

Jerry McKeiv's
SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

Vol. 11 – No. 4

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April, 2012

THE STORY OF THREE SHIPS

THE RMS TITANIC

We are approaching the one hundredth anniversary of the sinking of the *RMS Titanic*, the luxury passenger liner sailing on its maiden voyage from England to the United States in April, 1912. The ship had been advertised as being unsinkable. It was almost 900 feet in length and almost 100 feet in width. It weighed 66,000 tons and each of its three engines was as tall as a three story building. There were over 2200 passengers on board who were enjoying the voyage aboard this elegant ship. Four days into the voyage on the night of April 15, 1912, the ship hit a large iceberg and began taking on water. An evacuation was finally ordered when it was determined the ship could not stay afloat. Women and children were evacuated first since there were not enough lifeboats to accommodate all the passengers. Over 1500 passengers lost their lives in this disaster and 771 survived. It took two hours and forty minutes for the ship to sink.

There have been television shows and movies about the sinking of the *Titanic*. It was the greatest maritime disaster involving a passenger ship. Some think the sinking of the *Titanic* had been predicted. At the time of the disaster, a magazine was on sale at the newsstands containing a short story called "The White Ghost of Disaster". It was the story of the collision of an ocean liner with an iceberg in the Atlantic Ocean and the sinking of the vessel. There was also a book named "The Wreck of the *Titan*, or Futility" by Morgan Robertson about an enormous British passenger ship called the *Titan*, thought to be unsinkable, and carrying insufficient lifeboats. On a voyage in the month of April, the fictional *Titan* hit an iceberg and sank in the North Atlantic with the loss of almost everyone on board. This sounds very much like the sinking of the *Titanic*, but this book was written in 1898, fourteen years before the *Titanic* disaster.

Some interesting facts about the disaster: The captain of the *Titanic* had plans to retire after this maiden voyage. There were 13 couples on board celebrating their honeymoons. Two dogs were among the survivors. The ship had four smokestacks, but only three engines. The fourth stack was added for looks. It took 3,000 men two years to build the ship at a cost of 7.5 million dollars. There were enough life jackets for everyone, but most died from the cold ocean waters before they could be rescued. Very few actually went down with the ship. The world's richest man, John Jacob Astor, was among the dead.

We remember the name *Titanic*, but did you know the *Titanic* had two sister ships--the *Britannic* and the *Olympic*? The following is a condensed story of these two ships. In case you are wondering the initials RMS stand for Royal Mail Ship or Royal Mail Steamer.

THE RMS OLYMPIC

The *Olympic* was the first of the three large passenger ships of the White Star line, beginning its service in 1911. The *Olympic* also had its share of mishaps. The first happened in 1911 when it collided with another British ship, the *RMS Hawke*. It was damaged, but was able to return to

SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

port under its own power for repairs. Then in 1912, it lost a propeller blade and had to go back for repairs. After the sinking of the *Titanic*, the ship was checked closely. More lifeboats were added, but many of these were collapsible boats. Some of the workers on board went on strike, claiming the collapsible lifeboats would not work. Four of these were tested and only one worked as it should. After this labor dispute was resolved, the ship was refitted to incorporate lessons learned from the sinking of the *Titanic* and it was put back into service as a passenger liner.

World War I broke out in 1914 and Germany announced that it would sink these passenger liners on sight. This resulted in a great decline in the number of passengers. The ship was then put into service as a troop transport ship and it made several rescues after other ships were hit. It was repainted with something called "dazzled camouflage" to make it harder for the enemy to estimate its speed. The *Olympic* transported over 200,000 troops during the war, including many American troops after the United States entered the war in 1917. In one incident during the war, the *Olympic* rammed a German U-boat, the only known record of a merchant ship sinking a warship. The ship was given the nickname "Old Reliable".

After the war the *Olympic* was put back into passenger service with many improvements. Many people booked passage on the *Olympic* because they wanted the experience of sailing on a ship almost identical to the *Titanic*.

