



Jerry McKelvy's

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A Mystery That Still Haunts

By

Barbara Rushing Lyerly

It was one of those halcyon days near the end of summer around the year 1955. The sun was hot and the atmosphere was lazy with dust motes floating through the air. It was about one o'clock in the afternoon and my ZeeZee Girl (Mrs. Zannie Marks) was just finishing her daily clean up from lunch. That particular year my Mother had decided that we needed a garden in order to have fresh vegetables every day and it was therefore plowed and planted. We delighted in those vegetables but no one had the time or inclination to do the hoeing and weeding and the garden became a jungle of vines, weeds and grass burrs.

My grandfather, Dr. J. L. Rushing, had a fence put around this garden and the fence posts were old railroad ties. The vegetation had grown deep around these ties and vines of honeysuckle and morning glory had settled in for the duration. Most of the garden was bone dry as is wont to happen in South Arkansas in August. ZeeZee Girl had taken the trash out to put it in the burning barrel which was occupying a place of honor against the cross tie that held the gate to the garden secure. She unceremoniously dumped the trash into the barrel then struck a big kitchen match and set the whole concoction ablaze.

As the flames began to lick out of the top of the barrel, ZeeZee went back to finish her never-ending kitchen chores. As she passed the window at the back of the kitchen she saw flames eating their way up the gateposts, the garden was aflame and the smoke was beginning to come into the house. Out she went running, which was a chore for her due to both age and weight, and she proceeded to beat the fire with a broom she picked up on the porch. At that time there was no Chidester Fire Dept., and no one came to help.

The fire quickly became a raging inferno and ZeeZee ran to get the water hose. As she approached the garden with the hose, one of the crosstie fence posts fell, fully aflame, and hit her lower leg and she fell. By the time she had gotten away from the burning attacker her lower leg was burned completely to the bone. My grandfather came as fast as he could. He cleaned the burn and treated it with sulfur powder and dressed it. He gave ZeeZee a painkiller and after she was calm and settled, he took her home.

He told ZeeZee to stay at home until he pronounced her well and that he would be back later that evening and early the next morning. My sister and I could not go to sleep that night for worrying about our Zannie Girl. You see, she was a part of our family. We were never raised to be prejudiced toward anyone and it was just an accepted fact that she would be with us always. In that world, rightly or wrongly, there were certain culturally accepted practices between black people and white people. We didn't know anything

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about all that, we just loved Zanny Girl. In today's world Zanny Marks' granddaughter is my good friend Carolyn McKenzie. I have visited Carolyn's classroom many times. We always tell the children that we are cousins since we shared the same grandmother! Ah, but I digress from my story.

My grandfather called at Zanny's house twice a day for several days. I overheard him telling my parents that her leg was very bad and that he didn't know that it would heal correctly and he was very worried about infection. Our days were so very different without her. She had been there for us all the time. She taught us to cook. She sang to us. She stayed at our house when it stormed and made us feel safe from the thunder and lightning. We had no one to run to, and no one to fuss us out and threaten to "tear our rears up" while she was gone. Mother and Daddy and Papa were always working. I soon learned to practice the cooking skills I had learned from ZeeZee!

Less than a week from the terrible accident, lo and behold, at six o'clock in the morning there was Zanny Girl in the kitchen cooking my grandfather's breakfast! He came into the room fuming. He had told her to stay off the leg and he would tell her when she could come back. He insisted on seeing the burn and she sat quietly down and pulled up her long skirt and there was a big, big pink scar! The wound had healed completely. My grandfather was flabbergasted. How...how...he mumbled and questioned and mumbled and questioned. She would not tell him anything.

For days on end he would catch her unawares and ask what had she done to cause the burn to heal. What had she put on it, taken, and on and on. Finally in desperation and probably a wish to have some peace and quiet, she sat down with him at the kitchen table and told him what had happened. Her story began when someone drove her to a house that was across the road from the monument at what is commonly called the "Monument Curve" on Highway 24. This was a "shot gun house" that was the home of a little black lady that I have since forgotten her name. Zanny Girl told Papa that this lady had mumbled some words, spit on her hand and touched the burn. She had then gone into another room and when she came back she told Zanny Girl to go home. That is all that happened. The next morning her leg was healed and the scar was there!

