At the time of the interview, she was living near Bodcaw and is presently in a nursing home.

Mr. Hartwell Irvin—son of Willie and Minnie Ridling Irvin. He grew up about four miles from Bluff City. His adult life was spent in Camden. He passed away in 2001 and is buried in Ebenezer Cemetery.

Mr. Claudis Nelson—son of J. Frank and Verna Nelson. He also grew up about four miles from Bluff City and has spent his entire life in Nevada County except for time in military.

Mrs. Oleta Nelson—daughter of Elijah and Evalina Barlow and wife of Mr. Claudis Nelson. She grew up in the same area as Mr. Nelson.

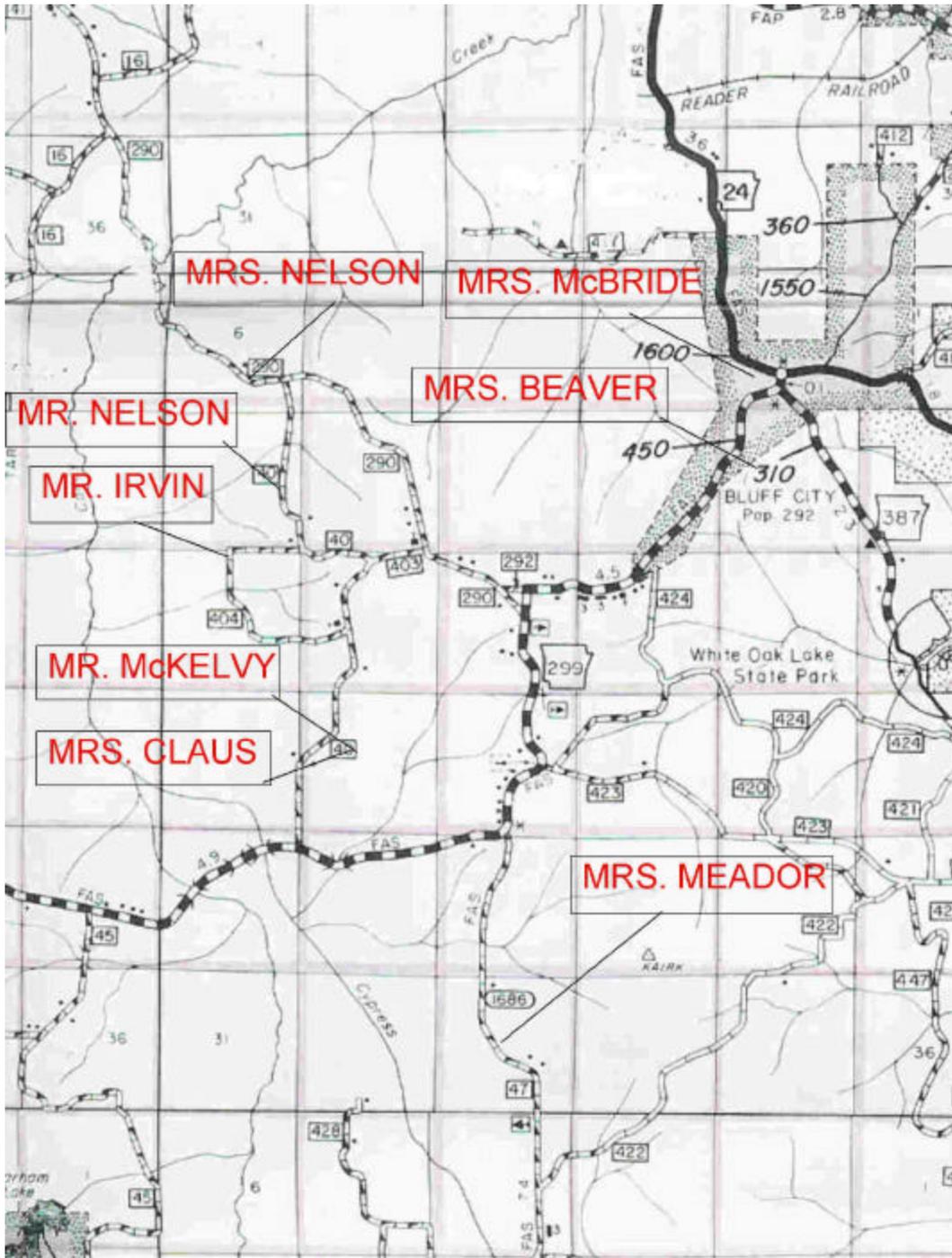
Mrs. Elloene McBride—daughter of William and Katie Moore. She grew up in Bluff City, taught school for many years, and after retirement moved back to her old home place.

