

Jerry McKelvy's
SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

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THE CORN AND CANTALOUPE CLUBS

The Prescott and Northwestern Railroad branched off the main railroad line at Prescott and extended northwest toward Blevins and Nashville. That area became well known for growing all kinds of crops like peaches, cantaloupes, and radishes which were sorted in packing sheds and transported by rail back to the main line at Prescott and then to the larger cities.

The P & NW railroad sponsored a contest in 1915 to encourage young boys to learn about modern farming techniques such as crop rotation, proper fertilization, and keeping accurate records. They came up with the idea of having Corn and Cantaloupe Clubs at all the stations along the route (Prescott, Shady Grove, Deanyville, Dotson, Belton, Blevins, and McCaskill).

All boys in those communities between the age of 12 and 20 were invited to participate. Each boy would have one acre of land which he must divide into two equal parts with half planted in corn and the other half planted in cantaloupes. The seed and fertilizer were furnished by the railroad, but the boys had to repay the railroad at the end of the season.

Rules of the contest:

1. The corn and cantaloupes must be planted on adjoining pieces of ground.
2. Each boy must do his own work and keep accurate records of time spent. If he hired anyone to help him, he must keep records on their time also.
3. Each boy must keep full and accurate records of all labor expenses.
4. Each boy must swear to the results of his report on costs and yields. The railroad reserved the right to have the yield measured by a third party if necessary.

Prizes:

First prize was \$40 cash and a gold medal
Second prize was \$25 cash and a silver medal
Third prize was \$15 cash
Fourth prize was \$10 cash

A club prize of a handsome silver loving cup would be presented to the club whose members made the highest general average on the score card.

Since prices vary on market prices of farm products, a uniform price for corn and cantaloupes was used in determining the winners of this contest.

Judges:

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There were three judges. One was picked by the railroad, one by the contestants, and the other picked by the other two judges.

The contest generated quite a bit of interest. Clubs had already been formed at Blevins and McCaskill when these rules were published in the paper and it was expected that all communities along the route would participate.

The P & NW railroad was chartered in 1890 to access timberland northwest of Prescott to transport timber to the new Bemis and Whitaker mill in Prescott. Over the years it transported timber, peaches from Highland, farm produce, and also carried passengers to the small towns along the route. Dr. R. L. Powers was president of the railroad during construction of the line. The first locomotive was brought to Prescott from New York in 1891.

The railroad was known locally as “The Peavine Railroad” because of all the twists and turns of the route as they tried to access all the small communities in that area. I thought that term was unique to the Prescott area, but after doing some research on the Internet, I found three more railroad lines known as “Peavine Railroad”. One is the Peavine Railroad of Green Co., Tennessee. Another is the Peavine branch of the Yazoo and Mississippi Railroad. The third one is the Santa Fe, Prescott, and Phoenix Railroad affectionately known as the Peavine Railroad. It is ironic that this line runs northwest out of Prescott, Arizona just as the P & NW Railroad runs northwest out of Prescott, Arkansas.

HESTERLY DRUG STORE

Hesterly Drug Store on East Elm Street in Prescott was one of Prescott’s leading drug stores for many years. I can remember Mr. Berry Hesterly, who was bald-headed, filling our prescriptions after we had visited his brother and our family doctor, Dr. Jake Hesterly for illnesses like bad colds. One of the favorite medicines given at that time was a bottle of sulfa drug liquid medicine in a clear bottle about six inches high.

I love reading the old medicine ads in old newspapers. Here are some of the medicines advertised at Hesterly Drug Store in 1915:

Swamp Chill and Fever Tonic—50 cents
Herbine Anti-malarial tonic—50 cents
Wintersmith’s Chill Tonic—50 cents
McCroskey’s Tonic—guaranteed to cure malaria and enlarged spleen--\$1.00
Mendenhall’s Chill Tonic—50 cents
Johnson’s Chill Tonic—50 cents
Nyal’s Chill Tonic—50 cents
Grove’s Chill Tonic—50 cents

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At least the prices were reasonable. I remember Grove's Tasteless Chill Tonic. It had a very gritty texture. Our parents gave it to us as kids and we hated to take it. I suppose they had to take it when they were kids. One thing it would do was give you an appetite. One of their ads says "it makes children and adults as fat as pigs". We didn't have malaria or chills, but we took our share of Grove's Tasteless Chill Tonic.