Another incident involving this ship happened in 1929 when it was sailing very near the last known position of the *Titanic*. The ship started shaking which lasted about two minutes. It was later determined that this was an underwater earthquake. No damage was done to the ship.

Then in 1934, as the ship was entering New York harbor on a foggy night, it accidentally hit a smaller ship causing the smaller ship to sink with a loss of several lives.

The *Olympic* continued in service until 1935 when it was retired and sold for scrap. Many people wish that it has been preserved as a tourist attraction since it was similar to the *Titanic*.

THE HMHS BRITANNIC

The *HMHS Britannic* was the third and largest of the White Star line's large passenger ships. It was launched as a passenger ship, but when World War I broke out, it was converted into a hospital ship. The initials HMHS stand for Her Majesty's Hospital Ship. It was repainted white with a green horizontal stripe and red crosses on the side.

This ship suffered a fate similar to the *Titanic*. It struck a mine in the Aegean Sea with a loss of 30 lives. The ship had no patients on board at the time. Since it was only three miles off the coast, the captain tried desperately to make it to shore. Even with all the improvements after the sinking of the *Titanic*, the ship could not stay afloat. One of the problems was the open portholes on the sides that had been left open to provide ventilation. Water entered through these portholes as the ship began to sink. Lifeboats were quickly deployed, but as it turned out, most of those killed were aboard the lifeboats. Two of the lifeboats were sucked into the propellers of the ship which were almost out of the water killing all those aboard. When the captain saw what was

SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

happening, he stopped the engines. The ship turned on its side and sank 55 minutes after the explosion.

This was the largest ship lost in World War I. Over 1,000 people were rescued. Thirty lives were lost. Only five of the bodies were recovered. The rest were buried at sea. There have been several diving expeditions to the ruins of the *Britannic* to try to determine exactly what caused the ship to sink so fast.

Two of the three largest passenger ships of the White Star line--the *Titanic* and the *Britannic*--were lost at sea and the other one--the *Olympic* had several mishaps during its service. The White Star line did not christen their ships when launched. Some people believe that this caused bad luck for all three of these great ships.

VIOLET JESSOP

Violet Jessop was a stewardess and nurse for the White Star line and had the distinction of being a survivor of both the sinking of the *Titanic* and the *Britannic* and also was on board *Olympic* when it collided with the *Hawke*.

She was in a lifeboat as the *Titanic* was being evacuated trying to comfort some of the passengers who were being put into the lifeboats. An officer handed her a baby to look after. Later after she and the baby had been rescued and were on board another ship, a woman grabbed the baby from her arms and ran off without saying a word. After her retirement many years later, she received a call one night from a woman claiming to be the baby she had rescued from the *Titanic*. The person then hung up the phone. The name of the baby she saved has never been identified.

When the *Britannic* was sinking, Violet Jessop again found herself in a lifeboat. When she saw the lifeboat being pulled toward the ship's propellers, she jumped out of the lifeboat, and was rescued by another lifeboat. If she had not jumped, she would have been shredded in the propellers.

She survived the sinking of two great ocean liners and was on board when the *Olympic* collided with another ship. Despite these narrow escapes, she continued to work on ships until her retirement. She died in 1971.

THE WORLD'S POPULATION

From the 1-23-1889 issue of *The Nevada County Picayune* (reprinted from *The Chicago Journal*)

Here are some interesting facts about the people who compose the population of the world.

There are 3,064 languages in the world and its inhabitants profess more than 1,000 religions.

SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

The number of men is about equal to the number of women. The average life is about 33 years. One quarter die previous to the age of 17. To every 1,000 persons only one reaches 100 years of life. To every 100, only six reach the age of 65, and not more than one in 500 live to 80 years of age.

There are on the earth 1,000,000,000 inhabitants; of these 93,033,033 die every year, 91,824 every day, 3,700 every hour and 60 every minute or one per second.

