

# Tales

from the general store

No. 2

Winter 1961-62

\$1

There's more to  
butchering than  
killing a hog—

Stories begin  
on page 9



Hog butchering  
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# RE-DISCOVER THE GOOD OL' DAYS



## Attend the Tales Spring Fair

at the

**Bellair General Store**

**April 16 and 17**

**10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

**"Tales from the general store"**

**Bellair, Illinois**

Fairs mean many things to many people. Some think of fun and games while others think of good food and music. Come find them all at the Tales old-fashioned Spring Fair. Play dominoes or '42', pitch horseshoes and eat sausage and pancakes with homemade butter. Relive the past while watching quilts being made, viewing the almost lost art of caning chairs, and stirring up images of times gone by with beautiful antiques and other old-time crafts.

**Visit old friends; make new ones**  
**"Tales from the general store" RR #2, Oblong, IL 62449**

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Cover photos by Russ Harper and Beverly Russell. Jackie Snider, Roger Walden, Joe Vajarsky, Harold Elliott and Craig Johnson watch as Clyde Purcell exposes the leaders in the hog's back leg to insert the gambrel stick necessary to hold the hog while scalding and gutting.

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by Dr. Carl R. Bogardus

contributed by Thelma Gifford  
Director of Nursing  
Lincoln Trail College  
Robinson, Illinois

This story was handed to Sarah Jane Webster, mother of Thelma Gifford. Dr. Bogardus was Webster's doctor for around 30 years. He gave the story to her to give to Gifford when she was going to nursing school.

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by Ray Elliott

In 1926, Adkisson's father gave him the motor from a damaged Ford truck. Almost 50 years later, Adkisson built a pickup truck, using the motor and parts he found around the country in parts stores or junkyards and had made or made himself. It took him almost three years to build the truck which he now drives in parades and around the countryside.

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and by Lisa Martin

Before the days of refrigeration, people preserved meat in a variety of ways. The sugar curing process was one of the easiest and most widely used methods of curing pork.



Ray Elliott

## She was a lady from another time

Some of the old-timers around Bellair remember when Nancy Bell ran a general store there. It sat just west of The Bank Building and was a large, sprawling structure with a false front, used as a feed mill in earlier days.

A few old-timers still around might remember when she started the store in her two-story, frame house that barely stands today, just west of The Store. One of the old-timers told me about how she started it.

"Why, she'd buy that penny candy, y'know," he said, shaking the long ash from his cigarette with a flick of his hand, "then she'd sell it and buy more until she had enough business and money to open the store."

There wasn't much more to the story. But there didn't have to be. Nancy Bell became a character out of a Mark Twain novel. To me anyway. I had this image of her in my mind as an old lady, as she was when I was a kid, standing behind a makeshift counter in her house, holding her pennies in her gnarled hands. Little boys and girls in bib overalls and long dresses ran in, handed her pennies and took her candy and ran laughing down the street.

I thought of her taking her pennies, tied in an old soiled handkerchief, to the bank each night and barely scraping by until she had saved enough money to open her store in The Old Mill. That's where she had her store when I first remember her.

At that time, sometime in the mid-40's, the outside of Nancy Bell's Store had no paint on the gray, weather boards. I don't remember much about the insides of the store. A couple of dim lights hung from the ceiling by cords, lighting the area just around the lights and casting dim rays in behind counters and shelves of dusty merchandise.

I don't remember seeing much I wanted to buy. I do remember wondering what she was like and wanting to go in her store so I could take a look at her.

There wasn't much time for that in her store for me, though. By the time I'd moved to town and remember much about it, she'd closed her store, selling what she could and moving the rest, boxes of paperwork and other things of no use to anyone else, over to an old barn behind the house that she then lived in, an old hotel down the street from the Church of Christ.

From then on I'd only see her out in the yard or on the back porch occasionally. When I'd walk by on the sidewalk or out in the street, I'd start gawking at the house as soon as I got anyways near close to it. And I'd still be gawking when I had passed it, my neck turning to the strangest angles to catch a glimpse of Nancy.

Maybe it was only coincidence, but bad things seemed to happen to me when I'd get close to her house. And that was often.

The first time I remember anything happening I was walking to The Store the back way through Mrs. (Jesse) Trigg's lot. I was getting an angle of the house that you couldn't get from any other path or road. My eyes were glued to the back of the house, my thumbs were hooked in the gulluses of my bib overalls and I stepped, with my bare feet, on a snake lying in the path.

To this day I'm sure I jumped straight up, forward five or six feet at the same time and hit the ground running. My eyes quite Nancy's door and focused on my feet.

About the same time of the year, late spring or early summer, I heard my mother call me home for supper one evening. I ignored her calls and stayed a few minutes longer before trudging down the street, trailing my big toes in the dust and watching the crooked lines they made.

I glanced at Nancy's house, then looked back at the road. Her son, Charley, had raked and burned last fall's leaves in a pile eight or ten feet long and a couple of feet wide.

I kept on walking, dragging my feet and letting the fine leaf ashes sift through my toes. Near the middle, I hit the first fire and took short jumps through the hot coals until I landed in the churchyard ditch.

I couldn't walk for the rest of the summer. Yet another time, I was playing in the churchyard with four or five other boys. It was summertime again, everybody was barefooted and shirtless. Charley had taken a hoe and chopped off a snake's head. The snake lay moving its tail slightly as we watched, reminding each other what we'd been told about snakes not dying until the sun goes down.

Somebody grabbed the snake by the tail and flipped it at another boy who tossed it at another. And so on. Until someone flipped it at me as if he'd flipped a towel to make it snap, only this boy let the snake fly.

The bloody end hit me in the throat and the body wrapped itself around my neck. I screamed and tore the snake from my neck and flung it as far as I could.

You get the picture. But that was all a long time ago, too. I've passed Nancy's house hundreds of times since without a single mishap. Still, I recall those times back then and think if she wasn't in a Mark Twain novel, she should have been.

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# With a little help from our friends...

"Tales from the general store" started with the idea that our history and culture could be preserved while giving students and interested people the opportunity to learn skills that they can apply to today's world.

It all sounded good. But ideas like these take a lot of money and help to get them off the ground.

Here are the people who have helped get this idea a little bit higher off the ground since the first issue:

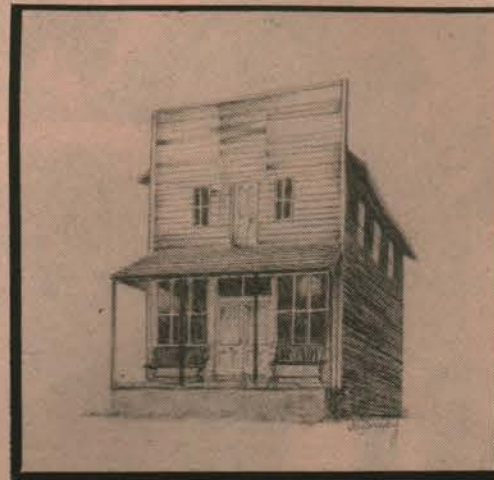
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 Arlene Watt  
 Williams-Steele Foundation  
 Mary Willis

These people have joined the growing number who believe in this idea and want to see it work. Without their cash donations and help, this idea would just run out of wind and die a slow death.

Mail contributions to: Tales from the general store, R.R. 2,  
 Oblong, IL 62449.

# Tales

from the general store



is published quarterly  
 by  
 Tales from the general store, inc.

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Tales from the general store, inc., is a nonprofit foundation established as an educational and charitable organization to preserve the history and culture of the Wabash Valley region of Eastern Illinois and Western Indiana from the days of the general store era. The foundation will conduct a two-week summer workshop and three 3-day seasonal workshops in cultural journalism for area residents, both students and non-students, who are interested in journalism and history.

Throughout the school year, grade school, high school and college students will also be given the opportunity to learn about their history and culture by talking with people who have experienced them. These students may also have the opportunity to participate in or observe such activities as hunting, trapping, fishing, butchering, furniture making, soap making and other customs from the past.

From these experiences, the workshop participants and students will record oral history, write stories, take pictures and collect tales, recipes and remedies that portray the rural life of long ago and a bit of what remains today. "Tales from the general store," printed and distributed as an insert to the Robinson "Daily News" and the Lawrenceville "Daily Record," will contain these stories. The program will be experiential and community related, in the tradition of educator John Dewey, where students learn by doing.

Workshops for the publication will be held at the Tales from the general store, inc., headquarters in Bellair where the foundation is engaged in the restoration of that village which dates back to 1844. Initial funding for the program will come from tax-deductible donations. Future funding will include donations, grants, subscriptions, syndication, book sales and other sources from services or merchandise provided by Tales from the general store, inc.

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Anyone may submit articles, photographs or drawings for publication in "Tales from the general store." If published, all material becomes the property of Tales from the general store, inc. No responsibility for returning unused submissions can be assumed; however, every effort will be made to return all submissions.

Subscribers to the Robinson "Daily News" and the Lawrenceville "Daily Record" will receive the magazine as part of their subscriptions as long as the Robinson "Daily News" prints and distributes it. Non-subscribers to the two newspapers may purchase individual copies for \$1 each.

Address all correspondence to: Tales from the general store, inc., Rural Route 2, Oblong, Illinois 62449 or phone 618-569-5171.

# Letters, Letters, Letters

## Lincoln's route

I am interested in your efforts to preserve the history and culture of the Wabash Valley section of eastern Illinois and western Indiana.

The following information might help you in this endeavor. The route the Abraham Lincoln family followed through Crawford County, IL in 1830 went through what became Bellair. The Randolphs and Adkissons of this community can show you visible traces of the route as of today.

Robert Lincoln, a second cousin of Abraham Lincoln, followed the same route through Crawford County in 1842, stopping west of what became Porterville and building his log cabin along this trace. Later Robert Lincoln built the home still standing on the same place.

I tried for three years to get this historic home moved to The Crawford County Historical Society's grounds. Dr. Joseph Piland, 1st president of Lincoln Trail College was very interested in this project and gave the society permission to place the home here. He was also interested in marking the correct way the Lincolns crossed Crawford County.

Dr. Wattleworth of Olney and his sister, Shirley Leffler, whose mother was a Lincoln gave their consent to have this house moved. The lowest cost for moving this structure and restoring it were prohibitive. The people in the neighborhood, Porterville, Annapolis, Bellair and the historical society preferred to restore this historic home on the original site. Dr. Wattleworth and his sister would not sell the society this homesite.

I have all kinds of proof of the relationship of Robert and Abraham Lincoln. We believe Abraham Lincoln visited in this home for we have an advertisement in "The Yellow Jacket," an early paper of Palestine, and we read Abraham Lincoln visited Vincennes, Indiana more than once.

MRS. CHARLES A. TENNIS  
Flat Rock, Illinois

## 'Tales' love letters

A friend from Lawrenceville sent me a copy of "Tales from the general store." You can imagine how I enjoyed reading about my old town.

LOWELL TRIGG  
Brighton, Michigan

Just a short note to say how much we enjoyed "Tales" as a supplement to Lawrenceville "Daily Record." A job well done! We look forward to the next issue.

The oil field museum in Oblong would be a good article as it has taken a lot of work to get it together.

MRS. PE. RI BALR  
Sumner, Illinois

Your magazine "Tales" is very interesting.

HARRY E. McCULLOUGH  
Bridgeport, Illinois

Our friends Addie and Miera Siler, Oblong, mailed your paper to us which we enjoyed very much and hope to receive each issue. We receive the (Robinson) "Constitution" but not the "Daily."

Miera and I attended the Jackville School together and have many memories of that area. It's really great that someone restores "memories" such as you and the community have done with this "Tales."

MRS. CLARENCE (ELLA) SHEETS  
St. Petersburg, Florida

I think "Tales" is fantastic. If I can find some history that I should have some place around here concerning the settlement of Harness Landing, I will send it to you.

MRS. LEONARD SAGER  
Robinson, Illinois

Have certainly enjoyed "Tales" and can hardly wait for the next one.

IWANA MAY RUNKEL  
Phoenix, Arizona

I have read and enjoyed each page of your paper.

GERALD C. McCARTY  
Robinson, Illinois

We saw the nice write-up (about "Tales") in this morning's Terre Haute "Star." My

husband and I have just returned from 30 years of traveling with U.S. Air Force and plan on spending some part of each year in Indiana searching for our roots. So we will be very interested in adding your magazine to our growing collection of genealogy information.

COL. & MRS. W.J. SCHMIDT  
Terre Haute, Indiana

I really enjoyed my issue that was in the Lawrenceville "Daily Record." I can remember the old grocery stores as I grew up with them. Also know Walt Whittaker. He lives just west of me.

FLORENCE SHAFFER  
Lawrenceville, Illinois

I was raised two miles south of Bellair so "Tales" is quite interesting for me.

MARILYN (WIMAN) BLAIR  
Newman, Illinois

The "Tales" workshop over Thanksgiving weekend was a good experience for the younger people and brought back a lot of memories for the old-timers. By watching and helping butcher hogs, dress chickens and churn butter, I learned quite a bit about how things used to be done.

If they had the stomach for it, people of all ages could get involved. And even though the workshop was a lot of work, I wish it could have lasted longer than two days.

CHRIS ADCOCK '83  
Pinckneyville High School  
Pinckneyville, Illinois

Nice project. Someday, I'd like to get involved. Maybe a story from White County.

DAVE JOHNSON, Principal  
Carmi Middle School  
Carmi, Illinois

## Kibbie Store

As I was born in the Kibbie area, then grew up in Oblong, I have studied a little of Oblong's history. The early name "Henpeck, as in husband," didn't set well with me. Why was it not explained that Henry Peck, a legitimate name, belonging to Oblong's first proprietor, gave it such a name? Granted even that wasn't much of a name for our town, but (it) beat "Henpeck as in husband!" The town was also

known as the Gem City at one period. The general oblong shape of the prairie is responsible for the final name of Oblong.

Kibbie store is certainly of interest to me. I would like to know more of its history. I was really thrilled to see the "about 1920 interior picture" published in "Tales" first run-off. Jim and Everett Randolph were my mother's first cousins, Al Curtis her father, Jim and Vic her brothers.

My great grandfather, Curtis, donated the land for the White Oak Church, cemetery and the White Oak School. The school is, of course, long gone, but the church is still there and active.

Jim Randolph's grandmother, Besty Ann (Carter) Randolph, my maternal great grandmother, was a mid-wife, riding side saddle all over the country, the county, actually delivering babies of the area 100 years ago. She delivered both of my parents. Her records are quite interesting (possibly only to me) to read and figure over. She plied her trade, day and night, riding those lonely roads until she was blinded in a fire.

I was also happy to read about Ray and Ada (Payne) Purcell, dear old friends of yester-year, in connection with the Bellair store.

Oh, yes, I know a little of Kibbie and Bellair. And having read the first "Tales," I wanted to share these small items with you.

MARIELLEN (BURNER) MEHLER  
Oblong, Illinois

## Melrose native

I thoroughly enjoyed your Autumn issue of "Tales from the general store," I am enclosing a brochure that tells about my family's history in this area and our campground.

We are located near Melrose, which at one time was a country community similar to Bellair. My grandfather taught school in the community and at one time was past master (one who has formerly held the position in an organization such as a lodge or club). We have many of his old records, like trading goose feathers for groceries.

