

Jerry McKelvy's
SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

Vol. 19 – No. 11

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November, 2019

The following article was contributed by Mrs. Mavis Belisle of Austin, Texas. Mrs. Belisle (now deceased) sent me several articles about her early life in Nevada County. She spent her last years at a retirement center in Austin, Texas. This article is a good record of the life of Annie Pearl Patterson who also lived at the same retirement center and many things mentioned should bring back memories of similar events in the lives of some readers who grew up in rural Arkansas during the “good old days”.

ANNIE PEARL PATTERSON

Annie Pearl Terrell was born in De Gray, Arkansas on October 16, 1907. Her parents were Andrew Coleman Terrell and Luella Rutland Terrell. She was the youngest child and the only daughter. She had two older brothers, Tom and Joel.

She and her brothers grew up on their parent’s farm. She had told many stories about her childhood. Her Mama was a friend and helper to many families in their rural community. Mama was called many times by the doctor to assist with the birth of babies on the farms in the community, and she cooked and sewed and helped neighbors all her life.

Her Papa was tall and strong and kind. He also helped many neighbors during times of need, taking a load of firewood to a widow, or helping with crops when a father was sick. She said that when they would go for walks, she thought her Papa knew the names of every tree and plant in the woods.

Her parents grew almost everything they needed on the farm. Mama had a garden and canned and “put away” fruits and vegetables for the winter. They had their own cows for milk and butter, chicken for eggs and Sunday dinner, and Papa preserved their own meat in a smokehouse—bacon and hams. Food was always good and plentiful, but there wasn’t much cash.

Annie Pearl helped Mama with the household chores. Clothes were washed in a big black iron pot over a fire. They used home-made lye soap that Mama made. Annie Pearl hated to iron. Mama ironed everything, all the clothes, and even the sheets. They used irons that were heated over a wood-burning stove, alternating two irons so that one was always hot. One time Annie Pearl folded up the pillow cases and then only ironed the outside. When Mama discovered what she had done, she made her re-iron them.

Annie Pearl walked with her brothers to a small rural two-room school. In the winter

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if it began to snow, she would be overjoyed to look out the school window and see that Papa had come with the buggy to take her home so that she didn't have to walk home in the snow.

The country school had classes only through the lower grades. She had to go to high school in Arkadelphia, a near-by town. She boarded in town with a dear friend. Papa would pick her up every Friday afternoon and take her back to town on Sunday afternoons.

She graduated from Arkadelphia High School and began teaching elementary school (in those days, only a high school education was required to be a teacher). One weekend she went home with a friend, and that Sunday morning, the two of them went to church together. It happened to be the home church of Wright Patterson. Wright said that when he saw that beautiful young woman across the church, he worked his way across the church after the service, asking until he found someone who could introduce him to Annie Pearl. That day was October 16, 1928; it was her twenty-first birthday.

Wright began courting Annie Pearl. He was gregarious, out-going and full of good humor. His personality complimented Annie Pearl's, who was a little shy.

They attended Magnolia A & M College in Magnolia, Arkansas from 1928 through 1930 and they were married in 1930. They both taught school—he taught high school math and science and coached basketball, and she taught elementary school. It was during the Depression, and school teachers in Arkansas didn't make a lot of money, but they were happy. She was thrilled when they ordered some kitchen utensils from the Sears-Roebuck catalog to start housekeeping. (We still have her butcher knife that is worn to a sliver from years of being sharpened, her solid wood rolling pin, and several of her original iron skillets.)

In 1935 their first child was born. He was named James Terrell after Wright's older brother who had died young of diphtheria, and Annie Pearl's maiden name. Annie Pearl no longer taught school after the birth of their first child; she became a full-time mother. Wright continued to teach and coach for several more years. Annie Pearl has recalled her pride when she attended a basketball game and walked into the gym with James as a toddler holding on to her finger. She could hear people saying "aaahhh" around the gym as she walked by.

They couldn't support a family on a school teacher's salary, so Wright obtained a job working at Lion Oil Co. refinery in El Dorado, Arkansas. In 1940 their second child was born, a daughter they named Virginia, and in 1944 a third child was born. He was named Arthur Wright after General Douglas McArthur, whom Wright admired. World War II caused the refinery to be closed. Wright heard the government was opening a refinery in Old Ocean, Texas to produce aviation fuel, so he got a job in Texas and Annie Pearl and the children stayed in Arkansas.