Mrs. Elsie Beaver—daughter of Walter and Julia Moore. She grew up in Bluff City and taught school at Gum Grove and Lackland until she was forced to quit to take care of her ailing mother. Most of her married life was spent in Chidester, but after her husband died, she moved back to Bluff City. She passed away in 1998 and is buried in Bluff City Cemetery.

Mrs. Goldie Meador—daughter of John C. and Edna Barksdale. She grew up a few miles south of Bluff City near Kirk's Chapel. After she married, she lived in Bluff City. She passed away in 1997 and is buried in Bluff City Cemetery.

On the next page is a map showing the location of the home places of each of these people. Each square on the map is one mile square, so you can see that only a few miles separated them when they were growing up even though they attended different schools. The map is a modern day map, but in the 1920's and 1930's, none of these roads were paved and the area was much more populated at that time than it is today. Farming was the main occupation in those days and most families had several children. These folks experienced first hand what living through The Great Depression was actually like.

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1. What did children do for amusement when you were growing up?

---Mr. Irvin-- we had parties about every two weeks, Christian Endeavor at Rocky Hill, baseball, pitched horseshoes and dollars, and had ice cream suppers (made in washtub in syrup buckets).

---Mr. Nelson--we rolled iron hubs with a stick, rode calves, and climbed sawdust piles.

---Mrs. Beaver--played baseball and basketball

---Mrs. Claus--swung on vines over ravines, climbed trees and rode down, swung on a split

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pole with a board on the bottom

---Mr. McKelvy--played ball

---Mrs. Meador—played hop-scotch; jumped rope, swung from a vine; played tag and “ring around the rosie”

---Mrs. McBride--made and played in play houses, played hide and seek, hop scotch, town ball, and “Ain’t Nobody Out Tonight”

2. Who was the doctor for your family?

---Mr. McKelvy-- Dr. E. E. Shell

---Mrs. Claus--Dr. Shell, Dr. Tompkins, and Dr. Whaley

---Mr. and Mrs. Nelson--Dr. Shell, Dr. Tompkins, and Dr. Whaley

---Mr. Irvin--Dr. Tompkins and Dr. Shell

---Mrs. McBride--Dr. Edgar Whaley

3. How far did you have to walk to school or did you ride a bus?

---Mr. Irvin--walked one and a half miles

---Mrs. Beaver--walked one mile

---Mrs. McBride--walked about one half mile

---Mrs. Claus--walked one and a half miles for first six grades and then rode bus to Bluff City

---Mrs. Meador—went to school at Ebenezer and Gum Grove

---Mr. McKelvy--walked one and a half miles to Gum Grove

4. What was your father’s occupation?

All said their fathers were farmers with cotton being the main cash crop.

5. Who were your closest neighbors?

---Mr. McKelvy--the Parkers

---Mrs. Claus--my grandmother, Betty McKelvy and girls, Esther, Mattie, and Beulah. Uncle Gee McKelvy was less than one half mile away.

