

THE SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

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ABANDON SHIP

In the last issue, I included a news story about James Arnold Harvey visiting his mother at Bluff City while on furlough from the military in May, 1942. He had recently survived the sinking of two ships in World War II. I did a little research on these incidents on the Internet and thought I would share with you some of the details I learned. It's good for us to be reminded occasionally of the sacrifices our military personnel make as they fight to preserve the freedoms we enjoy.

It all happened in 1942 in the Indian Ocean about 200 miles from Java. Four ships were involved in this story--the *USS Langley*, the *USS Edsall*, the *USS Pecos*, and the *USS Whipple*. Only one of them survived World War II.

The USS Langley

The *USS Langley* was the first of the nation's aircraft carriers. At the time of this incident, it was transporting 32 fighter planes which were badly needed in the war effort. This was only a few weeks after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor which had brought the United States into the conflict.

On February 27, 1942, The *Langley* was attacked by Japanese fighter planes and was soon reduced to a blazing wreck. The order was given to abandon ship. The *USS Edsall* was able to rescue 117 survivors and then the remains of the *Langley* was sunk by American ships to prevent it from falling into enemy hands. There were 16 men aboard the *Langley* who did not survive the attack.

The *Edsall* and a destroyer, the *USS Whipple*, were then ordered to proceed to Christmas Island and join up with the *USS Pecos*, a naval oil tanker, and transfer the survivors to the *Pecos*. After the transfer, the *Whipple* left to refuel and the other two ships continued on their assignment.

The USS Pecos

The *USS Pecos* was a naval oil tanker and now had on board its regular crew and the survivors from the sinking of the *USS Langley*. On March 1, 1942, The *USS Pecos* with 317 men on board came under attack by nine Japanese bombers and began to sink. A distress call was sent out and the men began to abandon the ship. The *USS Whipple* picked up their distress call and returned to help and was able to rescue 232 survivors. The death toll on the *Pecos* was 85. I found the following account of the incident in a book called *The Cruise of the Lanikai* by Kemp Talley:

"Darkness fell over the shivering, discouraged men, some hanging onto their providentially-carried bamboo poles, others in one of the ship's boats that had floated clear. Many lay awash in life rafts that offered no protection from the chilly sea that stung the eyes

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with its salt and thick scum of oil."

The men from the *Pecos* figured they might be able to survive 24 hours in the water. Then they saw the lights from an approaching ship, but didn't know if it was an American ship or a Japanese ship coming to finish them off. The *USS Whipple*, in answer to the distress call from the *Pecos*, came into view with ropes hanging over the sides and was able to rescue 232 men from the chilly waters who were dragged aboard in the darkness. There may have been more survivors too weak to cry out or too far away. Their fate was sealed when the *Whipple* picked up sounds from an enemy submarine very close to the scene. There was no choice but to leave quickly. Depth charges were dropped by the *Whipple* and any other survivors from the *Pecos* were "crushed like dynamited fish".

Admiral Abernathy described the survivors this way--"They were in bad shape indeed. Fuel oil was the worst culprit. Our throats and eyes burned like fire had struck. Our skins peeled as though we had been heavily sunburned from head to toe."

The USS Edsall

The *USS Edsall* had rescued the 117 survivors of the sinking of the *USS Langley* and had transferred the survivors to the *USS Pecos*. After the transfer, the ship continued on to its assigned destination with a crew of 185 men. The *Edsall* was last seen March 1, 1942, sailing over the horizon on the way to Java and was never heard from again. The *Edsall* was one of four American destroyers not accounted for during the war. She had simply disappeared.

It was later learned that she had been attacked by Japanese ships that fired over 1000 rounds. The crew of the *Edsall* managed to maneuver the ship in a zig-zag fashion and avoided many of the shells. Only two rounds hit the ship, but they were direct hits. The Japanese called in fighter planes and the *Edsall* was hit by several bombs, leaving the ship dead in the water. The *Edsall* was then sunk by the Japanese cruiser, the *Chukuma*.

This information about the attack on the *USS Edsall* did not surface until 1980 when naval historians examined videos and other information received from the Japanese government. The mystery surrounding what had happened to the *USS Edsall* had finally been solved.