Melrose was at one time a thriving community including a grist mill, Masonic Hall and other businesses. Two store buildings still stand.

W.G. CRUMRIN  
Martinsville, Illinois

## Cultural journalism

I hope to include information about Tales from the general store, inc. in the fall issue of the "Hands on" newsletter. Please send us a copy of the magazine as soon as it comes out, and we'll review it in the newsletter, too.

JOYCE COLBORN, Editor  
"Hands on"  
The Foxfire Fund, Inc.  
Rabun Gap, Georgia

I teach a workshop course, "The Community: An Educational Resource." In connection with this workshop we are attempting to acquire a representative collection of selected cultural journalism projects from various parts of the country. We would appreciate very much having a copy of "Tales from the general store" for our collection.

DONALD R. HAMMERMAN, Professor  
Northern Illinois University  
Faculty of Outdoor Education  
Lorado Taft Field Campus  
Oregon, Illinois

I read in the Journalism Education Association (JEA) "Newswire" I received yesterday of your August 20 meeting at (the) Willow Hill (Grade School). While that date is no longer significant, I am interested in your project.

I am now out of the area your project concerns itself with, but not far away. My home was in Newton. I have some rather interesting historical items that I found in my mother-in-law's closets.

I'm certainly not suggesting that I have much to offer, but I think the area of the state you are in has been much neglected and deserves its "Foxfire."

CLARE E. BARKLEY  
Newspaper adviser  
Urbana High School  
Urbana, Illinois



Sunday morning gathering outside Bellair Store, circa 1945. Picture supplied by Leola Farley and Oletha Matheny who ran The Store with her husband, Harold Matheny, from 1941-55. (Left to right) Henry Straker, Olen Ping, Kenneth Farley; (kneeling) Elza Wiman, Harold Elliott, Rex Monroney, Henry Matthew, Charles Lockhart, Lyle Lockhart; (front) Jerry Adkisson; (back) John Wiman, Jon Parker, Harl Odell, Kenneth Parker, Harold Dillman, Burns Perdiou, Bert Dugan, Junior Scott, Harold Matheny, unknown, Wiley Wiman, Tebe Calvertt, Billy Larrison, Bill Livingston, Ataska Goodwin, John Adkisson.

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RR #2 Oblong, IL 62449

Back issues are available for \$2; however, subscriptions may be retroactive to the Fall 1981 issue if you subscribe now.

## Nostalgia

Have been sorting out files, clearing up desk, etc., and became engrossed in "Tales from the general store." Stricken with nostalgia! The article on page three took me back a few years.

I grew up in Farmersville, IL, a small village of about 500 some 24 miles south of Springfield on old Route 66. The mayor was also the president of school board and ran a Red & White store. Naturally he bought butter, cream, eggs, etc. Most meats were cut to order from carcasses. Most dry good came in bulk packaged in barrels or large boxes.

Probably 20-25% of the building was partitioned off from the general public and used for office space. But there was a "potbellied" stove, meat block and storage, cream, butter and egg room, and, of course, a place for a few privileged loafers to josh with the proprietor. I even dared to loaf there when I skipped school! Fond memories.

MERV BELL  
Attorney at law  
Springfield, Illinois

## Animal husbandry or butchering

Leafing through last night's newspaper (November 20, 1981, Robinson "Daily News"), I read the activities planned for the next "Tales from the general store" workshop.

During the benefit held at Bellair (in September), stress was laid upon the preservation of country lore and customs to be learned from the reconstruction of various buildings and from the old-timers of Bellair—unique and enriching experience for workshop members that I wholeheartedly support.

However, the planned activities for November 27-28 are for members to slaughter two hogs and to "kill and dress a few chickens each day." What will city students learn from killing hogs and chickens? It is extremely doubtful that the knowledge will ever be put to practical use by them. Even the people who live here don't slaughter their own hogs.

If participating in the killing of these animals will really provide an enriching experience for the students, then wouldn't it at least be logical to follow the natural sequence of animal husbandry and first teach them to raise and care for livestock before slaughtering?

PATRICIA ROPP  
Robinson, Illinois

Editor—As unpleasant as it may be, butchering (hogs, chickens and other animals) was a part of the country lore and customs we seek to preserve.

And while all "Tales" students aren't from the city, even most of those who are are only one generation removed from the rural life in America, Europe or the Middle East. The country heritage is their heritage.

Perhaps none of them will ever put the knowledge to "practical use." But we really don't see that as the main thrust of the "Tales" project. Regardless, the students will have a firsthand perspective of an earlier way of life and be more aware that somebody, somewhere butchers the meat they eat.

We do agree that if butchering really provides "an enriching experience for the students," it is "logical to follow the natural sequence of animal husbandry" and teach the students about raising and caring for livestock before butchering. That's not

always the American way, though.

And we're guilty of being American.

We do hope that in the article on page 14 of this issue by one of our staff members who stayed on a farm for two weeks and cared for the animals there is, in some way, a step in following the natural sequence of animal husbandry.

"Tales" is real interesting. Most everyone is impressed with how people lived and what they did back in the general store days before the automobile, trucks and hard-surfaced roads.

Just wish it were possible that I could attend the hog butchering. When I was a kid, that was one of the great events of fall and winter.

H. RAY PURCELL  
Gaylord, Michigan

I was born on Mt. Ephraim in Crawford County in the days when we butchered on a neighborhood basis eight to ten hogs at a time. I have done all of it except the shooting and finishing rendering the lard. What a good time we had.

LEO CORRELL  
Sumner, Illinois

## Merom Chautauqua

The Merom Improvement Association was very pleased to read of your grant (Williams-Steele Foundation donation) to preserve the history and culture of the Wabash Valley. We, in Merom, are in the center of the area you are studying. We are 30 miles north of Vincennes and 30 miles south of Terre Haute.

We are a small community of 300 people, but we are a tight lot. Many of our families have lived in Merom for generations. We are situated on the highest point overlooking the Wabash River. We were once the county seat of Sullivan County.

One of the largest Chautauquas (an annual summer educational and recreational assembly originating in Chautauqua, New York) was at our town, housing such famous people as William Jennings Bryan, Billy Sunday and Carrie Nation. The "Chautauqua House," as we call it, was a stopping point on the Underground Railroad. The house is still lived in and has many hiding places and a caved-in tunnel.

We have had the pleasure of having a college, Union Christian College, in our town. The college was the second co-ed college in America. The campus is still in excellent shape and used as a church camp (non-demonominational) and a retreat center.

We also have many delightful and mysterious stories in our town, for example, the legend of Lindsey Island... (and) once you have toured our town and talked to the town folk (we believe) you will agree that Merom, its history and culture will definitely be an asset to your magazine.

ANN RETSECH, President  
Merom Improvement Association  
Merom, Indiana

## Roots in Bellair

I read the article (about "Tales") in the Terre Haute "Star" and am quite interested in your project. I was born in Bellair. In fact, the house I was born in is right behind the store and is still standing and occupied. My brother, Roy, also was born there. My father, Frank, worked in oil field at the pump station just east and south of town.

We moved from there to a farm approximately 3½ miles northwest (of Bellair) when I was

seven years old. I attended the school there one year and have a picture of the group that year.

My father and mother are buried in the cemetery there, and we are there every Decoration Day. Also, my grandfather, grandmother, and uncle Burns Perdieu and Jim Hill are buried there.

Willie Ritter who last owned the store was a very good friend of mine. We were boys growing up together and attended Round Prairie School.

So I have a place in my heart for Bellair. Many a happy hour, day and year was spent there or in the vicinity. Northfork was quite a place for skinny dipping back several years ago.

RAYMOND AUG  
Indianapolis, Indiana

## Indian boundaries

My first academic love was history, and for the last several years, I have become very interested in books pertaining to self-sufficiency. Your publication has admirably blended the two.

Some time ago, I did extensive research on the Indian Boundary Lines that traverse Crawford and Clark Counties, and the French Locations located in the Palestine area. Attempts by me to reduce that information to interesting reading failed miserably. Perhaps one of your young and talented writers could make some use of it.

Although I have never met Mrs. Lucille Randolph, when I first learned of your activities several months ago, I was strongly tempted to write you to tell you about her. She has a very complete scrapbook, with many articles of historical interest pertaining to the Bellair vicinity. She painstakingly reproduced it for the Robinson Library, that copy having given me several hours of quiet enjoyment. You might ask if you could impose upon her to have yet another copy made.

It does not appear that there are any "unskilled" enough occupations set forth in the coupon in your Autumn 1981, issue in which I could fit. But should there be occasion where you could use my assistance, I would be happy to help.

MARK R. WEBER  
Attorney at law  
Robinson, Illinois

## Restoring Bellair

I am very interested in your work of restoring the stores in Bellair. Rev. Paul Piersall was a distant relative of mine. He told us that one of the first settlers there was John Ryan who was born October 1799 in Ohio and died May 15, 1877 near Martinsville and was buried in Blackburn Cemetery. He married Charity Muse Hulen in October 1843 who was born February 24 or 25, 1820 in Randolph County, North Carolina. John had a grocery store in Bellair, received supplies overland from Palestine. The supplies came by boat there. At one time he owned lots of land near Bellair, but lost it by signing for friends who did not make good.

The last land he owned was about three miles east of Casey, where he raised his family of 10 children, the oldest was my grandmother, Alsie Hulen Ryan, who married T. J. McDaniel on September 29, 1863... I have dates and records down until the present date—eight generations on my father's side.

LENA GRAHAM  
Casey, Illinois

Address letters to Tales from the general store, inc., R.R.2, Oblong, IL 62449. All letters are subject to editing and become property of Tales from the general store, inc. Back issues may be obtained by sending issue number and two dollars to the above address.



Looking east down Main Street of Bellair in 1914 when The Bellair Church of Christ was being built. The Church was built by John P. Downey. photo courtesy of Amber Henry.

## Did you know. . .

compiled by Beverly Russell

### Tuition Free Schools

As of 1845 the Illinois State Constitution declared tuition free schools for students between the ages of 6-21. Anyone over 21 going to school was required to pay tuition, except Civil War soldiers.

—researched by  
Lucille Randolph

### Republican Campaigners

During the fall of 1863 a group of men opposed to the U.S. Government were secretly drilling to resist engaging in the Civil War.

Somewhere north and east of Olmsted about four or five miles was the secret campground of the "Knights of the Golden Circle." This national organization had an estimated membership of 500,000 from Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky.

A night march to destroy the draft list on the draft office at Olney, Illinois, was met by Union Troops. And since the "Knights" had been found out, some were afraid of the consequences. They were advised by some of the Union officers to enlist before any form of punishment could be given.

Many of the men did enlist, served the Union Army honorably and drew government pensions for many years.

—Historical File  
Robinson Township Library

### Gen. William Crawford

Crawford County was believed to have been named after General William Crawford. Crawford was a Revolutionary War soldier who was captured by the Wyandot Indians in the "Ohio County," which extended into Illinois in 1782.

Crawford was also a U.S. Senator, Minister to France, Secretary of War, Secretary of the Treasury and a candidate for the presidency in 1824.

He was burned at the stake in the original limits of Crawford

County, Ohio.

—Historical File  
Robinson Township Library

### 'Wide-a-Wakes'

During the Lincoln presidential campaign, a company campaigning for the Republicans, the "Wide-a-Wakes" was formed in Jasper County.

They were reported to have worn capes made from black oilcloth which fastened in front with a button. And to light their way, they carried oil lamps made out of tin and stuck on poles about six feet long.

One evening during the campaign about three wagon loads of "Wide-a-Wakes" set out for Brockville. Stopping a short distance from Brockville, they put on their capes, lit their lamps and with fife and drum proceeded to march into town.

The reception they received was not quite what they had expected. They were met with a volley of expensive eggs (at that time eggs cost 3 1/2 cents a dozen) from the first barn they passed.

—Historical File  
Robinson Township Library

### Crawford County First's

•The "Wabash Sentinel" was the first area newspaper. It was published by George W. Cutler from Hutsonville in 1852. Mr. Cutler brought all the equipment for publication up from Evansville, Indiana.

•In 1818 at the fifth term of the Crawford County court in Palestine, it was decided that they were going to have to build a jail. The jail was built from 12 inch square hewn logs and cost \$514.

•Joseph Kitchell, founder of Palestine and father-in-law to Gov. Augustus C. French, was the first State Senator from Crawford County from 1818-1822.

•Henry M. Barlow was born in the stable of the Hutson place two miles south of Hutsonville. The Indians had burned the Hutson cabin with the family in it but had left the stable standing. Barlow is credited as being the first white child born in Hutsonville Township.

•The first carload of grain was shipped out of Crawford County from West York by G. W. Bishop and Jesse C. Musgrave, two merchants of West York on March 25, 1875. The grain was loaded on a construction train as there were no freight cars on the railroad yet.

•Palestine established the first school in Crawford County around 1818-1821.

•The Baptists were the first public religious organization in Crawford County, although the Methodists organized the first church and also built the first place of worship at Palestine.

•One of the earliest newspapers in Robinson and the first political one in the county was the "Gazette," issued December 12, 1857 and published by G. W. Harper. The "Gazette" continued publication until 1858 and was a supporter of the Douglas Democracy.

•Oblong's first mill was run by horsepower and could put out about 15 bushel of corn per day in 1832.

—Historical File  
Robinson Township Library

### 'Dark Bend'

According to legend, the area known as the "Dark Bend" was once a region of dense timber and heavy undergrowth which was good cover for robbers, horse thieves, river pirates and counterfeiters.

This particular part of the Embarras River valley was "off limits" to anyone but shady characters, since the denseness was a haven for every man on the run from all over the middle West.

And since the settlers avoided the area, government surveyors were afraid to survey the land until Illinois became a state. But around 1845 a Frenchman settled on a ridge south of the river and started a colony of "Brothers" which was the beginning of Ste. Marie. The Frenchman and his many relatives acquired several thousand acres of land and started a vigilante group which ran off the outlaws.

—Historical File  
Robinson Township Library

### \$25 Fine plus Lashes

Any person permitting slaves or servants to gather for dancing in Clark County in the 1800s, night or day, was fined \$25. All persons gathered were sent to jail and received from one to not more than thirty-nine lashes on a bare back.

—History of Crawford and Clark County, Illinois

### Vote for Slavery

A vote was taken in Illinois in 1824 to frame a constitution to recognize slavery. Clark County voted 31 in favor of slavery and 116 against. The anti-slavery party was victorious by 2000 votes.

—History of Crawford and Clark County, Illinois

### Slave in Clark County

According to the first county census in 1820, there were 920 whites and one slave in Clark County.

—History of Crawford and Clark County, Illinois

### Merom Ferry

There are references that the Merom Ferry could have been here as early as 1820, but records indicate the ferry to have been started by Mrs. Elizabeth O'Boyle Cooper about the year 1835.

The Cooper family had an interest in the ferry for years. It went from Elizabeth Cooper to her husband, John, to Charles Cooper to Thomas and Ella Cooper to Walt Cooper to Harvey Cooper. Then it left the Coopers and went to Ray Radifer to Jess Plunkett and to Joe Plunkett. Sherman Plunkett also had an interest in it for a number of years.