This story occupied my grandfather's mind for days. He pored over the story, repeated questions, mumbled and fretted, and then he went down to the lady's house to see for himself. I went with him. The lady told him that she didn't do anything. She said she prayed a prayer and left the room. That is all he ever found out and we do not know to this day how Zanny Girl was miraculously healed.

I believe it was the prayer.

Zanny Marks worked for us for many years. She came to work at six o'clock and stayed until supper was cooked. Many times she stayed, when the weather was bad, all night. She literally "took care of our house, our clothes, our meals, and my sister and me. My sister, Sydney, could not say her name when she was little and there is the source of the "ZeeZee Girl". Later

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we called her Zanny Girl, also. We should have called her “Granny” because that’s really what she was.

TRIVIA (answers on page 10)

1. It contains 43,560 square feet.
2. What does a person do who suffers from somnambulism?
3. Whose picture is on the two dollar bill?
4. What was the name of the hotel on the TV show Petticoat Junction?
5. What was a "tin Lizzie"?
6. Who was the only president who was never elected to the office of president or vice-president?
7. What was the first name of President Ulysses S. Grant?
8. What was the first name of the wife of President Andrew Jackson?
9. It is 5,280 feet long
10. What are the first three words in the preamble to the United States Constitution?

WHAT IS IT?



In the last issue, I asked you to identify this tool. The correct answer is a cant hook. A cant is a squared-off log at a saw mill. The first step in sawing a round log into lumber is to make it square by slicing off one side of the log, turning it over and repeating the cut on the other sides. What is left is called a “cant” which can then be cut into lumber. This tool was used to turn the log for the next cut. It can be used to turn any log for whatever reason.

Those who answered correctly were: Don Rubarts; Blake Fairchild; Larry McNatt; Charlie Weaver; Perry Westmoreland; Bill Carman; Charles Farr; Norval Poe; Yvonne Munn; Donald Munn; James Nelson; Billy Joe Meador; Vernell Loe; Lois Evans; Don Bennett; Bill Barham

<p>Rainfall Record for 2013 January—4.3 inches February— 2.8 inches March— 4.1 inches April (so far)—</p>

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ELIZABETH AND THOMAS WED

Part 2 of Mrs. Ila Watkins' 'Golden Memories'

In this conclusion of her story, Mrs. Ila Watkins relates more of the life of her grandmother, Betty Elizabeth Amos Brooks and grandfather, Thomas Brooks. The first installment of this story told how Elizabeth met Thomas when he was a "Yankee" soldier in the War Between the States, how they were separated by time and circumstances; how the Amos family had to move away without notifying the young man; and how he followed the family and was reunited with them. The story continues:

"Elizabeth and Thomas were married.

"Elizabeth and Thomas Brooks started on their journey to Springfield, Illinois, to their little home for which he had worked for two years to 'make a love nest for his little Southern girl' he had met during the Civil War.

"They traveled along stopping for food, and for rest at night.

"After several weeks of riding horseback, they arrived at the little four-room house in Springfield. They put the horses in the barn, and Elizabeth looked over all the nice furniture and complete housekeeping outfit, which was modern for those days.

"The bedroom suite was a three-piece walnut suite with marble-top dresser, chest, and high porter bedstead. I must add that today I have the chest of drawers, and my brother has the dresser which belonged to my grandmother Elizabeth when she was first married.

"Elizabeth went with Thomas to be introduced to and to visit with his parents. The family was overcome with happiness to have such a beautiful sweet Southern girl such as Elizabeth in the family. They spent the night with Thomas' family, and the next morning went back to their home where Elizabeth had hidden away her box of gold money. The following day Thomas went back to work at his regular job in the mine.

"Elizabeth was terribly happy preparing food and trying to make Thomas happy. They attended church, and Elizabeth was soon no stranger, for all the folks in town fell in love with the new Mrs. Brooks.