The married are longer lived than the single, and above all those who observe a sober and industrious conduct. Tall men live longer than short ones. Women have more chances of life in their favor previous to 50 years of age than men have, but fewer afterward.

The number of marriages is the proportion of 75 to every 1,000 individuals. Marriages are more frequent after equinoxes--that is during the months of June and December.

Those born in spring are generally of a more robust constitution than others. Births are more frequent by night than by day; also deaths.

The number of men capable of bearing arms is calculated as one-fourth of the population.

It makes me wonder how they managed to accumulate all these statistics in 1889 and I suspect these figures may not be exactly correct. There's no way of knowing for sure about these things even today when we are talking about the population of the whole world.

Assuming their figure of one billion people in the world in 1889 is correct, how does that compare with today. Best estimates today say there are 6.8 billion people in the world. That's a big increase in just 123 years!

They reported in 1889 that the average life was 33 years. The average life of the world's population today is about 68.4 years. This could be explained by improvements in the medical treatments and better standards of living. Remember, we are talking about averaging together people from the well developed countries where life expectancy is high with the many people living in under-developed parts of the world. It just make sense that people who are fed well and who receive good medical care will enjoy a longer life, even though some people continue to shorten their lives by doing damage to their own bodies through bad habits of their own choosing.

If one person died every second in 1889, you would think that figure would rise in proportion to the population increase. However, the estimate is that about three people die every second in the world today.

It was reported that married people lived longer than single people in 1889. I think that is still true today. I don't know about taller men living longer than shorter men. How did they arrive at that conclusion? Must have been some sort of government funded study by some organization to think that we really needed to know that information. The same goes for some of the other

SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

figures like more births at night than during the day. I think there are probably more marriages in June than other months, at least in the United States. Part of the reason may be that a couple is waiting for the school term to end.

I was surprised to see that one quarter of the world's population died before the age of 17 back in 1889. Just think about that statistic! I wonder if that's still true today. Maybe we need another study.

I'm sure more than one person per 1000 lives to be 100 these days, probably due to better medicine. Current estimates say there are 450,000 people in the world over 100 years of age with 72,000 of those in the United States. The second highest country is Japan. I'm afraid the number of people in the United States over 100 may begin to decrease with the implementation of the new health care law (*my opinion*).

I can report that based on my cemetery surveys of Nevada County, Arkansas that only a small number of people lived past 100 in that county. The number seems to be increasing in recent years, but I can report that out of a database of over 25,000 burials in Nevada County, less than 20 people lived to be 100 or more years of age. According to a study in 2006, the state of Hawaii has the highest life expectancy (80 years). Arkansas ranks No. 43 in the list with a life expectancy of 75.2 years. The average for the United States is 78.49 years.

Well, that's enough statistics and analysis for this issue.



ED HARVEY'S STORE AT BLUFF CITY, AR.

Mr. Ed Harvey (David Edward) and his wife, Gladys, had a large store in Bluff City when I was growing up. It was a typical general store selling groceries, Gulf gasoline, plumbing supplies, feed, etc.

These are the only two pictures I have of the store. The first one, given to me by Mrs. Bernell Johnson, shows damage done to the store in the 1950s when a car failed to negotiate the curve on Hwy. 24 and crashed into the side of the store, killing the driver. I was told the driver had just

SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

purchased the car in Camden. The other picture is blurry, but I guess it's better than nothing. I have an old Super 8mm movie my brother and I took about 1972 while driving along the highway. We only got a quick shot of the store with a bread delivery truck parked out front as we passed by. I decided to do an experiment. I played the movie which I had already converted to a VHS tape and played it in my old VCR which still works. As the tape played, I tried to snap a picture of the store with my camera. It took several attempts and this is the result--not a good picture, but at least you can get an idea of what the front of the store looked like in 1972. The front of the store looks different in these two pictures. It was probably changed when the damages were repaired following the accident.