---Mrs. Beaver--Walter Carter

---Mr. Nelson-- Henry Irvin

---Mrs. Meador-- Jeff Sarrett; the Kirks, the Haddox family

---Mrs. Nelson--Luke Meador

---Mrs. McBride--the Tom Walker family, Andy Meador family, Con Harvey family

6. Where was the nearest store when you were a kid?

---Mr. Irvin-- John Griffith’s and Henry Irvin’s

---Mrs. Meador--Byrd’s store; Harvey’s store; the barber shop

---Mr. Nelson-- the Irvin’s had a store in their house on the Griffith place

---Mrs. Beaver--Bluff City

---Mrs. Claus--The Hall store about 1/2 mile from home. Bluff City was five or six miles

---Mr. McKelvy--Henry Irvin’s about 1 1/2 miles from home

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7. Describe your first car.

- Mrs. McBride--Didn't have one. Earliest mode of transportation we had was a hack.
- Mr. McKelvy--a 34 Chevrolet Knee Action
- Mrs. Claus--Didn't have one until I married
- Mrs. Beaver--A truck without a cab
- Mr. Nelson-- A 32 Ford
- Mr. Irvin-- A 1929 Model A

8. How often did you go to town? Where?

- Mr. Irvin--About every two months, we went to Prescott by wagon. It was four hours each way. My father would put a rock in the fireplace at night and would put it on the wagon to keep our feet warm.
- Mrs. Nelson-- Went to Prescott once to the doctor
- Mrs. Claus--My dad went to town in the spring and fall. We were fortunate if we went once a year. I remember one trip, he brought home four yo-yos. They cost 25 cents each, but we were glad to get them.
- Mrs. Meador-- Not until I was grown
- Mrs. Beaver--We went to Prescott one or two times a year. We would usually catch a ride with someone else
- Mr. McKelvy-- Went to Prescott two or three times a year
- Mrs. McBride--Went to Prescott once every two or three months at the most

9. About what year did you get electricity?

- Mrs. McBride--Possibly in late 30's or early 40's
- Mr. McKelvy-- 1945
- Mrs. Claus--About 1946
- Mr. Nelson-- Late 1940's or early 1950's
- Mrs. Nelson--Late 1940's
- Mr. Irvin-- About 1950

10. What do you think was the greatest invention of your lifetime?

- Mr. Irvin--Automobile
- Mrs. Claus--Electricity, heating and cooling
- Mrs. McBride--Electric clothes washer and dish washer

11. Do you remember any fads (hairstyles and clothing styles) that your parents complained about?

- Mrs. McBride-- Mother objected to the older daughters getting their long hair cut. Some slipped off from school and got their hair cut. Dresses were too short if they were not as long as half way between the knee and ankle.
- Mrs. Claus--Dresses were about like now--long for a while, then up to the knee and above.
- Mr. Nelson--Skull caps (stockings worn on the head)

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---Mr. Irvin--Boys wore long hair combed straight back, slicked down with grease. They wore cut off knit stockings called skull caps to help train their hair.

12. What were some of the home remedies you remember your family using for various illnesses?

---Mr. Irvin-- Paste from wet baking soda for poison ivy; Clay or biscuit poultice with a little vinegar for splinters, etc.; Vick's salve on a hot cloth for colds. The worst illnesses were polio, flu, and pneumonia.

---Mrs. Nelson--Vick's salve and senna tea

---Mrs. Meador-- Coal oil or turpentine; cake of tallow on cloth; Black Draught; castor oil, senna tea, catnip

---Mrs. Claus--A bar of tallow (beef fat). Rub bottom of feet and bake before open fire; A flannel cloth with turpentine and Vick's salve put on your chest an night for colds; We grew senna. You used the leaves to make a tea to drink for a laxative. If you have never had Black Draught, you missed something. I hated it. If I had a headache, my dad went for the Black Draught, so I didn't complain if I could help it.

---Mrs. Beaver--The most serious illnesses were flu, pneumonia, malaria, and polio. I don't remember anyone with polio.

---Mr. McKelvy--Black Draught and turpentine

---Mrs. McBride--Vick's salve on hot cloth, heated, and put around the neck for sore throat; having to take Epsom salts

13. What do you remember most about the Depression days of the 1930's?

---Mrs. McBride--Men wearing shirts made by their wives or mothers. They were made from feed sacks. Having one "Sunday" dress and one "every day" dress.