In another ad, Hesterly's advertised tonics for women like Pelvitone, McElree's Wine of Cardui, Stella-Vitae, and Dr. Simmons' Squaw Vine Wine.

Other medicines included Dodson's Liver Tone ("It livens the liver"), Grigsby's Liver-Lax, Bell's Podulax for stomach, liver, and kidneys, and Nyal's Liver Stimulator.

Hesterly Drug Store also offered for sale Purple Top and Amber Globe turnip seed, sealing wax, paraffin for sealing fruit jars, and jelly glasses. They sold Bee Brand insect powder for flies, bed bugs, and fleas. They also sold school books, tablets, and pencils and something called a Magic Washing Stick.

The store advertised itself as "the mail order drug store—we pay the postage".

Speaking of medicines, I know you are probably familiar with the name Lydia E. Pinkham. Old medicine bottles with her name are sometimes found around old home places. I collect old medicine bottles such as these. I especially like the ones that had cork stoppers and those that have the name of the medicine and other information on the bottle. I found this story of the life of this woman in the *Picayune* printed in 1906. I thought her story was quite interesting. Any information you find about these old medicines makes the hobby of collecting the bottles more interesting.

A SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF LYDIA E. PINKHAM Nevada County Picayune—12-7-1906

This remarkable woman, who maiden name was Estes, was born in Lynn, Mass., February 9, 1819, coming from a good old Quaker family. For some years she taught school, and became known as a woman of an alert and investigating mind, an earnest seeker after knowledge, and above all, possessed with a wonderfully sympathetic nature.

In 1843, she married Isaac Pinkham, a builder and real estate operator, and their early married life was marked by prosperity and happiness. They had four children—three sons and a daughter.

In those good old fashioned days, it was common for mothers to make their own home medicines from roots and herbs, nature's own remedies—calling in a physician only in especially urgent cases. By tradition and experience, many of them gained a wonderful knowledge of the curative properties of the various roots and herbs.

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Mrs. Pinkham took a great interest in the study of roots and herbs, their characteristics and power over disease. She maintained that just as nature so bountifully provides in the harvest-fields and orchards vegetable foods of all kinds; so if we but take the pains to find them, in the roots and herbs of the field there are remedies expressly designed to cure the various ills and weaknesses of the body, and it was her pleasure to search these out and prepare simple and effective medicines for her own family and friends.

Chief of these was a rare combination of the choicest medicinal roots and herbs found best adapted for the cure of the ills and weaknesses peculiar to the female sex, and Lydia E. Pinkham's friends and neighbors learned that her compound relieved and cured and it became quite popular among them.

All of this was done freely, without money and without price, as a labor of love.

But in 1873, the financial crisis struck Lynn. Its length and severity were too much for the large real estate interests of the Pinkham family, as this class of business suffered most from fearful depression, so when the Centennial year dawned, it found their property swept away. Some other source of income had to be found.

The three sons and the daughter, with their mother, combined forces to restore the family fortune. They argued that the medicine which was so good for their women friends and neighbors was equally good for the women of the whole world.

The Pinkhams had no money and little credit. Their first laboratory was the kitchen, where roots and herbs were steeped on the stove, gradually filling a gross of bottles. Then came the question of selling it, for always before they had given it away freely. They hired a job printer to run off some pamphlets setting forth the merits of the medicine, now called Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, and these were distributed by the Pinkham sons in Boston, New York, and Brooklyn.

The wonderful curative properties of the medicine were to a great extent self advertising, for whoever used it recommended it to others, and the demand gradually increased.