The checkout counter and cash register were located in the center of the store just inside the door. Mr. Ed sold things on credit and we had an account there. When I was sent to the store for something, I could just tell him to put it on our ticket. He would fill out a ticket for me to sign and my father would settle up with him later.

Best I remember, the groceries were to the left after you entered the store. He carried all the basic things people needed and had a pretty good selection of such things as sacks of flour in cloth bags, ten pound sacks of Godshaux sugar, lids for canning jars, boxes of laundry detergent with free drinking glasses or dish towels inside like Oxydol and Duz, jars of Johnnie Fair or Blackburn's syrup, coffee, Ivory soap, and just about anything else you might need. The plumbing supplies were toward the back of the store--not the plastic PVC pipe, but real honest to goodness metal pipe fittings. I think I remember a very large safe on the west wall near the back. I can't remember much about that side of the store, but I think this was where he kept things like shoes, rubber boots, gloves, and maybe some pots and pans. I seem to remember several chairs with fold-up seats near the front close to the checkout counter. The name Peters Shoes comes to my mind. Maybe he once sold that brand or perhaps I am remembering a sign advertising that brand of shoes. All the sacks of feed and fertilizer were in the very back of the store in another room with a loading dock on the east side of the store. I think the refrigerated meat case was near the center of the store.

We had a tradition at our house that on Saturday nights, we could go to the store and get something special to eat like a package of cookies, some ice cream, or something that was not home-made. This is not to say our food at home was bad. It just seemed that something store-bought was special--something we didn't get every day.

In those days a salesman from Logan Grocery Co. in Prescott would come by about once each week to all these country stores and take orders for goods to be delivered by truck to the stores.

The Harveys lived next door to the store in a white frame house which is still standing. I remember one incident that happened at this store, probably in the early 1960s. My father and my younger brother, who was about ten years old, had stopped there to get some gasoline (which at that time sold for about 27 cents per gallon). My little brother stayed in the truck and while my father was inside paying for the gas, he somehow knocked the truck out of gear and it began to roll down the slight slope toward Mrs. Harvey's house. Thank goodness he didn't steer it out into the highway. Mrs. Harvey had a short hedge planted between the house and store. The truck rolled completely through her hedge and stopped in her yard. Nobody was injured, but for

SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

a long time after that, there were two gaps in her hedge where the tires had destroyed the hedge. This is a good safety lesson--never leave unattended small children in a vehicle.

Mr. Harvey at one time raised hogs in a shed behind the store. My father and I tore that shed down for the lumber. We still have the old concrete dipping vat where he dipped the pigs. Pigs were dipped in those days to control worms, lice, and mange.

Mr. Ed Harvey passed away in 1962 and was the first person buried in the new section of Bluff City cemetery. His obituary stated that he had been a merchant in Bluff City since 1927. I don't have a picture of him, but I remember him as a fairly heavy-set man who sometimes wore a white apron while working in the store. Mrs. Gladys Harvey continued to run the store alone until 1973 when it was sold (?) to Eddie and Barbara Allen from Gurdon. Mrs. Harvey moved to Camden in 1979 where she lived until her death in 1986.

The Allens operated the store until 1979 when it was sold to the Buchanans. They named it "The Country Store" and in 1983, it was the only store still operating in Bluff City.

Soon after this in 1984, Eddie Allen began to operate the new store which had just been constructed just around the curve on the left toward Camden in the same building as the new post office. Bluff City once again had two stores operating until November, 1989, when Buchanan's store (the old Harvey's store) was destroyed by a fire.

The Ed Harvey store (and its successors) served the people in and around Bluff City for many years and was one my family frequently shopped at when I was a kid. The store location is now vacant and grown up in weeds and brush--now just a memory to those who once shopped there.



The founder of the Grapette Co. was Benjamin Fooks of Camden, Arkansas. He purchased a small bottling company in Camden in 1926, another plant in Arkadelphia in 1927, and a plant in Hope which he used as a warehouse.