The Fate of the Crew

Ten years after the attack in 1952, it was discovered that at least five crew members of the *Edsall* had been picked up by the Japanese and left at a prison camp on Celebes Island. Local natives led searchers to five graves covered by jungle vegetation. These graves were opened and five decapitated skeletons were found. Identification was made from the dog tags the sailors wore. All five were crew members from the *USS Edsall*.

These five sailors were identified as Sidney Armory, J. R. Cameron, Horace Andrus, Larry Vandiver, and Donald Waters. The bodies had been piled one on top of the other and had been executed by beheading with a sword. Why they were executed remains a mystery.

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In many cases the Japanese spared prisoners who had put up a valiant fight before capture. Some think in this case, the Japanese executed these men because of their frustration at not being able to hit the American ship but two times after firing over 1000 rounds.

James Arnold Harvey

As I mentioned earlier, James Arnold Harvey was one of the men who survived the sinking of both the *USS Langley* and the *USS Pecos*. He was a Machinist's Mate had been in the U. S. Navy since 1934. He had served in North Africa, Panama, Hawaii, China, Australia, the Philippines, France, England, and Ireland.

The article I found from May, 1942, mentioned that he had had left his wife and 12 day-old baby in Manila on December 6, 1941 and had received no word from them. He feared they had been taken prisoner by the Japanese. I found in the book of World War II servicemen from Ouachita Co. that he was married to the former Margaret Gardner. I learned that more than 5,000 American civilians were forced to surrender to the Japanese Imperial Army when they occupied the Philippines in late 1941. They were forced to live as civilian prisoners in internment camps for the next 37 months. The living conditions in these camps were very bad and many died.

I can only imagine the anxiety he probably felt with his wife and child missing and presumed to be prisoners of the Japanese while he was on duty in the Navy and then to be involved in the sinking of two ships in which many of his fellow sailors perished. The world was at war and terrible things happened to many people. It would be four more years before the war ended with an estimated 50 million people dead (about 22 million military and 28 million civilians). Some estimates are higher. The United States lost about 400,000 military personnel in World War II.

I then began a search to find when James Arnold Harvey died and maybe find where he is buried. I knew from his mother's obituary that he was living in Providence, Rhode Island in 1970 at the time of her death. Using that clue and after a lot of searching, my wife came across his obituary on the Internet. Here is a condensed version of that obituary. According to his obituary, he was married to Irene Lightfine in 1944--two years after surviving the sinking of the two ships.

Obituary

James A. Harvey of Portsmouth, RI, died July 26, 2006 at his home surrounded by his family. He was the husband of Irene (Lightfine) Harvey.

Born in Bluff City, Arkansas on August 24, 1916, he was the son of the late James Isaac and Lucy Lee (Barlow) Harvey.

*Mr. Harvey served in the U. S. Navy for 20 years. During World War II, he was a survivor of the sinking of both the *USS Langley* and the *USS Pecos*. He retired as Chief Warrant Officer in 1954. After his career in the Navy, he worked as an engineer for Westinghouse for 20*

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years, traveling throughout the United States and the world. He was a member of the Yangtze China Patrol, a collection of Pacific Theater veterans. After retirement, Mr. Harvey traveled with his wife to every state in the continental United States.

Besides his wife of 62 years, he is survived by his sons, James Harvey, Jr. of Portsmouth, RI, and Douglas Harvey of Long Lake, NJ; his daughters, Jean Fidyk of Clifton, VA, and Barbara Haeck of Eaton Rapids, MI; nine grandchildren; six great grandchildren. He was the father of the late Keith Harvey (born 1-31-1958 and died 5-17-1987--buried at Trinity Cemetery).

A graveside service with military honors was held July 31, 2006 at Trinity Cemetery in Portsmouth, Rhode Island. (Newport Daily News)

So, James Arnold Harvey, born at Bluff City, Arkansas and educated in the school at nearby Chidester, had the distinction of being a survivor of the sinking of two different ships in World War II. He traveled all over the United States and much of the world. I'm sure he could have written a book about his life experiences and I'm surprised that a movie has not been made about these incidents in World War II. Even after all the trauma of these experiences, he lived a long life, dying at almost 90 years old in Rhode Island which is a long, long way from Bluff City, Arkansas.

