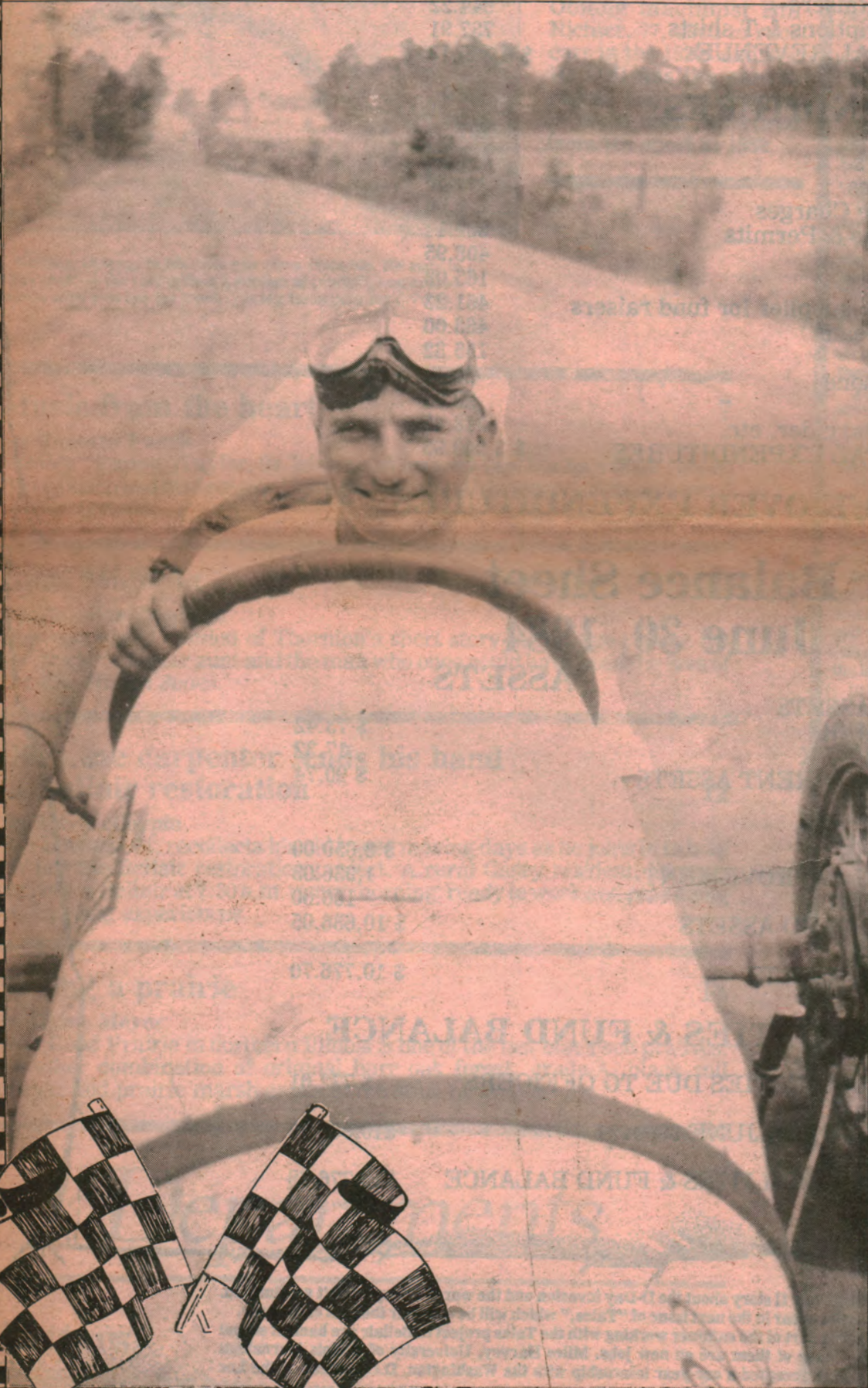


Tales

from the general store



Barnstorming race driver

Fifty years ago, Oblong's Bill Richter was a pioneer of professional racing in the area (left). Today, the 77-year-old machinist (above) remembers those days.

SEE PAGE 10

Tales from the general store

Statement of Revenues & Expenditures

For the Year Ended June 30, 1984

REVENUE:

Donations	\$ 2,713.00
Fund Raisers	944.22
Subscriptions & T-shirts	737.91
TOTAL REVENUE	\$ 4,395.13

EXPENDITURES:

Utilities	\$ 207.57
Repairs	165.94
Supplies	445.38
Service Charges	6.00
Postage & Permits	289.14
Gas	408.95
Meals	165.03
Food & supplies for fund raisers	461.23
Seed beans	468.00
Taxes	155.82
Telephone	20.41
Misc.	29.03
T-shirts, cider, etc.	218.45
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 3,040.95

EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENDITURES \$ 1,354.18

Balance Sheet

June 30, 1984

ASSETS

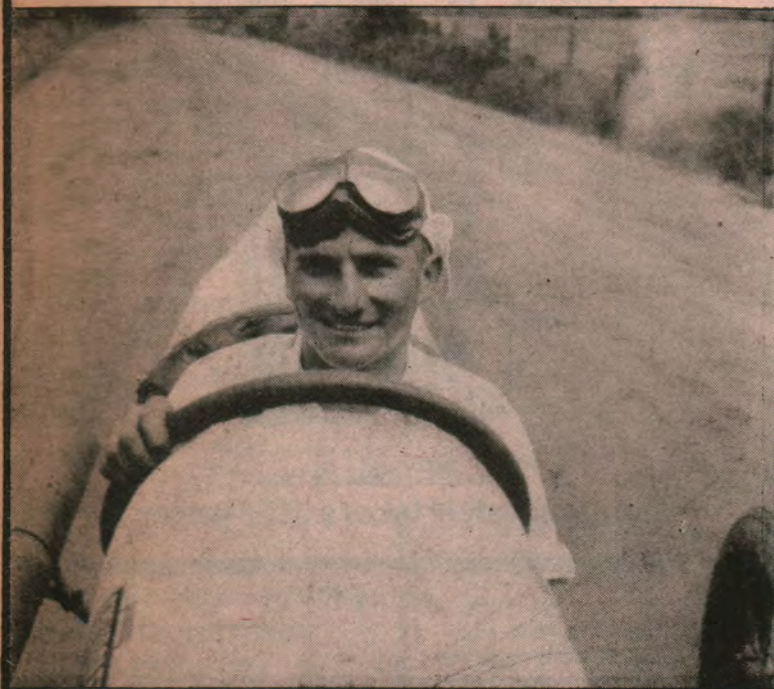
CURRENT ASSETS	
PETTY CASH	\$ 73.42
CASH IN BANK	17.32
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	\$ 90.74
FIXED ASSETS	
BUILDINGS	\$ 8,650.00
BUILDING IMPROVEMENT	1,936.05
EQUIPMENT	100.00
TOTAL FIXED ASSETS	\$ 10,686.05
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 10,776.70

LIABILITIES & FUND BALANCE

CURRENT LIABILITIES DUE TO OFFICERS	\$ 772.61
FUND BALANCE	
FUND BALANCE, JUNE 30, 1984	\$10,004.18
TOTAL LIABILITIES & FUND BALANCE	\$10,776.79

EDITOR'S NOTE: The World War II story about the D-Day invasion and the war in Europe didn't get finished. We regret that. The story will appear in the next issue of "Tales," which will be out after the first of the year. Most of the people who spent part of the summer working with the Tales project in Bellair are back at school or back on their jobs now. Some of them are on new jobs. Miles Harvey, University of Illinois journalism graduate from Downers Grove accepted a one-year internship with the Washington, D.C. Bureau of the Los Angeles Times.

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Bill Richter, Oblong, in his race car circa 1920s-30s. He rode in "hobo races" — the racing field's version of sandlot games: junk for cars, corn patches for track, ragtag teenagers for drivers.

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By Miles Harvey
Oblong machinist Bill Richter, 77, used to race cars in the 1920s and 30s. He still has the canvas racing cap and goggles he wore until he retired from the sport in 1932.

Music from the heart 7

By Vanessa Faurie
Harvey "Pappy" Taylor, 90, hasn't had an easy life, but he's been able to find a peace and contentment with his fiddle and his enormous repertoire of old-time music.

Aunt Malinda 10

By Thornton Stephens
This condensed version of Thornton's short story of the same name describes his spinster aunt and the man who once could have been the love of her life, Hiram Jones.

Old-time carpenter lends his hand to Bellair restoration 12

By Bob McCoppin
Bus Downey, 71, recalls his old house moving days as he joins in to help further the Bellair restoration project. A rural Casey resident, Downey arrived in Bellair at 7:30 a.m. every morning, ready to work and pass along his building experiences.

Saving a prairie 14

By Diane Meyer
Wolf Road Prairie in northern Illinois is one of the last black soil prairies. No other combination of original burr oak forest, grade-A, black soil prairie and prairie marsh exists in the state of Illinois.

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Ray Elliott

Walter Whittaker 1902-1984

Men like Walter Whittaker are rare. They live their lives as they choose, in a way most of us never could. Whittaker started living the way he wanted to early in his life and caught a westbound freight out of Lawrenceville when he was in his early Twenties.

For the next several years, he worked the wheat fields of Kansas and the oil fields of California and Texas and sparred with heavyweights like Jack Dempsey, Luis Firpo, Jess Willard and anyone else who came along, in or out of the ring, holding his own with anyone, any place, any time. He didn't drink, smoke or spend much money. The money he made went into the bank or into company stocks.

He grew his hair long, wore a beard and went barefooted during the Thirties, long before those things were fashionable with the hippy generation of the Sixties. During World War II, then in his early forties, he enlisted in the navy.

From the time he came back from the navy until just before he died in July, Walter Whittaker lived in a tumbledown shack that had no electricity, no running water, no paned-glass windows. Twine string hung from the rafters of the rambling attachment to his small, one-roomed loghouse, to guide him in the dark of night.

He slept between feather beds in the dead of winter, a wood fire burning in a stove, set down in the dirt floor, to keep the room warm. When it got too hot there in the summertime, he occasionally slept on the floor of a nearby cabin he'd helped reconstruct.

He went to bed at sunset and got up at sunrise. The sounds of the night, the animals, the insects were his constant and only companions. He could track a storm up and down the nearby Embarras River, knowing where the storm was by the sound of the thunder and the strike of the lightning. He knew the woods and streams better than most of us know our living rooms.

By the time I met him, Walter was nearly 80 years old, but still able to take care of himself and his animals year-round. The weeds were beginning to take over. And he kept fewer animals than he once had—only a few stray cats and dogs that people would drop off, knowing he'd take care of them until they died, he traded them or sold them to somebody.

Then, he was only a shell of the robust, healthy 225-pound, 6'1" he-man who could carry a 100-pound bag of sand in each hand and fight off a gang of bullies in places where there was no place to turn for help. When I'd drop by and holler, he'd start ambling out across the dam to the pond in front of his place and tell me to come on back.

"Want t' look around?" he'd ask, no matter if I was alone or if I'd brought a dozen or more folks to nose around. He'd shuffle around, showing us what we wanted to see. And there was plenty to see: momentos from his travels, childhood clothing and every kind of farm equipment and old-time artifacts imaginable.

Sometimes he'd be wearing just a pair of bib overalls, the galluses twisted, the trouser legs rolled up just a bit, a wornout pair of tennis shoes and a battered straw hat. One summer he was having trouble with his eyes and wore a patch over one of them. He told me he couldn't see with the other eye, then spotted a red fungi, no bigger than a pencil eraser, through the leaves as we walked along.

In the short time I knew him, I could see his health was failing. He gave in and went to the nursing home during the coldest months a couple of winters. But he told me the last time I saw him last fall that he'd never go again. He'd always told me he'd just go out in the woods and lie down and die "like a varmit" when the time came.

That's about what he did last winter. His fire went out on Christmas Eve when the temperature had dropped to 15 degrees below zero. By the time Ed Whittaker, Walter's 87-year-old brother, found him, he was nearly frozen to death.

"I can't walk," Walter told Ed as he started packing him out, an arm slung over his back.

"You'll have to," Ed said.

"What'er you goin' do if I get down?" Walter asked.

"Drag you out like a hawg," Ed said.

Ed was much the smaller of the two, but just as tough. He'd worked the oil fields with Walter and had farmed 1000 acres for years with mules and horses. He still does the work of much younger men. And he got Walter to the pickup, down the quarter-mile lane and to the hospital several miles away.

I didn't find out about that until last spring. By then, Walter had recovered enough to go to a nursing home in Bridgeport. First he fell, then caught pneumonia and finally died there Sunday, July 15, three weeks after his 82nd birthday and far from his home in the woods.

Ed and the Whittaker family asked for a simple funeral.

"We're backwoods people and proud of it," Ed said. "We want to bury that way."

A preacher who'd known the Whitakers for years conducted graveside services. Scores of people paid their respects, passing by Walter as he lay in a simple wooden casket. Then the preacher said a few words and Walter was lowered into his grave in a cemetery north of Pinkstaff.

When he was telling me about finding Walter nearly frozen to death last winter, Ed said someone had once asked him if he wasn't ashamed of having a brother who lived the way Walter lived. Ed said he reckoned not, there wasn't anything he could do about it.

Walter Whittaker lived his life the way wanted to, the way he chose. Not many of us can say that. It seems a shame he didn't die the way he might have wanted to—out there in the woods. That's one thing most of us don't get to choose, though. Even a man like Walter Whittaker.

But he was a rare man, the kind who had the courage to live his life on his own terms. Most of us can only dream of that.

Letters

Grandmother made her believer in the madstone

I enjoy reading "Tales" very much. I look forward to reading Ray Elliott's article.

I noticed in "Tales" #5 that John Freeland didn't believe in the madstone. I happen to be a granddaughter of George and Catherine Haddock. My grandmother treated several people with the madstone she had. I never did hear of anyone dying with rabies after she treated them.

One time there was a man and boy bitten by the same dog. Grandmother treated the man, and he lived. The boy wasn't treated, and he died. That makes me more of a believer in the stone.

I can tell anyone how the stone was used and how careful grandmother was with it, but that was a long time ago. I'm sure the rabies serum is a lot safer, and that's progress.

Just wanted to give Grandmother credit for all the sleepless nights she had when treating some person.