---Mrs. Beaver-- Hard work

---Mrs. Claus--We didn't have much, but no one else did. We were never hungry. A glass or bowl of milk and cornbread was supper for most families.

---Mr. Irvin-- Few jobs. We worked for 50 cents a day. The only thing bought at the store was sugar, coffee, salt, flour, and hoop cheese.

14. Which of these did your family have when you were a teenager--car, truck, battery radio, sorghum mill, grist mill, ice box, well, electricity, indoor plumbing?

---Mrs. Nelson--a battery radio; an ice box later, but used well at first

---Mrs. McBride--battery radio, ice box. We got water from a spring.

---Mr. Nelson--battery radio; an ice box later. Hoyt and Hambric Cummings delivered the ice.

---Mr. McKelvy--a well

---Mrs. Meador--an ice box

---Mrs. Beaver--car, truck, battery radio, ice box, but not at first. We let stuff down in the well.

---Mrs. Claus--battery radio, a well

---Mr. Irvin--a car; we let stuff down in the well to keep it cold

15. Which of these activities do you remember doing as a teenager--churning butter,

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cutting firewood, picking peas/beans, plowing with horse or mule, chopping cotton, sewing, washing clothes, making hominy, quilting, feeding the animals, cutting hay? Anything else?

---Mr. Irvin--All of them. We also made lye soap

---Mrs. Claus--all except cutting hay. I remember baling hay. We punched wire through to be tied with hay wire.

---Mrs. Beaver--I did all but cutting firewood, feeding the animals, and cutting hay. We made soap. Monday was wash day. We washed at the spring with a wash pot and a rub-board.

---Mrs. Meador--churning butter, chopping cotton, making hominy, quilting, making lye soap. Thursday was our wash day.

---Mr. McKelvy--All except sewing, washing clothes, and quilting. We went to school six days a week from 8 a.m. to 4 p. m. five or six months of the year.

---Mr. Nelson-- Just about all of them. We also made lye soap. Thursday was our wash day.

15. Do you remember any old sayings or words of advice your parents or grandparents always used?

Mrs. Meador-- The Golden Rule

Mr. Irvin-- "A stitch in time saves nine."

Mrs. Claus--My dad always said when you go to a party or something, "Pretty is as pretty does. You are not pretty, but act pretty. Behave yourself."

16. Do you remember any bad crimes in those days?

---Mr. Irvin, Mr. Nelson, Mrs. Nelson, Mrs. Meador—all remembered the killing of Mildred Jobe near Morris as the worst thing they ever heard about. The girl was killed by a shotgun blast to her abdomen while trying to stop John Daniels from hurting her father. John Jobe, a deputy, had arrested John Daniels' son a few days before and had confiscated his gun. Daniels hitched a ride to Jobe's farm armed with the shotgun, found Jobe plowing in the field, and things got out of hand. Mildred stepped between them and was shot by Daniels.

--- Mrs. Meador remembered someone caught smoking on the Nazarene church grounds.

I also asked these folks about their recollections of these communities and landmarks in the eastern part of Nevada County around where they grew up. This is what they told me. Keep in mind that these people are not all the same age, so their memories of these places may be different.

BLUFF CITY

---Mrs. Meador--The cotton gin, Byrd's store, Upton's store, the barber shop, Harvey's gristmill, the post office (Mr. Black was postmaster), the drug store in front of Byrd's store, Dr. Whaley's office, the Masonic Lodge, the Methodist church near the lodge, the Baptist Church, the Church of Christ, the school burning in 1945.

