

Jerry McKeiv's
SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

Vol. 12 – No. 2

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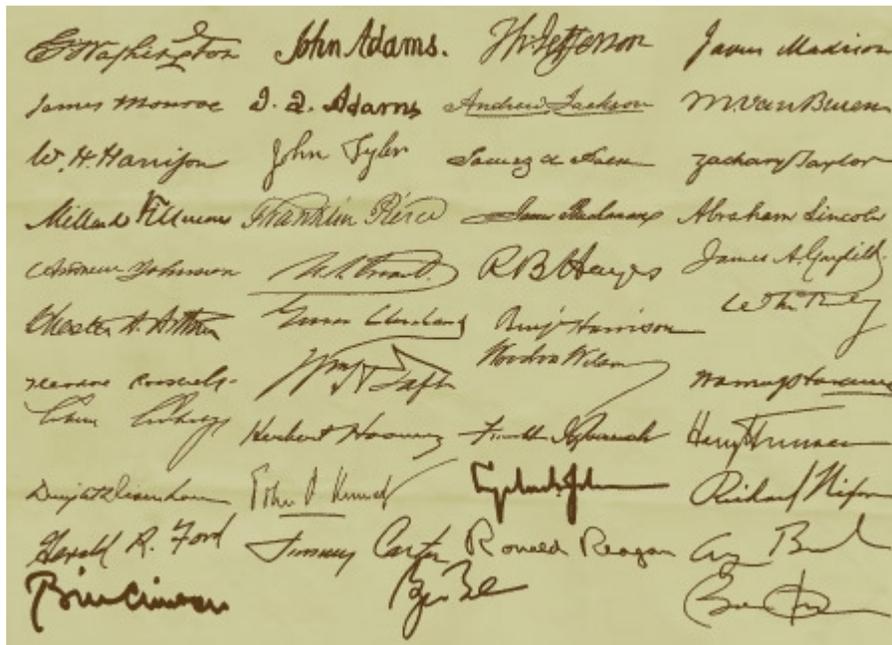
February, 2012

SHOULD CURSIVE WRITING CONTINUE TO BE TAUGHT IN SCHOOLS?

There is a big debate going on in the country right now about whether schools should continue to teach kids cursive writing like we all learned when we were in school. Some say that it is not needed these days and is a waste of time. Others say it should be part of a child's education to help them connect with past history and help them understand legal documents, etc.

Penmanship varies widely. Some of the most intelligent people have very poor penmanship. Just try reading a prescription written by a doctor. Even the pharmacists sometimes complain that they can't read them. The days of written prescriptions are just about a thing of the past. Most doctors these days just send the prescription to the pharmacy by computer.

Even some of our presidents have signatures almost impossible to read. Just check the list below. I would have to give the best penmanship award to John Adams and it would be hard to choose which one would win the award for worst penmanship. It looks like some of our more recent presidents have some of the worst penmanship.



I wonder if left-handed people write better than right-handed people. There have been eight presidents who were left-handed—James Garfield, Herbert Hoover, Harry Truman, Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and Barak Obama. You can check the chart and make your own judgment. The fact that presidents are required to sign their names so often may account for some of the sloppiness.

A signature is not always needed these days. There is such a thing as an electronic signature. People are writing fewer checks these days to pay their bills. Since fewer documents need a

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cursive signature, some say there is no need to waste time teaching it in school. Some say it will not be long until signatures are no longer needed. We could be identified in the future by a thumbprint or a scan of our eyeballs.

News reports say that Hawaii and Indiana have already dropped cursive writing from school lesson plans and it is optional in forty-six other states, including Arkansas. Schools are using the time to concentrate on teaching more math, science, and computer skills.

I've always admired good penmanship. The writing of some people seems more like a work of art. I think females usually have better penmanship than males, but I don't have any evidence to back that up. Some people have really bad penmanship. Some try to write too fast and the results show it. Some people say printing is faster and neater than cursive writing. I think we should be able to do both. I also think it is very important to have good teachers in the early grades when basic skills are taught and parents need to work with the teachers and encourage their children to learn. A good basic education in the early grades will be of great benefit to the student in later life.