EVA PRICE (HADDOCK)
Carmi, Illinois

'Many a happy day' for a young girl in Bellair

It is a real thrill to me to know that Bellair is to be restored. I can still remember the fun we had in going to the general store & how much of a thrill it was to attend the ice cream socials held beside the store. I have never seen so many different and delicious homemade desserts in all my life!

For a time, my great-aunt, Florence Wiman, lived just a short distance back of the store. My grandparents lived on a farm just before you crossed the bridge over North Fork on the way to Oblong. They were Clint and Naomi Wiman. And Granny played the piano when we went to the UB Church.

Ed Wiman lived just the other side of the bridge. Clarence and Dot Eirhart lived just north of Granny and Grandpa. I used to shoot groundhogs out of Grandpa's and my truck patch and carry them up to Dot and Clarence.

I have spent many a happy day in the big old barn on the farm, in the big woods around the farm (they are all gone now) and fished many an hour on the North Fork banks. Grandpa and I hauled wagonloads of sand for my big sandbox up from those creek banks with Old Barney—Aunt Florence's big old gray work horse—that I loved to death and rode every chance I got!

Grandpa used to hitch him to the double shovel and bridle him. Then I'd ride and guide the horse, and all Grandpa had to do was guide the plow. We had a huge truck patch and a big garden.

Granny used to send me to pick green grapes in the arbor, and she'd make green grape pie (or gooseberry, if we picked them). Too sour for me! Aunt Florence and I picked lots and lots of greens in the spring and berries later on. And when they got ripe, we got wonderful, cold watermelons from our own

truck patch that we'd chilled in the milk house.

My parents, Albert and Mary Jo Wiman, took us kids "to the farm" a lot, and I spent a couple or three summers there. It was like heaven to me. I still remember pulling my little wagon full of produce down to the end of the lane to "try and sell some." I never knew until later on why suddenly, that day, there was an uncommon amount of travel on the gravel road and people stopped and bought from me.

In fact, it was a few years later that they told me Granny and Aunt Florence got on the "party line" and told everyone I was down by the mailbox selling garden stuff!

Well, times have changed, and we've all changed, too—leaving good friends and finding new ones. But no one can ever erase from my wonderful memory book the great times I had as a kid in and around Bellair.

LINDA SUE WIMAN HAMMOND
Westfield, Illinois

'Tales' hits home for new Marshall reader

I recently was introduced to your marvelous newspaper when I found a copy in my "Marshall Independent." Being born and raised in Marshall, all your articles really hit home.

CAROLYN HUEY
Mt. Carmel, Illinois

Couple remembers early Hazel Dell/Casey

Would you like to publish what we know about Hazel Dell and Casey, Illinois?

I, Owen Laymon, was born northwest of Hazel Dell, Crooked Creek Township, in the year of 1903. Born to Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Laymon who had a family of 11 children—eight boys and three girls.

I can remember well all the stores in Hazel Dell where I grew up, such as the Gard and Taggart General Store and William Taggart's Harness Shop and Mr. Bartley Cook's Shoe Repair Shop and Mr. Mort Sturts undertaking establishment (where I helped him when needed). He kept caskets and burial equipment. There was John Gore's Grocery that also contained a barber shop and a post office and a millinery shop where men and women could buy hats and caps.

Then there was a Bank of Hazel Dell and a hardware store where you could buy horse-drawn implements, operated and owned by Mr. Dane Kelly. The town had two doctors, one of them delivered me at my parent's home. His name was Dr. Harris. This was 81 years ago. Dr. Thomas and Dr. Adams were in Hazel Dell at a later date. The town also had a veterinarian, Dr. Frank Reeds.

Hazel Dell had a band which played at the Fourth of July and different celebrations. My daddy was a member of this band. Other band members were: Holly and Elizie Timmons, Beemer Brooks, Harry and Mark Carruthers, Jake Rader, Bruce Kelly, Milt Kelly, Bob Stevens and a Mr. Thomas.

There was Jess Finney's

Blacksmith Shop, two hotels, eating places, Tom Kelly's Barber Shop. I can remember when passenger trains ran through the town. The name of the railroad was Sidell and Olney. There were stock yards and a depot, also hay barns. In winter times, ice was cut from ponds and stored in one of the hay barns to be sold through the summer for making ice cream and home use or whenever needed.

On Decoration Day the 30th of May, a great celebration was held at one of the churches. There were special speakers, decorating of graves and placing flags on soldier's graves. It was a great event.

I married Lenora Comer August 2, 1925—59 years ago. We have six children, five boys and one girl, 19 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren.

My wife lived six miles northwest of Casey. There were 10 children in her family, nine girls and one boy. She worked in Casey at Shrinkle's Drug Store, Nick Gehl Dry Goods Store and also at Arndt's Variety Store.

Casey was at its best and a booming town of much business 50 years ago. There were mostly dirt roads from town and not many paved roads.

We do enjoy "Tales" and wish more people would write in it of years ago. Lenora and I have seen some hard times and yet good times, much sickness. But God has always carried us through, which we give him thanks!

OWEN LAYMON
Casey, Illinois

Former resident remembers Bellair

Since I grew up in Bellair, I'm interested (in the project), but think there's more news on Bellair you could publish. My mother, Sadie Wright Aug (Mrs. Frank Aug), went to the UB Church, and my first school days were in Bellair. The house in back of the store is where we lived and where my two brothers were born. My dad worked in the oil field.

I recall many Bellair times—especially the time Faye Brent committed suicide and my mother found her. Also, my cousins, Alva and Bonnie Warner, ran the old store.

GLADYS (AUG) FREELAND
Findlay, Illinois

Encouraging notes

It was good to receive our copy of "Tales" recently. It's the highlight of the week when it arrives—a wonderful presentation.

BILL TYHURST
Covington, Louisiana

I smiled when I saw "Tales" in my mail, not just because I enjoy reading it so, but also because every issue is another step toward establishing the permanence the project richly deserves and should have.

TOM REITER
Lemont, Illinois

Tales

from the general store



'The difficult is easy;
the impossible takes a little longer.'

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Senior Editors: Miles Harvey, Bob McCoppin
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Tales from the general store, inc. is a non-profit 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 one summer workshop and several weekend workshops throughout the year in cultural journalism for area residents, both students and non-students, who are interested in journalism and history.

Throughout the year, grade school, high school and college students will also have 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," Lawrenceville "Daily Record" and Casey "Daily Reporter," will contain these stories. The program will be experimental 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, Illinois, where the foundation is engaged in the restoration of that village which dates back to 1844. Initial funding for the project 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 possible publication in "Tales from the general store." If published, all material becomes property of Tales from the general store, inc. No responsibility for returning submissions can be assumed; however, every effort will be made to return all submissions.

Subscribers to the Robinson "Daily News," the Lawrenceville "Daily Record" and the Casey "Daily Reporter" will receive the magazine as part of their subscriptions as long as the Robinson "Daily News" prints and distributes it. Non-subscribers to the three newspapers may purchase individual copies for \$1 each or annual subscriptions for \$4.

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

Reader has 'dual interest' in 'Tales'

I have a dual interest in receiving the last issue ("Tales" #7). I am a descendent of George Freeland. My grandparents, George William (Bilby) and Nona Coulter Freeland, lived near Bellair in the farm home on the bend of the road going east (now occupied by my cousins Larry and Phyllis Henry).

G.W.'s father, also of Bellair, was Henry Clay Freeland, the seventh of George's ten children. Also, "old-time race car driver" Bill Richter is my uncle.

It is with great interest that I watch your restoration of Bellair. A special place in my childhood memories is reserved for Bellair and for the general store in particular.

BARBARA HERLIHY
Alvin, Texas

Folklore class attends panel discussion at the Bellair store

Here is a long overdue letter to thank you for your significant contribution to the Illinois Folklore class (at the University of Illinois) early this summer.

Also, special thanks to the individuals who took part in the panel discussion and tours. They were a delight and full of information.

This fall, I would like to do a similar field trip on a Saturday. I also plan to use "Tales" again. Many students said that the day was a remarkable one for them; as we had anticipated, the experience was another world for them.

If you ever need supportive letters that would be helpful to the project, let me know. I will be happy to help out any way I can.

PROFESSOR LARRY DANIELSON
U of I Department of English
Urbana, Illinois

'Tales' reminds folks of childhood days

I am enjoying every issue of "Tales."

I grew up in the Bellair vicinity, and started my school days in 1921. I believe the teacher was Lena Calvert. The schoolhouse that I went to school in burned, as I recall, and was replaced by the smaller one that is now used as a community center.

There were lots of friendly people in Bellair back then. We used to love to hear Dr. Ferguson's parrot call, "Oh Doc, dinner!"

The summers were hot and the work was hard, but remember the fun on threshing day and those good dinners? Winters were cold, bad roads, spring-thaw bottomless roads. But through all the hardships, trials and errors, there must have been something special because so many people are remembering through "Tales from the general store."

I often think of the ones I went to school with and would love to hear from any of them if they would care to write. I am the oldest of the Spark's kids (Geneva).

Keep up the good work.

GENEVA P. BEAUCHAMP
Ontario, California

Recipes and remedies

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following recipes submitted by Becky Phipps, of Lerna, call for whole wheat flour. Salt may be omitted in any or all recipes. Oil may be substituted for shortening or butter, except pie crust.

Pie Crust

1 1/4 cups flour
3 tablespoons butter
3 tablespoons oil
2 tablespoons water

Measure flour into a medium-sized bowl. Add butter and cut into flour with a fork or pastry cutter. Add oil slowly and continue to cut or mix until you can gather the dough into a ball.

Place dough on a piece of floured wax paper, either on flat counter top or wooden board. Flatten the dough with your hand and sprinkle a little flour over it. Cover with another piece of wax paper, and roll out to form a circle about 12 inches in diameter, 1/8- to 1/4-inch thick.

Remove top piece of waxed paper and invert greased 9-inch pie pan over dough. Turn pan, dough and remaining piece of waxed paper right side up. Remove waxed paper, and fit dough into pan. Flute edges or simply trim away excess dough with a knife.

If recipe calls for a baked crust, prick dough with fork and bake 12-15 minutes at 425 degrees. Makes one 9-inch crust.

Stone Mill Bread

Mix: 1/2 cup warm water, 1 tablespoon honey and 2 packages of yeast. Set aside.

Mix in sauce pan: 1 cup flour with 1 1/2 cups water. Cook until thick and smooth, stirring constantly (will lump at first, but keep stirring until it smooths out).

Add to the cooked mixture in the following order: 1/4 cup honey, 1/2 tablespoon salt, 1/3 cup powdered milk, 1/2 cup oil, 1 egg and 1 cup flour.

Combine the yeast mixture with the flour mixture.

Add another 2 1/2 cups flour, or enough to make dough almost stiff enough to hold its shape. Cover and let rise in a warm place for one hour or until doubled. Turn out and knead for two or three minutes. Cover and let stand for 15 minutes. Knead a few strokes.

Divide dough into eight equal pieces and let rest for 15 minutes. Roll out four pieces into a one-inch cylinder, then braid together into loaves. Place gently into loaf pan and let rise until doubled. Brush tops with beaten egg. Bake at 375 degrees for 30-35 minutes. Makes two loaves.

Apple Pan Dowdy

Mix 1 cup honey, 1/2 cup flour and 1/4 teaspoon of salt. Add 2 teaspoons vinegar and 2 cups water. Stir well and cook over low heat, stirring until

thick. Remove from heat and cool. Add 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon, 2 teaspoons lemon juice, a dash of nutmeg, 2 teaspoons vanilla and 4 tablespoons butter.

While the above is cooking, sift together 2 cups flour, 4 teaspoons baking powder and 3/4 teaspoon salt. Cut in 6 tablespoons butter. Add 1 1/2 cups milk.

Place 10 cups sliced apples in the bottom of a large rectangular cake pan. Pour syrup over apples, then top with biscuit dough dropped by spoonfuls all over. Bake at 325 degrees for one hour.

Honey Cake with Cream Cheese Frosting

3/4 cup oil
3/8 cup honey
1/2 cup yogurt
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 eggs
1 1/4 cups flour

Mix all ingredients and put in one round cake pan. Place in cold oven. Turn temperature to 350 degrees and bake 40 minutes. Cream together 8 ounces cream cheese and 2-3 tablespoons of honey. Spread on cool cake.

Crumb Cake

Sift together 2 cups flour and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Add 1/2 cup butter and crumb well with fork. Add honey (2 tablespoons) and mix well. Remove 1 cup of the crumbs and set aside.

To remaining ingredients, add 2 beaten eggs and 1/2 cup honey. Dissolve 1 teaspoon soda in 1/2 cup buttermilk before adding to mixture. Pour batter into 9-inch pie pan (greased). Sprinkle the 1 cup of crumbs over top and bake at 375 degrees for 30 minutes. (Good with fresh strawberries).

English Muffins

1 pkg. dry yeast
1/4 cup warm water
1 cup milk
1 tablespoon honey
1/2 teaspoon salt
3 tablespoons shortening
1 beaten egg

Dissolve yeast in warm water and honey. Scald the milk and add it to the salt and shortening. Cool to lukewarm. Add the beaten egg and 2 cups flour. Beat thoroughly, then add the yeast mixture and mix again. Add enough additional flour to make a moderately soft dough. Turn out and knead until smooth and satiny.

Place a greased bowl, grease surface lightly, cover and allow to rise in a warm place until doubled—1 1/2 hours. Punch down and let rest for 10 minutes. Roll out 1/4- to 1/2-inch thick and cut with a three-inch cookie cutter or tuna tin. Allow to rise until double—45 minutes. Bake slowly on ungreased griddle 5-7 minutes on each side. Makes one dozen.

Waffles

2 cups flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 eggs, separated
1 1/4 cups milk
6 tablespoons shortening, melted.

Combine or sift dry ingredients. Add egg yolks and milk. Stir in melted shortening, then fold in stiffly beaten egg whites. Pour onto heated waffle iron and bake until browned.

Pancakes

1 1/2 cups flour
2 teaspoons salt
1 tablespoon honey
1 egg
2 tablespoons shortening
1 1/4 cups milk

Mix dry ingredients. Add milk, honey, egg and shortening. Bake on hot, dry griddle until browned.

