

Jerry McKelvy's
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REMEMBERING BARBARA

I never met Barbara Rushing Lyerly in person even though we were the same age and lived only about eight miles apart when we were growing up. She lived in Chidester in Ouachita County and went to the Chidester school. I lived near Bluff City in Nevada County and went to school at Prescott. Sometime around 2011, we made contact through email and she wanted me to add her to my Sandyland Chronicle email list. Barbara's family (the Rushings) was a prominent family in Chidester. Her grandfather was Dr. J. L. Rushing, who was the family doctor for many families in the surrounding area. I remember being taken to him when I was a small child. Her great grandfather organized the Bank of Chidester in 1909 and The Rushing family also had a drug store in town.

Barbara had an interest in anything related to Chidester and its history. She and I corresponded about old lost cemeteries near Chidester, and over the next few years, she submitted several articles for *The Sandyland Chronicle*. One article was about her grandfather, Dr. Rushing, in the April, 2011 issue. In the May, 2013 issue is a story she wrote called "A Mystery That Still Haunts". Another article about the Bank of Chidester was in the March, 2015 issue. You can go back and read those issues on the web site. She donated some things belonging to Dr. Rushing to the Chidester Museum which has a huge collection of things pertaining to Chidester.

Barbara was a classroom teacher for over twenty years in Ashdown, Foreman, and Vilonia before moving into administration. She was an elementary principal at Ashdown and retired as assistant superintendent at Vilonia, Arkansas. After she retired, she and her husband moved to Ash Flat in northern Arkansas which she sometimes called the "Arctic Circle" of Arkansas. They had a beautiful home there and she often posted beautiful pictures of deer grazing in their yard. Not too long ago, they sold that place and moved to Jonesboro, Arkansas.

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We were all shocked to hear of her sudden death on January 24, 2019. I copied her last post from her Facebook page which she had posted early that morning. Just a few hours later, she was gone.



Barbara Rushing Lyerly

January 24 at 7:55 AM ·

Outside, this morning early, with my fur babies. All of a sudden, a loud noise began overhead. As I looked up there was a flight of Canadian geese at about roof height, honking and making a joyous noise to the Lord. So beautiful with the sun coming up behind them. They don't worry, they know where they are going. We humans should be so ingenious. Just follow where the Lord leads you. He is your GPS!

That's good advice for all of us. Since her death, I've read many comments from her former students who all had high praise for her as a teacher. She affected the lives of many students in her career as an educator. She will be greatly missed by her family and friends. Her funeral was held at the Chidester Methodist church January 28th and she was laid to rest in Chidester Cemetery.

Here is a re-print of an article she sent to me in 2013 about her memories of life in Chidester when she was growing up there.

A Day That Lasts for Memories

By
Barbara Rushing Lyerly

Oh, the wonderful days of the forties, fifties and sixties! Some would say that today is the “good old days”. This may very well be true, but remembering the times of our lives when the pace was slower, where there was the camaraderie of small-town life, and the knowledge that morals and values were taught and practiced makes for sweet nostalgia as we reach the twilight times of our lives.

Go on a little trip with me. Let's go back in time to our hometown of Chidester, Arkansas population around 500 souls. There is a fine school. There are all the necessities of life: grocery stores, a drug store, a doctor, cafes, a bus station, a telephone office, a hardware, a post office, several service stations and mechanic shops, two large sawmills, a telephone

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office, a shoe cobbler, a hotel, several beauty “parlors”, lots of farmers large and small, a tie yard, a very busy railroad depot, several churches, and many, many people who cared for each other.

Early in the morning as you walk to school, or go by on the school bus, you will see a group of men standing outside the post office talking, laughing, and making plans for the day. Some days they are quiet and solemn; maybe they are discussing the war. Some days they are boisterous as they con some small child (me) into going into the telephone booth by Mrs. Pauline Beaver’s Café where they had put a sullied up ‘possum! You might see several trucks come through hauling beautiful logs to be made into lumber or small “billetts” that will be made into paper. Children are walking to school from all directions. Each has a quarter for lunch and a nickel for milk at recess. Maybe you will see the big red bus stop and pick up people who are going to Camden or some other exotic place.