I think cursive writing is usually taught when the student reaches the third grade. Some students get an earlier start with help from their parents at home. Others do only the minimum required and get most of their practice by having to write "I will not chew gum in class" or something similar several hundred times on the blackboard or on a piece of paper. I doubt if that punishment is still used in schools these days and gum chewing may now be allowed. It's been some time since I have been involved with the schools.

If cursive writing is not taught, many people will be completely lost if they try to do genealogical research on their families. They won't be able to read old court house records or census records. Many of those people who lived long ago could have used a little more practice on their cursive writing. Many of the documents are very difficult to read, especially census records. The style of writing changes over the years, but good penmanship is always appreciated by people like me who do historical research.

Text messaging also brings up the same questions. Some children these days have a cell phone before they even learn to write and learn the abbreviations used in text messaging before even learning how to spell the actual words. Adults also use this new way of communicating and before long they may forget how to spell words they once knew.

There is a long list of abbreviations used by kids these days in their text messages. Parents have to learn this new "language" just to know how to communicate with their children. Some are simple like "u = you", "2 = to, too, two", or "2moro" = tomorrow, "WRU = where are you?", "CUS" = see you soon". I even learned there is now a text messaging version of the Bible called the SMS Bible. How about this? U, Lord, r my shepherd. I will neva be in need. U let me rest in fields of green grass. U lead me 2 streams of peaceful water. (Psalm 23, verses 1-2).

There are times when we need things such as this. Police and others use the "ten codes" when communicating on their radios. Truckers have used the CB radio lingo for years. Text messaging is just another system of abbreviating words. I guess it's a form of shorthand like

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girls once learned in schools. I even use my own version of shorthand sometimes and nobody but me can understand it.

WDYT? (What do you think?) Is this idea of doing away with teaching cursive writing just more lowering of the standards in our schools? Do text messaging abbreviations interfere with children learning correct spelling and grammar? One poll conducted in 2009 showed that 80 percent said cursive writing should be taught in schools. Ten percent said it was a waste of time and ten percent didn't know. (How could you not have an opinion on this simple question?)

Another poll of over 28,000 students had these results. Thirty-five percent said cursive writing should be taught and 65% said no. The results for the eighth graders showed 4% yes and 96% no. I think the poll results would probably depend on the age of the people polled.

I look at it this way. If you learn to drive using a standard transmission, it's easy to convert to an automatic transmission later. Since you learned the basics, you could always use a standard transmission if needed. If you learn to drive using an automatic transmission, you will have some difficulty driving a vehicle with a standard transmission. Those of us who learned our basic spelling and grammar rules can easily adapt to the text messaging abbreviations, but we can still use the basics we learned in school when needed. If kids do not learn the basics of writing and spelling, they will never be able to write a sentence that makes much sense except to others who "know the codes".

I guess I'm old-fashioned, but I think cursive writing should still be taught in our public schools. If not, we may soon find people having to sign their names with an "X" on legal documents. Correct spelling should also be taught. Many people say that spelling should also be eliminated since we have spell checkers on our computers. I see many examples of incorrect spelling these days, especially on Facebook posts and even on advertisements and billboards. I think the dictionary is one of the least used books these days. We all make an occasional mistake in spelling, so if you find a mistake in my writings please overlook it or bring it to my attention. I promise I won't get mad at you.

I would like to hear from some of you on this subject. You can express your opinion or tell us some story you remember from school. Did your elementary school teachers put much emphasis on cursive writing? Do you consider your penmanship to be good, fair, or poor? Did you ever have to write sentences on the blackboard or on a piece of paper as punishment for something you did in school?

SEARCHING

Shannon Edmonson needs some help with her research. If anyone has any information on these people or any pictures, please contact her at:
shedmonson@peoplepc.com

Nealy Byrd, her mother's grandfather
McDuffy Burd, his father who married Sarah Ray

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WORD PUZZLE

A E N E R M

See if you can make 22 words using these letters. Blanks indicate number of letters in each word. Answers on page 7.