Muffins

Sift together, 3 cups flour, 1/2 teaspoon salt and 4 teaspoons baking powder. In another bowl, mix two beaten eggs, 1/4 cup honey, 1/2 cup melted butter and 1 1/2 cups milk.

Combine wet and dry ingredients and pour into tins that have been greased. Bake at 325 degrees for 20 minutes.

Banana Bread

3/4 cup butter
3/4 cup honey
3 eggs
1 1/4 cups mashed banana (about 4 medium)
1/2 cup chopped nuts
3 cups flour
1 teaspoon soda
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup yogurt or milk
1 teaspoon vanilla

Cream honey and butter, and beat until smooth and light. Add eggs one at a time, beating after each. Add bananas and nuts. Mix flour, salt and soda. Add to wet ingredients along with yogurt and vanilla. Line loaf pan with waxed paper (on bottom). Grease sides. Pour in batter and bake at 300 degrees for 1-1 1/2 hours or until toothpick or knife blade can be inserted and come out clean.

Tortillas

Mix together 2 cups flour, 1 cup water, 1/2 cup oil and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Add 1 more cup of flour and mix, then knead until smooth. Make into balls about 1 1/4-inch in diameter. Roll out very much like pie crust. Fry on hot, dry griddle briefly (long enough to cook each side, but not so much that they break when folded). Place on plate and cover with a wet towel to keep them soft for rolling. Use for burritos, enchilladas or tacos.

Fruit salad

4 firm apples, quartered and cut into bite-sized chunks (Note: cut apples into a small bowl of water and orange juice to prevent the apples from discoloring. Drain before adding to the salad)

2 bananas, sliced
1 small can of mandarin oranges, drained
1 cup of grapes (seedless are easiest to work with) sliced in half
1/2 cup shredded coconut
1/2 cup chopped nuts
Add vanilla yogurt to the fruits until the salad has reached a consistency pleasing to your taste.

—Joan Russell

EDITOR'S NOTE: Share your favorite recipes and remedies with other "Tales" readers. Send them along to us in care of: Recipes and remedies, Tales from the general store, R.R. #2, Oblong, Illinois 62449.

How to order back issues

No. 1:

General stores; hermit Walter Whittaker; the Augustus C. French Maplewood estate; storyteller Thornton Stephens; frog gigging; subsistence farming.

No. 2:

Hog butchering; curing meat; churning butter; dressing chickens; Homer Adkisson's homemade car; tall tale of an Irish folk hero; benefit concert in Bellair; country living; an old-time country doctor and his horse; Marvin Harrison's haunted clock.

No. 3:

Burl Ives; Spring Fair; furniture refinishing; rug braiding; quilting; the first signs of spring and childhood memories; "An Ode to the Backhouse"; Professor Whistledick and his cure-all elixir; the history of Palestine.

No. 4:

One-room schoolhouses and the teachers and students who attended them; cooking and canning with Grandma; summer barnraising and ice cream social; White's country store; Merom chautauquas; powerhouses; fishing; gathering wood.

No. 5:

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People board the Cincinnati, Hamilton & Dayton railway train in Westfield, 1910. (Photo courtesy of Bob Stutesman)

Did you know ...

Crawford County firsts

Golden Park was dedicated on July 4, 1891. It was the first official park in Crawford County and was located in Hutsonville Township. The ceremony was presided over by the park's donor, Dr. Golden, who practiced from Hutsonville.

The park featured a hedge running the entirety of its frontage. At this time, the concept of the hedge was just coming into vogue as an accepted landscaping technique. Dr. Golden's hedge may have been a first.

—A History of Crawford County, Illinois

"Mrs. Gertrude E. Maxwell owned and operated the first typewriter in Robinson, working the Building and Loan business." She enjoyed art and often took first premiums on her painted china at the county fair. She was also a charter member of "The Dickens Club," which was a reading circle and the first Woman's Club in Robinson.

—"The Robinson Argus" (May 16, 1940)

On July 8, 1886, the first woman doctor began her practice in Robinson, in an office Dr. L.E. Stephens helped her to fix up and put into operation. Her name was Martha Trimble-Pearce. She practiced medicine for six years. "My system of medicine used no poisons, narcotics nor alcohol and is medication according to nature," she said. "We were not popular and our colleges have all gone out. It is easier to swim down stream and not breast the current, but I thank God for the principles of sanative medicine which have guided my life."

—A History of Crawford County, Illinois

"Florence" was the name of the first steamboat to make the trip up the Wabash along the Crawford County shoreline. Her captain, "Captain Dorme of Louisville, was promised by the proprietors, a town lot as an inducement to make the attempt up the Wabash to Terre Haute." The journey was made in the spring of 1823.

—"The Western Sun," Vincennes, IN (May 10, 1823)

The first Masonic lodge in the county was organized in Hutsonville on October 5, 1853.

—A History of Crawford County, Illinois

Early Wabash Valley textile industries

In the earliest days of the white settlement on the Illinois prairie, flax was one of the most important crops farmers put out in the spring of each year. Mrs. Annette B. Haskett, in 1902, wrote the following description of these early days before ready-to-wear clothing became common. Her article appeared in the "Palestine Reporter."

"In those days...all the clothing was made at the home, from hats to the shoes. The looms and spinning wheels occupied the places now used by sewing machines and pianos.

"The manner of raising flax and making cloth in those days will be of interest to our young readers.

"In the springtime the ground was plowed and prepared for the sowing of the flax seed, which sprang through the ground in a single, slender stalk and grew to the height of one and a half or two feet; this plant bore a pretty blue blossom. At the proper time, the flax plant was pulled and spread on the ground to allow the woody part to rot. The fiber of the stalk of the plant was

broken and cleaned by hackling or combing. The flax brake separated the woody portions of the plants from the fibrous. The hackle separated the coarse part of the flax from the fine. The coarser grade was called tow and was made up into coarse cloth. The finer grade was called linen—from this was made the better and finer qualities of clothing.

"From the flax seed was made the linseed oil of commerce. The first ready-made article was shoes, then hats, then men's clothing."

Another article, by Mrs. E. Crowley, from an unknown source written in 1903 allows us a glimpse of the home-based wool industry of the mid-1800s. "The hum of the spinning wheel was our daily music during the season of manufacturing our own wool for winter wear. At that season you could not go into a house without being greeted by the odor of the old-fashioned dye pot, which had to have a warm place in the chimney corner."

But before the turn of the century dawned, this home industry was rapidly giving way to the growing trend toward mass manufacturing of clothing and other textile items. Mothers were now spinning, weaving and sewing outside their prairie homes.

Hutsonville was the home of an active overall industry. The "Hutsonville Herald" published a paragraph about this industry.

"But few of our people comprehend the extensiveness of the overall industry in Hutsonville. About 50 women are now engaged here in sewing waists and overalls for a Terre Haute factory, and they manage to make about 950 dozens of these garments per month, for which they receive 45 cents per dozen, or \$427.50. Out of this amount, the women pay transportation of the goods to and from Terre Haute,

about five cents per dozen. This work is principally done by J.R. Callahan and Ben Ormiston and enables them to make good wages with their teams. Of course, the greater portion of this money is spent among our home people and is but another evidence of what an industry of this or any character can benefit a community."

Another undated newspaper article written by Wm. P. Musgrave tells of a hat industry near Hutsonville. "General Stark, south of Hutsonville, made wool or fur hats for men who could afford them."

Across the river from Hutsonville lies Graysville, Indiana. The town took her name from the Gray family. In 1818, Thomas Gray established the first lumber mill in the area. And in 1850, Joseph Gray Sr. began the woolen mill down-river from the lumber business. The large looms turned out yards of flannel, jeans, cashmere and yarns.

Ruth E. Durham reported in an article written on the mill's history in 1953 that, "The product of the Gray Woolen Mill was of the highest quality. The best grade of fast dyes were used and the goods were recommended to the trade of the entire world by the Royal British Dye Trust of London, England; the Weaver's Guild of Lisle, France; the Royal Trade Union of Brussels, Belgium, and the Chamber of Commerce at Amsterdam." The mill was sold and broken up in 1877.

—Compiled from articles preserved in the Historical Files of the Robinson Library.

Rare bridge

Work is soon to begin on the construction of a new bridge across the

Wabash River in Hutsonville. The old "Hutsonville-Sullivan Bridge" was built in 1939. It has been the only bridge to serve interstate needs between Indiana and Illinois without traveling first to Terre Haute or Vincennes (unless a ferry could serve as adequate transportation).

Her days have become numbered do to the continuous heavy traffic of coal trucks pounding over her arched roadway. And it is this arched roadway that makes the bridge somewhat rare these days. For this bridge was one of only a few small-scale suspension bridges ever built in the nation, and one of the very few still surviving today.

—A History of Crawford County, Illinois

How the Embarras got its name

Mr. Joseph Schifferstein, a well-known historian of southern Illinois legend related the following story as to the origin of the name "Embarras." A group of hunters, not long after the Revolutionary War, became lost in the "Mississippi Valley" country and camped out overnight along the river. The river was unknown to them. The following morning they built a raft and drifted into the Wabash, a river that was familiar to them and were then able to find their way home.

The hunters were apparently embarrassed at having become lost while on their hunting trip and "in remembrance of the embarrassing situation (in losing their way) they named the river the Embarras, spelling in French, the native tongue of its sponsors, "Emberrau," and locally Anglicised into "Ambraw."

—"The Newton Press" (August 15, 1915)

Music from the heart

by Vanessa Faurie

I drove through a residential section of Effingham for the first time, not knowing exactly where to turn to find his house. The street continued after the railroad tracks, he said over the phone. But I was lost.

Meandering around a while, I tried to think, where would an 89-year-old fiddle player named Pappy live? Aside from the address, there weren't many clues.

It wouldn't be a duplex on a corner. It wouldn't be a bi-level, modern brick home. After I had it narrowed down to within a block, there was a tiny, one-story, rather worn-down white house. And it had the right street number.

I pulled into the small gravel driveway and confirmed it. A sign read, "Musical instruments repaired."

When I knocked on the screen door, Pappy answered almost immediately. I had only seen the man once before when he played at the Midway Cafe on 45 north of Effingham. And although I didn't have a clear picture of him, he seemed to look like what I expected him to look like.

He was a small man who shuffled a little bit when he walked. And he had a kind, gentle, aged face.

We said hello, and he invited me in. But no sooner than I sat down, there were two more people at the door. They were an older couple from Pana who were admirers of his, and they stopped by to visit and talk about an upcoming square dance they wanted him to play at.

I sat and listened.

"How you doin'?" the woman asked Pappy.

"Pretty good," he said as they all sat down in the small living room. "Well, I'm not pretty."

The couple continued to talk about how much they enjoyed his music, when they could see him play again, and had he seen any of their mutual acquaintances. It seems Pappy gets quite a few visitors. It also seems like he enjoys it.

The couple left after a while. It may have been 15 minutes until another visitor, Ron, arrived. He was a friend of Pappy's, and he had his guitar with him.

Harvey "Pappy" Taylor has played the fiddle since he was eight.

"When I'd hear a little bit o' music or something like that, I was always interested in it," he said. "The first fiddle I got, I fixed myself. I made the scroll to put on it, you know, where the keys goes in. I was always pretty good at whittlin' since I can remember. 'Course it didn't look quite as good as one you'd buy, but it was a good fiddle."

He picked up a chunk of Days Work and took a small knife from his pants pocket. Then he shaved off a few slivers and put them between his cheek and gum. A five-pound Hills Bros. coffee can set beside his feet in front of the couch, waiting for his first spit.

Pappy was born in Jackson Township (Effingham County). He went to school until he was about 17 "an' I got as far as the eighth grade an' that's as far as I got." There

were some things about school he didn't like—walking two or three miles, for example.

"When I was little, there was always somebody to go with me because I had to cross a crick," Pappy said, "an' they had to see whether you got across or not."

Although he generally liked school, Pappy didn't study books all the time. He taught himself to play the fiddle by listening to other people play. Back then, the fiddle was a common instrument; he could usually see someone play every three or four days.

"My dad raised a feller, an' his name was Brown," Pappy said. "He lived over in St. Elmo when he died. He'd come there and he didn't play very many pieces, but I paid attention to it. Then after he'd leave, I'd try it."

"I got so I could keep pretty well," he said. "The first tune that I ever played that sounded like anything was 'Mississippi Sawyer.'"

Pappy wouldn't play fiddle with the man. But he would keep the sound in his head. And it wasn't always easy for Pappy to practice because his mother didn't want him to play the fiddle in the house.

"We had a place where we milked the cow, an' I called it the ol' cow shed," Pappy said. "I'd go out there an' play by myself. My mother just didn't want me to play in the house where it'd bother her. But there was nobody could o' kept me from doin' something that I wanted to do outside."

Pappy's mother didn't want to hear him learn the fiddle because she had two brothers who played the instrument. After a while, she grew tired of hearing the same sawing tunes that they played over and over. Once Pappy could play fairly well, he said she didn't mind it.

It seems Pappy was the only one in his family who was cut out to play an instrument. He had two brothers who "couldn't learn nothin'," and a

sister who played the organ but died when she was 20. His father could play a juice harp, but didn't have much luck when he tried the fiddle.

"He said he got tired of it," Pappy said. "On a Sunday morning he was doin' the same ol' see-sawing. An' he just took it out and busted it over a stump. Said, 'Time to quit.' Well, he never learned to play it."

Pappy worked with his father as a farmer in the summer. (I didn't sit around an' fiddle all day.) Using two teams of horses, they farmed about 80 acres (40 owned by his father). In the winter time, they worked in timber making railroad ties.

"When we made a dollar, we had it," Pappy said. "We made more money than some of these farmers do now. Because you have 500 bushels of corn to sell, and you get around a dollar a bushel for it—that's \$500. A dollar was worth one dollar then. These farmers and the prices they get—they get a bigger price, but the money ain't worth nothin'."

Pappy was married in 1919 in Arkansas. He and his wife, Edna, moved back to Illinois. By now, Pappy was working for the Pennsylvania Railroad. He worked there for 27 years and was paid \$3.04 a day.

"There's something about music that you want to do it. And you get enjoyment out of it..."

All throughout his life experiences, Pappy continued to play the fiddle.

