

COOKEVILLE COUNTRYSIDE A LITTLE SLICE OF HEAVEN

By Jennie Ivey

Living Section: Just Jennie

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: Sunday, 19 April 2009, pg. C-8.

My mood bordered on melancholy as I set out on a late afternoon stroll last week with Buster, my yellow Lab.



It wasn't too long ago that Buster would get so frantically excited at the sight of a leash that it was nearly impossible to hook it to his collar. He wanted to go, go, go. Far, far, far. Fast, fast, fast.

"I saw your dog taking you for a walk," people would tell me later. I'd have to admit they were right.

Not anymore. Now almost 10 years old and grown gray and stiff and lazy, Buster is more than content to amble. And though he hasn't lost interest in the many enticing odors along our route, a half-hearted jerk on his leash brings him back to the heel position. A mile is the most I expect of him these days. And at the end of it he returns gratefully to his fenced yard, asking only for his usual dog biscuit reward and a chance to lie down and rest.

An aging dog wasn't the only reason for my somber mood that afternoon. My yard needed to be cut again, for the second time in a week, and I was pretty sure the mower was low on gas. My pasture fences were in desperate need of paint and repair. And in the endless parade of litter strewn from one end of my route to the other, I hadn't found a single item worth keeping.

A car slowed beside me as I neared home. An elderly man was driving. In the back seat was a dog. A dog so old that Buster seemed a pup in comparison. The man stopped his car and got out.

"What's the name of this road?"

I told him.

"Oh...that's not good," he said.

"How come?"

"Because I don't have any idea where I am."

"Where do you want to be?"

"Downtown Cookeville."

I assured him that he was in luck. One turn and an easy 10 minute drive and he'd be at the courthouse square. He thanked me and turned to climb back into the car.

"Can I ask you one more thing, young lady?" Now he had me. In fact, he'd suddenly become one of my best friends.

"Of course," I said.

"Am I alive?"

"You look alive to me."

“Well, I’m not so sure.” He gestured at the scene surrounding us. A cloudless sky. Grass so green it almost hurt your eyes to look at it. Hillsides dotted with dogwoods and redbuds in full bloom. Fat horses grazing in the pasture, looking not at all interested in escaping the run-down fence. A great blue heron standing on one leg at the edge of the pond, admiring his reflection.

“I think I might be dead,” he said. “Because I’m sure this must be what heaven looks like.”

The old man climbed back into his car. The old dog raised his head and thumped his tail against the backseat. And off they went, making their way – I hope – to the courthouse square. Buster began pulling toward home, but I turned him around.

“Hold on, fella. We’re going to do another mile this afternoon,” I told him. “It’s not every day you get to take an extra-long walk in heaven.”

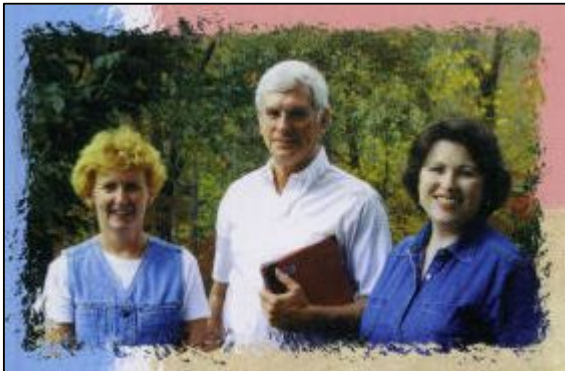
Jennie Ivey is a Cookeville writer.

Source: *Tennessee Tales the Textbooks Don't Tell* by Jennie Ivey, W. Calvin Dickinson, and Lisa W. Rand.

INTRODUCTION: By Jennie Ivey

As I sat as a student in Calvin Dickinson’s Tennessee History course not long ago and listened to him regale the class with one fascinating story after another, I made an important discovery.

History the way he was teaching it was not only painless, it was fun. It was nothing more nor less than the



stories of men and women whose actions and ideas helped shape our state into what it was and what it is – people who were really no different than people are today, however much the times we live in seem to have changed.

I had taught history myself several years earlier, but much of that material was new to me. “did that really happen?” I’d ask him after hearing a particularly outlandish tale. “I sure never knew that,” I’d find myself muttering over and over again. And finally, “somebody ought to write these stories down.”

Thus was born the idea for this book.