Some of the ferry operators were Joe and Sherman Plunkett, Ora Shorter, Buck Rockwell, Harry Lewis, Hugh Thompson, Ben Riggs, Hode Wills, Bob Carty and Bernard Criss.

Hugh Thompson was the last owner of the ferry. It is now

rumored to be on the White River around Gosport. It hauled three cars, was 60 feet long with a 12 inch apron on each end and was pushed by a small power boat on the side of the ferry which was on a swivel that could push one way, then swing around and push the other way. It also had a small cable running under the water that ran through pulleys on one side.

There were two iron stakes on each side of the river, and when the boat landed, a man would run on the bank with a log chain which was fastened to the ferry, throw the chain around the stake and secure it to the bank.

In 1936 or '37 a car drove through the chain and into the Wabash River on the Illinois side. All five passengers drowned. They were Blanche Milam, driver of the car; her husband, Pete Milam; their young son and a couple Mr. and Mrs. Jack Warren. The Warren man and the young Milam boy were not found for about three months.

When the ferry was in the hands of Walter Cooper, a semi-tractor and trailer, loaded with frozen chickens, went into the river on the Illinois side in 1955 sinking the ferry. It was thought that the driver was avoiding the weigh scales on the main roads. This proved a sure way to defrost frozen chickens as they were a stinking mess when the truck was raised out of the river the next day.

At one time, there were some pretty good horseshoe pitchers on the river as the ferry operators had horseshoe pegs on both sides of the river. They would pitch horseshoe while waiting for a car to come.

—'Pepsi' Cooper  
Merom, Indiana

### U. B. Mission

A United Brethren Church mission was established in Annapolis in 1866. The mission was in a log building also used as a school house.

There were five classes for Sunday school since the mission was for both Annapolis and Bellair.

—researched by  
Lucille Randolph





# Passing down a skill, sharing an experience

by Jim Elliott

They hadn't worked together as much as a grandfather and a grandson might have had they lived in the country years ago. Now, though, the grandfather was getting ready to butcher some hogs and needed some help to get things ready.

And there were many things to get ready. It was a lot of work for the 67-year-old, white-haired man whose rugged face and calloused hands had already seen years of hard work.

He had already found a place to get firewood and places to borrow the knives, kettles, lard press, sausage grinder and other equipment needed to butcher. He had also set a log post about eight feet high and two feet in diameter to be used for hanging and gutting the hogs.

But he hadn't built the frame where the hogs would hang. Nor had he built a table to scald, scrape and cut up the hog. For this work and for company, he wanted his grandson, a teenager from a Chicago suburb, to help him.

"We're goin' build it like they used to," he told his grandson when they started to work after an early breakfast of sausage, biscuits and gravy. "We're goin' build it like Pop built one when I was still just kid at home."

When he had set the log in the ground, the grandfather had made two vertical cuts at right angles from the top of the log intact where he could nail two, two by six boards, extending out about three feet on each side and forming a double cross so four hogs would be hung and gutted at the same time.

**"We're goin' build it like Pop built one when I was still just a kid at home."**

"It's too dang high," the grandfather said, standing back and looking at the log post for a while.

He started his chainsaw and climbed a stepladder to extend the cuts vertically so the horizontal boards could be nailed lower.

After he had cut the notches low enough, the grandfather and the grandson found two boards to nail to the log for the frame. The grandson stood on the edge of the pickup truck bed and held them so the older man could cut the bottom ends at an angle and put a v-shaped notch in the top of each, in about six inches from the ends.

"You know what these notches are fer?" the grandfather asked.

"Yeah," the grandson said. "They're to make sure those sticks in the pickup that hold the hogs don't slide around."

"You know what the stick are called?"

"No. What are they called?"

"Gambrel sticks," the grandfather said, using the regional

pickup and nailed the boards to the log while his grandson held them.

"That'll stay there 50 years," the grandfather said when he had

tossing the wood in the back of the pickup

When all the smaller pieces were loaded, the grandfather found an axe and split some big-

away and got in the truck. They drove back over the same bumpy gravel road for a while.

"We deserve a bottle of pop fer the hard work we just did, boy," the grandfather said and headed for the pickup for a general store.

The grandson agreed and enjoyed the drink.

After dinner, they unloaded the wood and began building the butchering table. It was to be made with six logs, about two feet high and about a foot and a half in diameter and eight two by fours, each ten feet long.

**"We deserve a bottle of pop fer the hard work we just did, boy," the grandfather said and headed for the pickup for a general store.**

Finding and selecting the long boards was the first part of the job. Finding the right boards in the pile of scrap lumber wasn't easy. By using shorter boards and putting them together to make one, they finally found enough.

With all the building material in one pile, the only thing left to do was to nail the table together. First they had to make sure that all the legs were even. To do this they shoveled dirt out from under the legs that were too high.

"Now go an' get them long ten foot boards," the grandfather said when all the legs were level and he had boards about four feet long nailed to each pair.

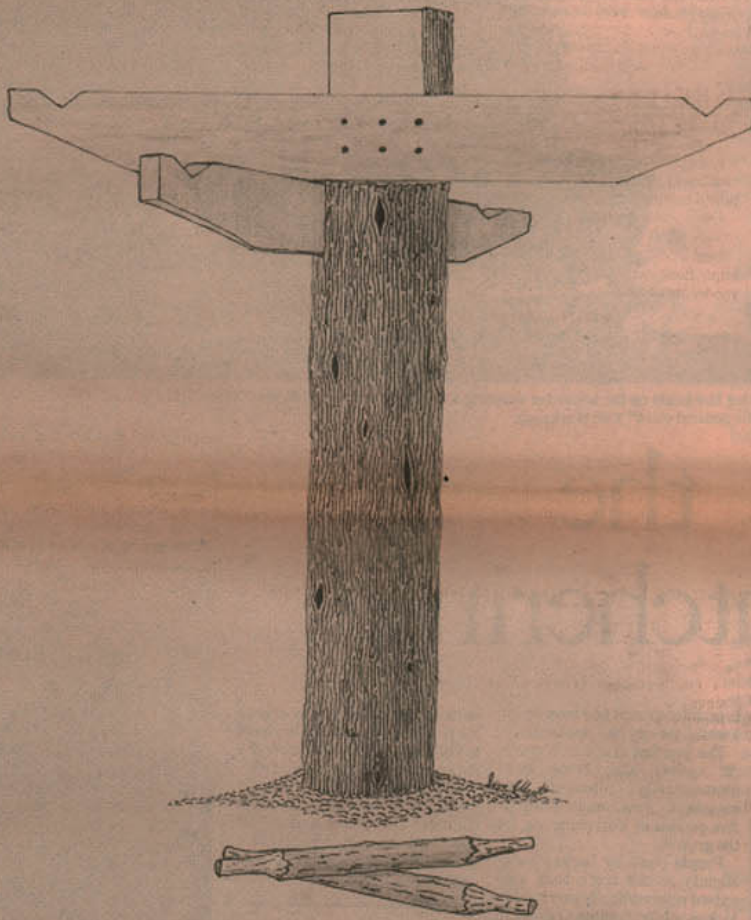
The grandson carried the boards to his grandfather who measured and marked each one. Using the longer boards, they nailed the three sets of legs together. At one end of the table, the grandfather made the boards uneven, longer on the outside and shorter in the middle.

"That's fer the barrel to set in to scald the hog," the grandfather said as he finished nailing the boards to the legs.

With the last board nailed in, the 50-gallon barrel in place for scalding the hogs, the only things left to do was saw off the uneven boards on the other end. The grandfather started the chainsaw and sawed them evenly where he had marked them earlier.

"I'll bet you didn't think yer grandpa was such a carpenter, did you?" the grandfather asked after the job was done and he and his grandson loaded the tools in the pickup and headed home.

The grandson smiled. He thought his grandfather was proud of what they'd built. The grandson knew he was. He also knew he was happy to have had the chance to work with his grandfather for a day. And he thought his grandfather felt the same way.



Gambrel sticks and the scaffold used to hang a hog for cutting as seen by Jim Elliott.

pronunciation for gambrel, an animal's hock. The gambrel sticks were made from branches about a foot and a half long and seven or eight inches in diameter. Both ends were whittled and tapered down so they could be stuck through the leaders of the hog's back legs to hold it on the frame for gutting.

**"That'll stay there 50 years," the grandfather said when he had nailed the last one in place.**

"Let's get 'er nailed up there, boy," the grandfather said as he finished cutting the boards. And he climbed into the back of the

nailed the last one in place. "Now we got to get some wood fer heatin' the water and keepin' us warm."

They drove the pickup to get the wood, talking very little as the truck bumped along a rough gravel road. The grandfather spoke when he turned in the lane at the place where the wood was to be loaded.

"Get out and open the gate," he said.

The grandson did and his grandfather shouted at him to close the gate as he drove through. Even though he wondered why he had to close the gate since he knew he'd just have to open it again when they left, the grandson said nothing and closed it. He climbed back in the pickup and roared to the woodpile.

"Just throw 'er in the back," the grandfather said and began

ger pieces. The grandson loaded them.

"What do we do now?" the grandson asked, hoping they'd leave.

"Go to another pile," the grandfather said as he wiped off his hands and started towards the truck.

At the other woodpile, they finished loading the truck and the grandfather said, "Go up in front of the truck and see if there's any logs in the way."

The grandson went up in front of the truck, looked around and saw none. He did see four big brown hogs.

"What should I do about them?" he asked his grandfather.

"Just shoo 'em away," the grandfather said. "That's what I told you to close the gate fer." The grandson shooed the hogs

# There's more to butchering



A roaring fire heats up the water for scalding a hog to be butchered at the "Tales from the general store" Fall Workshop.

## the butchering

by Craig Johnson

In the vacant lot between the general store and the bank building, the unmistakable smell of wood smoke hung in the air. A cold wind fanned the flames below two large, cast-iron kettles. Men and boys dressed in overalls and heavy coats gathered around the flames, holding out their hands to the heat. They moved when the wind shifted directions, trying to escape the steady stream of gray smoke and soot given off by the burning wood.

**"You turn that notch up so it won't slide off the end,"** Clyde Purcell, a long-time Bellair resident who remembered butchering his first hog at a neighbor's house when he was a boy nearly 70 years ago, said.

The sun had been up for a few hours. And although some of the people who were standing around

in huddled groups had been up for a while, the day had just begun.

The muffled crack of a single .22 caliber shot being fired momentarily silenced the onlookers. Two hundred thirty-five pounds of Yorkshire hog hit the ground.

People close by backed away slightly as the hog's body convulsed spasmodically and its legs kicked wildly. Someone pointed to where the cut to bleed the hog should be made.

"Oh no, I ain't goin' to touch 'im yet," Lafe Graham, an experienced hand from rural Oblong who had volunteered to help butcher the hog, said. "I had a deer kick a knife out of my hand one time."

Several minutes passed before the hog lay completely still. Forrest Richards, Sidell, who has gutted hogs all his life, then stuck a knife in behind the hog's ear. He twisted the blade until the jugular vein and carotid artery were torn open.

Gurgling hollowly, blood gushed out of the cut and onto the ground. The blood foamed and thickened quickly in the cold air.

Most of the people who witnessed this seemed unmoved by, even accustomed to, the sight. A few, though, turned away from the scene to the amusement of some people watching who had previously seen a hog bled for butchering.

Richards and Graham, with help from others, sliced down the

back of each hind leg to expose the tendons. They used a hayhook to pull the tendons away from the leg and inserted a gambrel stick.

The gambrel stick, a branch about seven or eight inches in diameter and a foot and a half long, had the ends whittled to a blunt point and a notch cut near each end.

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"You turn that notch up so it won't slide off the end," Clyde Purcell, a long-time Bellair resident who remembered butchering his first hog at a neighbor's house when he was a boy nearly 70 years ago, said.

With some help, Richards and Graham lifted the hog on a raised, wooden platform that rested on logs about two feet high. Leaning against one end of the five-by-ten-foot platform was a 55-gallon drum held at an angle by a chain and boomer.

By now the onlookers had un-

ched apprehensively, unsure of what would happen next and whether or not they wanted to see it.

Someone stepped toward the cast-iron kettles and quickly dipped the fingertips of one hand into the boiling water. Without speaking, a few more men did the same.

"She's hot enough," one of the men said.

The others shook their heads and agreed that the water, which had been pumped and carried from the well across the street, was ready. They scooped the steaming water up in buckets and poured it into the metal drum.

Two men firmly grasped the gambrel stick and let the hog slide into the hot-water-filled drum. After dunking the carcass a few times, they removed it from the water and turned the hog around.

Using the hayhook for another purpose, Richards and Graham pushed it through the hog's nostrils and secured it in the tough cartilage of the animal's snout. Then they scalded the other half of the hog.

When they finally removed the hog from the water, they lay it on the platform. Someone scattered a few handfuls of ashes from the fire over the carcass.

"Well, 'at jus' helps the hair come off better," Paul Tomaw,

consciously divided themselves into two groups—those who had seen a hog butchered before and those who had not. Those who had stood around and talked softly among themselves, offering an occasional bit of advice or a word of encouragement. The rest wat-



Two men scalding the hog in preparation for scraping.

# than killing a hog

Sidell, said. "The acid in it, I reckon."

Several people helped scrape the bristly hair off the hide, using knives, although an attempt was made to scrape with a small, sharpened bell. Clumps of the stiff, wet hair fell between the planking of the platform and collected in piles below.

**"Well, 'at jus' helps the hair come off better," Paul Tomaw, Sidell, said. "The acid in it, I reckon."**

In areas where the hair wasn't coming off easily, someone placed a piece of burlap and poured hot water over it. After most of the hair was removed from the right side, two men flipped the animal over and scrapped the left side before dragging it to the hanging post.

Hung by the gambrel stick on a two-by-six inch board, the hog's head dangled a few inches above the limestone road pack that surrounded the base of the post. Atop the eight-foot post were crisscrossed boards so that as many as four hogs could be hung for gutting.

Graham, a cigar clinched between his teeth, knelt down on the ground near the hog's head and used a sharp butcher knife to cut through the head just behind the ears.

"You got to hit right between the vertebrae to get it off," Graham said, calmly feeling for the correct spot to chop.

His hands were hidden inside the partially-severed head. He twisted and pulled on the head until it cracked loudly and snapped off in his hands. What was left of the blood inside the head slowly dripped onto the stones.

"It's all yours," Graham said, handing the head to Harold Elliott, Bellair, who placed it in a bucket of cold water.

Both men used the hog's ears as handles when they carried the head.

A couple of the onlookers walked away, seemingly revolted by the sight of the decapitated animal. Some watched with apparent disinterest. Others seemed to force themselves to watch and pretended to be unaffected by the relative nonchalance of the beholding. And still others gazed in what looked like fascination.

The hog was left to cool a while. While it was hanging, someone took a knife and scrapped off the remaining hair. During the lull in the activities, several people stopped to look at the hog's head staring up out of the bucket.

An hour or so later, Tomaw prepared to gut the hog, a job handled by Roger Walden, Porterville, with Mike Kessler, Hardinsville, sharing his years of experience, the day before.

"I worked in a packing plant for eight years," Tomaw said. "But it was a lot different than this. We killed a thousand to fifteen hundred hogs a day and each

guy had his job to do. I never did do one like this."