"Well, I played every time somebody wanted it," he said. "They had them country square dances where you could go some place about every Saturday night if you wanted to. Sometimes we'd have a regular job where we played every Saturday night."

"I played down here at Funkhouser every Saturday night for I don't know how long. There was a little pump house on the river. We played down there for about a dollar a piece."

The money didn't mean so much as the playing did to Pappy. It was a kind of release for him during the troubled times of his life.

His wife contracted TB, and Pappy spent \$50 a month for three years taking care of her. She died in 1932 when she was 28. His daughter died of the same disease in 1935 when she was 15. And then in 1940, Pappy's 17-year-old son died. He has one surviving daughter who lives down the street from him.

"Only one I got left of 'em," Pappy said. "An' she's not too well. With all that trouble I had, if I hadn't played the fiddle or somethin', I'd probably been in front o' one of them trains. That's my story about that."

Music is an important part of Pappy's life. And he enjoys sharing that music with other people.

"There's something about music," he said. "There's

something about music that you want to do it. And you get enjoyment out of it, unless you have to play too much that you don't want to play—which I don't."

He said the people who don't like to play their music in front of people are just plain bashful and even ashamed of their playing.

"I ain't ashamed for what I can do," Pappy said. "If I was, I surely wouldn't play to people I never seen before an' never expected to see again. An' I played for hundreds and hundreds of 'em."

People seem to appreciate Pappy's own brand of old-time fiddling. He has received several awards over the years. The most recent addition to his living room wall is a plaque that reads: David Adler Cultural Center Traditional Music Award presented April 6, 1984, to Harvey "Pappy" Taylor in recognition of his contributions to Illinois music.

Pappy likes "real old-time stuff," and he takes special care to distinguish old-time music from bluegrass.

"Bluegrass is played faster," he said. "It ain't dance music. The bluegrass they're playin' now, they run off with it. An' I don't care nothin' about none o' their music, 'cause it's not old-time music."

For a definition of old-time music, Pappy said it's folk songs that originated in the western European countries. After arriving in America with the pioneers, the music took on different characteristics in different parts of the country. Pappy plays West Virginia style.

"As far as I'm concerned, I think the old-time music is the only music there is," he said. "It takes somebody to really play music. There's fellas that jus' pick up a guitar an' beat the dickens out of it. They're not playin' anything. They just beat that guitar to death."

"I don't get tired of music," Pappy said. "But you know, unless I make it or hear somebody 'round here who can play, I don't hear enough good music anymore."

Pappy points to the other side of the room. "That television right there is no good at all," he said. "If you want to hear good music, you're not goin' to hear much of it on there."

"Music is self-made," he added, "just like anything else that you make yourself. It's a lot better than that there what you pick up around somebody else."

The secret to a good musician is to listen to what you hear. It takes plenty of energy and a few brains, according to Pappy. "They ain't nobody who can tell me how to learn that because I don't know m'self. So I don't know how anybody could tell you. I just picked it up an' took off with it."

Since Pappy has kept up his playing this long, he has no plans to stop now—so long as the music sounds good.

"An' I got good hearin'," he said and laughed. "My eyesight ain't so good now, but I can hear good. So as long as somebody wants to hear it. At my age, I don't know, you can stop anytime."

But no matter how long he plays, I get the feeling Pappy will be heard for a long time to come.



Bill Richter's days of dust and wind

It was not safe or profitable. But for one Oblong resident, barnstorming auto racing in the 1920s and 30s was a lot of fun...

by Miles Harvey

It is now an American tradition: young men in old cars on backroads, speeding through their own version of the rites of manhood.

Zippering down unnamed, unpaved, unmarked roads countless boys have somehow discovered their own identities. With foot to the floor and face to the air, they charge into the promise of the future that always waits around the next bend. For them, the glory of adolescence comes not in a moment in the sun, but from one in the dust and the wind.

Bill Richter of Oblong was one of the first in east-central Illinois to discover that particular glory. The 77-year-old machinist was a barnstorming race car driver in the late 20s and early 30s.

Richter's days of dust and wind were spent in the Pure Oil Company field outside of Bellair during the week. But come the weekend he would roll his old four-cylinder Chevrolet racer up on a trailer, hitch it to his Reo roadster, and head for the nearest race.

One Sunday it would be Terre Haute, the next Springfield, the next Newton. It didn't matter. He just wanted to be on the track.

"I didn't have no mechanic to work on (my car), no sponsor, no nothin'. I'd have to do m'own work," he recalls. "And I got it up to where, oh, I could get in the money all right."

Richter was working as a blacksmith's helper at the oil field when he purchased his first car.

"I got me a 1924 model roadster to start with," he says, "Brand new—I paid \$400 for it."

Shortly after that he took a liking to the "hobo races" being held in fields in the area. Hobo races were the sport of racing's version of sandlot games: junk for cars, corn patches for track, ragtag teenagers

for drivers.

"They were just old junk cars that they got out of the junk yard... Some of them would be antiques today that would bring thousands of dollars," says Richter.

"Well, they'd just go out in a field and lay out a track. There was one right north of town here," he says, pointing out the door of the house he and his wife Dessie share on North Range Street in Oblong.

"There was one in Robinson, there was one over by Annapolis, and they'd just have them around, you know, in the field.

"They'd just lay 'em out, dead furrows and everything... You cross one of them, and you were pretty lucky if you stayed in that car."

Richter started competing in the hobo races with a stripped-down Model T. But then fate brought him to the first of his beloved Chevrolets.

"I started to Yale one evening and we got her (the Model T) stuck going downhill," he says. "Well, I went on to Yale, and Red Perdieu—he's an old Bellair man—he was running a garage over t' Yale. He had a Chevrolet—kinda what they call a sports job now. So I traded that Model T out stuck in the mud for that Chevrolet."

Grey hair and wrinkles now accompany Bill Richter's handsomely hawk-like face. His hearing isn't so good anymore, and his walk isn't so fast.

But he has the same sharp mind that proved to be his strongest asset in race car driving. The Chevrolet proved to be an good car, and it soon became apparent Richter knew what to do with it. He began winning many of the hobo races.

"I put that there old Chevrolet in these hobo races an' I got to where I could kinda get a little of their few cents they was giving away," he says.

Soon he had a newer, speedier Chevrolet. And despite the objec-

tions of his parents he began racing at fairgrounds in the area and other professional racetracks in the area. The money and the conditions weren't much better (races were often run on horsetracks), but the competition was more intense.

As time went on he, "kep-a gettin' a little bit better." Eventually he was winning the professional races as well.

Bill Richter's secret to success was not just speed, but smarts. He was more interested in winning than showing off.

"Generally, I'd let the fast ones get around there a while, get the dust settled, and then I'd have pretty clear sailing," he says, smiling like a schoolboy. "And they'd generally have a wreck or something, and you'd be back there where you could move ahead... I tried to be a survivor."

Dale Monroney of Robinson remembers this survival ability: "There's always a bunch of wild ones in a race like that... He would wait back until the rest of 'em had fell out or wrecked their cars, and then he would move up... Quite often he would take some prize money home."

Monroney worked for Richter during those days in a garage the driver had opened up a mile and a half northeast of Bellair on the road between Bellair and Casey.

"We worked on customer's cars," says Monroney. "He had his race car as a sideline. That was his pet project."

And Richter put a lot of work into his pet. The fact of the matter was that he loved working on the car as much as he did driving it. He loved making the machinery work to its fullest potential.

He put in a Frontenac head, and inscribed "Fronty" on the side of the car in its honor. He added special racing connecting rods. He put in a Bosch magnito system. He ground

his own cams for the car. By the time he was finished, he had quite an automobile.

"The best I ever done was a half-mile in 27 seconds. That was averaging 77 miles an hour. But most generally, on a fairground track, you'd be pretty lucky if you made 30."

On a straightaway, though, the car was even faster. "It would really run," says Monroney. "For a 1926 four-cylinder engine, it would run 100 miles an hour, if I remember right."

Occasionally, Richter would take it out on the roads around Bellair. "After you'd drive around a Model A or some old car at 25 or 30 miles an hour, that old thing was like a bat out of hell coming down the roads," says longtime area resident Wayne Matheny.

Homer Adkisson, another Bellair resident, agrees: "He made a fog of dust with that old racer when he came around the curve."

Monroney remembers the day Richter unleashed the car on the new gravel road in front of Richter's garage.

"When I looked north I could just see a great big cloud of dust," says Monroney. "And when he got a little closer, I could just see a little dot and that was his car."

Bill Richter still has the canvas racing cap and goggles he used to wear to ward off that dust. He keeps them prominently displayed, along with his racing photos, in his immaculate machine shop on Kansas Street in Oblong. Unlike the cloud that followed him down the road that day more than 50 years ago, his memories have not dispersed.

He remembers vividly, for instance, how he would find helpers for each new race: "I just picked up a couple of guys to go with me. I would go out to Bellair, y' know, and I'd see two sittin' on the porch. I'd

say, 'Which one of you fellas wants to go?' And a couple of them would go with me."

Glenn Trigg of Robinson was one of those that went with him on a regular basis.

"I was just what you call a pit man. I was just a roustabout helping him out," says Trigg.

"I was as much enthused as he was... Then, there wasn't a whole lot for a boy to do. And with something like that going on, you looked forward to it."

Trigg says he went along for "moral support." Richter handled everything else. He was half daredevil, half technician.

"He was the master of it. He was the mechanic... He did all the work," says Trigg.

"He was a very good mechanic," says Monroney. "He had to have everything just right or he wouldn't quit working on it."

It's a good thing Richter was so good at fixing cars. The races often left him with a lot to fix.

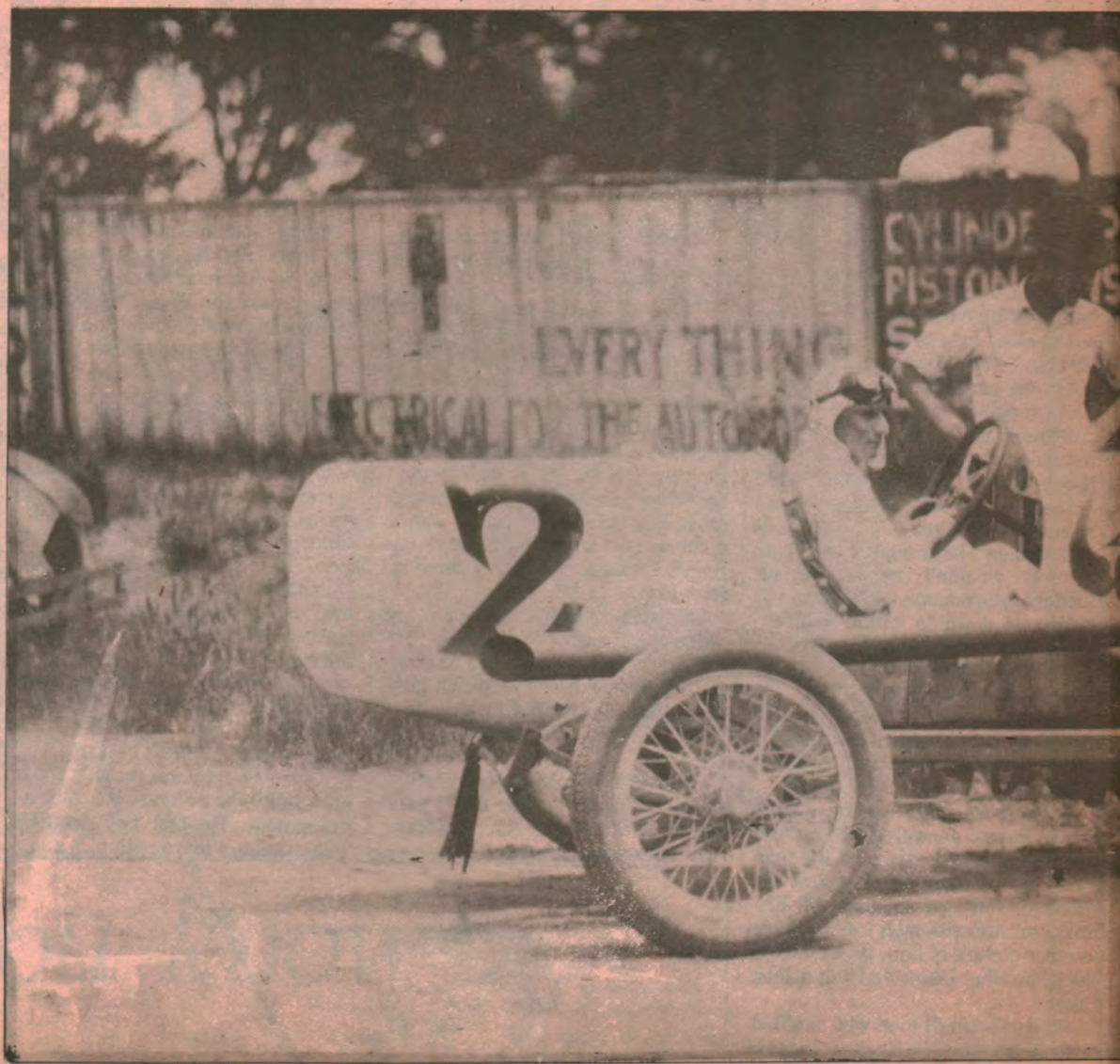
Adkisson remembers seeing him race in Newton: "He run into the fence. He rounded the curve and never got it straightend up... that plank come right up through his radiator, and it missed him."