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Why would anyone want to be President?

There never seems to be a shortage of people who desire to be elected president of the United States. Every four years we go through the ritual of choosing our leader for the next four years. It is an awesome responsibility to be the leader of over 300 million people and having the responsibility of making life and death decisions such as sending our military off to war and having the final word on the use of nuclear weapons against an enemy.

There are many perks that go along with the office and the pay is good. Modern presidents have Air Force One available to them and most all of them seem to enjoy using it flying all around the world for one reason or another.

Most Americans have an opinion about the president whether they voted for him or not, although I expect there might be a few who don't even know who the president is. When things go wrong, we always look for somebody to blame. I think it was Abraham Lincoln who said, "You can please all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you can't please all the people all the time." The same thing goes for governors of states, mayors of cities, and CEO's of corporations. Being the chief executive is a difficult job and will likely result in more gray hairs to go along with the power and prestige of the office.

Here is what some of our former presidents have had to say on the subject:

"I had rather be in my grave than in my present situation".-- George Washington. He also made the statement, "I'd rather be on my farm than to be emperor of the world".

"Never did a prisoner, released from his chains, feel such relief as I shall on shaking off the shackles of power."—Thomas Jefferson

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"If you are as happy, my dear sir, on entering this house as I am on leaving it and returning home, you are the happiest man on earth."—James Buchanan to Abraham Lincoln

"What is there in this place that a man should ever want to get into it?"—James Garfield

"I am sick at heart and perplexed in brain. It makes me feel like resigning."—Grover Cleveland.

Harry Truman called the White House "my big white jail".

"This is the loneliest place in the world"—William Howard Taft to Woodrow Wilson

"I don't want to be president. It's an awful thing to be president of the United States... It means giving up nearly everything that one holds dear."—Woodrow Wilson

Wilson said upon leaving office, the president's job is "too great a burden for any one man to bear".

Thomas Jefferson described the presidency as "a splendid misery".

FROM HEAD TO TOE

No one wanted to even vaguely sniffle in front of Momma in the winter months. We know what would be in store for us, and it was pronounced upon us by those squatty, Vick's salve and Mentholateum jars, one cobalt blue and the other distinctly bottle green.

There was no source of heat in our farmhouse save the kitchen stove and the fireplace in the living room. My brothers went to bed with sock caps on their heads in the winter, pulled down over their ears all night. I doubt that the lack of heat during the night made any of us ill, but to this day I cannot sleep under "central heating" systems and I HATE THE SMELL OF VICKS!!!!

Mom would swab the squirming victim's chest THICKLY with Vick's Vapor Rub gummy salve much like one would grease a sweet potato before baking it. Then, with great precision she would fold a piece of scrap flannel and pin it from side to side of our chest to our pajamas to cover the area. We were coated, to say the least. Then she would "swab" our throats internally on both sides with a glob of the Vick's. (We also gargled with salt water if the throat was REALLY red.) And why wouldn't it be at this point?

Ready for bed now? Not quite!!!! She would COAT the bottom of our feet (both of them) with that sticky goo-Vick's and then pull on long wool socks over the feet up to the knees. You could feel the fumes rising up through your every leg muscle. I felt like there

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was a vapor fog trailing me all the way to my bed. Oh, my goodness, from head to toe we were "vaporized" and then tucked under so many homemade quilts that we couldn't turn over during the night. What a tormentation!!!!

She heated bricks on the fireplace hearth and wrapped them in towels to put at the foot of our beds for warmth all night (whether we had the flu or not.) No decent flu virus would bed down there very long. No flu shots, no injections, we NEVER went to the doctor. There was absolutely no way to pay. It was not even a consideration. We knew that Momma had her remedies and they ALWAYS worked.

