

I GIVE AWAY MY MEMORIES

Writer's Corner: By **Truman Fox**:

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: Thursday, 30 April 2009, Arts Section B

I was born in 1930. Growing up in the 1930s and '40s was not easy. We were born on the creek named Rush Fork in Jackson County, and making a living was very rough. Ten children were born on our family farm; nine of us (six boys and three girls) lived and grew up down on the creek. Mother and father made 11. Our home consisted of three rooms downstairs and two big rooms upstairs. We did not have all the modern things we have today. We did not have electricity or indoor running water; instead, Papa had two springs. We carried water from the spring for drinking and washing clothes every day.



Winters were especially cold. The house had a fireplace that ran by cutting wood, and mother had a woodstove for cooking. It was a full-time job to keep stove and winter wood. We heated the water in a big cast iron kettle. To wash the clothes, Mother and our sisters filled a big tub and rubbed them on a washboard. On cold days sometimes the clothes would freeze before they would dry.

Since we did not have any electricity, we had two or three coal-oil lamps for light and a fireplace. In the winter, I remember, we would nail a small bucket on a stick and pop popcorn over the fire. Sometimes we would make popcorn balls with molasses. We raised about everything we ate. In addition to this we grew corn for feed. We also grew corn to take to the gristmill about one-half mile up the road. There the corn was round into corn meal. Papa also raised wheat. He would cradle it by hand, tie it into bundles and stack it until it dried. He would then thrash it out and grind it into flour.

We had a milk cow that had to be milked morning and night. We used a churn to make butter and buttermilk. The milk was kept in the spring in the summertime. This was the only way we had to keep it from spoiling.

Even though I was little I can remember when my Grandma Billingsley, who many times would rock me to sleep, died. My father helped build a coffin out of poplar wood. My grandfather couldn't walk in his last years, so one of the things he could do was make coffins. My father learned from him; and later he would make coffins. They loaded her in a wagon pulled by a mule. She was taken out to Pete Lawson Ridge to be buried. This was the way most were buried back then. It is funny that now a local funeral home will take people to their graves pulled by horse. A few years ago several of us went back to the graveyard, and it was all grown up. We cleared all the brush and put up a new fence.

Papa killed three or four big, fat hogs every year. The meat would have to be salted down to keep it from spoiling. Hams, shoulders and bacon were put in a saltbox. After a few weeks we would take it out, wash it off and hang it up in the smoke-house. It was smoked for a few weeks with hickory wood. It would get a golden brown color. We would also make several cans of sausage. We would shape the sausage into balls, fry them and put them in a can upside down. The grease would run down and help seal the cans. We used black kettles to render out the fat of the hogs to make three or four stands of lard.

We planted corn and sugar cane, and every fall Papa and Uncle Willis, who lived across the creek, made cane molasses for about six weeks. We made it for our family and for several neighbors. They would bring their cane to our house to be made into molasses. I remember coming in from school and stopping where they were working and eating the foam from the molasses pan. Our school was about two miles away, and we had to walk.

In the spring and fall we went barefoot. At school we would play basketball on a dirt court. We would put sawdust on the ground and play against another school or two. I remember one teacher. His name as Earl Lock. He would ride a horse to school because he didn't have a car. After him, my future sister-in-law,

Jewel, started teaching. She would send notes to my brother, Collie, by another one of my brothers, Houston.

One day she whipped Houston. This made him mad, and he wouldn't carry the notes home anymore. She started sending the notes home by me. Jewel and Collie married just before he went into the Army.

In 1943, I was 13 when Papa built a new house. It was about 100 feet from the old house, but the ground was a little higher and very nice. In 1946, he signed up with the TVA electric power and electricity was put into the house. Needless to say, that was very nice and changed the way we lived. A year later, he put a pump in the spring that meant no more carrying water. Mother got a washing machine and a Frigidaire. We had ice, hot and cold water and an inside toilet. In 1948 Father bought a car, but he never drove it. The boys drove for him, especially my three younger brothers. Mother and Father never drove, but my brother Houston lived close and took them where they needed to go later in life. A peddler would come by every week; Mother would sell him eggs and chickens for a few groceries. The main things she bought were loaf bread, snuff and coal oil for the lamps.

In 1942 my brother Collie and a cousin, Litton Pippin, who lived down the creek, went to World War II. Litton was killed in battle. His body was brought back home. My mother kept a picture of him on her wall the rest of her life. Back then, all 18-year-olds had to register, and I got my call in 1950. I had left home and went to Detroit to work for Briggs Motors, but soon my uncle called me and told me I was in the Army in the Korean War Conflict. My brother went to Vietnam in 1962. Of the six boys, three of us went to the service. I came home early in 1953. I went to see my cousin, Helen Fox, and met Willene Loftis, who would be my wife in a few months. We went back to Detroit, and I started working for the Chrysler Corporation. I worked in the aircraft department making the Red Stone missiles. This was one of the first rockets used in the space program.