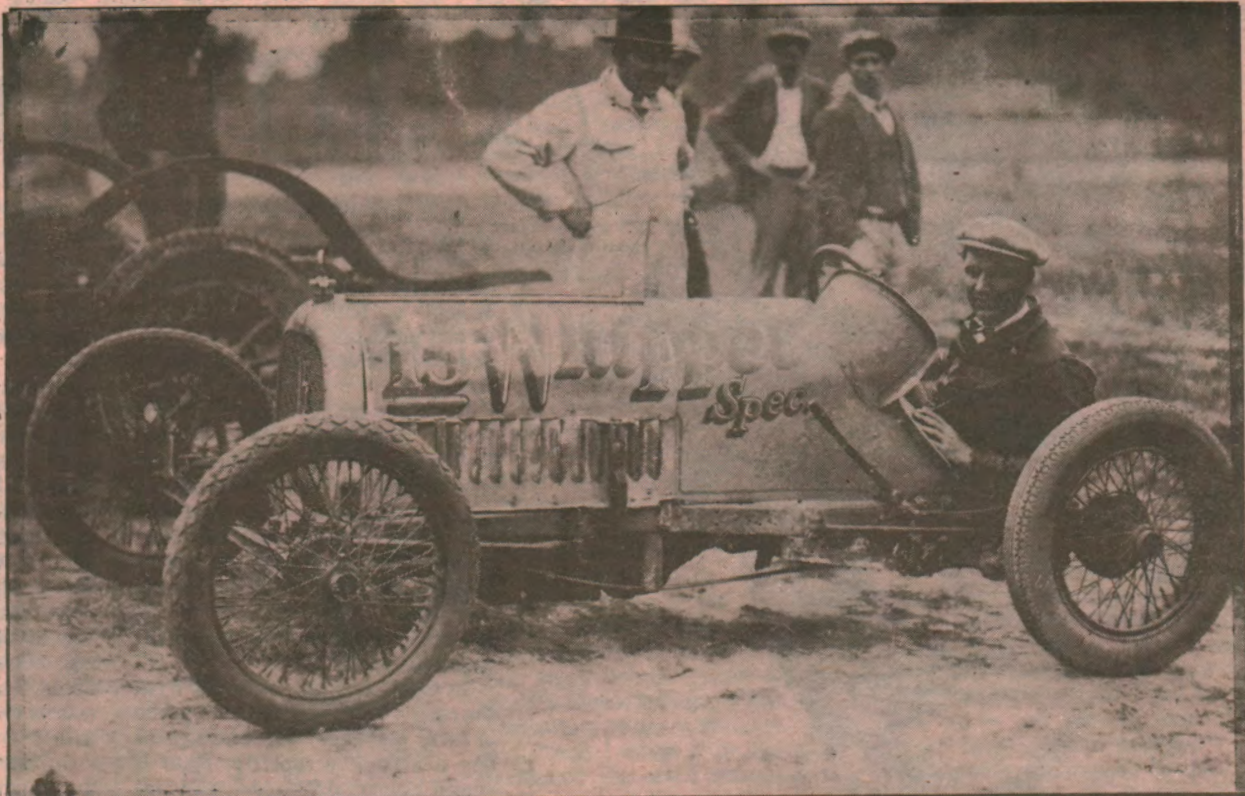
Monroney remembers another ruined radiator: "One time he was racing and they was running real hard... and there was a pileup right in front of him... When Bill hit this car in front of him, the other fella's tail pipe went right through his radiator."

Maybe Richter should have learned to fix himself up, while he was at it. He suffered several injuries, making him a bit of a local celebrity.

"They'd come around you when you were all butchered up, and they'd look you over," he says. "Just like looking at a monkey in a cage is what I figure."

Maybe he was lucky. At least he



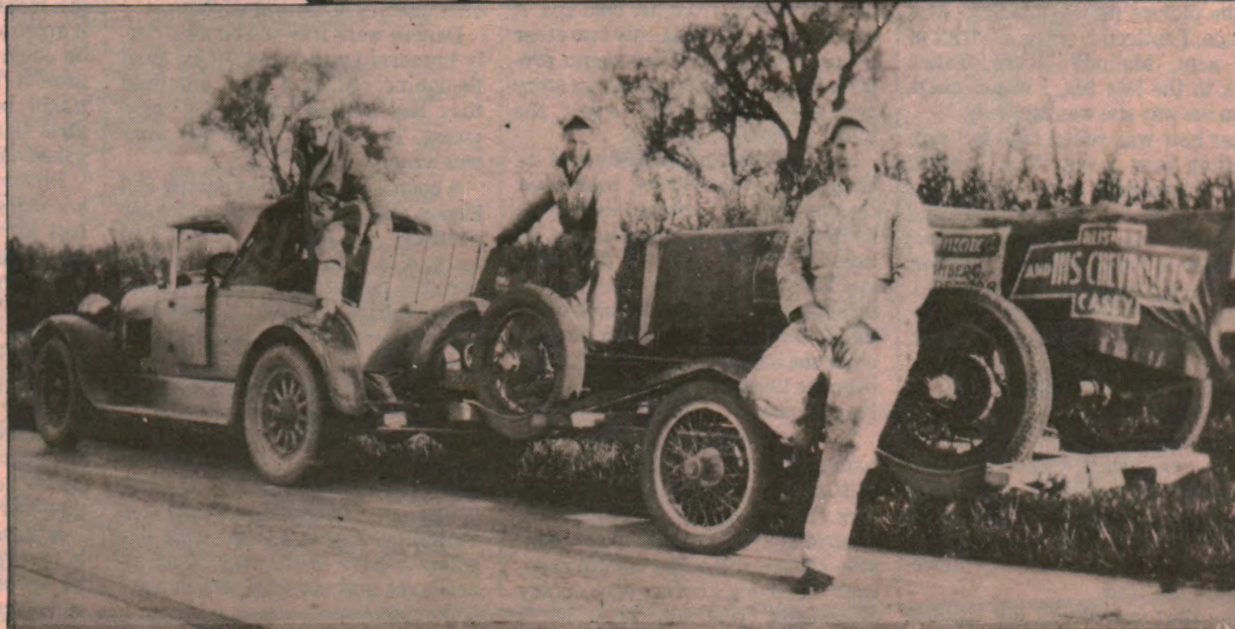
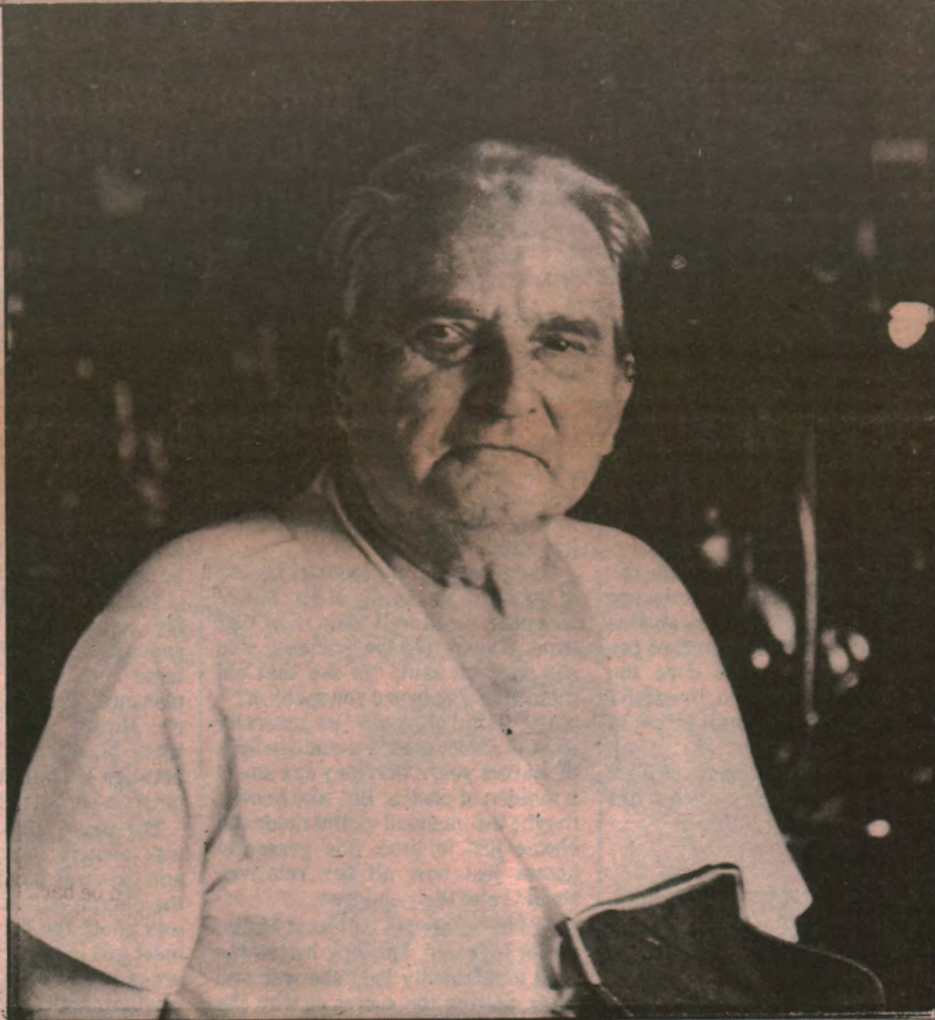


LEFT: Bill Richter and his Chevy in action. Crew members Marshall Chapman and Bill Robinson, both from Bellair, look on.

ABOVE: One of Richter's competitors. This driver from Davenport, Iowa, drove with no rear end on his car.

RIGHT: Richter in his machine shop in Oblong. Although he retired from racing more than half a century ago, Richter has never stopped working with motors and machines.

BELOW: Bellair crew members Kike Perdieu, Roy Owens and Glenn Trigg pose next to Richter's Reo roadster, trailer and Chevy. Richter says he was often given free gas for the racer while towing it to the track. "I guess (service station owners) thought that was advertising for them," he says.



got out alive.

"Them days, when your car went off the track and hit a tree or anything, you were a dead duck," he says.

"They didn't have an ambulance in them days. They just had an undertaker with a car."

Many accidents were caused by the dust. "That's one bad thing about the dust," says Richter. "Most of 'em (racetracks) was so dusty, about two laps and you couldn't see nothin'."

Maybe he could have seen more—if he'd had a windshield. But like most race cars of the era, his Chevy had no such thing. His only protection from the omnipresent fog of dirt was what he wore: a pair of coveralls, the cap and the goggles.

How did the grit-blinded driver know how he was doing, let alone where he was going? "Well, y'see I had a blackboard and the guy that was with me would show me what place I was in when I came around," he says.

It was under such conditions that Richter ran his longest race, a race he says was the best of his career. The 50-miler took place at the old Jungle Park, near Terre Haute.

"It was rough and dusty," he says, "and I'd had just about all I wanted of it. . . And (the pit men) kept placing me in second and third place. And I had a notion to pull in, and they said, 'Keep goin', keep goin'. It's about over.' And I finished second in that one."

Most races on the barnstorming circuit were not nearly as long. An average day at the races usually included three five-mile qualifying heats around the half-mile tracks. Those who placed in these heats were then advanced to the 20-mile feature race, while the remaining drivers competed in a 20-mile consolation race.

"I generally got in the feature

race," he says.

"(The other drivers) come from Ioway, they come from Kentucky, they come from all over the place.

"(In) a lot of barnstormin' there was about five or six cars for the race," he says. "They wanted all them boys to have money. So they divided the money up among them. Whether you're in first place or whether you're in last place, you get the same. . . Maybe we'd get \$40 for going to a race," he says.

Bill Richter never made much money racing. Nor did he ever aim his sites for the big time of the bricks in Indianapolis. In 1932, he sold his car, thereby retiring from the sport.

And although he was no longer a driver, his love for motors and machines endured. For years he worked as a rod-wrencher at Pure Oil, except when he served in the Navy as a machinist during World War II. In 1961, he retired from the company, to open up his own machine shop.

"He retired to go to work," says his wife, Dessie.

He still goes there, everyday. He still works on things with the patience and precision that made his race car forget its roots as an old Chevy with no right to be shooting around a track at 70 miles per hour. He still has the mind of a technician. And somewhere way back there behind his glasses, he still has the eyes of a daredevil.

In the half-century since Bill Richter crossed his last finish line, auto racing has grown to America's biggest spectator sport, and fast cars made an indelible impact on our popular culture.

But Richter had no idea he was pioneering the largest of America's sports institutions or establishing a way of life for young men. As Dale Monroney puts it:

"He just liked the thrill of the speed, that's all."

Aunt Malinda



by Thornton Stephens

To the reader:

As you try to read this story, bear in mind there are a great many things I did not learn in school. For instance, English, punctuation and what spelling I did learn I have almost forgotten. No rules for spelling were taught. My typing is amateur, self-taught, with one finger only.

All names in this story are fictitious. Many of the incidents are truth. The romantic part of this story is entirely the product of my own mind. The Deacon done the things I wanted him to do, likewise I put the words in his mouth I wanted him to say.

If reading what I have written gives you any pleasure, then I am well paid for having written it.

Yours sincerely,
Thornton Stephens

One day not long ago, a grandson and I were looking at some old family pictures that had been stored away for many years and not often seen. He asked me who the lady was in the picture he was holding. At a glance, I noticed it was a portrait of my aunt, Malinda Moore. Taken back in the late 90s, I would guess from the way she was dressed.

Her hair was rolled high in front, possibly over a rat, then combed back to terminate at the back in two braids, one of which she had carelessly allowed to hang over her shoulder in front. Possibly she was proud of her long hair and wanted it to show.

Her dress was some nice material, possibly silk, which was considered extravagant for common folks in those days. The Basque-style waist was fitted over a corset so tight, as some expressed it, to almost cause her to be cross-eyed. A stiff collar about two and one-half inches wide with a point at each ear, called a choker, further restricted movement of the head.

The skirt was almost the opposite

extreme of the waist. It was draped over several underskirts, was very full and covered the shoes all but the toes. Her shoes were button-type with six-inch tops.

She was a beautiful young lady, about 18 years old, and lived with her parents on a farm they owned, having inherited it from Malinda's grandfather.

Due partly to the industrious use of the farm, the family of Mr. Moore was considered well to do as of that time. When I told the grandson who she was, he said, "Is she that old maid aunt I've heard you speak of?"

The term "old maid" as generally used (I said), means a maiden lady of mature years who may say she is a maiden of choice. But who knows, maybe the intended victim made the choice just in time. She generally knows just how all her relatives should raise their children.

I never wanted to call Aunt Malinda an old maid, knowing her as the kind and friendly lady she was and later sharing the secret of why she never married, from her own lips. A secret up to that time only two other people knew. With the solemn promise from me not to reveal the story until after she was laid to rest, she told it to me.

She told me how little she was interested in other young men after the one she had expected to propose marriage to her seemed to lose all interest in her and never dated her again. She said she was keenly disappointed at first, but later other things interested her. After she got older she had many private chuckles over the thing that caused her single blessedness.