I don't even like to READ the word VICK'S on a package of cough drops to this day!!!!!!!!!!!! My mom passed on May 12, 2008. She used to laugh at me as an adult when I would purchase Luden's cherry cough drops instead. ----*Dr. A. Lemons*

Related article in Feb., 2003 issue (The Little Blue Jar)

WHAT'S THAT SOUND?

Back in 1978, my wife and I decided to take a little vacation trip combined with a visit to her parents in southeastern Missouri. Our car at that time was a 1977 Chevrolet Monte Carlo. Everything went according to plan the first day, but somewhere along the way, we noticed an unusual knocking sound coming from our car. It would sound really loud at certain times and then we wouldn't hear it for a while. As we got into the crooked mountain roads of northwest Arkansas, the sound got worse. We decided it was coming from somewhere around the right front wheel. I stopped and checked the wheel, but didn't see anything wrong.

We spent the first night in Branson, Missouri. It was our first visit to that town and there were many things to see. We left Branson about noon the next day headed for the Lake of the Ozarks where we had planned to spend the second night. The knocking sound didn't seem quite as bad the second day since we were driving mostly on the interstate highway. I figured the problem would only get worse and I just hoped it was nothing serious. It was in August and the last thing we wanted was to be stranded somewhere on the side of the road far from home on a hot summer day.

We saw most of the sights around the Lake of the Ozarks, found a good place to eat, and settled in at our motel for the night. We had one more day of driving to reach my wife's parent's place. That trip would take us off the Interstate and through a pretty remote section of Missouri. There were no large towns and our route would take us through a national forest with very few houses--not a good place to have car trouble. This was before cell phones and Onstar. If we had car trouble, we would have to depend on getting help from another motorist. We just hoped the car problem would not get worse until we got closer to people we knew.

No such luck! The knocking sound got worse and more frequent. It sounded like

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something was about to fall off the car. We still thought it was coming from somewhere around the right front wheel. The car seemed to be running fine and we did not notice any unusual smell--just that almost constant knocking sound.

Finally, we made it to Flat River, Missouri. I was familiar with that town since I once taught school in that area. Since the noise seemed to be getting worse, I decided I had better have it checked out. The car was still under warranty, so I found the local Chevrolet dealer and explained that we were on a trip and had been bothered by this awful knocking sound most of the way. They were very nice and told us they would be glad to check it out.

The mechanic assigned to work on our car took it for a test drive to locate the problem. He heard the noise, but thought it was coming from around the right rear wheel instead of the right front. His diagnosis was that it was a loose bracket on the muffler which was causing the muffler to hit another piece of metal. He made some adjustments to the bracket and took it for another spin. The noise was still there. When he came back he said there must be something in the trunk causing the noise. We opened the trunk and found the source of the knocking sound. I believed in being prepared for any emergency and had placed an empty plastic anti-freeze jug in the trunk in case I needed something to use for carrying water. The empty jug was hitting the side of the car every time we hit a bump or a rough spot on the road. It was not a mechanical problem at all.

That empty anti-freeze jug almost ruined our vacation that year. I'm sure the mechanics got a big laugh out of it after we left, but they were very nice to us and didn't charge us anything for finding the problem. I learned a valuable lesson. Next time I hear an unusual noise, I'm going to check the trunk first.

My brother, who is also a mechanic, told me later that things like this happen all the time. He told me about an elderly man who brought his car in complaining of hearing a beeping sound. It turned out to be his hearing aid he had left in the console between the front seats.

I heard about another fellow who complained about hearing a noise around the door of his pickup truck. They took the door apart and found a soda bottle left inside the door by one of the workers when the truck was being assembled at the factory.

I guess I would have to put this incident in my list of the most embarrassing things to happen to me. If you have had an embarrassing incident in your life and are willing to share it with others, send it to me.