For More Information

If you want to read more about the sinking of these two ships, check out this book: Pawns of War: The Loss of the *USS Langley* and the *USS Pecos* by Dwight R. Messimer.

You can also read an account of the attack on the *USS Pecos* written by one of the Japanese pilots who attacked the ship.

The link is <http://www.geocities.com/dutcheastindies/pecos.html>

If you want to read about life in the Japanese internment camps, check out this book: Captured: The Japanese Internment of American Citizens in the Philippines 1941-1945 by Frances Cogan.

If you want to read about the *USS Edsall*, check out this book:

A Blue Sea of Blood—Deciphering the Mysterious Fate of the *USS Edsall* by Donald M. Kehn



John McComsey, left his home in Tennessee April 1, 2009, with two mules and a wagon on a journey to Phoenix, Arizona. The last time I checked, he had just crossed the Arizona state line. You can check his progress on his website. I enjoy looking at his pictures and reading about his trip.

<http://twomulesandawagon.com/>

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A reunion was held at May 9, 2009, at White Oak Lake State Park for those who once rode the Bluff City school bus to the Bluff City School or to Prescott after consolidation. Even though the weather was not perfect, there was a good turn-out with good food and fellowship. Pictured below are some who “rode the bus”. Many of the spouses and other former students are not pictured. A total of 67 people attended.

We probably needed a professional photographer to arrange the group better for the picture. I had two pictures in my camera but accidentally lost them. We managed to find this one which shows most everybody except for one or two hidden from the camera. Let me know if you would like a larger picture that you can print out using the landscape option.



Front row (left to right)—standing on ground:

Peggy Greer Seiler; Ronnie Johnson; Kathy Johnson Williams; Marylyn Daniel Bussell; Jerry McKelvy

Back row (left to right):

Pam Lambert Greer; Kathy Barlow Thompson; Melvin Hildebrand; Jerry Norman; Nancy Cummmings Stockton; Bobby Loe; Charlotte DeWoody Woody; James Cottingham (?-hidden from view behind Charlotte); Aubrey Lee; Billy Joe Meador; Lyndell Knight; Ronnie McKelvy; Dennis Plyler; Debbie Knight Phillips; Linda Meador Carman; Shirley Franklin Singleton (partially hidden); David Hildebrand; Patricia Henry Farr; Loritta Meador Johnson; Barbara Plyler Bingham; Sandra Nichols Beaver; Bonita Meador Stinnett; Betty Knight Hunt; James Nelson; Lynell Franklin Henry; John DeWoody; Pete DeWoody; Joe Henry

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A NEW TWENTY-THIRD PSALM (found in an old newspaper)

The Ford is my auto, I shall not walk. It maketh me to lie down into muddy roads; It leadeth me into trouble; It draweth on my purse. I go into the paths of debt for its sake. Yea, though I understand my Ford perfectly, I fear much evil lest the radius rods of the axle might break or if it hath a blowout in the presence of mine enemies. I anoint the tire with a patch, the radiator boileth over. Surely this thing will not follow me all the days of my life, or I shall dwell in the house of poverty forever.

Moral: Equip your Ford with one of the new improved cuckoo clocks. When the car reaches a speed of 25 miles an hour, the birds will come out and sing “Nearer My God to Thee” and at 40 miles an hour, “Lord, I’m Coming Home”

MORE LOOKING BACK

Our arrival at the Livingstone Airport on October 17, 1969, was an event I’ll remember for a long time. Mary Kledzik and Georgia Hobby met us, not “with bells on,” as Mary had promised, but with open arms and big smiles. We certainly felt welcome! The feeling was very much like one feels when returning to loved ones after a long absence.

Georgia suggested we go into town, have tea, and visit before going on to Kalomo. Yes, we learned very quickly that ten o’clock is “tea time,” and that it is an excellent time to rest and visit. Would it be needful to say this was something we adopted as part of our routine—and we have never regretted it. We talked and talked. They had many questions about America, and we had more than many about Zambia! We asked about the school, the missionaries, the Zambian people, the culture, and all the other things that came so readily to our minds. It was very evident from the very beginning that we had much to learn.