According to the time of year you might be able to buy some wonderful vegetables and fruits from farmers who have come into town in their wagons to sell their produce. You might go down to the Clingan Trading Post and buy a live chicken or two, or some eggs or hoop cheese. The Mercantile would love to sell you shoes, fabric and patterns to make a new dress, delicious meats and canned goods. You could visit Mr. Bob Bray and get a super dandy haircut from a true gentleman of the old South. The Gillespie’s Store had many intriguing items for sale along with groceries. Once I saved my money and purchased my mother a pair of baby doll pajamas for her birthday. They were red silky material with black lace trim. I thought they were beautiful. She didn’t agree! Dr. Rushing might take a look at your poison ivy and say, “Tut, tut, tut, you need to stay out of that stuff”. You could watch as Mr. Cross Epperson’s crew stacks cross ties in perfectly geometrical cubes. You could go by the bank and borrow some money, or visit with Mr. Garland Rushing, or Bill Clingan or John Chester Clingan. According to the year you are there you might meet Mr. Clifton Stinnett or H. B. Yarbrough. Mr. Mike Rowe would love to sell you some feed, or work on your car. G. W. Kilpatrick would welcome you to his station and Mrs. Ruby might cook you some fish and hushpuppies if you get there for lunch. If not, you could go to the Lee Hotel and “room and board” would find you eating a grand meal and meeting new friends. Mr.

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Tom Benton's market would be a great stop to buy some fresh food for your evening meal. Mr. Watson Roll would be available to fix your radio and later on, your television.

If you stay long enough you might see the Chidester Volunteer Fire Dept. in action. You might even be there when the Holleman-Dickinson Lumber Co. caught fire and even the teenage boys at school were released to go and fight the fire. The new fire truck is a beautiful shiny example of the American automotive industry. If you have enough time this afternoon you could tour the Bradford Cotton Gin. It was an amazing machine. Later in years it was a cucumber-grading shed for a big pickle company. Oh, I hope you come in the summer time and can go to the McGill peach orchard and just make yourself sick on the scrumptious peaches. You can gain a pound just smelling the wonderful smell. You could always stop by the Ouachita or Little Missouri Rivers and take a quick swim!

There will be lots of new friends to meet since everyone's grandchildren come to visit in the summer. The Aarants have beautiful girls, so do the Coxes. Mrs. Elsie Sweatman always has teenagers who speak "Yankee"! The Eppersons and Stinnetts and many others host city kids who love to come to Chidester.

If you visit after the advent of "rock and roll" you might have a great time at the Teen Town in the American Legion Hut. Mrs. Ruby Kilpatrick and Mrs. Sally Singleton gave up their Saturday nights for many years to chaperone teenage dances. In the summer time you might be there for a street dance if the kids can talk Mr. Ed Rushing into pushing his jukebox outside and feeding it quarters so everyone can dance. Other times you might just see a dozen cars parked in a circle with all the radios on the same station! Hope you don't get talked into stealing watermelons! Mr. Charlie Wheelington doesn't condone that behavior.

Hope you are there long enough to see Mr. Guffy put the mail out on a hook for a train to "catch" when it comes through. It's exciting to see the evening passenger train come through with the windows lighted and many people dressed up and going to Chicago, St. Louis or even Little Rock. That "call of the wild" probably drew many of us away from our simple little world into what we thought was a better life.

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So, you've spent a day in Chidester. This day spans many a year. This day will never come again, but the memories in our hearts allow us to drag it out and live it over and over and celebrate the wonderful people who made up our world.

Thanks, Barbara for reminding us of how life was for many of us growing up in this part of southwest Arkansas. I'm glad you took the time to share your memories with us. Rest in peace, my friend.