Answers to word puzzle on page 4

RAN, RAM, NEE, MEN, MAR, MAN, ERE, ERA, ARM, ARE,
REAM, NEAR, NAME, MERE, MEAN, MARE, MANE, EARN, AMEN
ENEMA, MEANER, RENAME

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WILLOW OAK ACRES



Photo of barn from souvenir edition of the *Prescott Daily Mail* in 1947

Anyone traveling from Prescott toward Blevins on Hwy. 24 is bound to notice the large barn on the left a couple of miles past the Interstate. This 240 acre ranch owned by Misses Jimmie Nicholas and Addys Brown began active operations in 1945 and was known as Willow Oak Acres.

The farm (or ranch) raised and trained Tennessee walking horses and attracted wide attention as a result of excellent showings by various horses raised and trained at the ranch.

The ranch was featured in an article in the souvenir edition of the *Prescott Daily Mail* in 1947. At that time there were 42 horses at the ranch including brood mares, colts, and two stallions. Some of the most famous of these were *Marrie Walker*, *Anna Bee*, and the prize stallion, *Another Chance*.

The large barn had 82 windows. The barn accommodated fourteen horses in stalls arranged in the center of the building and circling the stalls was the training track where the horses were put through their paces.

Perhaps the most famous horse trained here was *White Star* born at the ranch in 1949. The horse was originally named *Strange Gal*, but as it got older, its coat turned solid white and the horse was re-named *White Star*. *White Star* showed exceptional qualities and performed well at various horse shows. In 1953, *White Star* was sold to Dr. Garnier of Bastrop, Louisiana who bought the horse at a horse show in Shreveport as a gift for his family. Along with the horse came Percy Moss, the horse's trainer.

The next year, *White Star* was named the Grand Champion Walking Horse of the World. This was only the second time that a horse trained outside the state of Tennessee won the title. *White Star* was shown all around the country and won every available award for walking horses at that time. You can find the pedigree of *White Star* on the Internet diagrammed like a family tree.

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White Star never officially retired and was still active until late in 1961 when she died suddenly from volvulus, an intestinal obstruction. All efforts to save her failed. The death of *White Star* made the front page of *The Bastop Daily Enterprise* on Dec. 29, 1961, in what is believed to be the only published obituary for a horse.

The main barn at Willow Oak Acres is showing signs of age now. It appears that the windows are gone. One can only imagine how the place looked sixty years ago with all the activity involved in training some of the best horses in the country. The farm is now owned by Steve and Janis Wren.

Miss Addys Brown, one of the original owners, was born at Stamps, Arkansas. She died in 2004 at the age of 92 and is buried at Lakeside Cemetery in Stamps. Also buried there is Jimmie Nicholas who died in 1982. I think this may be the other owner of Willow Oak Acres, but I'm not sure about that.

Willow Oak Acres was a scenic attraction for Prescott back in the 1940s and 1950s and the ranch was well known among those interested in well-bred Tennessee walking horses.

SLEEP TWICE AROUND THE CLOCK

This advice from an English physician appeared in the 10-21-1911 issue of The Nevada News.

If you are just about at the end of your tether, if your nerves jangle so that even your best friends can hear them, and if each day feels like a fiery torture almost not to be borne, it is a sign that you are worn out and in need of rest and recuperation. If your vacation is already past or still in the distant future, try taking a vacation in minimum, that is sleep the clock around twice, choosing Sunday if you can spare no other day, and see how fit you will feel afterward. This is the advice of a well-known English physician and it is well worth taking.

“To pass 24 hours in bed,” he said to a friend, instead of rushing away for a few hours’ change of scene when you are run down physically and mentally, is worth a week’s holiday. The night before going to a theater, to take the mind off worries, and having supped wisely and well, instructions should be given that the morning calling shall be omitted.

“Then sleep. On waking again, ring for some hot milk. Drink it and sleep again and keep on sleeping. Have nothing in the intervals more substantial than soup. Do not read. Keep the eyes closed constantly. Have a warm bath in the evening and sleep again.

“When you are tired of sleeping, sleep again for the night. Nothing calms the nerves more than resting the eyes.”