The scene of this story was out in southeastern Illinois, in and around a little trading point called Elm Corners. This little berg consisted of a general store, a church, a one-room schoolhouse and a blacksmith shop, each occupying a corner of a country crossroads. The time of which I

write is eighteen hundred ninety-six and on for a few years.

Off to the north of Elm Corners about a half-mile, the road forked on account of Elm Creek. One fork turned northeast on top of the hills and then due east passed the Moore farm.

The other prong turned due west across Elm Creek on a wooden bridge and then up the hill about 40 rods farther on. This hill became so mirey in the spring of the year that half of the roadway had been corduroyed with fence rails laid side by side. No one would drive this part of the road unless forced to do so—especially if they had eggs in the wagon to bounce about.

On top of this hill, but back from the road a little, is a well-kept group of farm buildings. The whole place has a look of prosperity. Here is where Deacon Jones and wife live with their 14-year-old son, Hiram.

The Jones family owned a large farm with quite a bit of livestock. They were good neighbors and one of the main spokes in the wheel in church affairs.

The life of Martha, the mother, was almost totally wrapped up in her son to the point where the father should have been jealous. When Hiram first started to school, his mother dressed him with a white shirt and bow tie, knee pants, black stockings and shoes. She told him to stay clean, but he would come home crying of an evening because the other kids called him a city kid.

Martha had a great respect for the Deacon's counsel in such matters. He advised her to dress the boy like the others dressed theirs so it would make him one of them, which would be best for him in the long run.

The Jones family had a light spring wagon with two seats and a canopy top pulled by a matched team or horse they used for pleasure, shopping or to attend church. Hiram was still well-dressed when he attended church and sat between his parents so he would be quiet and listen to the preacher.

The social life of the community was centered around the church, and that was partly the reason why the church had good attendance. It was about the only place boy could meet girl in public, or the other way around. However, the young folks would sometimes have taffy pulls or other parties in some of the homes.

Dances were frowned on as strictly immoral by the older folks, even though nearly all of them admitted they had danced when they were young. They never would say what was wrong with dancing.

A couple of years soon passed and Hiram and Malinda were no longer children, at least in their own estimation. In that two years, Hiram's parents had relaxed some of their strict rules and allowed him to associate with the other boys his own age.

But when he began to show just a little more than a passing interest in Malinda, his mother cracked down on it by advising him to stay clear of all thoughts of girls as they were only interested in making a good catch consisting of what a young man was going to have in the way of an inheritance and not what she thought of the man.

Just how she excused herself, in that respect, she never made quite clear. She told him he would never need a wife as long as she was able to do for him. Alas, the noose in some cases is kinder than the apron string.

Deacon Jones noticed a cut on Hiram's lip caused by trying to shave for the first time with his dad's castoff razor, and thought indeed his son was arriving at that time in life when he should associate with other boys his age that he would have to live among the rest of his life. He should be let do as they done within reason. They played ball on Sunday afternoons or went swimming, or had card games in the cornfield, 7-up, pitch or poker with acorns or grains of corn used to bet with.

On the way home from meeting they might stop on the grassy spot in the center of the road where the road forked to listen to some spicy little off-color tale that was new. Or they might have the excuse to go down the road to visit with one of the boys, meet with others and raid a neighbor's watermelon patch. Other boys explained it was just swiping them and not stealing when they just wanted them to eat.

Farming time had come. Time to make soap and set hens. Time to make garden. But when the new song books arrived at the school, there were many new songs to be sung. By popular demand, Hiram was chosen as their leader at church services and to practice new songs Sunday afternoons. He went shopping and came home with a new Kadee hat, necktie and black serge suit with split tail and covered buttons.

For a while, midweek sessions were held at various homes in the community. Fond mothers of unattached daughters were especially glad to have them in order to throw said daughter under the feet of the handsome, popular, well-groomed leader.

Mrs. Moore even demanded that her daughter make some advances to the young man, as far as she could within reason. "What do you want to do, be an old maid?" she said. "You will let your best chance of a man slip by if you don't grab him."

Friendly and sociably, Hiram treated them all alike. But when any girl hinted at anything romantically, it apparently had no effect on him as he could still feel that apron string around his neck, even though he might be wearing a necktie. The girls thought it was odd he never asked any of them for dates.

Hiram had often remarked he wished someone in the community had an organ so they could have some music with their singing. Mrs. Moore, hoping to hang out an attractive bait to the big fish she wanted Malinda to catch, proved a few tears and a woman's sharp tongue were mightier than a man's grip on his bank roll. Mr. Moore peeled off about the proceeds from four or five fat hogs to pay for a brand new parlor organ all decked out in gingerbread.

A music teacher came twice weekly to give lessons. The pupil practiced her lessons almost to the limit of endurance, always keeping in mind

she hoped to treadle her way into that organ inside a certain young man that keeps his blood circulating.

After about a year of lessons and practice, Malinda thought she could do credit to a few old and some new songs. She invited Hiram to come and sing to her music. But when he seemed reluctant to come alone, she invited the whole crowd who enjoyed singing to her music and congratulated her on her playing ability.

There was a hint of envy on the part of some of the older girls in the party, especially the new preacher's daughter, Henrietta McDowell, a beautiful girl about the age of Malinda.

The minister who had preached at the Corners church had asked to be released at the end of his year as he had become superannuated and lost most of his hair. A good sister inquired if he had been to the doctor with his ailment and if it was catching? A simple explanation seemed to allay her fears.

William McDowell was the name of the new preacher. He had bought a small farm down the road and moved on it with his wife and daughter. They came to the Corners to church. Being an ordained minister of the same faith and well liked, he was promptly hired. The men folk were glad not to have to make those long trips to the county seat.

Through summers heat
and winter's blow
To haul the preacher
to and fro.

Henrietta, or Etta as she was called, wasted no time in trying to make herself attractive to Hiram. Almost to the point where some of the old women raised their eyebrows or said a few sly words behind their palm-leaf fans. She soon found, like Malinda had, that Hiram avoided invitations to visit their homes unless he was part of a group of young people.

Hiram found Etta witty, intelligent and interesting to visit with. Also, he thought she would enjoy a few loving caresses at the right time and place. But that was not for him as that apron string was only temporarily replaced by his necktie.

After the hard times of the Nineties, farmers found themselves a little better off financially in the early 1900s. Although they were always hard up and could only exist by practicing the strictest economy, such as producing all their food possible on the farm like poultry, eggs, potatoes, beans, meat, soap and cane for sorgum molasses. Some even raised their own tobacco. They bought very little food from the stores.

Deacon Jones went a little overboard and bought a brand new two-horse buggy and at the same time he bought a bright red two-wheel road cart for Hiram. He was well pleased with the cart. It was handy to hitch to go to the Corners for the mail and groceries. He also (just for pastime) derived much pleasure from picking up Etta or Malinda and taking them home after meeting, but nothing of a romantic nature was indulged in on the way.

He took turns in this and intended to show no choice between the two

which had the effect of making them very jealous of each other. They tried to not show their jealousy, however it caused them to always be together when Hiram was near to prevent him from being vamped by the lone rival.

This went on all summer and into late fall, when tragedy struck. Deacon Jones had a letter from his sister that lived over in Indiana and just recently had lost her husband, telling him to meet her at the county seat. She was coming on the nine o'clock train, she would have one suitcase and a small bag. Said she intended to stay two weeks.

As the weather was raw and chilly he decided to go in the buggy for the protection of the side curtains. Mr. Jones and his wife started off at a fast clip behind their well-matched bays.

The whole community was shocked, to express it mildly, when word came back to the Corners by telephone the Deacon and his wife were both killed by a fast passenger train. There were no witnesses to the accident but the engine crew. So it was supposed the side curtains on the buggy and the brush along the right-of-way caused them to not notice the fast-approaching train.

Two local undertakers had charge of the funeral which was set for the next afternoon as was the custom of that time. They furnished homemade, but beautiful, walnut coffins with silver-plated handles and trim. Two shiny black hearses were pulled by well-matched, sleek black horses with black plumes on their bridles. A double grave had been dug to accommodate the pine boxes used for vaults. Someone had gone for the Deacon's sister to join the great crowd of relatives and friends who had gathered out of respect for Mr. and Mrs. Jones.

Never before had the little church at the Corners tried to accommodate such a vast crowd of people, not one fourth of which could be seated. Several songs were sung, then a sermon of about an hour duration was followed by the entire assembly filling past the open coffins for a last look at their highly respected friends.

Almost the entire crowd followed the coffins to the last resting place. A few appropriate words and a short prayer were said by the minister, then the coffins were lowered into the wooden vaults and the covers fitted in place. Two men stepped down on the boxes and carefully emptied soil around, between and on the boxes until large lumps would not thump on the boxes. The grave was quickly filled and a nice ridge was patted smooth over each half.

It was a nice Indian Summer day. Most of the crowd lingered and visited with friends they didn't see often. Others wandered about the graveyard hunting graves of relatives and friends.

It was hard for Hiram to pick up the pieces of his life and also the farm work, but with the help and advice of kind neighbors and a day now and then of hired labor, he carried on. Aunt Hetty said she could stay with Hiram indefinitely and keep house, by sending word to a niece to pack things she needed in her trunk and ship it to her. Playing around with the girls was out, as Aunt Hetty went along with Hiram to church in the cart when the weather permitted.

Along next spring, it was rumored Aunt Hetty was corresponding with a gentleman friend back in her old home town and would soon be leaving to marry him. How did this leak

out? Well, the postmaster isn't supposed to read the postal cards.

When Etta's mother heard this rumor, she persuaded her daughter to strike while the iron was hot.

"When Aunt Hetty leaves there won't be anything else for Hiram to do but get married," she said. "If you are interested in Hiram, why don't we drop in over there and change a couple of settings of eggs for some of his dominac eggs for the chickens you want to raise for yourself? It will give you an excuse to visit with him awhile and give him some sly hints that you would make some man a good wife."

So that very afternoon the two women set out on foot to Hiram's place with a bucket of eggs. They came up the hill on the private roadway the Joneses used to avoid that bad hill on the public road. They found Hiram had just finished plowing the potato patch across the driveway from the house.

He greeted his visitors very kindly when Mrs. McDowell explained their mission to him. She said the eggs were for chickens that Etta wanted to raise so as to learn how as she likely would be getting married before long and needed to know all theses things.

Here Hiram interrupted to inquire who the lucky gentleman was. Etta explained there was no one definite, but that she was waiting for "Mr. Right" to come along. Hiram changed the eggs for some of his which he gathered fresh from the nests. He said he was only too glad to help out.

As they stood talking near where Hiram's red cart stood with its shafts laid across the rail fence, Aunt Hetty came out on the porch and invited the ladies into the house. Etta's mother thanked her and said they should be going as they wanted to stop in the creek bottom to pick some wildflowers. But she would like to take a peek at her early bloomers inside the yard and back of the house. This of course was an excuse to leave Hiram and Etta alone for a intimate chat.

About the time the two older ladies had rounded the corner of the house, Etta remarked to Hiram how she did love to ride in his cart. Suiting the words to action, she promptly climbed into the cart and sat down on the seat before Hiram could interfere. The cart promptly turned backward, spilling the contents on the ground in a very undignified heap, wrong end up.

Hiram hastened to help the victim to her feet. And when he was satisfied she was unhurt, he could not help but let out a hearty laugh.

It was the wrong thing to do. Etta's anger boiled over, and she grabbed up three eggs. She missed him with the first two but scored a direct in the forehead with the third one just as the two women came around the corner of the house and saw what was happening.

Etta grabbed up the bucket of eggs and took off toward home in the run. Etta's mother apologized to Hiram for her daughter's hasty outburst of anger and assured him the daughter would do the same the next time she saw him.

She found her daughter leaning against the bridge bannister, crying her heart out. Between sobs she said she never wanted to see Hiram again, and she didn't want to raise any chickens as she pointed to the egg bucket lying on its side in the creek under a foot of water. Any thoughts of matrimony with Etta, Hiram might have had were now cooled down to far below zero as he couldn't imagine trying to dodge

missiles of all varieties over a long seige of married bliss with her.

Earlier in the spring, Hiram had joined the church. At the next business meeting, he was elected deacon by acclamation, partly to honor his father. He was also selected to teach the teenage boys Sunday school class. He accepted only after permission had been given to teach the class in his own way.

There was to be a ball game each Sunday afternoon in Hiram's back pasture. The only restrictions were no liquor and no swearing, and all the boys in the class were allowed to play some of the time. Hiram even donated the use of about an acre of high sandy bottom land to raise watermelons to feast on after each game so they would have no need to swipe any.

There was some objection to the idea of people enjoying any recreation on the sabbath from some of the church people who thought you should frown instead of smile on the sabbath. But this soon dwindled in regard to the ball games.

As her mother had predicted, the next time Etta found a chance to talk to Hiram at church semi-privately, she apologized profusely for her burst of temper and assured him it would never occur again. She wanted to remain his friend as though the incident had never occurred.

Aunt Hetty delayed her departure to Indiana until the crops were all laid by and the hay was made, then she gathered up her plunder. Hiram delivered her to the railroad with no hopes of her ever coming back.

Although it was slack season on the farm, Hiram found it pretty hard to do his chores then come to the house and find no ready-prepared meal.

After a hard day of work, he came into the house at noon too tired to fix dinner, so he lay down on the couch to rest awhile. His mind turned to thoughts that his mother was no longer with him to tell him what to do or to do it for him.

Although he remembered his mother said most girls married where they could do the best financially, he was willing to risk it. Other men did. Then he began planning.

The next Sunday afternoon, he would go courting Malinda. And in the cool of the evening, he would manage to stroll with her down the path at the end of the garden to the long seat under the shade trees. He would kneel before her to kiss her hand and declare his love for her and ask her to be his wife.

Having come to this decision, he felt much rested and prepared his dinner while he whistled, hummed and even sang a little. He looked forward with joyful anticipation to carrying out his plan.

Hiram planned to arrive at the Moore home about two-thirty. But before he reached the bottom of the hill, he realized it was much too hot to wear his new coat all afternoon, and he didn't have enough handkerchiefs with him to sop away the perspiration as fast as he made it.

Then the thought struck him to go over to the melon patch and see how they were doing. To his surprise, a good many of them were ripe. He picked a medium-size specimen and carried it to the shade tree that grew on the creek bank. Hiram had changed his plans. Why not call on Malinda some evening with his horse and take her for a drive? Maybe the right moment would come to tell her what was on his mind.