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The refinery was located on the flat coastal plains of Texas. Live oak trees with Spanish moss, palmettos, and swampy thickets covered much of the countryside. There was very little population and not much in the way of housing. The government-built bunk houses for the workers and Wright lived in a bunk house for a while.

After the war ended, the government closed the plant, but then it was reopened by Phillips Petroleum Co., and Wright was able to get a job with Phillips. Because there was still little housing, Phillips built a company camp--what today we would call a subdivision of small homes for its workers. Wright and Annie Pearl rented a house there and the family moved to Texas. Annie Pearl always laughed that she never forgave Wright for moving her away from the beautiful hills of Arkansas to the God-forsaken flat plains of coastal Texas.

Even though it was hard for Annie Pearl to live in the close confines of the camp, it was a great place for her children. There were always other kids to play with. In the summer time, they would play hide and seek after dark while the grown-ups sat out on the lawns and talked. The skies were very dark at night and they often saw falling stars in the summer. One night, Annie Pearl woke Virginia up during the night to see a full eclipse of the moon.

The children all roller-skated, rode bikes, and played marbles and jacks. They could always find a neighborhood friend to play with. Summers in Texas were hot and humid, and there was no air conditioning. Annie Pearl did most of the house work in the morning because it was too hot in the afternoon. She was happy that they were able to buy their own refrigerator and their own washing machine as appliances became available after the war ended. The washing machine was the type with a wringer on it. The clothes were washed in the washer and then squeezed through the wringer into two wash tubs of clean water to rinse out the soap. Virginia helped her with the laundry, being very careful not to get her fingers caught by the wringer. Clothes were hung out to dry on a clothes line, and often a summer shower caused a flurry of activity when they ran out to bring in the clothes to keep them from getting rained on.

The three children rode a school bus into Sweeny, the nearest town with a school. Eventually Wright and Annie Pearl were able to buy a house in Sweeny and they moved there with their family.

Their Christian faith was a big part of their daily lives. Wright taught a men's Sunday school class, but being shy, Annie Pearl never liked to lead a discussion. She was content to let Wright have the limelight. They attended church with their children at least three times a week, so Arthur would sometimes fall asleep lying on a church pew with his head in Annie Pearl's lap. Wright loved to sing exuberantly in a deep bass voice, and used to laugh that little children would turn around in church in amazement to see who was singing behind them. Annie Pearl said it didn't do any good to poke him to try to quiet him; he'd just grin and sing louder.

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Their house was always full of laughter and boisterous good humor. It was obvious to the three children that their parents loved and respected each other deeply. As they grew older, they have asked each other, “Weren’t we lucky to have them as parents?”

Wright and Annie Pearl taught their children that honesty and good character mattered above other things. They didn’t have a lot of material things, but nobody did in those days. Wright always used to joke, “Why mind expenses? We’ve got plenty of them.”

They scrimped and saved and managed to put all three children through college. James graduated from Texas A & M University in 1957 with a degree in business. He had a 32-year career as an officer in the U. S. Army Reserves. He married Anna Grace Shaw and had two sons, Joel and John Patterson. After the death of his wife, James married his present wife, Beverly.

Virginia graduated from Southwest Texas State Teachers College in 1961 and married Edwin Lloyd. He became a career officer in the U. S. Air Force. They have three daughters—Leigh, Leslie, and Laura—and moved many times before settling in Austin.

Arthur graduated from Southwest Texas State College in 1967. He became a career officer and pilot in the U. S. Air Force. He married Rebecca Russell and they have one daughter, Jessica.

Wright died of cancer in 1967. He was only 62 and Annie Pearl was only 58 when he died. She decided to make a new life for herself. She took a job working in the Sweeny school system because she loved working with and seeing children. This also gave her a group of women who became her support group and friends. She joined the Day Lily Society and began to grow and hybridize lilies. She went on sight-seeing excursions with her friends and she traveled by plane to visit her three children across the U. S. She went to Denver, California, Washington, D. C., and northern Virginia. She was thrilled to visit Mt. Vernon, the home of George Washington, which she had studied about in school but had never dreamed as a country girl that she would one day get to visit.

She lived independently in her home in Sweeny until she was 89, when she finally decided that she would move to Austin to be near her daughter, Virginia Floyd. She lived in Englewood Retirement Center for eight years.