Business was terrible during the Great Depression of the 1930s, so he sold the Arkadelphia plant and closed the warehouse at Hope. He then started selling what he called "Fook's Flavors" out of his car in the Ark-La-Tex area. He discovered that grape was the most popular flavor and he kept trying to improve the flavor until he had it just right. He then copyrighted the name "Grapette" in 1939 and concentrated on producing Grapette at his Camden plant. Sales increased rapidly and the drink was popular in all parts of the United States during the 40s, 50s, and 60s. He introduced "Oranette" in 1947 and his syrup concentrate in 1948.

SANDYLAND CHRONICLE



The Grapette syrup came in bottles shaped like a cat, elephant, and a clown. The concentrated syrup could be mixed with water to make an economical drink for the family. The lid on the syrup bottles had a slot and the bottle could be used as a coin bank when empty. These syrup bottles are very collectible now. I have the clown and the elephant, but the cat, which is more expensive, is harder to find. The Grapette sign above came off a large aluminum drink box like stores used. The box was out behind our house for some reason. I found the clown bottle and drink bottles at old house places in the woods and I purchased the elephant bottle at a flea market.

There are many collectible Grapette items—drink bottles, cases for bottles, toy delivery trucks, syrup bottles, thermometers, signs, golf tees, ice chests, marbles, and others. Wood’s Place, a popular fish restaurant in Camden, has a large selection of Grapette items displayed in their business. The slogan for Grapette was “Thirsty or Not”. They also had a popular bumper sticker that said “If You Must Drink and Drive, Drink Grapette and Stay Alive”.

Sales of Grapette expanded to other countries in the 1960s. The company also introduced a cola drink called “Mr. Cola” in 1962 to compete with Coca-Cola. It was advertised as “The Aristocrat of Colas” and was the first cola drink to come in 16 ounce bottles. They soon introduced Mr. Cola Jr., a 12 ounce bottle like the one pictured above.

The Fooks family sold their business in 1970 and people who loved the Grapette sodas were going through withdrawal symptoms. Finally in 2005, a deal was negotiated with Walmart to return Grapette with the original flavor to the store shelves and Grapette began to be exclusively sold at Walmart stores nationwide as part of their “Sam’s Choice” line of drinks.

SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

COMMENTS FROM READERS

Grapette:

My grandpa William Morgan used to let me go to the store with him when I was a little girl. He would tell me I could have a cola and candy bar. I always selected a Grapette and a Peanut Pattie. I can't imagine a worse combination now, but I thought it was great when I was about five years old. I really liked going to the store with Grandpa too!

Harvey's Store

I'm really dating myself here, but I remember the big old Harvey's store that belonged to those steps that now lead to nowhere. I thought it was an amazing place. The one thing that stuck in my mind was the JP Coats thread case that sat on the counter. It was wooden and had several drawers. You pulled out a drawer to select the spool or spools of thread you wanted to buy. I'm not sure why that made such an impression on a young girl, but I've wondered what happened to it. When I saw your article in the *Sandyland Chronicle*, I was really hoping you had a picture of the store.

I'm not sure if I remember this, or just heard the grownups talking about it, but gypsies would come through the area from time to time. They would crowd into the store and the owners and clerks would try to watch them carefully because they would steal things from the store.

Pine Knots

While I was still working in Tennessee, my boss came in one day upset because his wife was talking about ordering some quite pricey pine kindling for their fireplace from L. L. Bean. When I mentioned this to my husband, he went out to his shop where he kept some pine knots (found in Arkansas) and cut a nice, large bundle of fire starters, which I took to my boss the next morning. He took it home and put it near the fireplace without telling his wife. She grew up on a farm in south Georgia. When she came in she said "You brought me fat pine"! We kept them supplied as long as we lived there. It is always good when you can make the boss happy!

The *Chronicle* stirred up some good memories for me today! ---*Charlotte Woody*



Jackie Harvey sent this old photo of the old Harvey's store at Bluff City. His father, Dick Harvey is shown behind the counter. The other men are unknown.

