

Jerry McKelvy's
SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

Vol. 18 – No. 10

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October, 2018

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CLOCKS



It was once common in small towns to hear chimes each hour during the day, usually when the clock changed to a new hour and sometimes on the half hour or quarter hour. I remember the chimes that came from the Methodist church in downtown Camden many years ago. Prescott also had chimes from the clock at the Bank of Prescott about a hundred years ago. This picture is taken from the 1958 Wolf Trail, the high school yearbook. The location of the bank at that time was on the corner of East Elm St. and East Second St. In the 1960s, the bank moved to a new location one block away where it is today. The old building was used temporarily as offices for the tax assessor, treasurer, and sheriff in 1964 when the court house was being replaced.

I came across an article in the 1914 newspaper which told of a clock being installed and dedicated at the bank on May 9, 1914. I assume it is the same clock you see in this picture. The clock sounded out four bells on the quarter hour, eight bells on the half hour, 12 bells on the $\frac{3}{4}$ hour, and 16 bells on the hour. The clock struck 1116 times each 24 hours and played the following song:

Lord, through this hour
Be Thou our Guide
So, by Thy power
No foot shall slide

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I miss hearing those chiming clocks. I suppose some people these days might be offended by clocks playing religious type songs or music. I think the main reason we don't hear them anymore is that the downtown areas of most cities declined when shopping malls began to be constructed and large discount stores opened drawing customers away from the downtown area.

I wonder what happened to the old Westminster clock that once was heard by everyone on East Elm St. in the downtown area of Prescott.

In 2003, a new clock was installed in Prescott at the mini-park at the main intersection in town where the mural is located. That spot was once the location of the Sterling's five and dime store which many of us fondly remember. A nice mural was painted on the wall next to the little park known as Sterling Park. This little park, though seldom used, adds a nice touch to the city of Prescott and cannot be missed by those traveling through town. This clock does not chime and was not in working order when I took this picture. I wonder if anyone has even noticed.



Clock installed in 2003 at Sterling Park



Former location of Bank of Prescott as it looks today. Attorney Dudley Rouse had an office here after the bank moved. Today it is used by Teague Eye Care Center

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RANDOLPH PEDEN HAMBY MAYOR OF PRESCOTT FOR 36 YEARS



It is quite unusual to find a person who served as mayor of a city as long as Mr. Randolph Hamby. He was elected mayor of Prescott in 1912 and served continuously until 1948. He could probably have served even longer, but he announced in the fall of 1947 that 36 years was enough for anyone and decided not to run for reelection. He had defeated seven opponents in 18 elections.

Mr. Hamby was also a lawyer and served as court reporter for the Eighth Judicial District for several years. The Hamby family was a prominent family in the city of Prescott.

Prescott had only been a city for about 40 years when Mr. Hamby was first elected. The town was started when the railroad was constructed in 1873. The city developed on each side of the railroad track. Business owners tried to locate their businesses as close as possible to the railroad station thinking that would be better for them. But in 1911, the railroad moved the station to a different location which upset most of the business owners. A dispute developed between those on the east side of the railroad and those of the west side. Some of the leading citizens thought Randolph Hamby, a 26 year-old attorney, was just the man needed as mayor to fairly represent both sides and bring much needed unity to the town.

Randolph Hamby had no political ambitions at that time, but after encouragement from many of his friends, he agreed to run for mayor and hoped the dispute could be settled for the good of the city. He expected to serve only one two-year term as mayor. His salary in 1912 was only ten dollars per month.

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The years Mr. Hamby was mayor were some of the most prosperous years for the city of Prescott and many improvements were made. The population was growing during that time, but there were times when things were not so good. There was the Great Depression of the 1930s and two world wars during the time he served as mayor.

Mr. Hamby was very much interested in local history. He wrote many historical articles for the local newspapers and probably knew more about the history of Prescott than anyone living at that time. It was said that he kept a barrel in his office and every time he came across an item of interest regarding the history of southwest Arkansas, he would clip it and put it in the barrel. The local newspaper had a feature called "Little Prescott Laws" in many issues in which Mr. Hamby submitted little known laws from the past. Some of those old laws still on the books are interesting to read about. He also took photographs of various buildings and landmarks. He wrote articles for the centennial editions of the Prescott papers and the newspaper in Hope.

