

REFLECTIONS NO. 32 (July 5, 2021)

By Jerry McKelvy

COINCIDENCE OR NOT?

A remarkable coincidence is that two of our Founding Fathers and former presidents—John Adams and Thomas Jefferson—died on July 4, 1826 which was the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. In fact, another president—James Monroe—also died on July 4th five years later in 1831. What are the odds that three of our 46 presidents would die on July 4th, a national holiday?

Adams and Jefferson had some disagreements over the years but had become friends in their later years and wrote many letters to each other.

John Adams was 90 years old when he died, presumably of a heart attack or congestive heart failure. Thomas Jefferson was 83 at the time of his death and he had been ill for some time.

John Adams' last words were "Thomas Jefferson survives", but he didn't know that Jefferson had already died a few hours earlier at this home of Monticello. There is some question about whether those were his exact words, but he did mention Jefferson's name.

Thomas Jefferson's last words are also not too clear. Some said he asked "Is it the Fourth?" Some say his last words were "This is the Fourth of July". Others think his last words were "No, doctor, nothing more". It is said he refused to take his usual dose of laudanum to ease pain when he made that statement.

A historian came up with six possibilities when studying the deaths of these two Founding Fathers on the 50th anniversary of the nation's independence:

1. Coincidence
2. Divine intervention showing that God was blessing the new nation
3. "Hanging on" to life to ensure death on July 4th
4. Caused to die by others
5. Allowing oneself to die
6. Causing oneself to die

Much has been written about the three U. S. presidents who died on July 4th. It is generally believed that had these men been given a choice on what day their life would end, they would all have chosen July 4th as that day because of the love they had for this country.

Speaking of coincidences, here's something else a little strange. After George Washington, the next five presidents were John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, and John Quincy Adams in that order. John Adams was eight years older than Jefferson. Jefferson was eight years older than Madison. Madison was eight years older than Monroe, and Monroe was eight years older than John Quincy Adams.

Comments from readers—

1. People are known to “hang on” to life, to delay death by force of will, in order to reach certain milestones. Birthdays, anniversaries, weddings, the birth of a grandchild, all are well known for this phenomenon. Both Adams and Jefferson were deathly ill, and both wanted to see the fiftieth anniversary of their finest hour. Jefferson’s last words were “Is it the fourth?”. Adams’ were “Thomas Jefferson still survives” (though unbeknownst to him, Jefferson had expired a few hours earlier). Monroe was also probably holding on to see the Fourth. It’s not a coincidence. —Amy

2. If every word is not absolute history, we all were taught and respect and believe in the founding as it was done by God fearing men. They were white and it was 240 years ago. Now it’s the mantra to judge people’s actions that were 200++ years ago as if they were in grade school in 2021. If our founders were as ignorant as professors in Harvard now ---what country would exist? None at all. We would have become a sectional group comparable to Europe in constant war as has been their case for hundreds of years. Europe would never be reconcilable if the USA didn’t exist. - Dan

REFLECTIONS NO. 33 (July 12, 2021)

By Jerry McKelvy

Walking Across America

A few days ago, as I was driving on Hwy. 24 out of Camden, I noticed a young man sitting on the shoulder of the road with what looked like backpacks. He wasn’t trying to hitch a ride and appeared to be just resting. The next day I spotted the same guy walking along the highway with his backpacks heading west. He was about 20 miles from where I had first seen him the day before. I assumed he must be on a walking trip from one place to another.

Some people just like to take long hikes for one reason or another. Some set a goal of walking a long distance for publicity to raise money for a charity or maybe they just want to see new country and meet new people. A few years ago, a man was riding across America in a wagon pulled by mules. He came through our town heading west. He posted his adventures each day on Facebook and I enjoyed reading his posts. I mentioned him to an email friend who lived in Phoenix, Arizona which was one of the cities he planned to go through. She and her husband went to where he was camped in Phoenix and talked to the man. She sent me pictures of their visit with him.

Riding across America in a wagon is one thing, but walking across America would be even more difficult. In 1907, two men, Al Edwards and H. C. Clary, came through Prescott on a walking trip across America. They had left Los Angeles on Oct. 10, 1907 and claimed they belonged to an athletic club which agreed to pay them \$5000 if they could reach New York by June 25, 1908. They had made it as far as Prescott in April, 1908. The men left home without any money and under the agreement, they could not beg, accept any charity, or accept any rides of any kind on the trip. They sold furniture polish along the way to get expense money for the trip. They carried no baggage of any kind. They had made arrangements to leave their soiled clothes at a laundry where they would be washed

and shipped to a town further ahead. This eliminated having to carry extra clothes with them.