In 1877, the combined efforts of the family had saved enough money to commence newspaper advertising and from that time the growth and success of the enterprise were assured, and today, Lydia E. Pinkham and her vegetable compound have become household words everywhere, and many tons of roots and herbs are used annually in its manufacture.

Lydia E. Pinkham herself did not live to see the great success of her work. She passed to her reward years ago, but not until she had provided means for continuing her work as effectively as she could have done it herself.

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During her long and eventful experience, she was ever methodical in her work and she was always careful to preserve a record of every case that came to her attention. The case of every sick woman who applied to her for advice—and there were thousands—received careful study, and the details, including the symptoms, treatment, and results were recorded for future reference, and today these records, together with hundreds of thousands made since, are available to sick women the world over, and represent a vast collaboration of information regarding the treatment of woman's ills, which for authenticity and accuracy can hardly be equaled in any library in the world.

With Lydia E. Pinkham worked her daughter-in-law, the present Mrs. Pinkham. She was carefully instructed in all her hard-won knowledge, and for years she assisted her in her vast correspondence.

To her hands naturally fell the direction of the work when its originator passed away. For nearly twenty five years, she has continued it, and nothing in the work shows when the first Lydia E. Pinkham dropped her pen, and the present Mrs. Pinkham, now the mother of a large family, took it up. With women assistants, some as capable as herself, the present Mrs. Pinkham continues this great work, and probably from the office of no other person have so many women been advised how to regain health. Sick women, this advice is "Yours for Health", freely given if you only write to ask for it.

Such is the history of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound; made from simple roots and herbs; the one great medicine for women's ailments, and the fitting monument to the noble woman whose name it bears.

THE MIGHTY MINE DODGERS

I was recently given a bunch of old photos belonging to Carl and Annie Mae Barlow Greer who grew up in Nevada County in the area around the old Goose Ankle community. Carl Greer was the son of John Alexander Greer and Hattie McKelvy Greer. He was raised by my great grandmother after his mother died at a very young age from swamp fever, so he grew up with the McKelvy boys. He married Annie Mae Barlow who lived a few miles away. She was the daughter of Albert Barlow and Minnie Moore Barlow. Annie Mae's father died in 1938 after being hit by lightning while plowing with a mule and her mother later married Douglas Greening. Carl and Annie Mae Greer spent most of their married life a few miles west of Camden near Greening Lake.

There were many unidentified pictures in the collection including some of my family I had not seen before. There were also many military photos from World War II, mainly groups of navy servicemen at various bases enjoying periods of recreation while in the service.

While looking at those military photos, I came across a nice full page certificate given to Paul Gilford Nash for his part in a very dangerous mission during World War II. I don't know why Mr. and Mrs. Greer had this certificate in their possession or how he might have been connected

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to the Greers.

After reading the certificate, my interest was kindled to learn more about the Mighty Mine Dodgers and the part they played during World War II. I don't remember ever studying about that in school.

It all happened near the end of World War II in June, 1945. Germany had already surrendered but Japan continued to fight on. Japan had been receiving supplies from Korea and China through the Sea of Japan. The plan was for submarines to patrol the Sea of Japan to interrupt Japan's supply lines. To do this the submarines had to pass through the Tsushima Straits which the Japanese had heavily mined.

The mission was called "Operation Barney" named after Commander Barney Seiglaflaff who planned the mission. It involved nine submarines who would travel through this mine field in what was called "the most dangerous waters of the war". The submarines involved were the Sea Dog, the Crevalle, the Spadefish, the Tunny, the Spade, the Bonfish, the Flying Fish, the Bowfin, and the Tinoso.

I can imagine how nerve-racking it would be for these men to be in a submarine traveling through a mine field expecting one to explode at any moment. One of the crew members said they traveled for thirty miles at the speed of two knots which he said was slower than a person usually walks and that he was at the helm for seventeen hours straight. The ships had been equipped with some new sonar equipment and the heavily trained crew knew how to tell from the sonar signals what was a mine and what was not. The men said they could sometimes hear the cables from the mines as they scraped along the side of their submarine.