"She wrote to her sister, Mary, and the old colored woman who had reared her up; to tell them of their safe journey. When spring came on, Elizabeth and Thomas were happy on their little farm—with the planting, raising chickens, and caring for their little son. Thomas bought a cow, but it was his job to milk her, after Elizabeth was kicked over on her first attempt.

Thomas also bought a pair of horses and a red wagon for trips to town, to church, and for visiting their families.

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“Elizabeth made many friends and was soon teaching some to sew, knit, and to make fine lace. She made little Thomas long dresses with long petticoats all trimmed with home-made lace. All the women wanted to make their children the same kind of clothes.

“These were the days when Jesse James, Cole Younger, and the great desperados were robbing, stealing, and taking the law into their own hands.

“One Saturday afternoon, Thomas hitched the horses to the wagon to go into town and buy groceries. Elizabeth was busy with her Sunday baking, so didn’t care to go. Late in the afternoon much to her surprise, two well-dressed men stepped up on the porch. Elizabeth went to the door, very frightened, but determined not to let them know it. They demanded supper at once, and they wanted plenty of good food. Since Elizabeth had been baking, she had plenty of food, and she quickly placed it on a snow white linen table cloth and invited them in to eat. The two men came in and began eating. She wondered why they had ordered food for four. She went to care for her crying baby, and she saw two more men standing watch by the front gate. She was thoroughly frightened, for she was afraid Thomas would be coming home, and they would shoot him, for they wore their guns like officers.

“When the first two finished eating, they went to watch while the others ate. Not a word was spoken until the last finished eating all the fried chicken and other food she had prepared for Sunday, and then they complimented her on her cooking. They left the house then, and Elizabeth closed the door, putting the inside latch on all doors, for by that time, it was a little after dark.

“Elizabeth could hear the men talking outside and she was very much afraid that Thomas would come home. She prayed fervently as she lay near her little son, asking God to watch over all her family.

“The men waited a long time before leaving, but Thomas had not arrived home at that time; he only arrived some time later. Later, when the men were captured, they confessed that they had planned to steal Thomas’ horses.

“Time rolled on, and Thomas and Elizabeth were the happiest little couple in the world. They harvested their crops, cut all the corn tops and bundled them to dry for storing in the barns, as they would make good hay for cows and horses.

“Harvest time was great that year, and all the folks got to celebrate Thanksgiving.

“Folks were all in fear that Jesse James and his men would steal their horses or do something which they could not; and sure enough, they appeared at a widow’s house one day at noon for food. Her husband had died recently and left her with five small children.

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She was terribly frightened and cried and told them that she didn't even have enough food for her children—that the note was due on her farm, and she was going to lose the farm, as she did not have enough money to pay the mortgage.

“After they ate lunch, they told her they would give her the money to pay off the mortgage if she wouldn't tell where she got it. So the next day when the two men from the bank came to foreclose the mortgage, they were surprised to find that the widow had the money to pay them. When the lady's title to the property was clear, and the two men started to town with the money, James' men were waiting for them beside the road with guns and took back the money.

“The men were dangerous, sinful, and guilty of murder, but as Elizabeth observed, no matter how mean a person is, there is some good in him.

“Time rolled on, and it was planting and farming time again. Another little son was added to the family of Thomas and Elizabeth. With two little sons and a home to care for, Elizabeth could not help Thomas in the field as she once had.

“There had been little rain during the year, and drouth had set it. It appeared that Thomas might have to go back to work in the mines.

“When time came for the revival meeting, Elizabeth planned to go. She had not been able to attend services regularly and had no clothes she could wear to the revival. So when Thomas started after groceries one Saturday afternoon, Elizabeth told him to buy her some dress material and some clothes for himself and the boys. Thomas was very unhappy and told her he was afraid to spend any of the money, as it looked as if there would not be a crop to harvest because of the burning sun scorching the fields.

