

Jerry McKelvy's
SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

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FIFTY YEARS OLD

It's hard to believe, but our local White Oak Lake State Park is fifty years old. I think we can all agree that the park has been good for our part of the state. Many people enjoy camping at the park and many use the pavilion for family reunions or other events.

White Oak Lake was completed in 1961. In April, 1964, members of the Prescott Jaycees proposed that a state park or recreation area be established on the lake. A group representing the Jaycees met with Governor Orval Faubus and presented their ideas. The governor agreed that a state park at White Oak would be a good idea and offered his support.

In August of that year, a 23 member delegation of the Jaycees led by Larry Walquist met again with the governor in Little Rock and suggested the park be about 1000 acres in size. The next month, the Park Director visited the site which was on the western edge of the lake near the Nevada-Ouachita county line. Two weeks later, seven officials from the Parks Dept. met at Norwood Starnes' landing and toured the site. They were served a bar-b-que lunch provided by the Prescott Jaycees.

Governor Faubus was in Prescott in October, 1964 when it was announced that the park had been approved and would be about 300 acres in size but might be expanded later.

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By January, 1965, the size of the park had risen to 510 acres. The road from Bluff City to the park site was gravel at that time. The park site was covered in large pine trees with a lot of underbrush that had to be cleared which was quite a job.

In the summer of 1965, the Parks Dept. received some funding from the federal government for Neighborhood Youth Corps projects. That program was designed to provide a work experience for young people. The money was used in Arkansas to improve all of the state parks including the development of White Oak Lake State Park.

Mr. Ed. Cottingham was named superintendent of White Oak Lake State Park. He was friends with Governor Faubus and this friendship went a long way in keeping the project on the front burner with the politicians in Little Rock.

Under the Neighborhood Youth Corps program, young people were paid \$1.25 per hour. I was in college at that time and was chosen as the supervisor of the NYC boys at White Oak State Park. Girls were also involved in the project, supervised by Patricia Carter. A portion of the day on Fridays was devoted to educational programs.

These young people worked hard that summer cutting all the brush from under the pine trees. I think it was a good experience for them. This was the first real job for practically all of them.

One interesting thing happened the first day. We met on the hill where the pavilion stands today and began cutting the underbrush. We had not worked very long when a man showed up and wanted to know what we were doing. It was Mr. Harmon Ross, the manager of the Poison Spring State Forest. We told him we were making a state park. For some reason, he had not received word that the park had been approved and he shut our job down. Finally, the details were worked out between the Arkansas Forestry Commission, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, and the Arkansas Parks and Publicity Department and our work resumed.

Even though those young people spent the summer using sharp cutting tools, I don't remember any serious accidents other than some getting stung by bull nettles. We cleared a much larger area than is used today for the state park.

The new park was dedicated December 7, 1966. A large group of dignitaries from Little Rock attended along with state senator Olen Hendrix from Prescott. Mr. Ed Cottingham, the park superintendent, was the master of ceremonies. Governor Faubus spoke to a crowd of about 200 people telling how the park came to be and told of all the improvements that had been made and what was planned for the future. The Prescott High School band provided music for the occasion.

In 1969, the gravel road from Bluff City to the park was added to the state highway system and designated as Hwy. 387.

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Many improvements have been made at the park in the last fifty years including campsites, restrooms, showers, a park store, a home for the park superintendent, and improvements to the Mill Creek channel that feeds into the lake. Many activities are scheduled at the park throughout the year for people of all ages. Hiking trails have been developed for those who enjoy getting close to nature.

The park staff also maintains the Poison Spring State Park a few miles away at the location of the Battle of Poison Springs during the Civil War. I was also involved in clearing the underbrush at that park when I worked for the Arkansas Forestry Commission one summer while attending college.

If you enjoy camping, you might want to schedule a visit to White Oak Lake State Park.