THIS LITTLE PIGGY CAME HOME

We've all heard stories about lost dogs who travel a long way to find their way home, but this story reported in *The Nevada County Picayune* in 1908 is a bit unusual. It seems a man named Will Jones was living about ten miles from Bodcaw and raised a pet pig. When he decided to move to Bodcaw, he sold the pig to his brother who lived nearby. A month later, the residents of Bodcaw noticed a strange hog walking down the street and up to the gate of the home of Mr. Jones. When Mr. Jones came out, the pig acted like he was delighted to see him. The pig looked like his former pet, but Mr. Jones doubted it could be his pet pig since the pig had never been to Bodcaw before. Just to be sure, he called his brother on the phone and asked him about the pig he had sold him and was told that the pig had been gone since the day before. This was the first case anyone could remember when a pig tracked its master over ten miles from where it was raised

HUGE TREE CUT IN NEVADA COUNTY

(from the 9-11-1937 issue of *The Prescott Daily News*)

One of the largest pine trees ever to be cut in Nevada County was harvested from the Eugene White land between Mt. Moriah and Cale.

Four logs cut from the tree required two trucks to haul them to the mill. The logs were cut as follows: 16 feet long, 38 inches in diameter, scale 1156 board feet; 14 feet long, 39 inches in diameter, scale 1,072 board feet; 12 feet long, 41 inches in diameter, scale

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1,027 board feet; 12 feet long, 37 inches in diameter, scale 817 board feet. Aside from these four logs, one 16-foot cut and one four-foot cut with a total of 1,296 board feet were left in the woods because of red heart which made them unfit for lumber. The two logs left in the woods made a total scale of 5,368 board feet out of the one tree.

The timber was originally sold to F. E. Monzingo and was later sold to R. H. Delaney who cut the mammoth tree and brought it here yesterday and sold it to the Ozan Lumber Co. The logs were taken to Delight where they were cut into lumber.

The value of the log was greatly increased due to the fact that there was only one inch of sap with the rest heart, to make the finest lumber. The first log cut measured 12 feet in circumference at the large end. Another remarkable feature of the tree was the fact that it tapered so little from the bottom to where the top log was cut. The above figures show that the thickness of the tree only varied five inches over the 54 feet length of the four logs.

Lumber men and forestry workers estimated the tree to be from 210 to 236 years old. It had 222 rings. Forestry men also said the tree had grown probably not more than one inch in the past 22 years. The tree was a virgin shortleaf pine and was one of the finest ever seen in this section.

BELLY WASHER

Some folks called them soft drinks, soda pop, or just plain old pop. My Aunt Myrtie called it belly washer. We all had our favorites when we were growing up, but it didn't really matter much to me. I liked them all. Sometimes we called them by the wrong name. For instance, we might say "Let's go get a Coke", but when we got to the store, we might get a Pepsi, a Coca-Cola, Dr Pepper, or R. C. They were similar and since Coca-Cola was the most popular, we just called them all "Coke".

Drinks were cheap back when I was growing up compared to today. A Coke cost a nickel and you could get a whole meal of junk food for about a quarter. We often bought a bag of Tom's salted peanuts and poured them in with the Coke. The bottles were glass and

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could be returned to the store when empty. Kids collected used bottles from the roadsides and took them to the stores where they could receive two cents each for them. Pop-Cola had a deal where you get a free drink if you found a lucky number inside the cap.

Coca-Cola had different size bottles, but it seemed like the small six-ounce bottle tasted better. The bottles had the name of the town where it was bottled on the bottom. We always looked on the bottom to see the name of the town. Most of the bottles had places like Camden, El Dorado, or Magnolia, but occasionally we would find one from Little Rock or Pine Bluff. It was educational. We were even learning geography by drinking Cokes.