Annie Pearl never lived in the past. She was constantly still reading and learning and looking to the future. She was interested in sports, politics, and her children’s and grandchildren’s lives. She decided at age 96 that she was going to re-read the Bible through entirely, and she did, reading a little each day. She still loved to learn up until her death.

Annie Pearl died peacefully of complications of pneumonia at age 97. She was surrounded by people who loved her. We shall all miss her.

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(Annie Pearl died March 19, 2005 and is buried by her husband, Wright Patterson at Sweeny Cemetery in Sweeny, Texas)

WHAT IS IT?



The object in the last issue is a bicycle siren. It was mounted on the bicycle frame at the front wheel. A chain was attached to it that reached to the handle bar of the bicycle. When the chain was pulled, the round tip of the siren was pulled against the front wheel which produced the sound of a siren. There was a long hill near our house. I would ride down that hill (which was gravel at that time)

with my siren going.

I received a few answers and some were very close. Duncan McKelvey said it was a horn for my bike, so that's pretty close. Don Rubarts thought it was an auto horn. Bill Sellers said it was some kind of whistle.

A COMMENT FROM A READER

From Betty Thomas in Texas ---

To the list of "dangerous toys we played on" I want to add the jumping board. We would find a wide board (at least 10 inches) and at least 8 feet long and a very thick rock at least 6 inches thick that we would lay the board across with the rock in the middle. We would find another girl to stand on the other end and then one would jump thus flinging the other girl skyward. When she came down, she was supposed to land on her end of the board thus flinging the other girl into outer space (we thought!) If we were good enough, we could do this over and over until we got bored and stopped. The game was built to guarantee sprained arms and sometimes a broken one. I recall that jumping boards and jumping ropes were springtime games. Why, I have no idea.

SEPTEMBER WEATHER

Total rainfall for September was only .8 of an inch. All the nice green grass from the excess rainfall of the previous months quickly turned brown in September. The temperatures were very warm in September almost beating the record high temperatures set way back in 1953. Overall, the summer of 2019 was not too bad compared to previous summers.

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BELIEVE IT OR NOT!

(from the 8-4-1911 issue of The Nevada County Picayune)

A portion of a needle was taken from the knee of Mrs. Sophia Graham, aged 71 years, of Murfreesboro, this state, last week, and that she thinks was stuck into the palm of her hand 43 years ago at a quilting bee. Mrs. Graham lives 12 miles from Murfreesboro. She was in the city one day last week, and was seized with pain in her knee while walking on the street. A physician was summoned and he made an examination of the spot where she complained her knee pained her.

He saw the fine point of something that he removed, and found it to be a portion of a needle an inch and a half in length. When Mrs. Graham was shown the needle, she recalled having stuck it in her hand nearly a half century ago. It was the first time that she remembers having experienced any pain from it.

MARRIED FOR 103 YEARS

William Avery Rockefeller, father of John D. Rockefeller, the richest man in America in 1900, was known as "Doc" Rockefeller and "Devil Bill" Rockefeller. He was not a real doctor but claimed to have a cure for cancer and sold patent medicines and elixirs. He was also a bigamist. At age 27, he was married to Eliza Davison and the marriage lasted 52 years. While married to Eliza, he had an affair with his housekeeper. He traveled around the country selling his elixirs and was sometimes gone from home weeks at a time. During one of these trips, he met Margaret Allen, and claiming to be Dr. William A. Levingston, he married her without obtaining a divorce from Eliza. He was married to Margaret for 51 years. He is described in various articles as being a quack, a con-man, a womanizer, ruthless, an accused rapist, a scoundrel, and a bigamist.

According to a news item in the Prescott Daily News issue of Dec. 10, 1910, Mrs. Margaret L. Allen Levingston, widow of Dr. William A. Levingston (in reality, William A. Rockefeller, father of John D. Rockefeller) died at her home at the age of 80 years. Her husband had tried to keep his identity a secret while he lived, and she carried to her grave the secrets he entrusted to her. She was buried beside the unmarked grave of her husband who died May 11, 1906 at the age of 95 years.

The Rockefeller family tried to keep this family secret from the public. Rumors had been circulating and money was offered by the press to anyone who could provide proof about the Rockefeller family secret, but it was two years after his death before the story finally became public. John D. Rockefeller never publicly acknowledged that Dr. William A. Levingston was really his father, William Avery Rockefeller.