When he announced his intention not to run again, about 65 of his friends put together an event in his honor. They told Mr. Hamby it was to be a fish-fry for retiring members of the city council and they knew he would want to attend that event. The event was held at the American Legion hut. Mr. J. W. Teeter was the toastmaster for the occasion. When Mr. Hamby discovered that the event was in his honor, he said, "This is the greatest honor that has ever been bestowed upon me".

The group thanked Mr. Hamby for so many years of faithful service to the city of Prescott and as the dinner ended, they presented him a certified check in the amount of \$1500.

Mr. Hamby must have done a good job as mayor because the people kept re-electing him to the office. I haven't researched it to be sure, but I wouldn't be surprised if he holds the record as the longest serving mayor in Arkansas.

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GOOD NIGHT, JOHN-BOY

I always liked to watch "The Waltons" on television. That show depicted the Depression days in a pretty realistic way, I think.

There was Grandpa Walton who had the wisdom from a lifetime of experiences to give help and advice to the family. Grandma Walton helped teach the young Walton children everything from how to cook to how to respect their elders. John Walton, the breadwinner of the family, knew all about hard work and trying to get by during hard times. He wanted all his children to have it better than he did--to get a good education and good jobs. Olivia Walton, his wife, had her hands full raising a large family and bringing them up to be good productive citizens. Of course, Grandma Walton was there to help.

Then there were the Walton children--John-Boy, Mary Ellen, Erin, Jason, Ben, Jim Bob, and Elizabeth. John-Boy was the oldest and helped to look after the younger children and help solve their problems. His ambition was to be a writer and he was always writing down his thoughts in a journal. Mary Ellen wanted to be a nurse and ended up marrying a doctor. Erin had dreams of being a Hollywood star. Jason loved music which just didn't seem to fit in with working at his daddy's sawmill. Ben helped out at the mill and took pride in using his grandfather's tools. Jim Bob wanted to be an airplane pilot and was accused of always having his head in the clouds. Elizabeth was probably more concerned about what to do about freckles than anything else. She was the youngest of the family and probably had her share of hand-me-down clothes.

That television family was probably typical of many families living in rural America during the 1930s. The family had an old pick-up truck as the main form of transportation. Most of the family had to ride in the bed of the truck. I was not around during the Great Depression, but I can remember when chairs were brought from the house and placed in the bed of a pickup truck for more seating. We didn't know about seat belts in those days. John-Boy on the TV show managed to find himself a nice little car with a rumble seat. Getting a vehicle to call your own has been every boy's dream ever since automobiles were invented.

The setting for the show was Walton's Mountain, a close-knit community in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. There was the local

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church and the general store, similar to many of the small communities that once existed in our part of Arkansas. Country stores are disappearing at an alarming rate since they can't compete with the large discount stores in town and rural areas are facing declining population in many places. I always hate to see a country store forced to close since they add so much to the charm of a small community. I often think of the small country stores in our area when I was growing up. Those were happy days back then. We didn't have any Wal-Marts. We could get most anything we needed in Bluff City, Prescott, Chidester, Camden, or order it from a mail order catalog.

Walton's Mountain also had a small school like most communities of any size in the Depression days, but consolidation of the small schools was already in progress in many places. The idea was that "bigger is better". Most of us who attended one of those small country schools have fond memories of those days. When a small community loses its school, it's usually not long until the stores close and the town begins to die.

Well, times have changed. We are a more mobile society these days. Very few young people want to be farmers when they grow up and most wouldn't know a butter churn from a crosscut saw. All the young people want a new car when they get sixteen and their idea of recreation is playing a video game, surfing the Internet, or text messaging their friends on their cell phones. They think a cell phone is a necessity and most wouldn't take a job unless it paid more than the minimum wage.

