

MORE ROARING RIVER TALES

By Robert "Bob" Rogers Chaffin

'Writer's Corner'

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN

Sunday, 28 April 2013

Aunt Mary Petty lived just a little way up Morrison's Creek Road after you turned off the Roaring River Road and headed up toward McCoinsville. For some reason her house did not have a water supply- of course, I don't mean a water supply in the house, none of us



had that – she didn't have a fresh water supply at the house. Through the years I have wondered if the house was built by a spring that went dry or if there had been a well that that caved in, or exactly why there was a house with no water supply. I have seen houses and schools built on the very top of a hill or ridge, but always because there was a spring there to supply fresh drinking water, so Aunt Mary's situation was unusual indeed. Of course, she had a tank to catch the runoff from the roof to use for wash water, but the wiggly creatures that lived in the tank water made drinking the stuff unappetizing, if not downright dangerous.

Most often when you saw Aunt Mary, it was as she carried water toward the house from Oplis Loftis' place or some other neighbor. I can see her now with a water bucket in each hand, trudging up the brown river-gravel road, bringing drinking water home. Who, oh who, would live like that today? But I never remember hearing Aunt Mary complain about her plight, even one time.

Uncle Hick was hurrying past Bill West's store porch, and the usual collection of old, infirm, and down-right-lazy loafers was leaned against the clapboard wall, balancing on two legs of a straight-back chair. As Uncle Hick strode past, head down and a look of purpose on his face, one of the loafers called out, "Come on in on the porch, Hick, and tell us a lie."

Uncle Hick barley broke his stride or looked up but said, "Can't do it today boys, I got a lot of work to do."

"What kinda work er-ye into Hick?" one of the porch gang asked.

"Well, I guess you fellers ain't heard, and I'm sorry to be the one that tellin' you, but Aunt Mary Petty has died and I'm on my way over there to see about getting in some wood, and givin' a hand diggin' the grave."

Well the porch crowd had not heard and began to talk among themselves, wondering what could have happened to Aunt Mary. Then one of them suggested they might ought to go over there themselves and see what help they might be in the process. A country burial was strictly a do-it-yourself proposition in those days, where the good women of the community washed and laid out the body, cleaned the house of the deceased, cooked copious amounts of food, and the men built the wooden coffin for burial and dug the grave. No funeral directors or professionals, just the good neighbors of the deceased. Perhaps knowing that made the general population more neighborly than today.

After some lengthy discussion of what they “ought” to do, the loafers leaned forward in the straight chairs, climbed down off the store porch and started down the river road toward Aunt Mary’s house. I was only a few minutes later that they spied a bent and familiar figure carrying a bucket of water in each hand trudging up Morrison’s Creek Road. That’s right, Aunt Mary was very much alive and making sure she had fresh drinking water.

As for the loafers, well they realized they had been had by Uncle Hick. He had done exactly what they asked, “Stop and tell us a lie.”

So, be careful what you ask for because it might just how up at your door looking different than you had pictured.

Have a blessed day.

*Read more Robert “Bob” Rogers Chaffin stories at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>