When we arrived at Kalomo after the long ride—most of the highways in Zambia that we used at that time, and even today, are not very much like those in America, so even a short distance seems much further! You have to allow time, because it takes a bit longer to get where you are going than we had been accustomed. From Kalomo, it did not take very long to get to the mission, but here we had a big surprise! Can you imagine driving up to your new house in a third world country, having no idea of what to expect? What a pleasant surprise to see that our house was “furnished” by those who had awaited our coming with great expectations. They wanted us to feel “at home.” (But, oh, it was so far away from America!!)

I knew I would have to rely on many things and many people to help me. I believe that a person who has lived in the same country, the same town, the same village, gone to the same school and the same church building since childhood, has grown up with friends and classmates, can get some help from these experiences.

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At that stage of my life, I felt that I would always have people, places and things to help me over the rough places. My journey began! Did I let them help me? Memories? Maybe you can decide if you continue to read...

Common sense tells me I had not been in Zambia long enough in 1969 to know anything about the people and/or the countryside. I'm sure that a missionary who appears to know it all from the beginning would "turn one off" (a good old Southern expression). In 1969 I had had only a peep at the two. A glimpse of Africa for the first time left me with a feeling I cannot describe. I can say its culture has touched my heart—things like a woman carrying a baby on her back with a heavy load on her shoulder (or her head) and carrying a stick for protection. Or it might be a man plowing a field with oxen, or a man trying to prepare a field for planting with only a hoe. It could be a mother outside her hut, cooking the evening meal over a hot fire while her children play nearby—and perhaps she may even have a baby on her back.

As we traveled the seventy-five miles from Livingstone to Kalomo, I must admit I did not notice the countryside very much. I do remember I did not see any houses or billboards along the way—oh, there was one billboard which read, "Lay-by." Now the only time I remember hearing that word was when the folks back home would use it, "Next week we'll lay-by that field of cotton." This meant all the work had been done except for the harvesting—no more hoeing, chopping, or cultivating! But back to the Zambian lay-by—this was a place prepared for a picnic. The area had been cleared away, and a table had been placed for the convenience of passer-bys.

Maybe I was too sleepy to notice much that day, but I was trying to keep my eyes on the road and listen to Mary and Georgia tell us about people, places, and things we would encounter as we lived in Zambia. Also, I was very interested in keeping my eyes on the small road. There was a strip of tar down the center of it, and when meeting a vehicle, this strip was shared—two of our wheels and two of the other vehicle! I had visions of that road disappearing and our drifting off into a footpath. However, when we got to Kalomo, there was a dirt road which reminded me of the road from Camden to Prescott and which ran in front of our house in Bluff City when I was very young.

As we rode along that day and the days that followed, I often thought of a quote I'd read during the summer—that long, HOT, HOT summer before we left the States—"The men whom I have seen succeed in life have always been cheerful and happy and have gone about their business with a smile on their face."

I'll leave you with a smile and a promise to write again.
But for now.....

That's all, folks,
Pearl Louise Henson

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WATERMELONS

By Jerry McKelvy

Watermelon--"It is the chief of this world's luxuries, king by the grace of God over all the fruits of the earth. When one has tasted it, he knows what the angels eat." Mark Twain

I grew up in the sandy land around Bluff City in Nevada County, Arkansas. Sandy soil is well suited for many crops, but especially watermelons. I can't understand how something so juicy could grow in deep sand during dry weather, but it does. Usually the melons are sweeter during the driest seasons.

Watermelons can be planted as soon as all danger of frost has passed. If you are lucky, you might have a ripe melon by the Fourth of July, but usually, they get ripe about the middle of July and last about three weeks. A later crop can be planted to get ripe in the fall of the year. Every farmer has his own techniques for growing watermelons, most of which were learned by experience.

The farmers must battle the deer and crows while growing their watermelons. Deer like to eat the vines and crows know just when the melons are ready to eat. They peck a hole in the melon which ruins it. Over the years we have tried all types of things to keep these critters out of the melons. Some work and some don't. Just about anything will work for a day or two, but soon the pests will ignore it when they get accustomed to it.