Right now what he wanted was a refreshing swim in the old swimming hole that had never known the use of bathing suits. Fifty feet up the creek was a break in the hazel brush fringe and plenty of tufts of grass for clean steps down to the water.

Fifteen or twenty minutes swim is quite refreshing. And just as Hiram was thinking of leaving the water, he thought he heard voices. He took refuge under the hazel brush near where the melon lay, and squatted down until only his head was above water.

Etta and Malinda crossed the bridge. Without any thought as to where they were going, they turned up the driveway that skirted the swimming hole. They stopped by the watermelon and wondered how it happened to be laying there.

Malinda thought they had come far enough away from home, unless Etta wanted to call on Hiram. Etta didn't like the remark, but said it would be entirely proper for her to call on him as they were practically engaged. Malinda followed this up with angry words. "Your only interest in Hiram is to spend that thousand dollars he has in the bank," she said. "And I doubt if he has ever mentioned the word marriage to you."

Etta came back at her, saying she did intend to spend the thousand dollars. "That's all you want from Hiram yourself," Etta said. "And if you deny it, then you're a liar."

Goaded on by Etta's words, Malinda expressed herself in her ire. She and Hiram had loved each other for years, and she expected to marry him soon. She said she was not counting on spending that thousand dollars, but anything else he might accumulate.

Then Malinda picked up the watermelon. "And for calling me a liar, take this," she said. Malinda took two or three steps toward Etta, intending to burst the melon on Etta's head. But Etta stepped backwards, causing the melon to miss and Malinda to stumble and fall forward.

The melon hit Hiram between the shoulders and almost paralyzed him, as well as knocking the wind out of him. It was followed up by

both girls falling in the creek on top of him, a kicking, screaming, struggling mass.

It was just plain luck none of them drowned. Hiram made a run for the exit from the swimming hole, grabbed his clothes and escaped to the privacy of the cornfield to dress.

The girls regained their footing and part of their senses as they leaned against the bank. "What was that monster?" Etta asked.

"I don't know, but it was probably harmless as it got out in a hurry," Malinda said.

Once out on level ground, the two girls rested on the grass, their feud forgotten in the face of common peril. Malinda glanced back at the water and pointed as she said, it was Hiram. Sure enough, there on the water floated a Kadee hat brim up like a Spanish Galleon sailing proudly home with a cargo of loot stolen in the New World.

The girls made their way back home slowly. Hiram dressed in the tall corn and then lingered and listened 'til he was sure the girls were safely out of the creek. Before he reached his house, his mind was made up to call off the idea of matrimony, at least for the present.

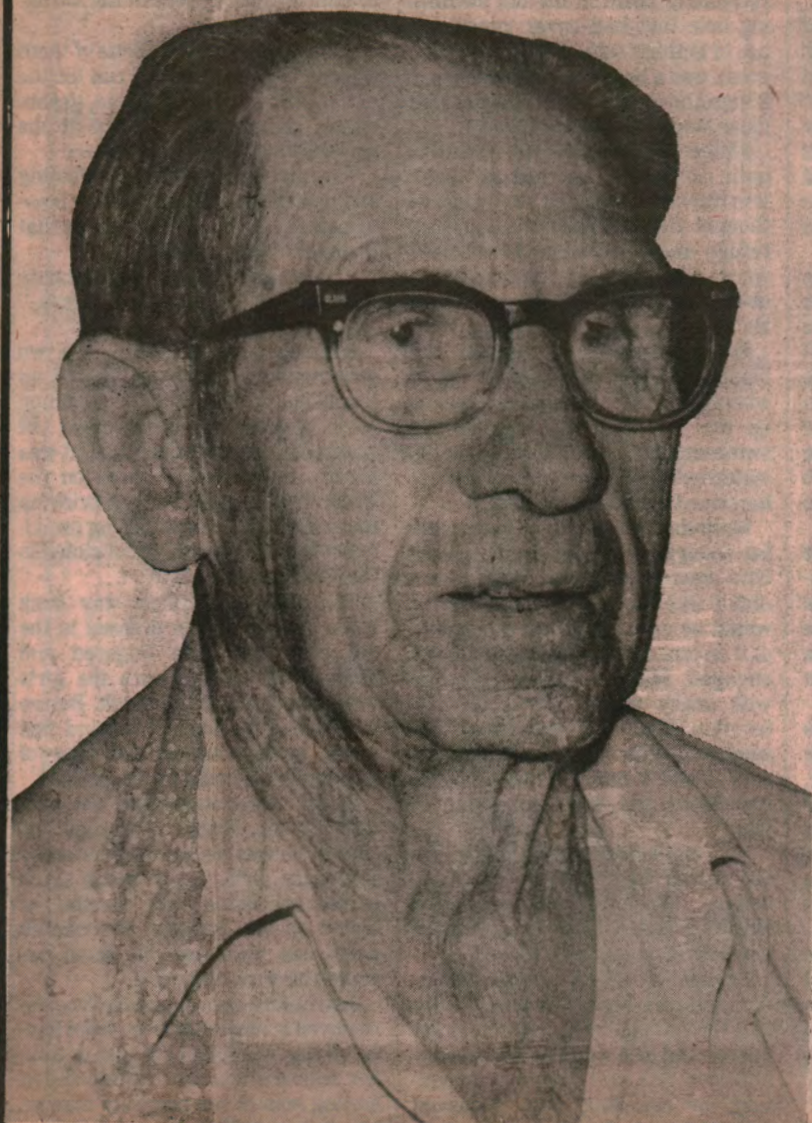
Hiram never mentioned the incident at the creek to anyone. At church he was his same old friendly self to the girls, but he never again carted one home from meeting or called on one socially. His church work, his boys and his farm occupied his time and mind.

Just before corn shucking time, he received a long letter from Aunt Hetty, saying she found out just in time her intended was more interested in getting hold of her property than he was in her. If Hiram wanted her to, she would come and keep house for him permanently as she would never seek matrimony.

Her offer was promptly accepted. Malinda remained a spinster. And after her parents passed away, a niece who taught school came to live with her.

Etta married a man from the county seat, and they raised a family of three children. Malinda often visited with them. It is not known if either woman ever spoke of that bath they took with their clothes on.





EDITOR'S NOTE: Since this story was written and after all the hard work was done by volunteers Bus Downey, Rev. Hugh Smith, Don, Scott and Bub Murphy and the Tales summer staff, the old restaurant building came tumbling down—with quite a nudge from a scoop mounted on the front of a tractor.

The rebuilding effort was a good learning experience for all of us. Now we have to start from the ground up, which we plan to do as soon as time and money permit. The difficult is easy; the impossible takes a little longer.

Old-time carpenter lends his hand to Bellair restoration

by Bob McCoppin

House-movers don't do things the way they used to. Seventy-one-year-old retired carpenter Darrell "Bus" Downey of rural Casey can testify to that. They just don't move entire buildings by horse anymore.

Next time you see one of those huge "WIDE LOAD" signs on the back of a trailer being moved down the road, think of Downey, who worked for his father's house-moving business in the late 1930's. But imagine a full wood-frame house rather than a trailer, and a team of two horses pulling it rather than a Mack truck. And consider how times have changed.

While they were changing from 1945 to 1979, Downey worked at the Huisinga Grain Elevator in Casey. He didn't forget what he'd learned previously in the moving and carpentry businesses, though. Those skills, acquired over 40 years ago, were recently applied to restoration work of today.

Downey directed the beginning of the renovation of what was once Jake's Restaurant in Bellair, a project being undertaken by Tales from the general store, inc.

The turn-of-the-century building has weathered 50 years of abandonment; the floorboards crack under the weight of a footstep; overhead, the sun pours through the skeletal remains of the roof. But the dusty-grey oaken frame stands solid, and the building retains a certain personality—as if, though full of holes, it is not dead.

The preliminary restoration plan for the restaurant was similar to the old technique of moving houses. Downey recalled the technique while sitting at a lakeside picnic bench in front of the trailer he and his wife own. He described the process in a matter-of-fact manner, as if it was still his daily occupation.

"Normally we'd have two logs, maybe 50-60 feet long," he said. "We'd put them under the house, jack the house up, and had four four-wheel dollies we'd put under these logs. A lot of times we would move with what is known as a capstan, which was a rotary drum that had a cable around it that attached to the building.

"And this capstan had a long tongue on it," he continued, "which you'd hitch a horse to, and it'd go 'round an' 'round an' step over the cable each time. And as it'd go around it'd wind the cable up on the drum."

The same basic procedure was planned for the restaurant. It was to be moved out of the way while a new

foundation was being laid. But picking up one's roots can be an upsetting experience for the aged, and it was decided to spare the structure the trauma.

So Downey had taken a decaying building, and shaped it up to the extent that it was ready for a new foundation. At that point, he turned the reins over to Don Murphy of Murphy and Sons Masonry Contractors, Inc. He and his sons, Garland (Bub) and Scott, put in the new cinder block foundation.

Thus the building stands, ready for sills to be put on before being set on its new foundation. Tales intends for the project to continue in such phases with additional volunteer help and individual financial contributions.

During his working days, Downey would have been involved in all phases of the construction. The carpentry he did was very much a ground-up proposition.

"It took a long time to build a house back in them days," he said. "It was roughly constructed, then on the inside you'd lathe it, and plaster it, put your baseboard down, your windowsills in, and your windowframes. It was a time-consuming job."

Downey sees the time spent on

The turn-of-the-century building has weathered 50 years of abandonment; the floorboards crack under the weight of a footstep; overhead, the sun pours through the skeletal remains of the roof.

foundation was being laid. But picking up one's roots can be an upsetting experience for the aged, and it was decided to spare the structure the trauma.

"Took a second look at it," Downey explained, "an' thought it wouldn't even stand it; the sills was all out. Logical thing to do was raise it up an' dig out from underneath it an' put the foundation in."



Journalism/history teacher Dwight Connelly, Martinsville, secures a wood brace on the side of the restaurant building.

such a job as reflective of the quality of the house. He contrasts that with modern methods.

"Now everything's already pre-cut, pre-fabbed. They'll make a whole wall at a manufacturing place, a few people get around to set the wall up, tie another wall into it and put a few braces on it, and they've got a house built. They think they've got a house, but they haven't."

"It took a long time to build a house back in them days," he said. "It was roughly constructed, then on the inside you'd lathe it, and plaster it, put your baseboard down..."

He also sees present-day materials as inferior, due to the depletion of our forests.

"The lumber is just absolutely not what we had several years ago. It's poor grade, it's cut dead wood a lot of times, an' it's knotty. You couldn't get a decent stick of lumber to save your life anymore."

However, there have been some positive changes in modern carpentry, Downey notes. For instance, he sees electric power tools as a "welcome relief"; they weren't around during the early days of his work.

But perhaps the most important aspect of any craft is the character of those who practice it. Downey can't understand why there is often criticism of today's worker.

"Evidently the people makin' that kind of statement haven't worked with the modern youngsters," he said.

Modern carpenters aren't bad, according to Downey. It's just that they don't take the same pride in their work as they used to, he said, due largely to "the modern way of doing it: hurry up and get it done so you can get on another 'un."

Downey rarely seems hurried. He puts in a lot of time tending his 40 X 100 feet garden of lettuce tomatoes, sweet potatoes, green beans, and corn; he's patiently grafted apple tree branches in his back yard; and he enjoys relaxing activities such as camping, fishing, and traveling with his wife Mildred in their motor home.

Their trailer is completely fronted by a screened porch, which he built two years ago. Before that, the trailer had been pelted by scattered buckshot that strayed from a shooting range located over a nearby hill. He and his son-in-law built the porch in three days.

Such resourcefulness, and tolerance of minor inconveniences, were characteristic of Downey while working on Jake's Restaurant.

At one point, for instance, the foundation needed to be checked to make sure it was level, and there was nothing to measure it with. Downey used a garden hose filled with water as an approximate level. When the first time-consuming



Don Murphy, Robinson, (left) and his son Garland (Bub) (at right) make the finishing touches on laying a corner block of the restaurant foundation. Murphy and his two sons (Scott is not pictured) took time out from their own masonry business to donate their skills and lay a new foundation for the old building.

measurements contradicted each other, he simply did it over and got it right.

And so he handled setbacks, from a broken shovel to a wall of the building that buckled out when the building was raised. "I take it in stride and if it happens it happens," Downey said, "an' if we gotta do a little detourin' or somethin' a little different we just do it that way."

Downey also knew some tricks to make the going easier. He suggested

And she handled setbacks, from a broken shovel to a wall of the building that buckled out when the building was raised.

greasing nail tips to make driving them in easier, and using bigger hammers on bigger nails, (even if it meant using a sledge). What was the test of this advice? Once workers tried it, they kept using it.

Having worked in carpentry since the age of six, Downey seemed as much at ease with a hammer in his hand at the worksite, as he was seated at a picnic table talking. Reflexively, he took up an imaginary hammer to drive home a final point about using the proper grip: "If you drive a handle way up there close to the head all you do is 'tap tap tap.' If you grab it on the end there you can go 'wham wham wham.'"

Downey attributes much of what he knows about carpentry to the man who taught him as a youth: his father. He taught by "practical experience," Downey said.

"That's the best teacher. He didn't read it in a book. He just showed you how to do it..."

"He was a very precise man. I mean, it had to be just so-so or he wouldn't accept it. So as I said, I got some good training there."

None of that training seems to have been lost. Although retired, Downey often does carpentry work for neighbors.