The men said they had already gone through three pairs of heavy shoes and were almost ready for a fourth pair by the time they reached Prescott. In order to finish the trip by the agreed-upon date, they had to average 20 miles per day. The men said they sometimes walked 30 miles or more on a good day. After a two-hour rest stop in Prescott, they left walking up the railroad tracks toward Gurdon.

I found a newspaper report from New York in July, 1908, which said that Al Edwards had reached New York on time and was expecting to receive his share of the \$5000 from the athletic club. The athletic club in Los Angeles responded by saying they did not know anybody named Al Edwards, had never had any dealings with him, and had never made any agreement to pay him for walking across America.

There's probably more to this story, but I couldn't find anything else about it. I did find a list of 46 people who have walked across America. Some people climb a mountain just to see if they can do it, so I suppose walking across America can be done. It would take a lot of planning to accomplish such a feat.

REFLECTIONS NO. 34 (July 19, 2021)

By Jerry McKelvy

CARTER'S LITTLE LIVER PILLS

A very popular saying in the South goes something like this—"He (or she) has more _____ than Carter has liver pills".

Carter's Little Liver Pills was a patent medicine developed by Samuel J. Carter, a chemist from Erie, Pennsylvania, in 1868. He claimed the little pills would cure just about everything including biliousness, sick headache, torpid liver, furred tongue, indigestion, constipation, dizziness, nausea, and pain in the side. He claimed they improved bile flow in the liver. One ad had this phrase—"They touch the liver".

In 1943, it was discovered that the pills had nothing to do with the liver so the Federal Trade Commission said a name change was needed. Finally, in 1959, the name was changed to Carter's Little Pills. All mention of the liver was removed.

A black crow was the trademark for Carter's Little Pills. The pills were advertised in newspapers all over the country and were sold in practically every drug store. They were so common that the phrase I mentioned above became well-known throughout the country. When the name was changed, so did the phrase. Now, people just said "He (or she) has more _____ than Carter has pills".

Carter's Little Pills can still be purchased on Amazon. They are mainly advertised today as a laxative and sell at a higher price than other products with the same ingredients

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The Times Picayune newspaper in 1900 published a listing of some of the leading men in Nevada County at that time. I will be including some of these from time to time. Perhaps some of you will learn some new information about one of your ancestors.

Nathan Fairchild is 82 years old and is still able to plow all day. For 43 years he has been in Arkansas. His faith is that of the Primitive Baptist and his upright walk has won for him the good will and highest returns from all who know him.

S. D. Carman, living 10 miles northwest of town, is among our honored citizens. He has passed his eighty-fifth birthday. His life has been one of honor and deep piety. He has lived in the community where he now lives for about 35 years. He was born and raised in Tennessee, but has given his active and mature manhood to Arkansas.

Dr. S. J. Hesterly has enjoyed the free and open air of Arkansas from his birth. After securing a good literary education, he entered Memphis Hospital Medical College where he graduated with the class of 1895. After a season of active practice at Bluff City, he came to Prescott in 1897, where he has enjoyed a lucrative practice.

J. Wilburn Honea first looked on this world's beauty in the state of S. C. in the year 1833. In 1852 he reached Arkansas and since that time, except his wanderings during the Civil strife, he has lived in our state. His zeal for Christ and his kingdom has been more than that of many men. His wife still stands by his side. Their children number 15 and are an honor to their Christian devotion. Though they have passed the 3 score years, their lives are active and full of usefulness.

REFLECTIONS NO. 35 (July 26, 2021)

By Jerry McKelvy

PEST HOUSES

Back in the early 1900s, most towns had what were called pest houses. These were used as place to put people who had communicable diseases like smallpox, tuberculosis, cholera, and typhus. They were mainly used for those who had no family to care for them or a place to isolate those with communicable diseases. They were usually located at the edge of towns usually near a cemetery so that those who died could quickly be buried. They were sometimes called by other names such as plague house or fever shed. The name pest house comes from the word pestilence.

Those sent to the pest house remained there until they recovered or died. They mainly had to care for themselves. Sometimes the city brought food to them and left it outside the door and in some places, those sent there were expected to bring their own clothing and food. A doctor visited the patients occasionally but there were many complaints about the poor conditions at pest houses and the lack of medical attention. Some people complained about the pest house being too close to their homes.