Besides meaning that only one man would do most of the gutting, it also meant that the hog would not be skinned as is the common practice in slaughter houses.

"We have hog roasts all the time," Graham said waiting for

fingers as a guide, Tomaw carefully cut loose the entrails and avoided slicing into the intestine. This was important because the intestine was full.

"It's warm in there, anyhow," Graham said, holding up the loose intestine.

Tomaw cut free all the organs

a try," Tomaw said. "I didn't know if I could do 'er or not. These boys (Graham and Richards) here gave me a lot of help."

With the gutting completed, Elliott sifted through the bucket full of bloody entrails and removed the heart, liver and sweet-

Even though the meat cutting was almost as bloody as the gutting, few people seemed bothered by it at all. They casually looked on as though the platform were a supermarket meat case.

The chunks of fat for the cracklings and lard were thrown into the cast-iron kettle and cooked down, with Purcell stirring the mixture with a lard paddle. The chunks were put into a lard press and squeezed together, the lard draining into a waiting lard can.

All that remained after the lard was rendered was the cracklings. Nearly everyone gathered around for a few bites of the crisp, crunchy, hot pork rinds.

**All that remained after the lard was rendered was the cracklings. Nearly everyone gathered around for a few bites of the crisp, crunchy, hot pork rinds.**

Elliott used an axe to cut the hog's head in two, splitting it right between the eyes. He saved the brains to fry and said the hog's head would be used to make mincemeat.

After several onlookers cut the extra chunks of meat and threw the lean pieces into a metal dishpan for sausage and the fat pieces into another pan for lard and cracklings and ground the sausage, the hams, shoulders and sides were carried inside the store to be cured.

Some people drifted inside to watch the curing process; others lingered around the fire, talking and reminiscing a while longer.

**"My folks used to butcher all the time, and we'd help the neighbors."**

"I've butchered a lot of 'em," Purcell said, standing by the dying fire, his hands jammed in the pockets of his overalls. "My folks used to butcher all the time, and we'd help the neighbors. Neighbors'd all gather in, you know, and butcher at one neighbor's house one day, maybe four or five or six hogs. Next day we'd go to another neighbor's house."

Several men nodded in agreement.

"Yep, that's the way they used to do it," Walter Whittaker, rural Lawrenceville, said, sitting in a lawn chair near the fire. "But this is the most people I ever saw at a butcherin'. Must 'o been 50-100 people here."



Lafe Graham, rural Oblong, concentrates on severing the vertebra to cut the hogs head off before gutting.

Tomaw to make the first cut. "We usually skin 'em. The reason they're doin' it this way is to render the lard out of the hide."

Assisted by Graham and Richards, Tomaw started at the top of the underside of the hog and cut all the way down the hog's belly and cleanly sliced the layers of flesh and muscle to expose the innards. He cut a circle around the anus, freed the large intestine and then tied it off with a piece of string.

The front of the rib cage was hacked in two to allow easier access to the viscera. Using his

and the elastic-like entrails rolled out of the hog into a bucket. Some heads turned to learn the cause of the loud plopping sound made by the entrails falling into the bucket.

Steam rose from the bucket and from the clean-looking cavity of the gutted hog. Several people smiled broadly and congratulated Tomaw and the others on doing a good job.

"Couldn't tell you'd never gutted a hog," one man said. "That looks like you'd been at it all your life."

"Well, I just wanted to give 'er

bread and put them in a bucket of water. At the same time, Graham used a hacksaw to saw down through the middle of the backbone, splitting the hog's carcass in half.

After the hog had been hanging for another hour, the two halves of the hog were laid on the platform. Graham, Richards, Tomaw, Elliott and others took turns cutting the meat. They removed the tenderloins from next to the backbone, cut apart the spareribs, removed the hams and shoulders and cut the bacon from the sides.

by Lorene Newberry

Back when my folks butchered two or three hogs every year, it was usually done on school days. So I wasn't around very much. But memories of long ago and how things were done then come to mind when I think about butchering.

The neighbors generally helped each other butcher and take care of preserving the meat. My folks took care of theirs by rubbing salt all over the hams, shoulders and sides. Then they left the meat in a cold place to take the salt, sometimes putting it in a barrel until they were ready to fry it down.

**Some of the cracklings from the lard were eaten fresh, but the rest of them were saved along with any old grease or lard from the year before and used to make Lewis Lye soap.**

After a few weeks, the folks would take a day or so, slice all the joints (hams and shoulders) and start frying. As the meat fried, they would lay it in a three or four-gallon jar.

Each time some meat was put in the jar, they would pour a little grease over it. When frying was finished or the jar was almost full, the meat was covered with plenty of grease so the air couldn't get to it. Then the jar was covered with some kind of lid or board.

Any time they wanted to use the meat, they scraped the grease back and took what they wanted and put the grease back over the rest of the meat. If they had lots of sausage, they put it in gallon jars and took care of it in the same way.

My folks and their neighbors would butcher several hogs in one day. They would also get the lard rendered the same day. It would take about all day to get this done, sometimes being almost dark when they finished. The sausage was usually ground after the rest of the work was done.

Some of the cracklings from the lard were eaten fresh, but the rest of them were saved along with any old grease or lard from the year before and used to make Lewis Lye soap. I don't remember how it was made, except that the folks used grease, water and Lewis Lye to make it.

They put this together in the big black iron kettle that was used to render lard and cooked it over an open fire. When it was done, the kettle was covered and the soap was left to get cold. It was then cut into squares and put away. On wash day, Mom would take a knife and shave off what she needed to wash with that day.

Some recipes my mother, Martha Newberry, used follow:

### Pickled pig's feet

Clean feet thoroughly, making sure all hair is off. Boil until tender. Keep two or three cups of the water the feet have been boiled in and add about a cup of sugar and a cup of vinegar. Salt and pepper to taste.

Boil mixture for a short time. Put cooked pig's feet in a crock or bowl and cover with liquid. Set in

a cool place and let contents get cold. Mixture will be jelly-like when cold and ready to serve.

If too much fat is showing for taste, take meat from bone and grind. Mix with a little sugar and vinegar. Salt and pepper to taste again. Pack in a loaf and serve when cold.

### Liver

Boil liver until tender. Season with salt and pepper. Grind and pack in a loaf. Slice and serve when cold.

### Ribs and backbones

Fill quart cans with ribs or backbones but don't crowd too much. Put a teaspoon of salt on top of meat in each can. Seal each one with hot sterilized lids and put in a cold packer. Cover cans with water and boil three hours. Take out of water and let cool.

### Mince-meat

Remove snouts, ears, eyes, brains and skins from two hog's heads. Wash heads thoroughly and boil in salted water until tender and meat will come off the bone. Let cool and remove from bones. Put through a food grinder.

Peel and dice two dozen or more good apples. Add diced apples and one pound of washed raisins to meat mixture. Add about three cups of brown sugar and one and one-half cups of vinegar. Sprinkle generously (about two tablespoons) with cinnamon. (Individual taste will determine amount of sugar, vinegar and cinnamon to use. Some people add a little nutmeg, too.) Put in hot jars while hot and seal.

To make mince-meat pie, make pie crust and put desired amount of mince-meat in bottom crust. Put top crust on and bake as any two-crust pie is baked.

## meat curing

by Sheila Hussar

Lisa Martin

Before refrigerators and deep freezers, preserving food involved a little more than opening a door and finding some space in an icebox. Freshly butchered pork was preserved in several different ways.

Some people fried the meat down and stored it in grease; others smoked or sugar cured it, adding flavor as well as preserving it.

To cure by smoking, the meat was salted and hung in the smoke house—shoulders and hams with the joints down. A smoldering fire of hickory wood was placed under the meat so there was plenty of smoke going to the meat.

Several recipes for sugar curing were used, using only simple ingredients from the kitchen. Each family generally had its own recipe. And Morton's Sugar Cure, a prepared mix, was available from the store. The following recipe is one that was used by Bellair area residents for years:

### Sugar cure

4 tablespoons brown sugar  
2 level tablespoons red pepper  
2 level tablespoons black pepper  
good pint of salt

Mix ingredients together in a large dishpan rub all over the hams, shoulders or sides. Put down well in joint end and under skin. Wrap in newspaper, then wrap in cloth. Twist cloth and fasten securely. Hang in cool place with joints down. Let hang for six weeks.

—Lenna Straker

Bill and Gladys Livingston used a similar recipe with a tablespoon less brown sugar and a tablespoon less red pepper. Other people used other proportions, according to their tastes.

At the Fall Workshop of the Tales from the general store foundation, the Livingston recipe was used to cure the meat from one of the hogs that had been butchered. A white plastic bag filled with the hams, shoulders and sides to be cured sat on a long table inside the Bellair Store. Dishrags, newspapers and a large dishpan with the curing mixture sat on the other end.

**"My folks used plain white salt to salt the meat down with," he said. "Then they'd leave it out in the summer kitchen for most of the winter. In the spring, they'd fry it down or smoke it."**

Explaining that he had learned how to cure meat from his parents when he "was a little boy," Harold Elliott, Bellair, dipped his hand into the dishpan again and again, taking handfuls of the grainy mixture and rubbing it into the now cold slabs of meat or letting it run out of his fist into the joints.

"My folks used plain white salt to salt the meat down with," he said. "Then they'd leave it out in the summer kitchen for most of the winter. In the spring, they'd fry it down or smoke it."

As he talked or answered questions, he continued rubbing the sticky, spicy, sweet-smelling mixture into the meat. The pungent odor of the mix mingled with the smell of wood smoke and food that had dominated the room before the curing process had been started.

"Len Straker showed us how to sugar cure when we moved to Bellair," Elliott's wife, Mable, said, watching the mixture being rubbed into the meat. "My folks didn't have a smoke house or any place to hang meat, so they fried theirs down, too."

Packing the cure down around the joints, Elliott then folded the four corners of a newspaper over a ham and turned it over with the folds face down on a dishrag. After folding the dishrag the same way and fastening it together with safety pins, he twisted the loose ends and tied them together so a baling wire could be used to hang the meat.

"And that's all there is to it," he said. "Hang 'er up for about six weeks, take 'er down and slice 'er off. You'll have some real eatin'."

# Churning hard work, but the butter's better

by Becky Elliott and Shanda Hussar

Ask anyone who was brought up on a farm years ago and he'll tell you that the taste of store-bought butter and cottage cheese can never measure up to the taste of homemade.

While that may be true, the time and effort it takes to churn butter or make cottage cheese has all but made them parts of the past. About the only place you'll see anybody do either is at educational demonstrations or on a back-to-nature farm.

Mariellen Mehler, Oblong, started churning eight years ago to show her son's kindergarten class how it was done. She has been doing it for area schools ever since.

Last year, Barbara Russell, Oblong, joined Mehler in the demonstrations. Russell demonstrates how to make cottage cheese. Both stood behind a small table in the Bellair Store churning butter and explaining their specialties, although no cottage cheese was made because the milk available didn't have enough butter fat.

"When I was a girl at home, my mother churned," Mehler said. "We lived on a farm then, just down the backtop, about six miles from Bellair. But when I was two years old my family sold the farm and moved to town. Mother kept all her butter churning equipment for sentimental reasons, though."

Holding the butter paddle in her hand Mehler said, "Since we didn't have cows in town, my mother used this to paddle me, which I didn't think was the greatest."

She continued talking and explained that she also had her grandmother's cream skimmer. The skimmer was used to skim off the cream that formed on the surface of milk that had set overnight in a crock.

"Now years ago, some time in the 1700's, they used a big wooden churn like this one," Mehler said, lifting the lid from the round, wooden-barrel-like churn and looking inside. "The cream was poured in the churn and was left settin' out. The cream needed to be room temperature for faster churning."

"It might take a week to get enough cream to fill it, so it was just left settin' in the churn. The churn'd hold several gallons, but they would fill it only about half full."

Standing behind the table, Mehler looked every bit the part of an old-time farmer's wife, dressed in an old-fashioned navy blue dress that reached her ankles. She said the cream she was using was donated by some dairy farmers near Wheeler and some was bought from a Trimble dairy farmer.

"We churned for almost two hours at Grove School the other day before we got butter," Russell said, steadily cranking the handle of the glass table-top churn. "The cream was just too cold."

Churning time varies according to the temperature and the

thickness of the cream, Mehler explained, just as the color of the butter varies depending upon the breed of the cow. Yellow butter comes from the Jersey, Guernsey and Milking Shorthorns while other breeds will make white butter.



Mariellen Mehler and Barbara Russell churning butter at The General Store in Bellair for "Tales" fall workshop.

Relieving Russell from the churn, Mehler pointed to the butter beginning to gather on the paddles. The churn was more difficult to crank and yellow flecks could be seen through the cream.

"Now that butter has formed, you pour off the excess milk, which is buttermilk," Mehler said, pouring the buttermilk through a strainer into a pitcher. If the butter isn't washed clean of all the buttermilk, "the butter will turn rancid, giving it a spoiled taste," Mehler said. Pouring salt into her hand, she began to work it into the butter with the paddle.

"Now when you mold butter," she said, "it has to be cold or it won't mold and you won't be able to get it out. Back in my grandmother's day if they had a big dinner and wanted to be fancy, they would make individual butter patties for each person. The individual mold my grandmother had was an 'M'—her name was Mary—about the size of a quarter."

All that molding took time, Mehler said. And with everything else the old-time farmer's wife had to do like making flax, spinning yarn, weaving cloth, making clothes and cooking three meals a day, it wasn't always possible to mold the butter.

"Oh, they had a hard life," Mehler said. "But they took the time to get together with their friends. They had housewarmings, barnraisings and things like that. It was all work, but they had fun while they worked."

And when there wasn't enough time to mold the butter, it could be shaped into a block and hit with what looks like a child's paddle with designs on it. Each woman's butter had a different design.

"Back in Grecian times, now, they never molded the butter they churned," Mehler said. "They didn't eat it either. It was used as a pomade (a perfumed hair ointment) and rubbed in their hair."

Spreading some freshly made butter on a cracker and handing it to an onlooker Mehler said, "That's not what you do with it now, of course. But I don't know when it was that they finally woke up to how good butter would be on their bread."

# A chicken for every pot (the old-fashioned way)

by Russ Harper

"I want there to be no peasant in my realm so poor that he will not have a chicken in his pot every Sunday"—attributed to King Henry IV of France (1553-1610).

By the 1928 Presidential Campaign, Republican candidate Herbert Hoover adopted King Henry's idea for a campaign slogan and promised the American people "a chicken for every pot."

While Hoover's optimistic outlook for the economy didn't last long, his slogan was a way of life for rural people all across America. Fried chicken and Sunday dinner were synonymous.

And now modern technology and automation have truly made it possible for there to be a chicken in every pot. Because chicken is inexpensive today, it's a rare family that raises any and goes to the chicken yard to catch and dress one any more.

Joy Collings, Oblong, and Della Waldrop, Bellair, are two women who do make that trip to the chicken yard regularly, though. They like the chickens they raise better than what they can buy in the supermarkets.

"When you like chicken as well as I do," said Collings, who raises cornish game roosters, "you got to raise 'em if you want to eat 'em."