Dr. William A. Levingston was buried at Oakland Cemetery in Freeport, Illinois in an unmarked grave. A grave marker was installed later which was paid for by his second wife's estate. You can find a picture of him and other information at the Find-a-Grave web site or do a search for William Avery Rockefeller.

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THE WONDER DRUG—TANLAC (an advertisement in the Prescott Daily News—1917)

“My wife goes about the house now singing and whistling all the time, and no wonder she is so happy, for on just three bottles of Tanlac she has gained 18 pounds and seems like a different woman altogether” says J. D. Zachery of Georgia.

“My wife suffered from indigestion and stomach trouble for a long time and was in a general run-down condition. She reached the point where she couldn’t hardly sleep at all, and her appetite went down to almost nothing. She couldn’t take interest in anything and was very weak and nervous and seemed despondent all the time. She lost a good deal of weight and her strength was getting away from her.

“This is the shape she was in when she began taking Tanlac. She has taken three bottles of the medicine and the indigestion has been relieved entirely. She hasn’t a pain about her and feels fine in every way. She has been gaining weight and strength and weighs 18 pounds more today than when she began taking Tanlac. She has the biggest kind of appetite and eats meats, hot biscuits, and anything else she wants and everything agrees with her perfectly. She is no longer nervous and dizzy and sleeps like a baby. She goes about her housework as happy as a sixteen-year-old girl and smiles all the time.

“I have one hundred cows to look after and my wife is helping me more with my work than she ever has in her life. Tanlac just seems to have filled her with new life, strength, and energy, and you don’t know how happy we are with her recovery.”

Tanlac can be purchased at Hesterly Drug Store in Prescott, E. T. Kennedy in Bodcaw, J. E. Lambert at Sutton, W. A. L. Waters at Irma, and E. Delaughter Mercantile Co. at Boughton.

Tanlac was probably the most popular patent medicine about 100 years ago. The man responsible for it was L. T. Cooper who relied on newspaper advertisements to spread the news about his tonic. Many of the testimonials printed in the papers were false. In one of the testimonials a man told of how his health had improved from taking Tanlac. On the same page two columns over was an announcement for the man’s funeral. Mr. Cooper had previously been convicted of fraud in one state.

In the days before modern medicine, people were searching for anything that might cure their ailments. The extensive advertising campaign complete with testimonials from people who claimed to have been helped by the medicine resulted in millions of bottles of Tanlac being sold. An analysis by chemists showed that Tanlac was mainly disguised booze – a mixture of alcohol, herbs, glycerin, and a small amount of laxative flavored with a wild cherry flavor. It was advertised as a “tonic and system purifier”.

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PAYING DEBTS By F. A. Blackmer (1884)

Mr. Wilkins had a dollar, so he said he guessed he'd pay
A little sum he'd borrowed from a gentleman named Gray;
Then Gray took that dollar and he said, "It seems to me
I'd better pay that little debt I owe to McAfee."
Then McAfee the dollar paid to Thompson,
And by Thompson paid to Hart.
And so that coin kept rolling, as a very busy "plunk",
Until it paid indebtedness amounting in the chunk
To more than forty dollars, and it may be rolling yet,
And all because this Wilkins thought he'd better pay a little debt.

For when a dollar is started
On its debt-destroying way
There hardly is a limit
To the sums that it will pay.

Mr. Wilkins knew a kindness that he might have done for Gray,
But he wasn't feeling kindly, so he thought it wouldn't "pay".
Then Gray, not being grateful, said, "It really seems to me
I've done sufficient favors for that blasted McAfee".

Then McAfee felt ugly, and he took a whack at Smart,
Who passed it on to Thompson, who passed it on to Hart.
And so, no act of kindness was done through all the day
But many an act that rankled in a most unpleasant way,
And many a soul was longing the help to fit its need
And all because this Wilkins didn't do a kindly deed.

For a dollar or a kindness,
The rule is still the same, I say;
If you wish to see it rolling,
Better start it on its way.

REMEMBERING NOV. 11th -- By Don Mathis

Children become soldiers; there are a thousand reasons why.
Some will die in combat, others will survive.
I won't forget their sacrifices, their families who had to wait,
and their careers they put on hold. So, if it's not too late,
I want to thank the veteran. What he had to do, he did.
Soldiers grow old too fast. It seems yesterday he was just
a kid.
We can flower and flag the cemetery. We can shed a little
tear.
We can offer our thanks to the living veterans who are still
here.