The submarines went through the mine field in groups of three. All nine submarines made it safely through the Tsushima Straits into the Sea of Japan. Each submarine had a certain area to patrol and had orders to shoot at any vessel they found. All nine submarines destroyed enemy ships after going through the mine field.

One man who served on the USS Bowfin said men sometimes went 45 days without a shower because potatoes were stored in the shower and any other place they could find in the limited space of the submarine. Food supplies sometimes ran low before the patrol was completed. The crew on the Bowfin consisted of 100 men and eight officers.

After their mission was completed, the nine submarines planned to rendezvous at a certain location and leave the Sea of Japan, but sadly, the USS Bonfish didn't show up and was presumed to have been sunk by the Japanese. The other eight subs made a daring high-speed escape out of the Sea of Japan at a different place from where they had entered.

You can go to the following web site and find a memorial page which has pictures and information on each of the 85 men lost on the USS Bonfish.

<http://www.oneternalpatrol.com/uss-bonfish-223.htm>

Operation Barney was a great success and Vice Admiral Charles A. Lockwood presented each crew member a special certificate making them an official member of the Mighty Mine Dodgers. Paul Gilford Nash's certificate was in the box of photos that was given to me.

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I learned that Paul Gilford Nash served aboard the USS Bowfin submarine which was said to be one of the most highly decorated submarines of World War II. After getting through the mines into the Sea of Japan, this submarine was responsible for sinking two Japanese ships. The USS Bowfin is now preserved as a submarine memorial at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii.

Now that I know more about this dangerous mission called "Operation Barney", I can appreciate the service of these brave men involved in a very dangerous mission which some called "a suicide mission". They accomplished their goal and the casualties were much less than expected.

Paul Gilford Nash died in 2000 in Ouachita County and is buried in Two Bayou Cemetery. If any of his descendants happen to read this and would contact me, I would be glad to return his certificate to you if you would like to have it. We thank him for his service and that of all the others involved in this important mission during World War II. I'm sure it helped to bring the war to an end. Japan finally surrendered September 2, 1945 after the United States dropped two atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

I never understood why anyone would want to serve on a submarine. Just the thought of being confined underwater for days or weeks at a time in a limited space is enough to give me claustrophobia. The only one I was ever on was the USS Drum parked at Mobile Bay along with the battleship Alabama. Taking the tour of those two ships was interesting but that was enough submarine duty for me.

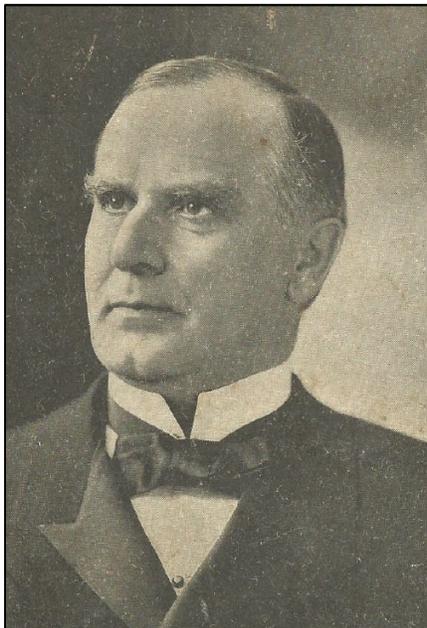


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The answer to last month's "What Is It?" is a yoke collar placed on a calf or young cow to keep them from going through fences. It can also be used as a calf weaner.

Those who submitted correct answers were Billy Joe Meador, Eddy McKelvy, Vernell Loe, Norval Poe, and Don Hall.



WHO IS HE?

This man played a very important part in the history of the United States.

Clues—He was from Ohio.

A famous landmark in a northern state is named after him.

He was rarely seen without a red carnation pinned to his lapel.

Send me your answer or guess by Oct. 15th.

RAINFALL RECORD

January – 1.2 inches

February—3.6 inches

March—5.0 inches

April – 5.8 inches

May—5.5 inches

June—4.0 inches

July – 5.2 inches

August – 8.2 inches