Texarkana had a very rigid quarantine in Sept. of 1898. A detention camp and pest house had been established near the city limits and inspectors placed on all trains. Person who could not furnish proof they were not from an infected district were placed in the detention camp and those entering the city from an infected district were placed in the pest house.

In Jan. of 1900, the city of Pine Bluff announced that the city had purchased an eight-room residence one mile southeast of the city to be used as a pest house for smallpox patients.

An outbreak of smallpox caused much concern in Prescott about 1907 and efforts were made to keep it from spreading. Here are a few items from the newspaper in Prescott:

May, 1907—Some Prescott residents had been exposed to smallpox and had been ordered to be quarantined in their homes for ten days. The city marshal announced that the quarantine would be rigidly enforced and that anyone caught outside their homes during the quarantine order would be removed to the pest house.

June, 1908—The Prescott city council recommended that a physician be sent to attend to Oliver Harrell who had been quarantined in the pest house located in a pasture west of town.

Jan., 1909—A brakeman discovered a passenger on a train who had symptoms of smallpox. The man had boarded at San Antonio and was traveling to St. Louis but was unaware that he had the disease. He was removed from the train at Prescott and put in the pest house. His condition was said to be very serious.

Feb., 1913—The Prescott board of health issued a quarantine against the state of Oklahoma and the cities of Blevins, DeAnn, Emmet, and Hope. Nobody from those places was allowed to enter Prescott unless they had a notarized affidavit stating they had not been exposed to smallpox and they had to have a health certificate from a doctor. A pest house would be secured near the city limits and would be guarded at all times.

When the pest house at Conway was empty, the city decided to install screens on the windows and doors of the pest house to control flies. It was thought that flies and mosquitoes from the pest house might infect people in nearby homes.

Smallpox was brought to the New World by European explorers. The disease caused many deaths among the native Indians. About 30 percent of those who contracted smallpox died and those who recovered usually were left with scars. Since those who had recovered could not get the disease again, some of those people were employed to be caretakers at some of the pest houses. Having already had smallpox was a plus when a person was looking for a job. An early newspaper ran this help wanted ad: Wanted—a man between the ages of 20 and 30 to be a footman and butler. He must have had smallpox in the natural way.

In 1917 when troop movements accelerated the chances for the spreading of smallpox, Arkansas was one of the first states to require all students, teachers, and employees of

Arkansas schools to be vaccinated or show proof of immunity. A court case was brought challenging the law, but the Arkansas State Supreme Court upheld the law. Smallpox was officially considered eradicated by the World Health Organization in 1980. The smallpox vaccine is no longer available in the United States.

Smallpox existed for at least 3000 years causing millions of deaths. It was responsible for about 300 million deaths world-wide since 1900. The eradication of smallpox is considered one of the great medical success stories.

Just this week, I heard a report that officials were monitoring 200 people in 27 states who had been exposed to a person from Nigeria who had monkeypox and had flown to Dallas. Monkeypox is caused by the same virus that caused smallpox, but is a less severe disease than smallpox. Hopefully, they can keep this disease from spreading.

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Comments from readers—

1. According to CDC, a disproportionately high percentage of Democrats are refusing to take the COVID 19 vaccine!!!! They are understandably skeptical!!

The new virus threat in the US, not a joke, is Monkeypox, it has been introduced here from Africa. There is no vaccine or cure for it.
Google it!!!! – James D.

2. I did not know all this. Wonder why Mother didn't tell us about some of this stuff. She lived during some of it. She did tell us that Uncle Garland died of the flu in 1918. I recall getting the small-pox needle scratch. -- Irma

3. What an interesting article. I had no idea of this sad bit of experience in my hometown. Thanks for your continuing research in this part of the world. – Irma

4. This is an excellent article and very informative especially considering what America is experiencing with Covid-19. We should always seek to learn from history. Covid is by no means the only disease outbreak in our country, but it is the one I will most remember. I recall polio and getting shots but was not old enough to be really concerned. – Teresa

5. There are so many things I could say about this--and I imagine many others will anyway. Of course, the similarity of disease and vaccine is staring in your face in this 1900-1910 account. Finally, Arkansas made it mandatory to have small pox vaccination--back then. I expect it was nationwide. I have been all over the world and everyone I ever encountered has the vaccination scar. We have the same Constitution of course that we had in 1900. The Federal System gives states' rights and states need to urgently make the vaccine mandatory. But without question the FDC must approve these things drugs.....Totally OUT OF HAND. With no leadership. -- Dan