Bottling companies tried all kinds of flavors to entice their customers. Just about any flavor a person wanted could be found in some soft drink. Even back in the early 1900s, the Prescott Ice and Milling Co. offered over 20 flavors of soft drinks, some with such interesting names as Cherry Blossom, Hot Tom, and Afri-Cola. One of the most popular drinks produced in Prescott was called Parfay.

Another popular drink was Grapette, a sweet grape-flavored drink made in Camden, Arkansas. The Grapette company was started by a man named Benjamin Tyndle Fooks. As a young man, he worked for fifty cents a day, but through hard work and determination, he became a successful businessman. He perfected his formula for Grapette in 1939 and it was a hit with consumers. Grapette became the most widely distributed product of any Arkansas industry in 1948 with over 300 bottlers in 40 states.

The company experimented with other flavors as well. They came out with Oranette and later a carbonated drink called Mr. Cola. Grapette memorabilia is popular with collectors in our area. The company offered concentrated syrup in glass bottles shaped like clowns, elephants, and cats. These are often found in flea markets and garage sales and bring a good price. The cap on the bottles had a slot so they could be used as a piggy bank. The price is higher if the bottle has a cap on it.

The Grapette company was sold in 1970 and the drink was no longer available. Finally, a deal was worked out with Walmart in 2005 to stock Grapette in Walmart stores. So, if you haven't tried Grapette, check your local Walmart to see if they have it in stock.

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Did you drink Grapette when you were growing up? What was your favorite soft drink? Did you return empty bottles to the stores for money? Send me your memories about anything associated with soft drinks and I'll print them in the next issue.



RAINFALL RECORD

After an extremely wet year in 2018, we are off to a good start in 2019. I received 6.1 inches in January. January was cool, but not nearly as cold as some years. The lowest temperature was about 22 degrees at the end of the month. No snow or ice was reported in our area in January.

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Here's a poem from Don Mathis for St. Patrick's Day on March 17, 2019.

The Irish Word -- by Don Mathis

The Irish are so good with words
with shortened verse or rambling dirge;
it provides an inspiration.

It makes me want to emulate
minstrels of old or imitate
their sources of stimulation.

How they used to praise their king!
Of his exploits, they would sing.
It gives me admiration.

Life, according to bards of yore
and tales of ancient troubadour,
was rich beyond imagination.

The women all were hardy souls
whose beauty writers would extol
with their frequent recitation.

The Irish warrior's speed and strength
were simply far beyond belief
as per poet's proclamation.

And the curses of the Irish tongue
would make the Devil's own ears burn
with unending consternation.

Ahh, but the Irish prayers are best.
You know when you've been blessed
with heavenly adoration.

The Irish have a way with words
with shortened verse or rambling dirge;
the best in all creation.

SOME SLANG IRISH EXPRESSIONS

Acting the maggot—being obnoxious; acting like a fool —“He is really acting the maggot”

Bad dose – severe illness---“You have a bad dose of it”

Bunk off – skip school or work—“I know you bunked off today”

Culchi – person from a rural area—“She was a culchi originally”

Donkey's years—a very long time—“I haven't seen you in donkey's years”

Earwicing – listening to a private conversation—“You've been earwicing again”

Fine thing – good looking man or woman—“He is a fine thing”

Gander – a quick glance—“Take a quick gander at this”

Jacks – toilet “I'm off to the jacks”

Kip – a dump of a place – “That was a kip of a hotel”

Leg it – run away quickly—“Come on. We need to leg it now”

Mortified – highly embarrassed ('I was mortified when I discovered my mistake”

Not the full shilling – not fully sane—“I don't think he is the full shilling”

Oul fella – your father—“My oul fella has gone to the store”

Oul dear – your mother—“My oul dear has gone shopping”

Shattered – exhausted—“After driving all night, I was shattered”

Sorry – excuse me—“Sorry, can I please get in there?”

Sucking diesel – doing really well—“We're sucking diesel now”