Both parents are working in most homes these days, sometimes leaving small children by themselves until the parents get off work. In the old days, the children got off the school bus and headed for the kitchen to see what kind of cookies were in the cookie jar. Most children had chores to do around the home after school before the evening meal. Some families still have the supper meal as a family, but many have to eat in shifts because they have so many activities to attend. I think for many children, the most nutritious meal these days is the one served at the school cafeteria.

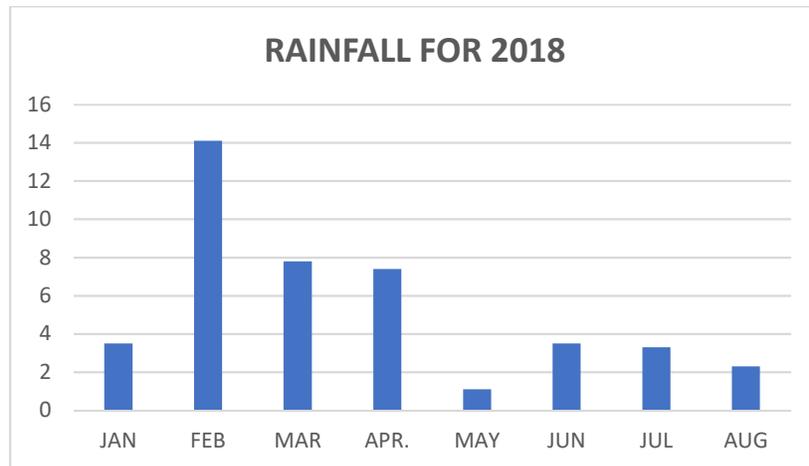
The question is: Are we really better off these days? Have we lost some things like family values, respect for elders, caring for our neighbors, etc. in these modern times?

Every generation has its own challenges and most parents want their children to have it better than they did. Life is complicated enough without

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all the problems facing many families these days--drug use, divorce, lack of religious instruction, busy schedules, and many other things that affect family life.

Does your family still tell each other "Good night" before going to bed like the Waltons did in the TV show? That's not a bad idea.



Nelda Galley captured this photo of this pretty deer in her yard. It appears the deer is posing for the picture.

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The mystery item in the last issue was a can opener and spout used to open metal oil cans and pour the oil into a vehicle. These readers correctly identified the mystery item: Dan W., Brenda B., Don R., Don E., Cathy S., Larry M., Susan B., Ginger P., William B., Betty T., Eddy M., Bill S., James N., and Billy M.

These were no longer needed when plastic oil containers came along with a screw off top. These are now collector's items. I saw some offered for sale on the Internet from \$5 to \$10 each.

THEY WILL BE MISSED

It was announced a few days ago that three newspapers in southwest Arkansas would cease publication. These are *The Nevada County Picayune*, *The Hope Star* and *The Daily Siftings-Herald* at Arkadelphia. A lot of expensive equipment is needed to print a newspaper. Reporters and photographers have to be hired to report the news and people have to be employed to print the paper and deliver it to customers. Rising costs have forced newspapers to increase their subscription rates. Printed newspapers are hurting in our modern world of the Internet and "instant news".

I hate to see these small newspapers go out of business. Many local news events are reported in these papers such as sports events, family reunions, school news, etc. Local news columns from small towns or communities were once printed in these papers. Social media like Facebook has pretty much taken the place of printed local news. We are able to see family pictures, vacation photos, death notices, and some people even post pictures of what they had to eat at a restaurant. We learn about people who are sick and in the hospital. It is an easy way for people to communicate with family and friends.

I think many people will be disappointed years from now when they wish they had a copy of an obituary or information about some event had happened years ago. They won't be able to find an old newspaper from that time period. I have found that local newspapers are a good place to look for local history from years past. Historians and genealogists can find much useful information that is not recorded anywhere else.

I would suggest printing out a copy of any obituary or news story you think you might need from funeral home web sites or other online news sources when it is published and keeping it in a file. If you live in one of these towns without a newspaper, you might want to keep a record of important events and the date they happened so you will have your own local history file just in case you ever need it. It will be interesting to read many years from now and you will have proof of what actually happened instead of relying on stories passed down from people who may have forgotten some of the important details.