Date of photo: Probably mid-1930s.

SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

THE STEPS TO NOWHERE

Warren U. Ober

Those concrete steps at the “E. M. Harvey & Sons General Mdse.” store on the corner of Highway 24 and Highway 299 are indelibly etched in my memory. I remember well also Mr. E. Monroe “Mun” Harvey and his sons Messrs. Con and Ed Harvey. My family—my father, Andrew C. [Andy] Ober; my mother, Delilah Hannah Upton Ober; my sister, Mesilla Jean Ober Miller; my late brother, Kenneth H. Ober; and I— lived across Highway 24 from the store in the “Olive and Con Harvey house” for a time during the later 1930s. Mrs. Olive Harvey was one of the most prominent Bluff City personalities during the thirties, and Con and Olive were the parents of one of my excellent teachers at the Bluff City Consolidated School, Mrs. Helen Robinson. (Perhaps I’ll be forgiven for straying from the subject for a moment to pay tribute to the superb teachers I was blessed to have at that little depression-era rural school: e.g., Loreen Meador Lee, Vivian Moore, Blanche Martin, and Belle Morgan, as well as Helen Robinson. These gifted women helped provide a solid foundation for my eventual Ph.D. studies in English, and I’ll always be grateful to them.)

In those days E. M. Harvey & Sons was a remarkably harmonious and prosperous family enterprise. The Harvey store was a sort of super-sized shotgun house. (Folk etymology at the time had it that a shotgun house got its name because one could fire a shotgun through the front door and kill a man standing outside the open back door.) The building had a generously wide front porch (with benches) reachable from the dirt road/footpath up those steps (originally wooden steps, as I recall), placed at the very end of the porch. My sister reminds me that the porch floor sloped somewhat alarmingly (for a child) toward the road.

There was, during my time, a separate “filling” station between Harvey’s main store and Highway 24. I recall that the gravel-floored gallery into which vehicles were driven to gas up was inadvertently built too low to accommodate the pumps, with the result that the circular “Standard Esso” tops were affixed separately to the underside of the ceiling next to the respective pumps. Mesilla and I recall that for a time beer was sold at the station, and it was always something of an occasion to observe the scene from across the highway on a summer Saturday. More than one tipsy customer would happily weave his way on foot down the road in the late afternoon.

When the partners of Upton & Harvey went their separate ways, my grandfather (my mother’s father), Percy Charles Upton, established his general store down the present Highway 299 from the site of the (later) E. M. Harvey & Sons General Mdse. The Upton store was situated on the same side of 299 as Harvey’s store, on the curve heading toward Gum Grove just after the present Highway 387 branches off from 299. My grandfather’s residence, fronted by two magnificent magnolia trees, was across the road from his store. My impression, subject to correction, is that the P. C. Upton store was established on the site of the original Upton & Harvey store. My grandfather’s store was closed not long after his death in 1927. L. M. (“Old Stand Pat”) Carter—whose “Gen. Mdse.” store was a short city block from Harvey’s store down 24 heading toward Chidester—was my uncle, husband of my mother’s sister, Pearl.

SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

On occasion, my son Henry (a Director, Department of Justice, Canada) and I (a Distinguished Professor Emeritus, University of Waterloo, Ontario) have made trips down by car to visit my sister, Mesilla, in Texarkana, Texas. On the way each time, we have paid our respects at “The Old Place,” the now grown-over farmstead of my father’s maternal grandfather and grandmother, Andrew Giles Meador and Jennie Meador, along the banks of the “Big Branch,” or, as Henry discovered in an official map, the “Meadows Branch,” obviously named after the Meadors. We have also never missed a visit to Bluff City (“The Bluff” to real old-timers), always paying our respects at its well-kept cemetery, and we have made sure to stop by the Reader Railroad works and to spend time in Prescott, where my family later lived and where I enjoyed attending its excellent high school.