Collings, who has been dressing chickens since she was ten years old, demonstrated how she kills and dresses them. Onlookers watched as she grabbed a rooster and cut its head off with a knife and a quick flick of her wrist. One rooster escaped her knife and managed to get away.

"When you like chicken as well as I do," said Collings, who raises cornish game roosters, "you got to raise 'em if you want to eat 'em."

"Probably went to the next county," Collings said as she stood with a cigarette dangling from her mouth, watching five headless roosters flop around on the ground.

When they stopped flopping around, Collings took them by the feet and dipped them in a tub of boiling water to scald them. She explained that scalding the roosters makes plucking the



Steve Waldrop cuts the head while his mother, Della, holds it.



Della Waldrop, Bellair, plucking feathers from a recently killed rooster. The roosters are scalded in hot water before plucking.

feathers easier.

"Tail feathers and wing feathers come out the hardest," she said, plucking feathers by the handful. "That's why you want to do 'em first."

Little short hairs were left on the roosters after Collings and some of the onlookers had plucked the feathers. These hairs were close to the skin and virtually impossible to pull out with the fingers.

"You cain't pull 'em off," Collings said, standing amid a pile of feathers. "You got to singe 'em or burn 'em off over a fire."

As the roosters were held over an open fire and the hairs were singed off, the scorching flesh cancelled the moldy smell of wet feathers and lingered in the air. That done, the roosters were ready to be dressed and cut up for frying or to be left whole for roasting or baking.

"What're you goin' to do with 'em?" Collings asked, breaking the joint between the leg and the foot with a snap, then cutting the foot off and pitching it in the grass. "You goin' to roast 'em, fry 'em or what?"

Nobody answered and Collings continued.

"Well, if you're goin' to fry 'em, you want to cut their legs off right next to the body. Just cut it on either side like you were goin' to carve it."

Using a sharp knife, Collings cut down to the hip joint between the thigh and body of one of the roosters. The hip joint exposed, she broke it and cut through it, severing the leg and thigh from the body. She repeated the process on the other side.

"You cain't pull 'em off," Collings said, standing amid a pile of feathers. "You got to singe 'em or burn 'em off over a fire."

"The wings are cut off the same way," Collings said, standing up from the stooped position she'd been in while bending over the low table to dress the roosters. "Pull the wings out from the body and they'll have joints just like the legs."

While Collings cut her rooster, onlookers watched and she instructed a couple of the younger ones about how and where to cut the roosters they held limply in their hands. She flipped the one she had been cutting up over on its back and pointed her knife to the front top part of the breast.

"Now you got to cut the pulley bone," she said. "Put the blade on the breastbone and push it as far as it will go and turn your knife towards me."

Following the instructions, the young onlooker made a v-shaped cut on the breast.

"Cut right in the breastbone—down toward you as far as the knife will go," Collings said. "Then turn your knife and slice down. Take your fingers and pull down, then cut the pulley bones off."

Collings quickly cut the bones apart.

"Now the two pieces of the breast," she said, indicating the ribs of the roosters, "just cut through these up here."

She pointed to the ribs with the point of her knife and continued, "Then do the other side the same way. But don't cut too deep. The entrails are still inside and you don't want to cut the gall."

If the gall is cut, she explained, a green bile flows out and spreads through the meat, giving it a bitter taste.

If the gall is cut, she explained, a green bile flows out and spreads through the meat, giving it a bitter taste. Collings didn't have any trouble slicing through the ribs. Taking the breastbone in hand, she pulled it up, revealing the insides.

"Take your knife and cut right down the sides and around his rear end," she said, deftly scooping out the entrails with her hand and separating the edible organs and throwing the rest away.

"The liver, heart and gizzard are the only parts of the entrails that you keep," said Della Waldrop, who has been "cleaning chickens ever since she was big enough."

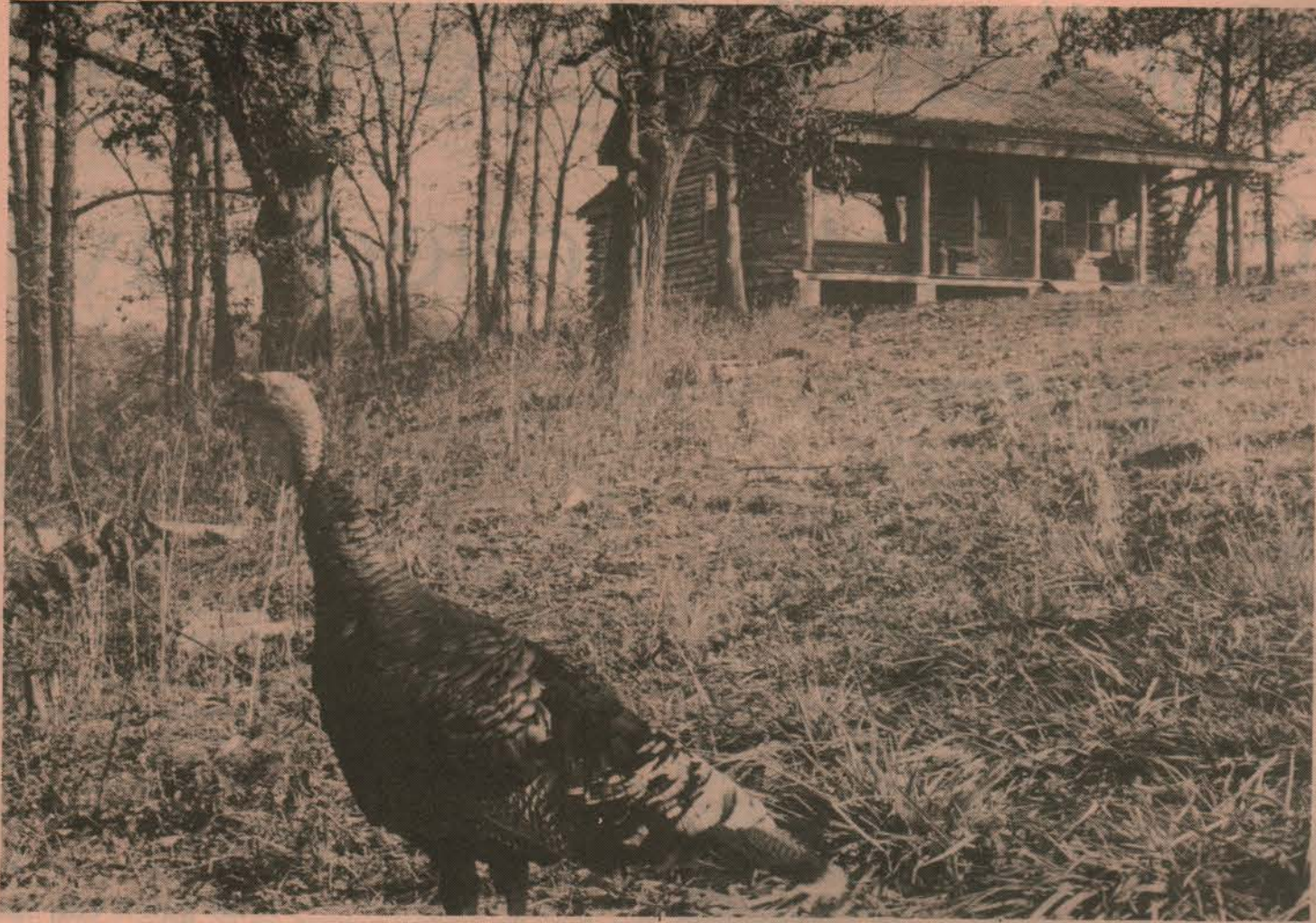
Explaining that she used to clean chickens for other people to clean chickens for other people before she decided "to slow down a little," Waldrop demonstrated how to clean larger chickens and roosters left whole and used for baking. About the only difference, she said, is how the entrails are removed.

"Now on young chickens, the entrails just peel right out," she said, making small cuts near the breast and rectum before pulling the entrails out. "But these old roosters are a little harder."

Despite being more difficult, Waldrop soon had three large roosters dressed. Two were cut up and roasted on an open fire; the other was cut up and put with Collings' smaller roosters to be used to make chicken and noodles.

Having a chicken in every pot is much easier today than it was in King Henry's or Herbert Hoover's time perhaps. Being able to buy them at the supermarket already dressed is certainly less mess and bother. But Joy Collings and Della Waldrop wouldn't have it any different than the way they've been doing it for years.

# Country life...the way to go



Warily eyeing the photographer, Tom pauses on a strole around the grounds while keeping his eye on the place.

## by Beverly Russell

It isn't every day that most of us can sit in the living room, look out the picture window, see a black speckled hen jump from the porch to the window ledge and peck on the glass as though she's trying to tell us she's there.

And it certainly isn't every day that a former country girl who now lives in a Chicago suburb stays in a log house with a wood stove and a pile of wood, caring for a bunch of chickens, a few dogs, a pair of turkeys, a half dozen or so ducks and a cat.

That's where I found myself last fall, though, after agreeing to house-sit while a friend went on vacation. While I lived half my life in the country, that doesn't mean I am a farm girl or have even taken care of farm animals.

I can only vaguely recall when my mother raised chickens. Dirty, ugly white chickens at that. At least that's the way I remember them.

The only times I was ever around the chickens was when I carried the potato peelings and egg shells out and threw them into the chicken yard or when I occasionally went with my mother to gather the eggs. With a large wicker basket over one arm for the eggs and a big stick in the other hand to fight off the mean roosters and me trailing behind, she'd go inside the dark, smelly, dirty chicken house and shoo the setting hens from their nests.

I thought she was the bravest woman in the world to get that close to the hens. They'd squawk and fly from their nests, while I cowered in the corner. She'd place the eggs in the basket and tell me not to be afraid.

Then later, I remember one evening when I got off the school bus there was a big square box of baby chicks, hanging from the mailbox, crying cheep, cheep, cheep in their high voices. They were cute when they were all little, yellow and fluffy. But they soon got big and ugly just like the rest of the chickens.

I thought about my mother and

her chickens as I closed the chicken house door the first evening and headed for the house.

After filling the stove with wood that night, I crawled into bed. Lying there trying to go to sleep later, I thought I heard someone walking upstairs. Just in case, I quietly crawled out of bed, turned on the lights and got the gun that had been left for my protection.

Not knowing what to do with it since I'd never really handled one before, I carefully laid it on the floor beside the bed. And leaving the lights on, I crawled back into bed and went to sleep—the noises had disappeared after the light was turned on.

It was cold in the cabin the next morning. I jumped out of bed and into my clothes. After putting the gun away, I raked up the coals that were left in the stove and packed it with wood. I didn't want to have to shake off the icicles when I took a shower after I'd finished the chores.

On the way out, Morgan, the big yellow tom cat, met me at the back door. He was meowing for something to eat, but he wanted in, too. Making a run at the door each time I carried a load of wood inside, he finally made it. It wasn't two minutes before he wanted out again.

Looking around for Dolly, the old coon dog that ran loose, I poured Morgan's breakfast of dry cat food on the porch. I didn't see Dolly, but I figured she'd be around later.

Lifting the lid from the fifty-gallon drum of dog food that was sitting on the back porch I filled a bucket, using an old green frisbee that was left in the drum. Then I filled another bucket with water from an outside faucet and carried them down the hill to the two bird dogs, Jody and Maybelle, that were in a pen.

When I got down the hill, Dolly was waiting at her food bowl. And after filling her bowl, I went into the pen to feed Jody and Maybelle.

They were happy to see me come with their food. And they

followed me around the pen as I filled their bowls, barking, jumping up and down and wagging their tails.

Next I had to put out the food for the chickens and turkeys and then open the chicken house door. I thought about the mean old roosters that jumped on my mother's back as I approached the door.

So I put off opening the door until I had the cracked corn in the feed trough. And I also talked to them while I was filling it. Although I felt rather dumb, I thought it calmed them down. But maybe it just calmed me down.

"Are you guys ready to get out?"

"Cock-a-doodle-doo. Bluck, bluck, bluck," they said as they scurried out the door.

The two turkeys, Tom and Gertrude, also roosted with the chickens. And after the chickens had gotten out, Gertrude was left standing in the doorway. She didn't seem to know whether she wanted to come out or not.

Poor old Gertrude, I thought. Her breast feathers were all worn off because she'd been kept in a cage for a long time and it seemed that she might even have arthritis.

"Well, Gertrude, are you going to come out?" I said. "I've got to get in to gather the eggs and put some food out."

She turned her head and looked at me with one eye and then turned her head around and looked at me with the other eye. I held out the coffee can of cracked corn and Gertrude pecked at it, gobbled it down and backed up to let me in.

Inside there were two hens setting on their nests. I didn't really want to bother them as I was afraid of them pecking me, so I just looked in the empty nests and found only one egg. I slipped the egg in my jacket pocket, put some feed out and quickly went back outside.

Tom and a rooster had upset the bucket of dog food that I'd left outside and were gobbling it

down. I shooed them away. The rooster crowed and Tom gobbled.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo, gobble, gobble," they said.

I was amazed that turkeys actually did sound just like my grandmother used to sound when she told me stories about when she grew up on a farm. The rooster was the pretty reddish-brown one with the big red comb. These chickens weren't dirty-white like my mother's. They were colorful. Black and white speckled, red, brown and orange with green tail feathers.

I shooed them away from the bucket, picked it up and walked up the hill to the cornfield to get the corn to feed the ducks. Pulling off the ears of corn and shucking them, I then broke them in half and threw them in the bucket on top of the dog food. Tom, a few roosters and some hens had followed me and were trying to get to the bucket of corn.

After I had enough corn in the bucket I carried it back down the hill to the chicken yard to throw out the half ears for the ducks. Of course Tom and the rest of the chickens had followed me and were the first ones there to eat it. I worried that the ducks wouldn't get anything to eat but didn't know what to do about it.

Since the ducks weren't as friendly as the chickens and turkeys, I could never get too close to them. They finally began to waddle, quacking and honking, down the hill from the pond. They were a funny bunch, they never went anywhere singly. They always went as a group, all eight or none of them. When one would get a little behind the group, he would waddle faster and faster, honking all the time to let the others know he was trying to catch up.

As I stood watching them, they turned and began their fast waddle up the hill to the pond. I followed them and could see their heads sticking up in the morning sunlight over the top of the hill. I'd scared them back onto the water.

So I sat down on an old inner

tube that was left over from summer swimming and watched them paddle out to the middle of the pond. The pond had a sparkling reflection of the morning sun, and the ducks seemed to just glide gracefully over the smooth surface. The ducks were beautiful, too, with their shiny iridescent blue-green heads and necks.

They were starting to float my way, and I wondered just how close they would come. But they didn't get very close before they turned and headed for the cattails at the other end of the pond.

Tired of watching the ducks, I picked up the bucket with the last of the dog food in it and headed for the last animal. Fred, another bird dog, was tied up on the other side of the hill.

Fred acted like a happy dog in spite of the fact that he was tied up. He seemed to smile when he jumped around. And that peculiar jump. It seemed like he was jumping for joy. He'd jump up from all four feet, not just the front two like most dogs.

With all the chores done and the house warm, I went back inside for a shower, breakfast and a cup of coffee made the old-fashioned way.