(Pictured: L to R: Jennie Ivey, Jennie Ivey, W. Calvin Dickinson, and Lisa W. Rand)

Then we discovered Lisa Rand, whose expertise in and love for children’s literature seemed to make her a natural partner in our endeavor to make history not only enlightening but also entertaining for young readers.

We wrote *Tennessee Tales* with seventh graders in mind because they are the ones who study Tennessee history as part of their curriculum, but we hope that readers of all ages will enjoy the stories.

This book is not intended to be a comprehensive text. It is simply a collection of snippets from the past of what surely must be the most fascinating of all the fifty of our United States.

All the stories contained herein are true and are as historically accurate as it was possible to make them. In some cases, realistic dialogue was created in order to enliven the action. If it seems, in the telling of these

stories, that a little extra jam has been added to the biscuit, perhaps it has – not to distort the taste but simply to make it all the more enjoyable going down.

BACK COVER:

Tennessee Tales the Textbooks Don't Tell is a collection of memorable stories from Tennessee's past. Beginning with the legend of how a young Cherokee boy earned the name "Dragging Canoe" and waving its way through three centuries, *Tennessee Tales* treats history not as a collection of names and dates, but as real-life drama filled with strong characters and vivid emotions.

From buckskin pioneers to sequined singers...from the Great Smoky Mountains to the Mighty Mississippi River...from Rachel Donelson to Elvis Presley...from bottled Coca-Cola to Goo Goo Clusters...from the fight for woman suffrage to the fight for racial equality - *Tennessee Tales* captures the essence of the Volunteer State from the 1700s until the present.

Though some of the people, places, and events portrayed here are mentioned in textbooks, never have they been presented as they are in this collection. Written in simple style and richly illustrated, these seventeen true stories and interesting facts are sure to enlighten and delight readers of all ages.

Jennie Ivey is a former history teacher who currently works as a professional writer. Calvin Dickinson is a professor of history at Tennessee Technological University. Lisa Rand teaches courses in Reading Methods and Children's Literature at Tennessee Technological University. All three authors live in Cookeville, Tennessee.

Biography: **Jennie Ivey** is a former history teacher who lives in Cookeville, Tennessee, with her husband, George, and their three children. She works as a columnist for the *Herald-Citizen* newspaper and writes fiction and nonfiction for various other publications. Home: Cookeville, Tennessee, USA.

E is for Elvis The Elvis Presley Alphabet

by Jennie Ivey (Author), W. Calvin Dickinson (Author), Lisa W. Rand (Author), Ron Wireman Jr. (Illustrator)

LOST COMPUTER DOCUMENTS ARE A FORM OF PERSONAL KRYPTONITE

By Jennie Ivey

Living Section: Just Jennie

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As losses go, the one I suffered last week was minor.

Trivial even. But when I opened the Word documents folder on my computer to discover that the newspaper column I'd worked on for five hours wasn't there, I felt like someone had hit me in the stomach with a baseball bat.

Especially given that my deadline was just a few hours away.

It was all my fault. Every bit of it. And it's not as though such a mishap hadn't happen before. Back in the mid-1990s, I wrote a story titled "The Feed Store Frolic That Almost Cost me My Marriage" that I hoped to sell to True Story magazine. Great literature it wasn't. But it was gripping and heartfelt and I'd put a lot of time and emotion into it. Only to have it disappear somewhere in cyber-space.

When I opened the file where I was sure I'd saved it, all I could find was four or five lines – single-spaced and in a tiny, tiny font – that looked like a combination of the Greek alphabet and symbols from higher mathematics. Not one readable line from the 9,000-word story I'd been working on for weeks. There was nothing to do but bury my face in my hands and wept.

Which I did.

I eventually learned that a friend whom I had not even remotely suspected was a closet computer geek was a genius at retrieving lost information. Wonder of wonders, he some-how found my story. And the happy, happy ending is that True Story magazine bought and published it. They didn't pay particularly well – a nickel a word – but you can rest assured that I treated my friend to a steak dinner. Including a baked potato with butter AND sour cream.

And I vowed that I would never again lose my work on the computer. Yeah, right.

It's easy to explain why this problem keeps happening.

When it comes to technology, I'm a computer idiot. I've mastered the basics of word processing and have been able to move from Works to various version of Word without much trouble. It's the naming, saving and filing – and moving between one computer and another – that gets me into trouble.