On one visit a few years ago, Henry and I had stopped in front of Bluff City’s steps to nowhere and were taking turns photographing each other on the steps when suddenly a voice called out from somewhere behind us: “What’s going on there! What are you two doing?” When we turned open-mouthed in surprise, we saw, standing in the road beside our car, a somewhat formidable-looking lady dressed in gray denim jumper and trousers who identified herself as Mayor of Bluff City. (We never learned her name.) Later we realized she must have wondered what in the world we were up to when she saw the Ontario license plates on our vehicle, and her alarm was probably intensified when she saw us photographing ourselves in turn standing on the concrete steps. After what must have seemed to her our weird explanation of our weird actions, we decided it might be prudent to be on our way without further delay. I imagine she was greatly relieved when she saw our VW Passat disappearing down the highway toward Prescott. Still, each of us took pictures of ourselves on the steps to nowhere that we continue to enjoy to this day.



Grapette-- started in Camden, AR (don’t know year). We found enough of the small bottles for our 45 class (58) reunion. They were GOOD. After that I kept emailing Grapette and they said something would happen soon. Well it finally did. They sold it to Walmart. Walmart is NOT using the small bottles, but regular size cans. The cans are pretty much what I remember . My 15 yr old grandson loves it. Also a side note-- We do not have peanut patties in my part of country (Fayetteville, GA). RC Cola was started in Columbus , GA, about 80 miles south of where I live. --*Charlie Weaver*

SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

Ahh!! "Grapette"! Good memories! Growing up in Cale in the early 50's...believe it or not we had 3 stores here at that time! "Mathis'" "Garret's" and "Gist's"....I lived right across the road from Erbert Mathis' store. I would walk over there and get a "Grapette" for a nickel or maybe it was a dime by that time..start out the door..and ol' Erbert would holler "You takin' that bottle with you"? "You be surein' brang that bottle back! You here"? You see, there was a nickel deposit on every bottle and ol' "Ub" we called him.. wern't NEVER gonna lose no nickel!! I also liked the "Orange Crush" in that brown odd bottle...but my very favorite was "Pop Kola" !.....with peanuts poured in it!! UMMM!!! "You come back and spend a nickel with me! You here"?--*Bill Barham*

Or, what is one of the most exciting things you have ever done?

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Almost started a flap with Israel. I was CO of *USS John Willis* (DE 1027); time was summer of 1958 and the exercise was the Lebanon crisis. *John Willis* was assigned a patrol station about 50 miles off Lebanon, under the command of a DD at another station about 20 miles to the south. It was kind of a back and forth bit. I had the ammunition up and ship at condition three. (a gun manned). In the middle of the day, something was approaching at high speed from the southeast. What? Helo, PT boat, speed boat? Called the DD and cut him in as to what was going. Then, at about nine +/- miles we saw what appeared to be a PT boat. Called the DD and cut him in as to what was going and he said he was closing me. The stranger was closing us, still at high speed. I called the DD and told him if the stranger came closer than 5,000 yards, I was going to open fire. The stranger turned away at 6,000 yards and we could see it was an Israeli PT boat. Guess he was listening to our radio conversations. Good for him, as we were loaded and finger on the trigger. 5,000 yards and shoot. --*David Cummins*

I've decided to keep an unofficial rainfall record at my house this year. I'm hoping we are not in for a repeat of the hot, dry weather we experienced in 2011. Here are my rainfall totals so far this year measured by my little plastic Walmart rain gauge. I'll try to keep this record all through the year and report the totals each month. Normal rainfall varies for Arkansas depending on where you live, but the statewide average is about 50 inches per year.

January – 3.3 inches

February – 4.1 inches

March—10.0 inches (through March 25th)

PET SHOW

I thought it might be interesting to have a pet show for the next issue. Send me a photo of your pet (dog, cat, bird, snake, turtle, or whatever). You might even consider sending a photo of a pet that has passed on (sort of a way of keeping its memory alive). Be sure and include the pet's name. Include a sentence or two about the pet if you wish.