“Elizabeth was washing and sunning clothes, and she went on about her work, being the busy housewife she was, until she had kissed Thomas good-bye. Only then did she cry a little. She went into her little house where her little sons were sleeping and stole away into a corner; there, lifting her voice to God, she asked that He make a way possible to go to the revival. She also prayed that the rains would come so that they could fill their barns and have plenty of everything that is promised in the Good Book. She prayed for thirty minutes or more, and then went on about her work.

“As she finished gathering the last of her clothes, she saw a black cloud almost over their house. It thundered several times and Elizabeth ran to cover her many little chickens. Before she could get back into the house, rain was pouring down. Elizabeth cried for joy and thanksgiving that God had heard and answered her prayers.

“When Thomas returned from town and got nearer and nearer home, he began to notice signs of rain until finally, before reaching home, he was driving through mud, and water standing in the mud. He met Elizabeth with a big hug and kiss and apologized for not

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getting the clothes she wanted. And he also told her the rain had extended only half a mile beyond their house. No one else got rain.

“Elizabeth told Thomas about the prayer and how she had asked God to send the rain so they could have a harvest, and could afford clothes to wear to the revival. When Monday morning came, Thomas took Elizabeth and the boys to town and she bought the clothes they needed to attend the revival.

“They attended every meeting, and many souls were saved because of Elizabeth’s faith in God. She always said, ‘Have faith in God’.

COLLECTING THINGS

People collect all sorts of things as a hobby. Some of the things people collect can be valuable, but a person needs to learn about whatever it is he or she is collecting to be good at it. One of the newest and fastest growing hobbies is that of collecting marbles.

Patricia Farr is one person I know who is into this hobby. She knows a whole lot more about it than I do. Most marbles I am familiar with are those used in various games like Chinese checkers or some other board game. Kids once played with marbles, collected them, and traded them with each other. Those marbles are still around somewhere and those are the ones collectors like to find. Like everything else people collect, some are valuable and some are pretty much worthless.

I recently found several old marbles at Dill’s Mill. I was there checking out the old mill site for old bottles or anything else from the days when this large saw mill was in operation. It doesn’t look like the same place I remember from years ago when I drove through by the mill on the old road before the new highway was constructed--back when the Reader Railroad was in operation. This was the same spot where one scene in the movie *Boxcar Bertha* was filmed--the scene that showed a prison chain gang digging a ditch and one of the old cars had a flat tire. Large stacks of lumber from the saw mill were filmed in that scene. There I was standing in the same spot where all this was filmed about forty years ago.

A small area at the old Jerald Johnson house place at the mill site had recently been cleaned off as a spot for a deer feeder. As I was walking around I noticed several old marbles just lying on the ground. I picked them up and later gave them to Patricia because I knew she collected marbles. I asked her to write up something about this hobby for this paper. Here is what she says on the subject of marble collecting. If you are interested in this hobby or have a message for her, just send it to me and I’ll see that she gets it.

MARBLES By Patricia Farr

Welcome to the fun and excitement of collecting marbles. Other than being beautiful and easy to

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display, they have a sense of history and bring back childhood memories of a less complicated time.

Are you thinking about that sack of marbles you won in marble games at school? What happened to it? Maybe it is a forgotten treasure left in an attic or in an old trunk where your mother or grandmother placed it.

There are many different kinds of marbles. Many collectors today played with machine-made marbles as children. To name a few of the marbles, there are cats-eyes, slags, corkscrews, swirls, patches, agates, etc. There are many books and articles about marbles and the value of them now.

Collectors can find marbles at flea markets, antique stores, auctions, marble shows, and yard sales. If you like to treasure hunt you can dig for them rather than purchase them. Sometimes you can find them around old school buildings, home places, or park areas.

As a marble collector, I could go on and on, but maybe I've said enough to bring back happy memories that you would want to share with everyone. Just maybe you will want to start collecting marbles too.

Check out all the interesting information out there about this fascinating hobby. Happy hunting!

Speaking of marbles, here is an email I received several years ago. I thought it was worth keeping since it has a good message.

COUNT YOUR MARBLES

The older I get, the more I enjoy Saturday mornings.