Some of the things farmers have tried to keep deer out include: parking vehicles in the field, hanging work clothes along the fence and changing them every day, placing human hair from barber and beauty shops in the field, noise makers set on a timer, and electric fences. A deer-proof fence could be built, but it would have to be very tall. Such a fence would be very expensive and might be impractical since watermelons should not be grown in the same place the next year. Crop rotation cuts down on some of the diseases that cause the vines to wilt.

For crows, we have tried scarecrows, putting strings over the field with aluminum pie plates hanging from them, putting something on each melon, and scaring them off with the old shotgun. A bunch of crows can do a lot of damage in a few minutes.

Another problem for some farmers comes in human form. Teenagers seem to think a raid on a watermelon patch is something fun to do. Most farmers don't appreciate this type of amusement and someone who does this takes the risk of a confrontation with an angry farmer and his shotgun.

The advantage of growing your own melons is that you can eat one anytime you feel like it. It makes a good snack anytime during the day. When we had cows and hogs, we could always give them any leftovers--they were ready made garbage disposals.

Getting a bunch of big melons out of the field is not an easy job. They can weigh as much as 50 or 60 pounds, so you need a strong back. It's possible to raise a melon that weighs up to around 200 pounds if you give it tender loving care and leave only one melon on the vine.

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These are mainly raised for show--who could eat a 200 pound melon? Hope, Arkansas is known as the home of the world's largest watermelons, although many of the so-called "Hope melons" are actually raised in Nevada County.

How do you tell when a melon is ripe? Some folks like to thump them, some check the curl on the vine nearest the melon to see if it is dead, some look at the underside of the melon, and some use a broom straw placed on the melon to see how it turns. There may be other methods, but these are the most common.

How do you eat a melon? Some folks like to cut the melon and eat out of each half. Others like to slice the melon. It all depends on how many people will be eating. How it is served is a matter of personal preference. Most people like their melons chilled and some people put salt on them. You can also make preserves out of the watermelon rind. Ask some of the old folks for the recipe. You might even want to save the seeds for a future crop if it was a very good melon.

All watermelons are not red inside. Some are yellow-meat and some are orange-meat. There are many different varieties from which to choose. Some of the old-time melons are hard to find these days such as Tom Watson, Huffman, and Moon and Stars.

Don't complain too much about the price of a good watermelon. Consider that the farmer has to buy fertilizer which is very expensive these days. He also has to cultivate the melons and battle the fire ants, deer, and crows. Then he has to lug the heavy melons out of the field and maybe haul them to market. Even with the high prices these days, what could be a better way to spend five or six dollars than to purchase a watermelon and get the whole family together for a few minutes of overeating, spitting seeds, and having fun?



My nephews enjoying some watermelon

- Watermelons are 92 % water and 8 % sugar.
- Watermelons are ideal for the health as they contain no fat or cholesterol and are high in fiber content and vitamins A and C. They are also a good source of potassium.

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THE MOODY-GRIFFITH HOUSE

This old house was located on Hwy. 299 near Ebenezer Cemetery about four miles southwest of Bluff City, Arkansas. According to Mrs. Zettie Griffith Link, her father (Hildre Griffith) bought the house and farm from Asbury Moody in 1928. The house was built by Mr. Moody, but she is not sure what year.

The Moodys had a son named Harlis. She remembers Mr. Moody putting a chicken wire fence around the porch to keep young Harlis from crawling off the porch. The house was about four feet or more off the ground similar to many houses at that time. Mr. Moody's wife was the former Fannie Buchanan, a sister to Mrs. Beulah Kirk (Brodie Knight's mother).

Mrs. Link says they moved to this location from Lackland Springs when she was nine years old.

I took the picture of the house, but didn't write down the date. As you can see, the house was empty at the time and the bushes along the front needed trimming. Soon after the house was vacant, it was destroyed by fire. The Red A deer camp is located there today.

I can remember eating a meal at this house when I worked for Mr. Griffith. He had a small John Deere tractor at the time ("a popping Johnny". Mr. Griffith was married to the former Stella Hardwick. After her death in 1964, he married Ozell Chamlee. Mr. Griffith died in 1971.

*"Your home in heaven may depend on what you are doing to make your home heavenly".
(from a 1907 newspaper)*

"No person wants a shady family tree." (from a 1907 newspaper)

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