MEMORIES OF J. L. FRANKLIN JR. (PART TWO)

That one room cabin over the years had become a four bedroom home with an attached kitchen, (that was huge), a dining room, and a storage room or pantry. There was a huge wood cookstove, a big cook table, a smaller work table, a kitchen cupboard and two pie safes along with a few chairs in the kitchen. In the dining room, there was only a table that would seat 12-14 people, two handmade split or slatted benches-one on each side of the table, just enough shorter than the table so it could be pushed under it between the corner legs. These benches were made concave to be very comfortable. The slats were worn and polished to a satin smooth finish and there was absolutely no chance of getting a splinter off one or my bottom would have a veneer finish, as much as I scooted back and forth on them. At each end of the table was a chair, the east end for Bob and the west end for Maxie. On the wall were two brackets that held two kerosene lamps that were short and had a round flat oil reservoir that sat down in the bracket so as not to be tipped or knocked off. There was an oilcloth cover on the table for easy cleaning. It hung over several inches on all sides. These oil cloths would soon stick to the table from the heat and lots of use. Uncle Clint told me that as a youngster, he loved to run his hands under the cloth and peel it loose from the table. This made a ripping noise like tearing a big piece of paper. He said Granny had cautioned him many times to not do this, but he enjoyed it so much he didn't listen to her. One day he did it again and a scorpion nailed him right in the end of his middle finger. He said she never

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had to mention it again as he never even thought about doing it again. I'm not sure if he was ever certain whether Granny put the scorpion there or if it crawled in of its own determination. I know they are quite common around this country and I have found them under big rocks or between heavy boards that were so flattened you wouldn't believe they could possibly be alive, but they were.

In the pantry there were shelves built along the walls. These were of varied widths and heights and held many items utilized in the kitchen. There was a wide counter top on one side that I could barely reach without a stool. Just inside the back door was a cream separator that really fascinated a young boy. When I would be there and the cream needed separating, Granny would let me do it. I loved turning that thing. Also under the counter was a Mason #1 churn. This churn was different and I loved to operate it. It had a square galvanized bucket that fit in a wooden frame with a gear on top that had two handles to turn it. The "habber dasher" as I called it had six or eight blades on it. At the bottom there was a wooden knob that fit in an indentation made into the bucket. On top of the shaft was a square metal pin that connected to the shaft coming out of the gear box. After you hooked this up, there were two wooden lids that sat down in the lip of the bucket. There was a half circle cut out of each lid so it fit snug around the wooden shaft. Now all you had to do was crank and the dasher turned and did the rest. You never had to worry about splashing milk on the floor as I always did with the old crock type that you beat up and down. Also that was like work and this turn type was like making ice cream in the old White Mountain freezer. On one end of a shelf was a mounted small coffee grinder where we ground our own beans so the coffee would always be fresh. When you lived this far from town you had to buy supplies in bulk. Flour by the barrel and meal or get your own corn ground at a gristmill. I have an old bucket that held fifty pounds of Ocean Spray coffee beans.

At the other end of the pantry was a "critter" that I could sit and stare at for hours at a time trying to figure out how it worked; never did. Granny called it her "Icy-Ball". It was some type of kerosene cooler, I think. It was white and squarish with the lid on top like

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a chest-type freezer. I could see how it got its name, as there were two metal balls extending out from one end. I would guess them to be about 8 to 10 inches in diameter and they weren't exactly alike; as I remember one had some grill work on it and the other was plain and smooth. Each was attached to a tube that came out of the end of the box. I never saw any fuel put in it and never remember it making a sound. I don't think it even had a motor but it could have. Anyway it left here before I got old enough to really tear into it. I wish I had that joker today, I'd sure find out what made it tick.

The two front rooms of this house measured 20 by 22 feet. They were sealed with one by three center-match heart pine boards and there wasn't a knot or joint in either room. There was a double fireplace with an opening in either room. Granny and Grandpa lived and slept in the south bedroom and the other was the guest room. The north fireplace never heated as good as the south one. I figured it might be that it wasn't used nearly as much and really never got broke in sufficiently. There was a tabletop radio in the south room but it was never used except to get some news and the weather report. I always wondered why he listened to the weather report. There was a barometer on the mantel that had a couple of kids on one side and a witch on the other. If it was to be fair weather, the kids would come out to play, if rainy or bad, the witch would come out with her broom. By reading this barometer and his understanding of nature's signs, he could predict the weather better than anyone on the radio.