I made the coffee by filling the pot three quarters full of water, throwing in about three scoops of coffee and bringing it to a boil. Then I let it boil until I remembered to turn it off and poured in a half cup of cold water to settle the grounds. It was good coffee, even though I could never get all the grounds to settle to the bottom.

As I sat enjoying my coffee, Dolly started barking. Dolly was the watch dog and she barked to warn me that someone was there whenever a car drove up. I wondered who it could be.

I was suprised when I found a salesman at the door. He was selling some kind of food delivery service. I guess he thought I'd need one since I was back in the woods.

But I really wasn't alone in the woods. The animals became my friends, the chores became a way of life and the two weeks slipped by almost too quickly. Even carrying in the wood got easier. I was thankful that it hadn't snowed, though. The rain was bad enough.

Before I knew it, it was time to pack the car and head back to the suburbs of Chicago, where you are governed by traffic lights at every corner and jampacked expressways. I knew I'd miss the peacefulness of the country, the quietness of the woods and the animals.

Oh, I'd still have animals—a doberman pinscher, a fiesty white cat and a bird. All in an apartment. But I wouldn't have friends who came around and closed the chicken house door when I didn't make it home at dark or who called to see if I was freezing because I couldn't get a fire started.

Then, of course, I didn't have a chicken house or a wood stove, either. And all I had to do to make it warm was flip a switch.



# The saga of Nellie Gray

by Carl R. Bogardus, Sr., M.D.

Nellie Gray was the name bestowed upon her by a former owner. I could not think of a more fitting one, since she was a mare and was gray, so I kept it. Her mistress had taken the name from an old song, the first line of which went something like this: "Oh, my daring Nellie Gray, they have taken you away."

She was a high-strung, spirited, blue-grass-bred, strawberry roan. She was fleet and sure-footed, but inclined to be skittish at times—such as the first time I rode through Tug Point up on the Middle Fork of the Kentucky River. That was when the Ghost of Tug Point jumped up behind my saddle and rode with me through the deeply-shaded woods with Nellie Gray flying like the wind and me hanging on for dear life until we emerged into the bright sunshine on the other side. This happened to me not once, but many times. And others, too, swore the same uncanny thing happened to them when they rode along the sandy, holly-bordered trail through Tug Point.

It all started long ago when an early settler was thrown from his horse while riding through the Tug Point woods, and died instantly of a broken neck. From that time on his restless ghost has leaped upon the back of every horse which came through his domain, and thus it shall probably be until Doomsday releases his troubled spirit.

When I went to Hyden, Kentucky, deep in the Cumberland Plateau, in 1931, to be the full-time County Health Officer of Leslie County, I bought Nellie Gray, then aged five years, from Mildred Hall, the former Home Demonstration Agent, for \$150. The price included the bridle, an old World War I Calvary saddle, brass spurs and a pair of leather U.S. Army saddlebags. These items I still have, along with one of her shoes. A blacksmith by the name of Uriah Wells always shod Nellie Gray for me. He hammered the rear corks of the shoes into points—this was the Wells trademark.

At that time, 1931 to 1934, Leslie County had only one highway, State Road 80, which ran from Hazard to Hyden. Otherwise there were no roads passable to cars. The greater part of the roads were not even "wagon roads," but were trails traversable only by mule-drawn, homemade sleds with runners made of tough sourwood. Many, many miles of mountain roadways ran through the beds of creeks and branches. As the expression had it: "They forded the creek endwise!" As a consequence all travel was by either muleback or horseback. Mules were preferred by the natives since they were better hillside workers than horses, and were more nimble-footed and trustworthy on the rocky mountain trails. Court day in Hyden had to be seen to be believed. Hundreds of saddled mules would be tied up at every available spot. Many a picket fence disappeared completely before court was over by being entirely devoured by salt-hungry mules.

I rode horseback many thousands of miles winter, summer, spring and fall, visiting Leslie County's 72 one-room schools to give shots to and examine protesting barefoot school kids, and all for the munificent

salary of \$216 a month. I'll never forget one dreary winter day which threatened there was worse to come, I got up early, saddled Nellie Gray and started jogging up the Middle Fork, bound for a log school house located in a gap between the heads of two creeks whose names I do not now recall. I had sent the teacher a card saying I would be there on this particular day. So, about five hours and thirty miles from Hyden I arrived at the school house, and found it to be empty of humans. I rode up to a neighboring cabin and was told the teacher had decided to go squirrel hunting so he dismissed school. My sixty-mile roundtrip winter horseback ride had been for naught. Disgruntled and disgusted to the point of profanity, I headed Nellie Gray for home, which suited her fine since she would not have to be tied to a sapling, cold and hungry for hours.

Horseback riding is not without its possible dangers. I had several close shaves with disaster, two of which I shall recount here.

One day, early in the morning, I started on my way to the Grassy Branch School, down the Middle Fork and up Grassy Branch. It was a cold, late winter day, low gray clouds were whipped along by a brisk north wind. The Middle Fork fords were stirrup-deep. The Grassy Creek ford was notorious for being rough and difficult. The water there was up to a medium-sized hillbilly's bellybutton. As we started across, Nellie Gray began kicking and floundering as her steel-shod hooves slipped on the slick, moss-covered boulders in the stream bed. I did my best to help the excited mare, but she finally blew her cool, farted and went completely down before I had a chance to jump off. My leg was pinned between her body and the rocks. Fortunately, the rushing water was only a few feet deep and my head remained above the surface. That was the first time I've ever been baptized (by a horse or anyone else for that matter). Nellie Gray managed to scramble back up on her four feet and I struggled to my feet and led her back to the bank of the river. Relieved of all sin, I stripped off all my sodden clothing, wrung them out and put them back on. I was so cold my chill bumps had chill bumps on them. Then, thoroughly frozen to the bone, I galloped old Nellie back to the Frontier Nursing Center at Possum Bend, and fried myself before a crackling log fire. A bruised and sore leg was all that resulted from this near brush with death.

On another occasion I emerged unscathed from what could have been a tragic situation. Horses are much like people—stubborn and balky when they want to be. My old gray mare was inclined to be reluctant to move with any great speed when we were headed away from home and I would have to stimulate her with my spurs and speak sharply to her to prod her into action. But coming back home she proved very hard to control and would want to run like a thoroughbred on a track. Then I would have to hold her back with taut reins. She was anxious to get back to her warm stall, corn, oats, hay and fodder as soon as she possibly could.

On this particular day I had ridden up Short Creek to visit a

school. Returning we came to a place where the road traversed a long sandy bottom, and I let Nellie Gray have her way. With no urging on my part, she galloped like the wind. Suddenly a front hoof struck a rock embedded in the road, and she stumbled badly, but did not fall. As she hesitated momentarily, my inertia carried me headlong over her head and into the road in front of her, where I tumbled over and over. Finding myself unhurt, I dusted myself off and remounted the patiently waiting mare, who had a guilty sheepish look on her face, and road on into town at a more leisurely pace. Except for



Dr. Bogardus on Nellie Gray, his fleet and sure-footed strawberry roan.

general body soreness, there was no after effect felt from this mishap.

It is said today that no book or story is successful unless it has some sex in it. So, here's a little sex angle to this story, which undoubtedly will not make it a best seller!

One fall day we (Nellie Gray and I) set out for the school over on Thousandsticks branch of Bull Creek, which was about six miles from Hyden. At this time Nellie Gray was "horsing," or in other words, she was "in heat." She would stop every little bit, spread her hind legs, squat down and urinate a few drops. In spite of these little interruptions of an anticipatory nature, we arrived at Thousandsticks school in plenty of time. I hadn't been there long until I heard the sounds of galloping hooves coming up the rocky bed of the branch. Looking out the door I saw it was a riderless horse. Nellie Gray neighed loudly, the horse stopped and trotted over to my tethered mare. They nodded their heads, touched noses affectionately and gave a few low whinnies. Then he moved around behind her and took a deep whiff of her rear end. Whereupon he tarried not and with tail up, he took off again flying up the branch. By then Nellie was so excited she reared up, broke loose from the sapling to which she was tied and loped off up the branch after her newfound friend—rocks and water flying in all directions. I yelled as loudly as I could, but my shouts

seemed only to spur her to faster action and she was soon out of sight and sound. I felt that pursuit was useless and went back in the school to finish puncturing the greatly amused kids. When I had finished I packed my saddlebags and trudged over Thousandsticks mountain to Hyden. To say I was somewhat perturbed with Nellie Gray for acting in so stupid a fashion, chasing after a strange male, would be putting it mildly. That night I walked over to the barn, and as I came along the dark street I heard a familiar whinny. There she stood by the door anxiously awaiting to get into her stall. There is a postscript to this tale. Nellie did not conceive as a result of this escapade, so she never experienced the joys of motherhood, and as far as I know, died a virgin. To the day of her death, she did not know that the lover she so hotly pursued

the Frontier Nursing Service's British-born and trained midwives, who's name was a two word poem, Mary Harry, riding her horse, Prince, accompanied me, and I was on my pride and joy, Nellie Gray. We were to give typhoid shots to all in the neighborhood who wanted them. We arrived before noon, had dinner with the Lewis family, and worked on into the afternoon. Before we were finished, Mary decided she had to go out behind the log barn to heed nature's call. There being no sanitary facilities on the premises, she squatted down next to the barn, not observing the copperhead between two logs. The snake struck out and bit her on the shoulder. Mary ran screaming back to the house crying she had been bitten by a snake. We all carried snake-bite kits, so I incised the fang punctures with a razor blade, and sucked the blood out until the bleeding stopped. Then I injected antivenom under the bite area, and we rode back to the hospital at Hyden as quickly as possible. She had a lot of trouble from this. There was sloughing of the bite area, and she was incapacitated for a long time. The moral of this story is: "Look before you squat!"

One summer day as I was riding up Beech Fork I was suddenly startled by hearing a tremendous flapping of wings and a loud honking coming from high overhead. I looked up and saw what I took to be a flock of domestic geese sailing down through the sky creating a terrific din as they came. The whole thing took only a few minutes and they splashed into a long pool of the creek still honking and beating their wings as though that were a fitting finale to a game that had been great fun.

I observed that the mountain-side had been cleared and was in grass to its very top. I stopped at a nearby cabin where I saw a woman in a long gingham dress and wearing a sunbonnet poking with a stick at her washing which was boiling in a large iron kettle over a wood fire.

"Do your geese do that very often?" I asked. "I mean, fly down from the top of the mountain that way?" "Yes," she answered, "they do it everyday. They walk all the way to the top eating grass and bugs, then they are too full to walk back down; besides it's much easier for a goose to climb up a hill than it is to come down, so they do it the easiest way and fly down. They've been doing it that way for years."

I added the incident to my store of trivial memories and rode on up the creek. I will always have a vivid mental picture of that flock of geese taking an enjoyable way out of a potentially difficult situation.

Before I left Hyden in the summer of 1934, Nellie Gray developed an inflamed and watery left eye, which apparently caused her considerable discomfort and interfered with her binocular vision. I arranged for the Frontier Nursing Service to keep her when I moved away and they were to pay me for her if she eventually proved healthy. However, several months later I received a letter from Mrs. Mary Breckinridge saying my beloved steed's other eye had gone bad and she finally became blind. They had her destroyed and buried her in their horse graveyard at Wendover.

Ordinarily I am not fond of animals, but even today, almost forty years later, I still have fond memories and happy thoughts of my sweet and gentle Nellie Gray.

by Ray Elliott

During the 1929 robbery of the Bellair State Bank, Cashier Homer "Putt" Adkisson stuck his fingers in the lock of the vault door to keep the two bank robbers from locking the door on him and several customers.

He left the vault only seconds later, grabbed a gun, ran into the street and fired several shots at the fleeing robbers, hitting the car with all but two rounds. The bank robbers got away, but not before Adkisson alerted authorities and organized a posse to chase them.

Both men were caught a few days later in Indiana. One was shot to death by the arresting officer; the other, seriously wounded, was later convicted of the bank robbery and sent to prison.

Adkisson's clear thinking kept the group with him in the vault from being stuck there for quite a while. But people who know him are used to his wit and ability to get by with what he has available or to fix or build most anything.

It was almost three years before the bank robbery that Adkisson's father gave him a 1926 Ford motor from a junked truck. He unloaded the engine in the old, well-kept, red-painted mill sitting down the hill from his workshop and house a quarter of a mile east of Bellair. And it stayed there for almost 50 years.

Then the now 83-year-old Adkisson decided to build a pickup truck. Using the same kind of ingenuity and perseverance that he is known for and with slight modifications that had to be made because he couldn't find all the original Ford parts, that's what he ended up with three years later.

The entire cab and back of the pickup is a box-shaped piece of wood, carefully cut and hewed, shaped to look as though it could have been the real thing.

A handcrafted toolbox of the same light-colored wood as the truck bed and cab sits fastened to the running board in front of the rear fender on the passenger's side. And step-through doorways leading to the steering wheel and tan vinyl-covered seat and backrest were cut into the box-shaped bed on both sides.

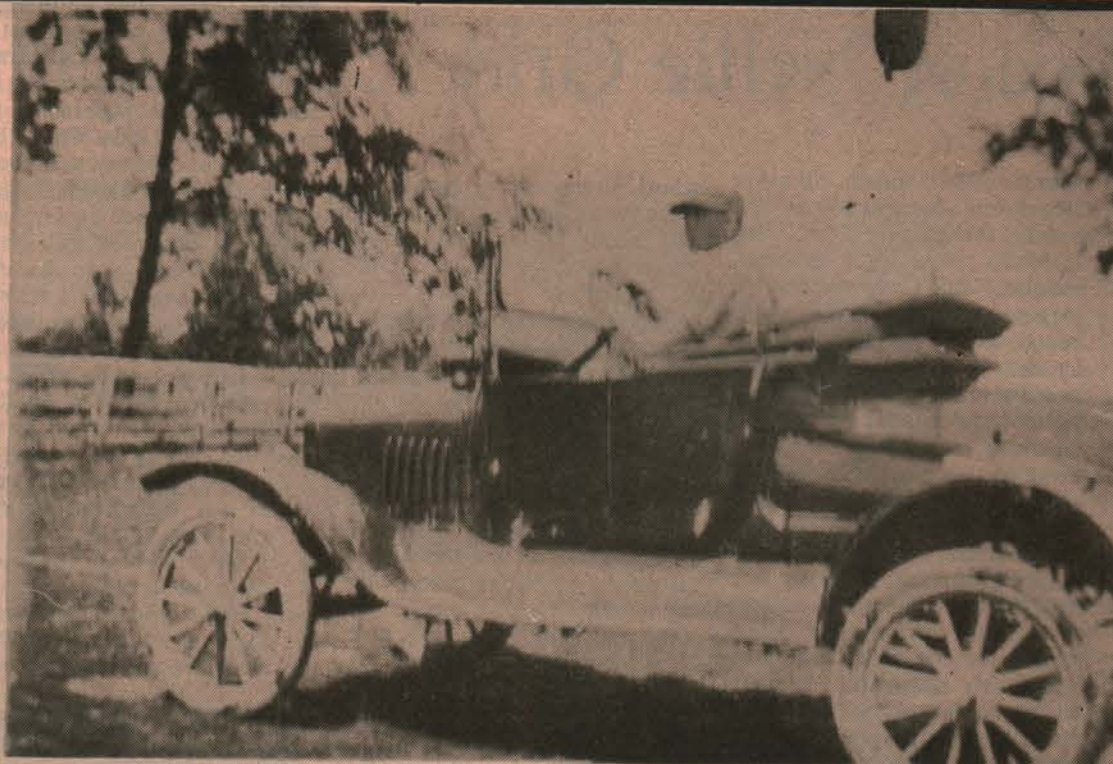
Adkisson designed the bed, and it and the now yellow-painted spoke wheels contrast sharply with the jet black hood, running board and fenders, chrome-plated hood ornament and radiator cap and two round white headlights mounted between the fenders and the hood, staring out like two giant flashlights.