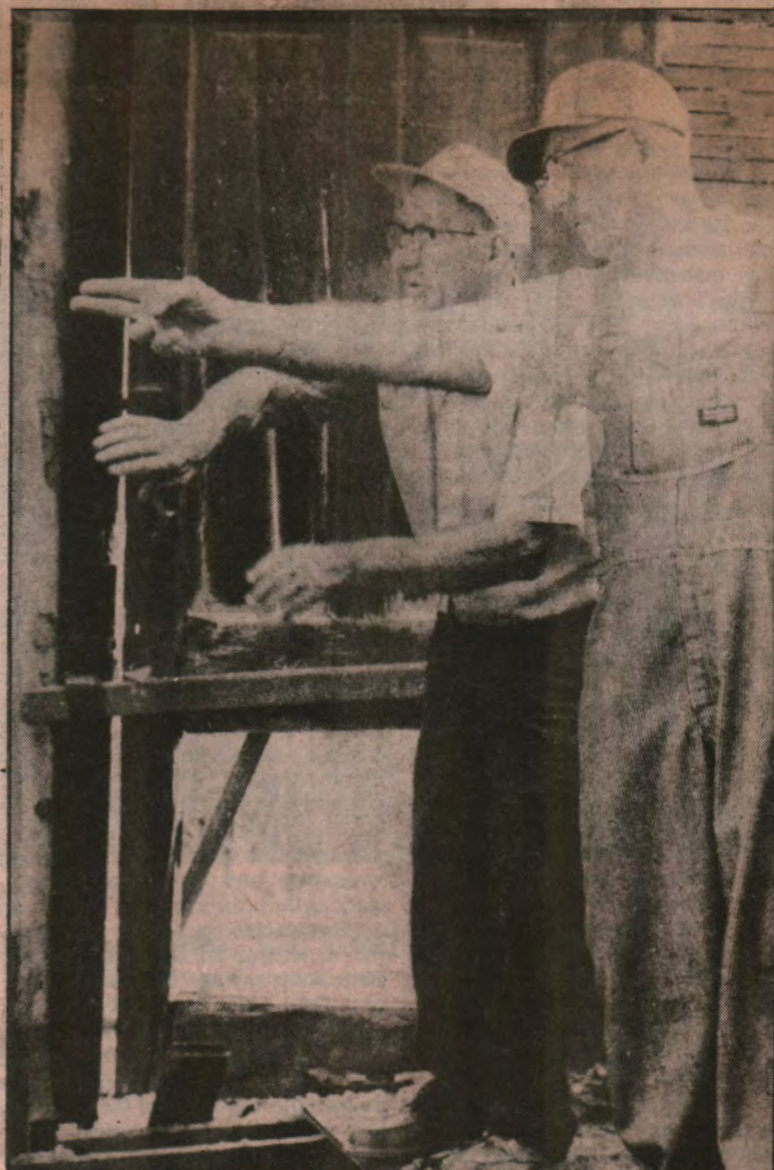
He explained, "It's awful hard for these older people to get somebody to come an' do a small job. A regular carpenter or lumber yard, it's gotta be a big job before they'll handle it. There's a definite need for someone to do the small jobs, an' I feel like I fit in that picture pretty good."

The restoration work he started in Bellair is no small job, however. Reconstruction costs are estimated to be \$30,000. But Downey has two sources of motivation in donating his help. He can trace his family origins in the area as far back as 1849, and he appreciates his roots. Beyond that, although restoration work is new to him, he said, "I do love to see these old towns restored—hate to see the old buildings go down."

Downey is dedicated to seeing some things kept the way they used to be; whether it's a restaurant built before he was born, or the pride in his work he was taught to have "since I was big enough to hold a hammer." But he doesn't miss those old days of house-moving and carpentry.

"Not at all," he said. "I like my camping an' fishing too well."

So if you ever see Bus Downey moving a "WIDE LOAD" down the road anymore, it will probably be his motor home.



Bus Downey and retired pastor Hugh Smith, Casey, (at right) discuss every facet of the initial steps toward restoring the restaurant building. Both men have worked as carpenters in the past and rekindled their skills this summer to help the Tales project.



The Prairie Rose

by Jim Hodapp

Prairie Rose, you show your flower,
But grow no thorns
Much like the prairie herself.
The mountains have their steep cliffs,
The deserts have little water, hot days,
And scarce vegetation.
But prairie Illinois, you showed your beauty
Unprotected, thornless.
So, your treasure of rich, black soil
Was easily stolen,
And you were destroyed,
Miraculously, your ancient spirit
is alive and well in Westchester, Illinois.
Still thornless and vulnerable.
Will man ever learn to respect a treasure
Given freely and unguarded?

Saving a prairie

by Diane Meyer

"It was not until after crossing the river DesPlaines that I became fully sensible of the beauty and sublimity of the prairies. They embrace every texture of soil and outline of surface..."

The splendor of the Illinois prairie inspired Patrick Shieriff, a Scottish farmer, to write these words in 1833. In those days Illinois, the Praire State, was one vast grassy sea. When people talked of prairie, vast, unique and rich with variety, they meant Illinois.

Years ago in the Midwest, high winds, frigid winters, hot summers and raging fires posed the most serious threat to the trees, shrubs and animals of the prairie. But, today, man poses as that threat.

The Wolf Road Prairie in Westchester, Illinois, is one of the few black soil prairies left. No other combination of original burr oak forest, grade-A, black soil prairie and prairie marsh exists in the state of Illinois. Throughout its 80 acres, diverse habitats promote the growth and interaction of prairie grasses, forbs (broad-leaved, flowering plants) and wildlife.

"There are only 250 acres of prairie remaining in Illinois," says Jim Hodapp, a member of Save the Prairie Society. "Twenty-five of these acres are pure, virgin, tall grass, black soil prairie found at Wolf Road, so the extinction or preservation of black soil prairie in Illinois hinges to a large extent on whether Wolf Road Prairie is saved."

The Save the Prairie Society is a group who believes the most important reasons this natural community should be preserved are self-evident: the beauty and entrancing diversity of life forms found on Wolf Road. The group of volunteers are concerned with protecting the remnant Wolf Road Prairie for future generations.

"The Society is a not-for-profit organization," says Hodapp. "We donate our time, talents and labors for the goal of saving one of the last black soil prairies."

Hodapp joined the Prairie Society only a year ago, however he has been interested in prairies since he was a young boy. Growing up in the

western suburbs of Chicago, he spent long hours playing in the prairies which encompassed most of his neighborhood.

"I never really noticed how rapidly the prairies were vanishing until I returned from the Peace Corps in 1970," says Hodapp. "Back at home, I found myself spending hours in the prairie, enjoying the beauty, relishing in the vastness.

"In a world of rapidly diminishing natural resources, time to preserve what few natural areas remain is running out. That is why saving Wolf Road Prairie is so important."

Miraculously, Wolf Road Prairie has survived relatively untouched for the last 8,000 years. Yet, today, the overpowering skyscrapers of Chicago loom in the distance to the east of the prairie. This symbol of man's technological advances encroaching upon the threatened prairie's perimeters reminds us that there will not be a second chance to save this grassy sanctuary.

"The Society has been purchasing prairie land for the past decade," Hodapp says. "The Illinois Department of Conservation and the Cook County Forest Preserve District have joined us and are currently committed to purchasing 10 acres each."

Other concerns of Save the Prairie Society are to maintain the plants of the prairie and to familiarize the public with the prairie through displays, educational tours and slide presentations.

"Last month 500 people showed up for our prairie tour," Hodapp says. "The public's general response is amazement and delight that such a place as the prairie exists.

"Most people are used to going to the mountains in Colorado. They come home saying, 'Oh, wasn't that beautiful,' while the beauty of the prairie is in their own backyard."

During the past 150 years, man has plowed the Illinois prairies, drained the marshes, cut the forests and built homes, factories and highways. With increases in population and advances in technology, the pace of human activity and change in the landscape have quickened.

"What makes Wolf Road Prairie so special is that it has never been grazed," explains Hodapp. "Most

prairies are grazed, which means they aren't original, virgin prairies.

"Illinois is such a rich state because of its farmland and prairies. The prairie is an endangered community of plants; the preservation of Wolf Road Prairie is a tribute to Illinois."

Only a few natural communities of wild plants and animals still remain as they have existed, undisturbed throughout the ages. One by one, these remnants are being crushed by the blade of the bulldozer.

However, the question is still asked: Why save the remaining prairies?

The answer, Hodapp says, is that in this day of tremendous technological advancement there is no question of the values of basic scientific research.

"Natural areas are resource materials from which new knowledge can be derived," he says. "As scientists learn more about the world of nature, they're increasingly aware of what we will lose with the impending annihilation of natural communities all over the world."

The prairie is more than a series of statistics... it is alive.

"The early part of August is a lovely time to catch the new flowers which are now blooming; my favorites are the Blazing Star and the Early Golden Rod," says Hodapp. "Fifteen different flowers are blooming every week from spring to fall."

In order to save the prairie, the Society and other conservation organizations must own it. This involves negotiation with present private owners and intensive fundraising to finance acquisition. Although the Society has succeeded in acquiring several lots throughout the 80 acres, there are many more lots to buy, provided there will eventually be a dedication to the Wolf Road Prairie preserve.

Saving the Prairie is an individual matter, as well as a group effort. Contributions (which are tax deductible) are used for the purchase of prairie land. The Society also offers prairie workdays, meetings and tours. One such tour will be a mid-summer walk through Wolf Road Prairie on Saturday, August 11, at 9:30 a.m.



EDITOR'S NOTE: For more information on preserving the essence of Illinois through the Save the Prairie Society, contact: Save the Prairie Society, 10327 Elizabeth, Westchester, Illinois 60153.

Impressions

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following poems are images of Bellair, the surrounding areas and its people.

by Wayne Allen Sallee

Terra Strains: I

with molten veins and cool
logic beating like infantry percussion
Bus Downey, foundation digger and man,
sees a day of Minutemen
bolting skies gray with disbelief

planting his spade
in sodden ground
he thinks of the children

Walden's Pond: I

To Roger Wayne Walden: Thanks for letting me borrow your sight...

a plateau of slate
in an earth of sky;
bat-wings of dusk
taunt the grey beard
of day above
rust of a June
autumn behind
below

fireflies lick
my nose look Ma
inverted
I'm at the top
of the world

Walden's Pond: II

an island of trees
guard the woman's laughter as
if it was their own

Walden's Pond: III

the two boys ripple
forgetting that creatures
and lagoons still exist
or perhaps
they haven't seen
the movie

In Cleon's Eyes

Cleon's eyes see stars
each night in skies
littered with myths
and wary breezes of coyote
caring not of dog stars
or Orion nebulae
for the simple fact
that ebon configurations
will not save his crops

but aint they pretty

Cleon's eyes cough
and swim when walking
up the hill and love
his wife of many years

and many miles

Cleon's eyes blink
and pray remembering
Tuesday sunset, 12 June 1984,
but it is Friday or a third
Christmas celebration
a field of cows

in Cleon's eyes



Walden's Pond: IV

one last genuine
peal of ha
as the inner tube
escapes down
the hill

drying off
is like closing a door
and leaving the million stars
to the gnats of the night

It's butchering time again at the Bellair General Store

and you're invited

Saturday November 17

beginning at 7 a.m.

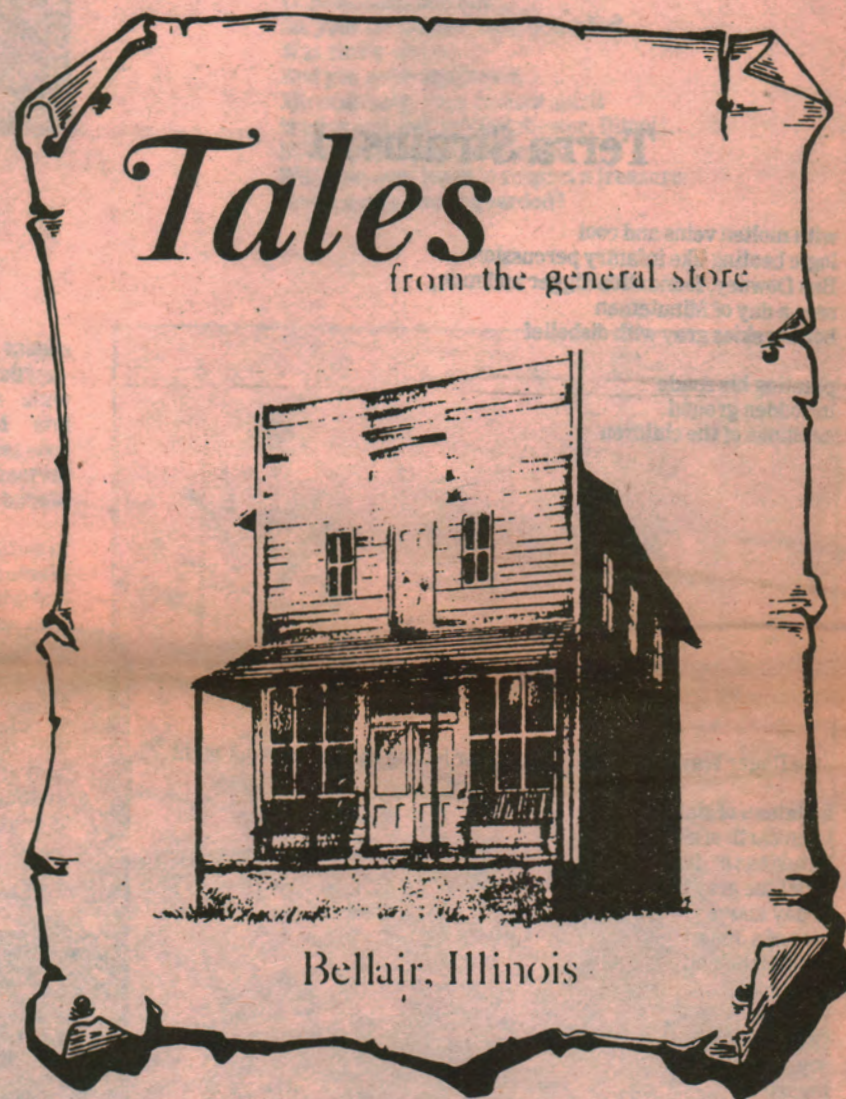
* Two hogs raised by
Tales, cared for by
Harold Elliott

* Sausage

* If you'd like to
butcher your own hog,
call (618) 569-5171

* Pancakes, bacon
and coffee served
from 7-11 a.m.

* Coffee, pies and
visiting from 11:30
until mid-afternoon



Donations

**That's Saturday, November 17
at the Bellair Store**

(12 miles north of Oblong; 12 miles south of Casey)

Don't miss it!

**—Other upcoming events—
Saturday, November 3**

**Tales Art Show
Bellair Store
10 a.m.-4 p.m.**

**Vegetable and Chili Soup
Bake Sale
Bellair Community Center
11 a.m.-7:30 p.m.**