---Mrs. Beaver--Harvey's store, Black's store on the corner, Byrd's store, the baptismal pool near the spring behind the church

---Mrs. Claus--where I went to school and graduated in 1935

---Mr. Irvin--Harvey's store on the corner facing Hwy. 299, Pat Carter's store, Byrd's store

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next to where Ellis Johnson lived, the cotton gin just past Jeff Purifoy's, a school house that burned, the post office in front of Luke Carter's house which was where Ellis Johnson lived (he had a live monkey the kids picked at), two doctors, Dr. Thompson or Tompkins where Millard Cummings lived and Dr. Whaley where Allen's store is now, the grist mill about where Jones station was. Hwy. 24 was gravel. A nine passenger bus ran from Prescott to Camden twice each day. A Greyhound bus came through once each week.

---Mrs. McBride-- There was a blacksmith shop located between where Laverne Green and Mary Ann Starnes homes are now. Mr. Monroe Harvey had a store near the intersection of what is now Hwy. 24 (a dirt road then) and Hwy. 387. He and his wife, Martha lived across the road from the store. Con and Olive Harvey lived across the road (now Hwy. 24). The two story schoolhouse had a bell tower. On Halloween, older boys would go there at midnight and ring the bell--and then turn over the outdoor toilets. At school a bucket of water with a dipper was in the back of the room. We made paper cups to drink from.

THEO

---Mr. Irvin--A post office in the store, a church and a school, Dr. Shell was the doctor there, but later moved to Cale

---Mrs. McBride-- The only time I saw Theo was when Clyde Moore, who drove the school bus, let me go on his route once. There I saw a store/post office in the same building, and I think there were two dwelling houses, one in which the Creech family lived; the other in which the Benton's lived. Mrs. Benton was the daughter or sister of Mr. Creech.

---Mrs. Claus--This was one of the schools that consolidated with Bluff City, where the Knights, Creech's, Moody's and others lived.

---Mrs. Meador--A church, post office, small store, school which consolidated with Bluff City in about 1925 or 1930.

GUM GROVE

---Mrs. Meador--A two room school with grades one through five in one room; a grist mill at the Marion Plyler place

---Mrs. Claus--where I went to school for the first six years--a two room school

---Mrs. McBride--I remember the old school house with two rooms. Later, the church met there.

---Mr. Irvin--A two room school where the deer camp is now. It consolidated with Bluff City in 1929. Marion Plyler had a store 1/4 mile west of Gum Grove. A hot item was prepared mustard. Kids would eat the mustard on biscuits. He also sold tobacco, baking powder, etc. Herman McKelvy remembers a gas pump there.

---Mr. Nelson--A two room school; Plyler's store and grist mill.

ROCKY HILL (GOOSE ANKLE)

---Mr. Irvin--The present church was the original, but the siding was added on later. The land for the church was given by A. F. McKelvy in 1907 (two acres). It was a Methodist church.

---Mrs. Claus--I was born about 1/4 mile southeast of the church. All the McKelvys lived in that area. My grandfather gave two acres for the Methodist church.

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DILL'S MILL

---Mrs. Claus-- A spoke mill that made wooden spokes for car wheels. I have one of the spokes. My aunts used it like a potato masher.

---Mr. Irvin--It was a spoke mill. The railroad was being built about 1923. I remember peddling watermelons to the workers. It was an old logging road. They used a steam operated loader on tracks to load the logs onto flat cars to haul to Johnson Lumber Co. in Reader. They moved the tracks in sections for the loader to move on the way the Egyptians built the pyramids.

LACKLAND SPRINGS

---Mr. Irvin--A school and post office. There were seven springs-each with a different type water. I remember a whiskey still there that they raided one night. Two or three people were killed. We could hear the shots from our place.

---Mrs. Claus--At one time it was said there were seven springs there. They tried to make it into a park. Each spring was to have a different mineral taste to the water. They tried to make a resort there. I knew of two springs. One was kept active for a while. I went there for a gathering-possibly a fox hunt. I don't think there are any signs of it there now.



DO YOU RECOGNIZE THIS COUPLE?

Here is another unidentified picture. The only thing written on the back was "Bluff City, Ark.", so I assume this is possibly a Bluff City couple. It could be a wedding picture. They are very well dressed and the frame around the picture is very decorative.

If you can identify this couple, let me know.