When Adkisson, a short rotund man with a few strands of gray hair still covering his balding head, talks about the truck, he peers through his bifocals straight into your eyes. And he walks from his green frame cottage, where he lives with Vera, his wife of nearly 60 years, towards the shed where he stores the pickup at a much brisker pace than you might expect from a man of his age.

Inside the shed he throws the plastic covering from the truck and rolls it up. As he climbs up in the driver's seat, he tells how he got around to building the truck at an age when many people no longer have much to do with motor vehicles, much less think about building one.

"Dad had bought the motor in '26, and then he put it in a truck," Adkisson says. "Then he damaged the truck, and I got the motor. And that's all I had. I had the motor and coil box is all I had to start with.

"Motor and the coil box," he echoes the rhetorical question you ask.



Homer Adkisson, Bellair, sits in a 1914 Model T Ford owned by his father during 1915.

## It took 50 years to build this car

"Radiator! Had a hood. Somebody stole it. I had this half from here back," he says, pointing to the folding section of the hood. "I made that hood that's on there."

He talks about other parts of the pickup, a slight twinkle in his eyes, a smile on his round face and a chuckle in his voice as he remembers something about a particular piece or points to something he'd gotten in some unlikely place or by some unusual manner.

"Now that's a 1919 radiator," he says, climbing out of the truck and walking to the front of the pickup and grasping the hood ornament and radiator cap combination. "That's a '26 motor."

Then patting the fenders, he says, "These are '25s. And the runnin' gears is '27s. Wire wheels. Now before they started in on Model As, the last six months, they used them kind of wheels. But now this is a Model T. They quit makin' them in '27."

Walking to the back of the truck, he continues talking and touching a spot here and there as he explains the history of the pickup parts with the patience of a first-grade teacher who has happily and lovingly taught the same lesson over and over to eager students for years.

"I just picked up the rest of it out of pieces," he says, touching the toolbox. "I made this out of a bedstead. There's two pieces there."

He points to the spot where the wood had been joined together in a vice until it dried and looked as though it were one piece.

"Now this is one piece," he says, pointing to the truck bed and cab. "I bought this lumber up to Paris. It's all Red Oak."

Climbing into the truck, Adkisson says, "Now I don't know whether it'll run or not." He grins a little, his eyes twinkling as he leans his slightly protruding belly against the steering wheel and moves a lever and something beeps like a horn connected to a battery almost out of juice.

Then the motor turns. It turns slowly at first, whirring and chugging until the momentum of the whirling flywheel increases and the engine fires and catches

hold. "Broooooooooooooom," it starts.

He says something about the battery that is drowned out over the roar of the engine, then leans down and says, "That's where you adjust your carburetor—with this choke."

As the engine rattles and cugs and roars, Adkisson talks about the 25-26 miles to the gallon of gasoline the truck gets. "Now they's a man in the 'Grit' that says he gets 27 to 30 miles a gallon. But I get about 25 out of it.

Turning back to the steering column again, he says, "I don't know if you can see in here or not. But that's what runs it. There's no gear shift to it. This one here is forward." He moves the lever. "This one is reverse. And this is your brake.

"There's just two gears. High and low. There's no third gear in it. And that's the forerunner of the automatic transmission right there. Your automatic transmission is controlled by governors.

"Now your spark on your cars nowadays is automatic. But this is your spark here," he says, pushing the spark lever down until the engine begins chugging, almost dying. Then he increases the spark, and the engine turns over at a faster pace and runs smoothly again.

After shutting off the engine, Adkisson talks about building the

truck again. "It's got a regular frame on it," he says. "I bought the chassis off of Harold Newlin. He had it in a wagon, and I just had to put the bed on top of the frame. The frame was already there.

"I'll tell you—I had that motor, and they got to tryin' to steal it. It was down there in that building all them years. They tried to steal it, tried to get the starter off of it. They got the hood, like I said. So I moved it up here then and started working on it. I was working on it for about four years. No, no, three years, three years.

"It wasn't too much trouble gettin' the parts, no," he says, answering a question. "Them fenders was where I had the biggest job, gettin' them fenders. I got them out of Minnesota. A \$125 for them four fenders.

"I got this runnin' board here off of Leon Fisher over here by Yale. He had it in the junk pile. I sent it away and had it sanded. It's got pits in it where it's rusted."

Turning to the wheels, Adkisson says, "I sent the wheels up with Jerry (a son who lives in Tuscola) and he had 'em sand-blasted. Cleaned them up. And I bought new tires off of Montgomery Wards. But they's a place in Ohio that you can get parts. And they's a place in Quincy, Illinois. And they's a place in Oklahoma City.



Fifty years later Adkisson built this car with only a motor left to him by his father in 1927.

"They're high, very high," he says, explaining that a manufacturer still makes some original equipment but that parts aren't cheap. "We used to pay for the ring gear and pinion gear that went into the back axle, maybe \$5 for the ring gear and \$2.50 for the pinion. Well, a ring gear and a pinion now is—I give \$56.

"And I've got a brand new water pump on this. Back in 1923 or '24 we paid anywhere from \$5-6 for it. I paid \$31 for this one. That thing on the front of the radiator there, that's a Motometer—it don't work. But it's on there; it's supposed to work; it's supposed to register the temperature of the water in the radiator.

"Jerry and Earl (his other son who also lives in Tuscola) bought that for me for Christmas. And you could buy that winged cap there," he points to the radiator cap, "for 89 cents and buy the Motometer for \$2.50. Fourteen dollars in both them now."

Working his way around the car mentally or with the point of a finger, Adkisson explains the style of the 1927 Fords and stresses their simplicity compared to today's models.

"They only had one frame," he says. "They used the same frame for the pickup truck, touring car, roadster, sedan and coupe. Same motor, too. The only thing that was different was the body.

"Now I found this frame," he says, pointing to the windshield frame, "here out there in that old garage of John Haddox's in Bellair. I took it to Robinson—it had a plate glass in it.

"This one here was broke in two, and I thought they could take this one and make one here and put a new one down here," he says, pointing at the windshield again. "No. Forty dollars. Safety glass. You can't put the plate glass in 'em. Forty dollars for that windshield. Just the glass."

Adkisson says the Model T he built will run from 35 to 40 miles per hour as it is.

"But," he says, "if you put different gears in the backend and put aluminum pistons in 'em, why, you might be able to get more than that out of it. This's got cast iron pistons in it, and they are heavy.

He lifts up the seat and points to the gas tank that sits under the seat.

"That tank," he says, "I had the tin shop up to Casey make it. It's 23 inches long and 10 inches high. And he charged me \$36 for making that tank."

His voice slows and he stresses the \$36.

"It's about the same thing as the original. They's just so much room for them to fit on the frame, and the regular ones held 10 gallons. But that one only holds nine."

Then he remembers other Model Ts he had, other cars his father had.

"I had a Model T until 1925 or '26. The first one I got was in 1919. First car Dad got was 1914. And then I got one in 1922. I traded for one with a starter on it. I run it until '25.

"They didn't cost—well, the first one I got in 1919 cost \$525. There was no tax or anything on it. Then they got cheaper. In 1926 they got down to \$360. Now I've been offered \$3500 for this one.

"But I don't want to sell it. It's just kind of a hobby I have. Vera says there was two fools that met, though," he says and laughs. "One that didn't sell, and one that wanted to buy."

And then he covers the pickup with the plastic covering again until he wants to drive it somewhere, in a parade perhaps, or just wants to show someone his kind of artwork.



# Good times, more memories

by Vanessa Faurie

As the sun slips beneath the horizon west of the Bellair Store on the warm Friday September evening, people park their cars and pickups on each side of the blacktop road that passes the old store, restaurant and bank.

**Only tonight the wagons aren't for hauling hay or straw. Tonight they're a makeshift stage.**

It's a night for people to get together to eat, visit and listen to entertainment. Friday nights like this one were common years ago when people gathered at the general store after the day's work to relax and visit with friends. And over 400 people come out tonight—young people to experience, old people to relive.

Two flatbed wagons with wooden bottoms sit on the east side of the brick-sided, two-story store building. Only tonight the wagons aren't for hauling hay or straw. Tonight they're a makeshift stage.

Levi-clad men in cowboy hats and leather boots unload microphones and amplifiers from a big silver-colored, Greyhound-type touring bus with "Ennis" painted in big letters across the sides.

"Excuse me there," one of the

**"Course folks gettin' together like this ain't new to me," Cleon Matheny, Bellair, says.**

workers says to a bystander so he can slide another speaker onto the stage to prepare for a benefit concert for the Tales from the general store foundation, the purpose of tonight's get-together.

"Course folks gettin' together like this ain't new to me," Cleon Matheny, Bellair, says. "I can remember times when the upstairs o' the store was full. I was just a kid, ten years old, but the store'd be full every night. An' they'd have different things."

I remember they had what they called a 'hard-up party' durin' the Depression an' nobody had no money. That hall was full with people dressed in rags—worse than things really was. I remember Homer Adkisson come dressed in a barrel."

Nobody has a barrel on tonight, but people talk and laugh just like Matheny says people did at the hard-up party. Small groups of friends and neighbors gather to say hello and visit with each other in the grassy lot between the store and the bank.

"This is really somethin', ain't it?" a woman says to open a conversation with the older woman standing next to her as they

watch the crowd.

The number of people in each group is always changing as they mingle and mix with other groups scattered around. And Tales workers rush to finish last details, stopping every few minutes to answer an onlooker's question.

"Where do hungry folks get this food I been hearin' about?" an old man asks a worker carrying an extension cord to the back of the stage.

"Just around at the other end of the stage there," the worker says, pointing toward a long table covered with sandwiches, coffee and homemade cakes.

Wooden benches, folding chairs and bales of straw are arranged around the stage for the crowd. And as the night gets darker, a string of naked lightbulbs held up with wooden poles line the edge of the lot to provide some light. The store's porch lights also glimmer, calling back scenes from another day.

Soon the voices in the crowd soften as the band, Ennis and the Outlaws, climbed onto the stage. The band members even look like outlaws with their bearded faces and cowboy hats that rest just above their brows.

But they're not. At least not all the time. They're really doctors or pharmacists or newspaper publishers or something other than they appear to be. For now, though, they're outlaws playing country music.

Dr. Mike (Ennis) Elliott walks to the center microphone with his guitar strapped over his shoulder and looks out over the crowd. The concert is about to begin.

"Let's play some music here tonight and raise some money for this outfit," Elliott says. "I've always had a kind o' soft spot in my heart for small towns. I grew up over in 'Napolis. Big Bob (Martin) o'er here grew up just down the road. Some o' these other boys just grew up. An' we're happy to be here tonight to play a little music for you."

Elliott talks some more about the night ahead and the mosquitoes buzzing around in the evening air that are "big enough to look a rooster in the eye." Then he calls out a song and the music starts.

Song after song, people sit with their eyes fixed on the band. An elderly woman nods her head in time with the music. The young, sandy blond-haired boy who sits next to her smiles. Others clap or sing along.

Then as the band begins a slow country ballad, all the eyes shift to husky, six-foot guitar player Big Bob Martin. The people silently watch him as he gently picks the strings of his guitar and sings with closed eyes. Some of the people close their eyes, too.

But the music soon speeds up again and the band plays a few more songs made popular by country singers like Hank Williams, Waylon Jennings and others. One couple gets up and starts to dance at the side of the stage. A woman with wire-rimmed spectacles wearing an old-fashioned, early 1900's era, patterned dress and small, dark-colored hat joins in and claps and stomps her feet to the music.

People who have seen Ennis and the Outlaws before know the woman as Cousin Jenny. She's a regular who talks and jokes with the people at the band's shows.

After the band finishes a song, Elliott announces an auction of Ennis and the Outlaw tee-shirts for the Tales foundation. The gray-breaded, guitar-playing doctor holds up the black shirts with a picture of three riders and the band's name printed in white as people call out their offers.

The small groups that had gathered before the concert have melted into one large group now. And they laugh and clap as some of them go up to the stage for tee-shirts.

Howard Knicely, Oblong, is one of those people. Knicely was born and raised in Bellair and worked in the general store during the early 30's. He appears from behind the crowd and hurries toward the stage, waving a bill over his head.

As people keep approaching the stage, Elliott reaches down to hand out the tee-shirts and collect the money for Tales. Old and young people get a shirt. Some even put it on over their clothing. And the crowd cheers them.

With the tee-shirts handed out, the group takes a short break and a newer band called the Rough Cuts plays for about three-quarters of an hour. Then Ennis and the Outlaws are on stage again. Nobody seems to know what time it is. But then nobody seems to care. For the people, it's as if the night were just beginning.

**Nobody seems to know what time it is. But then nobody seems to care.**

Throughout the show, the band has joked and had fun with everyone. But just before the last song, Elliott stands at the front of the stage and waits until the crowd is silent. Then he speaks.

"You know, a lot o' people think we really are outlaws an' don't think we have much religion," Elliott says, his right hand on the microphone and his left hand resting on the neck of his guitar. Then he raises his arm up to the sky in one sweeping motion and points to the full, white moon.

"But how can you see a beautiful moon like that an' think there ain't no God?" he says. "So we're gonna close this show with a little gospel music. An' we'd like for you all to join in."

The band begins to play "Amazing Grace," and everyone starts to sing. People slowly sway from side to side.

"Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me," they sing out loud. "I once was lost, but now am found, blind, but now I see."

"One more time," someone shouts and everyone sings the verse again. And then again. And again.

Thin clouds slowly drift across the full moon as the band draws out the last chord. And the words fade into the summer night like a cowboy riding off into the sunset.

# Heb Wheeler: honorary Irishman

Dave Johnson originally from northern Illinois, is the principal of the Carmi (IL) Middle School. The following Irish tale is from his mother's people, the O'Cassidy's—"Suren a fine lot," he says.

by Dave Johnson

Greatest thing since sliced bread.

Anyhow, that's what my Grandpa called Heb Wheeler. I can remember so well because Heb was Grandpa's only friend whose name didn't have the ring of an O'Grady, O'Brian, Donohue or Moriarty.

You see, Grandpa was an O'Cassidy and proud of it. How he became so fond of a Wheeler was beyond me, but many things about Grandpa puzzled me... at that time.

Grandpa swore (every chance he got, by the way) that Heb was 6'8" and weighed 280. Now in 1948, that was one heck of a man. I thought that Grandpa at 5'7" and 215 was large. More reliable sources put Heb somewhat smaller than that, but Grandpa was rather adamant about the subject, so Heb remained 6'8" and 280, at least in my mind.