By the time this division of Chrysler moved to Alabama, my family had grown to four. Our two boys were 3 and 5 years old in 1961 when we decided to buy a few acres of land and go back to Tennessee. My son David and his wife, Laura, have a son and daughter. Myron and Jodi have two daughters and two grandsons. We have attended the Willow Avenue Church of Christ for 30 years. My wife and I, who walk every day, will soon celebrate our 56th anniversary.

Things have changed since I was a boy. My wife says even if those were the good old days, she wouldn't want to go back. Even though coming up we had it very hard, what a blessing I have in this life.

The Herald-Citizen welcomes family-friendly poems, essays or short stories of 700 words for possible publication in The Writer's Corner. E-mail works with a contact name and phone number to arts@heald-citizen.com. The editor reserves the right to edit or refuse submittals.

*See Bill Flatt's Reflections.

Source: *Loftis and the Descendants of Laban Loftis*, by Jimmie Loftis & Bobbie Bryant, pgs. 39, 73 & 75.

Truman Fox married **Willene Loftis** (1.4.5.6.2), daughter of **Claude Loftis** and **Grace Hicks**, b. 18 March 1912 – d. 1 June 1989.

(1.4.5.6) **Claude Loftis**, son of **Francis Marion Loftis** (1.4.5), b. 21 June 1863 (census shows him b. 1862) Jackson Co., TN – d. 17 May 1941, Overton Co., TN married 1st Lizzie Lynn, d/o Will and Emoline Mansell Lynns. (see 7.3.1). Issue two. Married 2nd **America Gentry**, b. 22 March 1881 (census shows 1878) Jackson Co., TN – d. 19 June 1955, Overton Co., TN and d/o Louvernia Loftis and Henderson Brown Gentry (8.3.1.1). Issue six. America Gentry Loftis married 1st Daniel Loftis (see 8.1.10). Issue one.

Francis Marion Loftis (1.4.5), son of **Archable "Archibel" Squire Loftis**, (1.4), b. 18 October 1825, Jackson Co., TN – d. 1899, Jackson Co., TN married ca. 1849, Jackson Co., TN to **Elizabeth Jane Phillips**, b. ca. 1827, Jackson Co., TN. He served as a Private, I Co., 25th Infantry, CSA during Civil War.

Issue. According to research by Early Langford, Archable Loftis is buried in a family cemetery at the back of the house formerly owned by Perlina Loftis West and her husband Almon West. Perlina was the daughter of Laborn Loftis Jr. She was apparently born in an old log house near to the house now standing on Spring Creek, 9th Dist. Jackson Co., TN which was built about the turn of the century and recently sold by Dewey West. Also it is believed that John L. Loftis may be buried here or across the creek upon a hill in back of the old Harrison Loftis home in another old cemetery. Early Langford also believes that Archable Loftis lived down Spring Creek about 1 & ½ miles at a place once owned by Carlin C. Loftis and Michael Van Dorn Loftis and possible once owned by John L. Loftis. It's location is at what is known as the mouth of Hardscrabble Branch on Spring Creek, 9th Dist., Jackson Co., TN.

Archable "Archibel" Squire Loftis, (1.4), son of **John L. "Jack" Loftis** (1st child of Laban Loftis & Elizabeth Holcombe). John L. Loftis, b. 7 October 1791, SC – d. April 1842/44, Jackson Co., TN. He is said to have been killed by a millstone. He married ca. 1818 enroute to Tennessee in a wagon train to **Ermilla "Millie" Dill**, b. 1800/1805, VA or SC – d. after 1880, Jackson Co., TN. She was the d/o Archibald Dill who according to records served in the Revolutionary War. Her brother Roland C. Dill owned considerable land together with William Loftis, brother of John L. Loftis, on Blackburn's Fork in Jackson Co., TN. Issue. The Dill and Loftis families are known to have been living near each other in the Tyger River area of Greenville, SC before coming to Tennessee.

John L. "Jack" Loftis, son of **Laban Loftis** (1760-1850) & **Elizabeth Holcombe** (1770-1859), both buried in the Morrison's Creek Cemetery, Jackson Co., TN

SAM FLATT CEMETERY, Shephardsville Road, Jackson Co., TN

***Willis B. Pippin**, b. 17 March 1880 – d. 5 March 1952, s/o Andy Pippin & Lucinda Hutchinson.

***Sallie B. (Billingsley) Pippin**, b. 16 September 1891 – d. 20 December 1975, d/o John L. Billingsley & Martha Petty.

Litton Pippin, b. 26 December 1918 – d. 20 June 1944, s/o Willis Bryan Pippin & Sallie Billingsley (PFC US Army WWII died in France).

William Odell Pippin, b. 1 July 1914 – d. 9 September 1926, s/o Willis Bryan Pippin & Sallie Billingsley.

Ridley Mitchell Pippin, b. 4 November 1931 – d. 3 January 1968, s/o Willis Bryan Pippin & Sallie Billingsley. (Tenn. PFC US Army, h/o Doris M. Rogers).

<http://www.ajlambert.com>