That's what happened with last week's column. I recently received a free mini-computer as a thank you for renewing my contact with my telephone and Internet provider. As you might guess, it has a cramped little keyboard and not many bells and whistles. But it's perfect for taking out to the screened porch on a warm spring evening. I did just that, and wrote one page of my "Rain Barrel" column before darkness drove me inside.

I e3-mailed that column to myself and then opened it on the desktop computer in my home office. From there, I continued working. Several hours later, I had the piece exactly the way I wanted it. I hit the "save" button and went to bed. But when I opened the file to put the final polish on it before sending it to the *Herald – Citizen*, the only thing there was the partial – and very rough – work I'd done on the screen porch.

Once again, I dropped my face into my hands and wept. Then I got busy and re-wrote the whole darn thing, vowing all the while that I would never, ever allow such a mistake to happen again. So here's my plan. After I finish this piece, I'm going to dig out a book I bought through AARP called "Computer Friendly!" written by Raymond Steinbacher.

I'm going to study and practice Lesson 6, "Files and Folders – Loading Them, Saving Them and Copying Them," until doing those things becomes as second nature as brushing my teeth or tying my shoes.

I'll let you know how it goes. In the meantime, before I go to bed, I'm going to print out this column with real ink on real paper. Just in case.

Jennie is a Cookeville writer.

COOKEVILLE WOULDN'T BE THE SAME WITHOUT THE *HERALD-CITIZEN*

By Jennie Ivey

Living Section: Just Jennie

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I know, I know, I'm preaching to the choir.

If you're reading this column, you're obviously a newspaper reader. A vanishing breed, apparently, based on the number of newspapers that are, even as I write this, shutting down or trying desperately to keep their heads above water by reducing their size and content. I can't imagine anything much sadder, or more frightening, than a nation without newspapers. Or a town without a newspaper, either.

Try to imagine Cookeville without the *Herald- Citizen*. Sure, we could still get state and national news from the Internet and television and magazines like "time" and "Newsweek." But how would we find out what's going on with the Putnam County Commission? Or the School Board? How would we know what

plays are coming to the Drama Center or what music the Bryan Symphony Orchestra will be performing at their next concert?

What about sports news and scores from Tennessee tech and our Putnam County middle and high schools? Or editorials from syndicated columnists like Leonard Pitts (my favorite) and Michael Reagan (not so much). Even worse, without the newspaper we'd miss out on some fine local columns that deal with everything from cooking to religion to pet care to movie reviews to what's going on at the library. And everybody's favorite – the never-dull letters to the editor.

Let's not forget ads, a newspaper's bread and butter and the main reason some people buy the paper. Brightly colored, slick-paged inserts. Black and white ads on the paper's inside pages. Full-color ads that often take up the whole back page. Most interesting of all are the classifieds, where you can spend hours studying what kinds of jobs are available and the hundreds of different things people have for sale.

Then there's "Dear Abby" and the comic page, which I always save for last in hopes of erasing any bad news from my mind. (How can you stay sad after seeing what Snoopy is up to, even in reruns?) For added fun, I usually read my horoscope, though it's disappointing that new astrologist Bernice Bede Osol doesn't seem to be nearly as partial to Capricorns as her predecessors were.

Strolling outside in the late afternoon to get the paper is one of life's little pleasures. I wave at passerby. I pull a few weeds out of the day lily bed. I pat the cat. I check to see if there are tadpoles in the giant puddle near the street. And then I scan the driveway for the newspaper. Ah. There it is, a little harder to see now that it's wrapped in clear plastic rather than blue, but waiting for me in nearly the same spot every day. Thanks to my newspaper carrier, who has very good aim.

I often play a little game with myself to see how much of the front page I can decipher without unwrapping the paper. I look for the obituaries first, just to make sure – as the joke goes – that I'm not listed there. Then I try the headlines. When that fails, as it usually does, I pull the paper out of the wrapper and scan the front page as I meander toward the house. I settle into the porch rocker and hook my feet on the top rung. And then I start reading, beginning with page one and ending, always, with Arlo and Janis. Who are so much like George and me that it's almost spooky.

Think you can get that kind of pleasure, and information from TV or a computer? Not a chance. But then again, you knew that. After all, I'm preaching to the choir.

Jennie Ivey is a Cookeville writer.

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