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TIPPLING HOUSES

Town Ordinance--

Be it ordained by the Mayor and Town Council of the town of Prescott, Arkansas:

Sec. 1 - That all houses or places of business wherein shall be sold or given away any vinous or ardent spirits of any kind, and in quantities of one quart or more, or in sealed bottles, and the purchaser or purchasers, or person or persons to whom the same may be given, shall be permitted to drink the same in such house or place of business, or on the premises, are hereby declared to be tippling houses.

Sec. 2 - That all houses of places of business wherein there shall be sold or given away, within the boundaries of said incorporated town, any wines, manufactured from grapes, berries, or other fruits, in quantities less than one quart, be and the same are hereby declared to be tippling houses.

Sec. 3. - That the keeping of tippling houses as expressed and defined in the two preceding sections, be and the same are hereby expressly prohibited, within the limit of said incorporated town, and any person or persons who shall be guilty of keeping such houses or houses, either in his own name or as the agent or clerk for another, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and, on conviction thereof, shall be fined in any sum not less than ten nor more than twenty-five dollars for the first offence, and the sum of fifteen dollars for each subsequent offence, and each day that such tippling house shall be kept open shall be and is hereby declared a separate offence and punishable as such.

Sec. 4 - That this ordinance shall take effect and be in force on and after the 1st day of January, 1887.

Passed Nov. 1st, 1886—T. S. Bryan, Mayor—C. W. Leake, Recorder

WISE MAXIMS

(from the 9-15-1886 issue of *The Nevada County Picayune*)

- Learn to think and act for yourself.
- Respect gray hairs, especially your own.
- Waste nothing--neither money, time, or talent.
- If you have a place of business, be found there when wanted.
- Spare when you are young that you may spend when you are old.
- Bear little trials patiently that you may learn how to bear great ones.
- Be self-reliant and not take too much advice, but rather depend on yourself.
- Keep alive in your breast that little spark called conscience.
- Learn to say no; it will be of more service to you than to be able to read Latin.
- Do all the good you can in the world and make as little noise about it as possible.
- Stick to your own opinion if you have one, allowing others of course, the same liberty to stick to theirs.

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Mrs. Zettie Link sent me a copy of a page from the *Rawleigh's Good Health Guide and Year Book* published in 1932. This booklet belonged to her mother, Mrs. Stella Hardwick Griffith. One page had some cookie recipes said to "surprise your family and friends". These recipes used products manufactured by the W. T. Raleigh Co. Farm women in the old days would buy these type products from the "Rawleigh man" or the "Watkins man" who would stop by their farms selling these products. Try this first recipe at your own risk.

Milk of Magnesia Cookies for Children

These cookies have been tried out in the Rawleigh's Good Health Diet Kitchen and proven very successful. They contain many minerals which are needed by the body and produce alkalinity. A very slight laxative quality would result when the magnesium oxide comes in contact with the moisture in the intestines. These cookies are very acceptable for children's lunches and especially the lunch basket.

1/2 cup shortening	1/2 cup Rawleigh's Milk of Magnesia
1 cup sugar	1 tsp. Rawleigh's Vanilla
1 egg	3 to 4 cups flour
3 tsps. Rawleigh's Phosphate Baking Powder	1 cup raisins or dates
1/2 cup milk	

Cream shortening and sugar; add well-beaten egg and mix well. Sift baking powder and flour together, then add to the creamed mixture alternately with the milk. Add vanilla and fruit and roll out thin. Bake in a quick oven. This makes 4 dozen cookies.

Another recipe from the same book--

Chocolate Crispies

2 squares chocolate, melted or 5 tbsp. Rawleigh's Cocoa
1/2 cup butter or other shortening
1 cup sugar
2 eggs unbeaten
1/2 cup sifted flour
1/2 tsp. Rawleigh's Vanilla
1/2 cup nut meats, finely chopped

To melted chocolate, add butter, sugar, eggs, flour, and vanilla, beating well. Spread mixture on baking sheet. Sprinkle with nuts. Bake in hot oven (400 degrees) for 15 minutes. While warm, cut with cookie cutter or mark in squares. Makes 48 crispies. Ground or finely chopped peanuts are delicious in these.