Perhaps it's the quiet solitude that comes with being the first to rise, or maybe it's the unbounded joy of not having to be at work. Either way, the first few hours of a Saturday morning are most enjoyable

A few weeks ago, I was shuffling toward the basement shack with a steaming cup of coffee in one hand and the morning paper in the other. What began as a typical Saturday morning, turned into one of those lessons that life seems to hand you from time to time. Let me tell you about it

I turned the dial up into the phone portion of the band on my ham radio in order to listen to a Saturday morning swap net. Along the way, came across an older sounding chap, with a tremendous signal and a golden voice. You know the kind, he sounded like he should be in the broadcasting business. He was telling whomever he was talking with something about "a thousand marbles." I was intrigued and stopped to listen to what he had to say.

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“Well, Tom, it sure sounds like you’re busy with your job. I’m sure they pay you well, but it’s a shame you have to be away from home and your family so much. Hard to believe a young fellow should have to work sixty or seventy hours a week to make ends meet.” he said. “Too bad you missed your daughter’s dance recital. Let me tell you something, Tom,” he continued. “Something that has helped me keep a good perspective on my own priorities.” And that’s when he began to explain his theory of “A Thousand Marbles”.

“You see, I sat down one day and did a little arithmetic. The average person lives about seventy-five years. Now then, I multiplied 75 times 52 and came up with 3,900 which is the number of Saturdays that the average person has in their lifetime! Now stick with me, Tom. I’m getting to the important part.”

“It took me until I was fifty-five years old to think about all this in any detail”, he went on, “and by that time I had lived through over 2,800 Saturdays. I got to thinking that if I lived to be seventy-five, I only had about a thousand of them left to enjoy.”

“So I went to a toy store and bought every single marble they had. I ended up having to visit three toy stores to round up 1000 marbles. I took them home and put them inside of a large, clear plastic container. Every Saturday since then, I have taken one marble out and thrown it away.”

“I found that by watching the marbles diminish, I focused more on the really important things in life. There is nothing like watching your time here on this earth run out to help get your priorities straight.”

“Now let me tell you one last thing before I sign off with you and take my lovely wife out for breakfast. This morning, I took the very last marble out of the container. I figure if I make it until next Saturday, then I have been given a little extra time. And the one thing we can all use is a little more time.”

“It was nice to meet you, Tom. I hope you spend more time with your family.”

I had planned to go fishing with some of my buddies this morning and then I was going to work on the antenna, so I could listen to the game. Instead, I went upstairs and woke my wife up with a kiss. “C’mon, honey. I’m taking you and the kids to breakfast.”

“What brought this on?” she asked with a smile.

“Oh, nothing special, it’s just been a long time since we spent a Saturday together with the kids. Hey, can we stop at the toy store while we’re out? I need to buy some more marbles...”

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Answers to trivia quiz on page 3:

1. An acre
 2. Sleepwalk
 3. Thomas Jefferson
 4. Shady Rest
 5. A name given to cars such as the Ford Model T
 6. Gerald Ford
 7. Hiram
 8. Rachel
 9. A mile
 10. We the people
-

SOME OF MY FAVORITE QUOTATIONS

"The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing." *Stephen Covey*

"I think we consider too much the good luck of the early bird, and not enough the bad luck of the early worm." *Franklin D. Roosevelt*

"Don't ever take a fence down until you know why it was put up." *Robert Frost*

"As seedlings of God, we barely blossom on Earth, we fully flower in Heaven." *Russell M. Nelson*

"Whatever you are, be a good one." *Abraham Lincoln*

"Decide what a beautiful day it's going to be for you before checking the weather." *Mary Ellen Edmunds*

"The best remedy for those who are afraid, lonely, or unhappy is to go outside, somewhere they can be quite alone with the heavens, nature, and God." *Anne Frank*

"The future lies before you, like paths of pure white snow. Be careful how you tread it, for every step will show." *Author unknown*

"One sees great things from the valley; only small things from the peak." *C. K. Chesterton*

"When a person has a pain after eating a big dinner, the trouble is more likely to be found in the table of contents rather than the appendix" *(from 1907 newspaper)*