After all these years, I have found the key to their friendship. (Others older than I already know.) Heb and Grandpa had a mutual love: alcohol. Heb, it was rumored in the Irish community, had to have had at least one ancestor from the Emerald Isle. Even I knew that no non-Irish human could possibly drink that much.

Anyhow, Grandpa and Heb headed uptown one afternoon to see the motorcars. Of course I knew, as did the rest of the family, that they were headed for another of their legendary drinking bouts. But little did we know how legendary this particular bout would be.

**Heb, it was rumored in the Irish community, had to have had at least one ancestor from the Emerald Isle. Even I knew that no non-Irish human could possibly drink that much.**

Word has it that Heb and Grandpa actually stopped at the Ford garage and glanced at the new motorcars. Of course, during their journey they had consumed a quart of Irish whiskey and had a leg on another. I have never found out which one suggested going on the brewery tour, but neither Heb nor Grandpa was wealthy, and the prospect of free beer probably entered their

minds at the same time. After waiting in line for half an hour and a half a quart, they finally began the tour.

The details are somewhat sketchy now, but I'll try to be as detailed as Grandpa was. Seems that by the time the tour reached the brewing vats, Heb and Grandpa were ready for action. In the middle of the guide's speech on the capacity of one of the smaller vats, Heb fell in (at least according to half of the eyewitnesses—the other half said he jumped—Grandpa would never commit himself on the issue).

Amidst the splashing and hollering, Grandpa yelled, "I'll save you, Heb!" Heb would have none of it; he was sure he was up to the task. Some agreed—some didn't. Grandpa put his last \$5 on Heb (and the possibility of his Irish ancestry).

The cheering then commenced, some cheering for Heb, some for the vat. And a momentous struggle it was. About three hours and three trips to the bathroom later, Heb went under for the last time. The vat had won.

Grandpa argued that one more trip to the bathroom would have saved his five and ol' Heb. But Grandpa paid up and got the O'Brian boys to help him fish that mountain of a man from the vat (which, according to Grandpa, was at least half empty).

Grandpa and the O'Brians then loaded Heb into the back of the O'Brians' truck and headed toward Old Man Swartz' funeral home. After depositing the remains, Grandpa went to tell Mrs. Wheeler of her husband's demise.

Mrs. Wheeler was entirely upset with Grandpa; he attributed this anger to the fact that she wasn't Irish and therefore could not understand the dignity with which Heb died. Most of the Irish community volunteered to help Mrs. Wheeler in one way or another, and she soon begrudgingly began to accept the fact that Heb was somewhat of a hero akin to St. Patrick and Disraeli. Of course, that alone did not pay the rent or feed her six kids.

Five days later (two to build the casket big enough for Heb, three to get the smile from his face) the funeral took place. According to Grandpa, it was one of the finest non-Irish affairs he had ever attended. It wasn't until about a week later that I noticed that Heb Wheeler's death was having an effect on Grandpa. He finally realized that he had lost a friend beyond compare. But an O'Cassidy doesn't grieve long—at least outwardly.

A short six months later Grandpa went to join Heb. The doctor said it was a heart attack. I guess the Doc was partly right. (I'm sure it was Grandpa's heart.) I knew Grandpa planned to die. Things just weren't the same and Ol' Heb was waiting for him.

Greatest thing since sliced bread, sure, that was Heb. The Irish don't grieve long—just hard.

# Tell tale toll of tick-tock

Due to the complications that transpired through surgery on Feb. 23, Marvin Harrison died at Good Samaritan Hospital Feb. 27. Harrison was interviewed prior to surgery. This article was written by Robinson Daily News reporter, Bruce Simmons, and published in the Daily News on Saturday, March 6, and reprinted with permission of the Robinson Daily News.

by Bruce Simmons

Franklin Delano Roosevelt asserted in his 1933 speech that there was nothing to fear but fear itself. But many Oblong area residents weren't ready to subscribe to this philosophy 29 years earlier, and assuming a place of prominence on their list of fears was one clock.

There was nothing peculiar about the clock in appearance. As a mantle model it stood just over two and one-half feet tall. Hours were symbolized on the face by roman numerals. Power was derived through two weights and a pendulum.

It certainly looked harmless enough.

Marvin Harrison, an Oblong resident during the era which the clock allegedly brought grief and terror to the Willow Hill area, assuredly reported from his sixth floor bed at Good Samaritan Hospital in Vincennes where he was awaiting surgery recently that people did not find the clock harmless.

"People were afraid of that clock," he reminisced.

The clock was originally purchased by Harrison's grandparents, Elias and Sarah Bush McFadden, in Yale. The couple had fled Kentucky in 1863 when southerners forced them off their property during the Civil War.

When their daughter, Nancy, matured, she married Jacob Harrison and the clock fell into their possession.

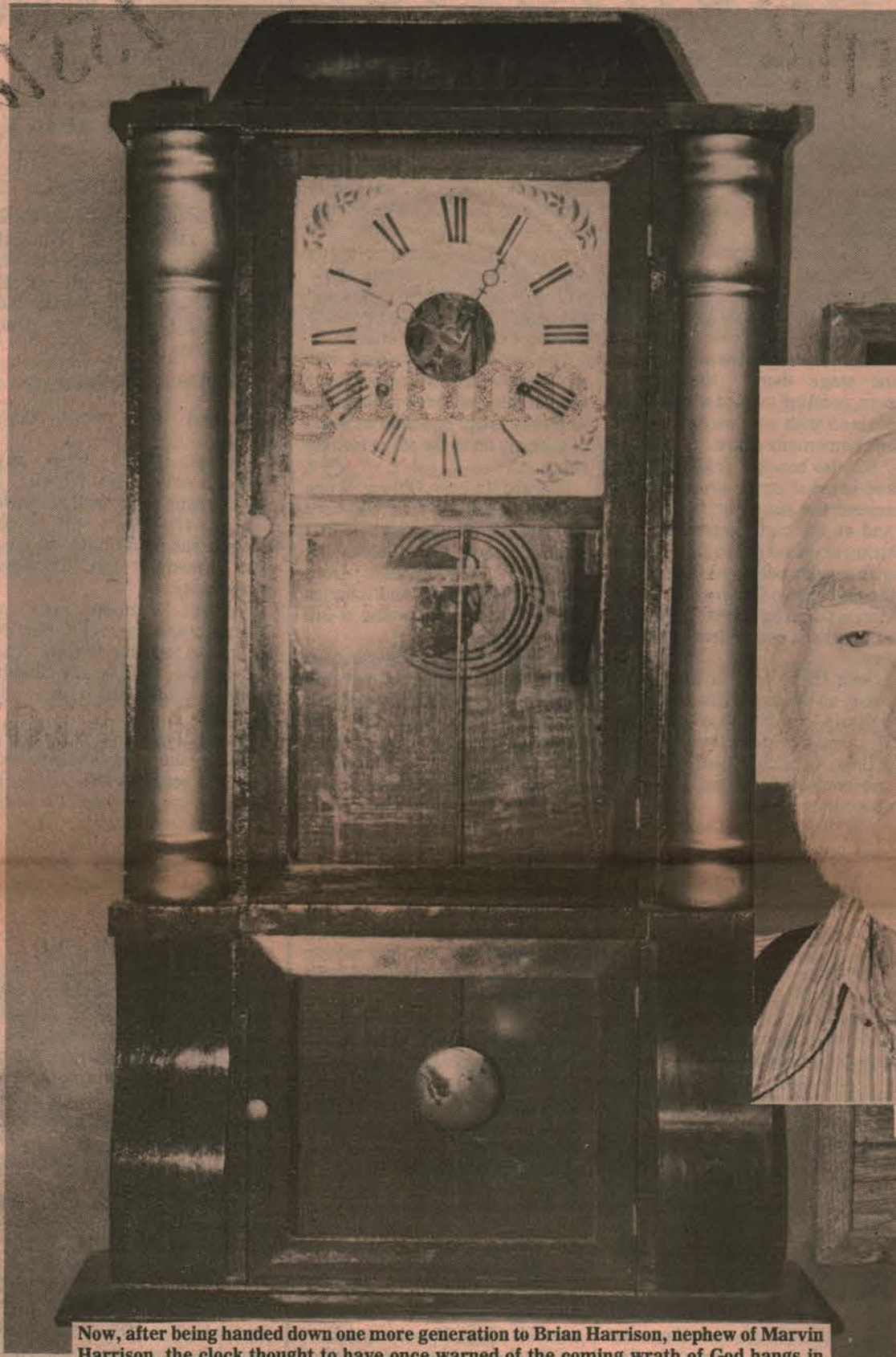
It was on their farm in Willow Hill in the late months of 1904 that the clock began to develop its sordid history.

As the tale goes, reports Harrison, a stranger approached the house one summer evening bearing a gun. Becoming afraid, he and his older sister, Ora, fled to the backyard and the comfort of their mother. When they returned, accompanied by their father, the stranger was gone.

The event was perceived as an attempted robbery of the family's hog money, and Jacob, with the aid of a nephew, armed themselves the length of the night. Had the stranger returned, he would have been met with gunfire.

Though the stranger never did return, he was not forgotten and the very next morning Jacob and Mary, hoping to find the truth behind the event, visited a nearby band of Gypsies.

Because of the magnitude of the event, the Gypsy fortune teller claimed that the crystal ball must be viewed on the premises of the attempted robbery. The three returned to the farm where the Gypsy observed the said-to-be magic sphere in the house, where the man had stood



Now, after being handed down one more generation to Brian Harrison, nephew of Marvin Harrison, the clock thought to have once warned of the coming wrath of God hangs in silence. Resurrected in 1980 after the mice claimed squatter's rights in it while packed away in a box with old magazines and stored in a barn, it has been refinished. All of the original parts remain with the exception of the pendulum, once a coat hanger, and one of the pulleys which was replaced after it was destroyed by a mouse at the turn of the century. The mouse also enlarged the slot the pulley sits in, allowing for easier entry

in the road, at the back door, at the back yard gate and then in the hay loft to no avail.

In a final effort the Gypsy ran through the crystal ball pomp and circumstance in a field bordering the farm after which she excitedly exclaimed that she had seen the answer.

The stranger had not come to rob the family according to the Gypsy. Rather he had come to kidnap the daughter.

The Gypsy's revelation led to the formation of a vigilante committee, two of which would stay up each night to protect the daughter from a possible recurrence. More than two weeks later, the kidnapping threat began to diminish and with it the vigilante committee.

Months later, a still December Willow Hill night was shattered by the striking of the clock,

though it had been abandoned on a shelf since it ceased to run in 1900. Interpreted as a mystical warning of the revitalization of the kidnapping threat, Jacob grabbed his gun. No kidnapping occurred.

Residents were still pondering the clock's role in the great scheme of things in early January when Harrison's sister became stricken with typhoid fever and soon died.

The recent December striking of the clock was now interpreted as a vehicle to deliver the warning of God's wrath.

The theory could have been abandoned for another, or it could have been panned off as coincidence or it could have died a natural death over a period of years. And perhaps it would have had another resident not died in February following the crying of

the clock.

The clock brought with it a "mysterious feeling" said Harrison.

In spring another death, this time a five-year-old boy, occurred after an unexpected chime of the clock. A fourth was recorded in June when a 21-year-old male died soon after the clang of the clock.

Any thoughts of coincidence between the striking of the clock and death had been extinguished from the minds of area residents.

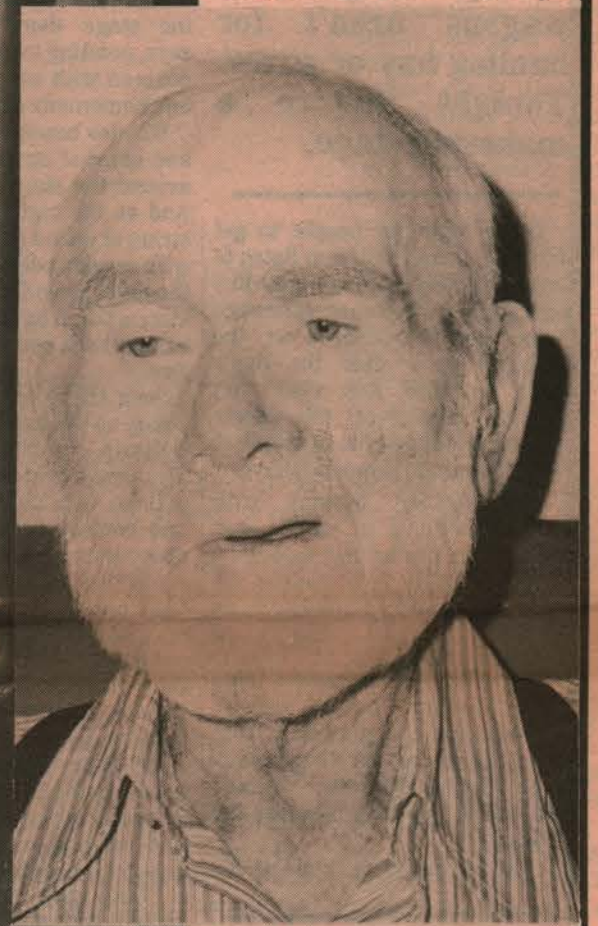
"Of course," Harrison commented, "that clock drew attention all over the community."

The clock had become the focus of attention, and fear, throughout the community. One Sunday the local pastor, claiming to have years of divine guidance, declared that the striking of the clock was undoubtedly a warning

of the coming of God's wrath.

Some residents believed the pastor's words while others did not. Some prepared for the worst, still confused as to how they had provoked the wrath of God, while others did not change their lifestyles.

Harrison isn't sure how much time elapsed before a resident got up nerve enough to approach the clock. An investigation did eventually ensue, though, leading to the discovery of a hole that had been knawed in the top of the clock by a mouse. When the rodent infiltrated the time piece, its



Marvin Harrison

rambunctious movement often tripped a spring, triggering the striker on the clock.

God's alleged wrath had been delivered through a common mouse.

The Lord works in mysterious ways.

While growing up as a boy, I used to visit my Great-Uncle Marvin Harrison on his farm just west of Jake's Smorgasbord on Route 33, west of Oblong. Born in Willow Hill in 1894, he was a school teacher for 46 years, most of those years in the Oblong school district as an industrial arts and biology instructor.

Very fond of nature, Uncle Marvin had a large collection of reptiles, preserved in formaldehyde, that he kept in a shed behind his farmhouse, which he called the library. I borrowed some of the reptiles and took them to my biology classes while I attended school in Robinson.

Uncle Marvin could fix anything. He was also well read and was a competent writer which he demonstrated in the many essays and short stories he had compiled over the years.

During the years I knew him, Uncle Marvin taught me many things. He left me with many details of my family history. I have recorded many of them on tape.

—Brian Harrison

Spring

Issue

Coming

in the next

“Tales from the general store”:

•An interview with Burl Ives by “Tales” editor Ray Elliott

Born and raised in Hunt City and Jasper County, Ives has spent his life collecting the history and culture of America through folk songs and stories. In this interview, the well-known folk singer/movie star recalls memories of growing up in eastern Illinois and his life-long career in show business.



Burl Ives, telling a story in the garden of his Montecito home during a recent interview.

- A tall tale about a peglegged professor and his cure-all elixer written by 91-year old Crawford County resident Thornton Stevens.
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- Letters, recipes and remedies.
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