In the 1890's Grandpa deeded three acres of land on his southern border to the Gum Grove School District. A school was built and operated there for many years before consolidating with Bluff City. After the consolidation with Bluff City School District, R.M. Henry, W.C. Pearce, and Lige Barlow established a Church of Christ at the former location of the school. The Church continued here until 1980. At that time there was only J.C. "Claudis" Nelson, J.A. "Jesse" Barlow and myself left. I was working for the Arkansas Forestry Commission and was traveling much of the time, not being dependable in sharing my part of the load. My wife was working in Little Rock, and most of our children had married and left the area. It was decided that with so few in

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number, it would be best to disband and join the Bluff City congregation. Claudis took the building and moved it to his dad's old place and converted it into living quarters for his daughter Aleta and her husband Mike Haynes. As Jerry stated in his chronicle, they are living there now. The land was given back to my mother who had inherited the surrounding part of Grandpa's estate as her share at his death. Since the Bluff City School District had consolidated with the Prescott School District, the wording of the deed, etc. it was determined by the attorney that to be perfectly legal, with no chance of any later uncertainty, the Prescott School Board issue a quit claim deed for the property. This has been recently done.

In 1921 Gladys married James L. "Leslie" Franklin, who was raised in Terrapin Neck. From this union three children were born. Gladys Louise was born in 1922 and only lived to eighteen months. Virginia Surrell was born in 1923. In 1948 she married Franklin D. Wilson from Ben Lomond, Scotland. They had six children and live in San Diego, California. James L. "JL" Jr. was born in 1928. In 1953 I married Martha Nell Wilson from Little Rock and we have four children.

Some of my fondest memories are my earliest when we lived in the Henry Walters house where I was born. In the next house north of us, Luke and Lucy Meadow lived. Their older daughter Dorothy was several years older than I. Their son Adrian was a few years older, but my buddy. He would take time to play with me, therefore I thought he was the greatest. Mrs. Lucy was my real love. I would slip out and up the road to see her any time they weren't watching me too close. She and I would walk around the place and just enjoy nature to the fullest. If the apples were in season, she would gather some and then bake them or make a pie, I thought just for me. There was one little problem when we went to the orchard. We would have to go through the barn lot and that was where the old 'dominecker' rooster stayed. Anytime I turned my back to him, he would jump me and spur me real good. I think he hated me and the feeling was mutual. I never had a chance to get even with him as we moved before I got big enough. I got my first experience with birthing of babies while here. Mrs. Lucy was

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getting real fat, but I figured it was from eating all those baked apples. One night Mr. Luke came to the house and asked mother if she could come up and stay with the kids. He had to take Lucy to the hospital in Prescott to find a baby. I couldn't understand why she wanted to get a baby as she had me most of the time. We stayed at their house until she came home, with that baby. She was thin again and I knew then, it had something to do with finding that baby. They named her Zeldabeth and I thought it was fair punishment for her, since she had displaced me.

Another thing I'll never forget is how Mr. Luke would come home from his plowing in the evening. When plowing in his Caney bottom field (about 2 miles away I would guess), at dark he would unhitch his team and crawl on one of them and start home. His vocalization started then. I can't explain it to anyone who's never heard it. It was part yodeling, part singing, and part hollering, but very melodious. I found out, it was called "Nigger-hollering", something derived from the days of slavery when they would be working the fields and bemoaning their bondage. I know if I live to be a hundred, I'll never forget the sound. I would go to the back door every night just to hear him. When I asked him why he did it, he'd say, "so Lucy knows I'm coming home for supper." Good reasoning I would say.

The next place north, was the old Conklin place. The only family that I can remember living there was Mr. Lige and Mrs. Elvie Barlow. The Conklin's had broken up house-keeping in 1918 as I have a chest of drawers, or bureau as mother called it, and a walnut table that mother bought from them when she was eighteen. She gave a quarter for the chest and fifteen cents for the table.

Just north of this place, a road turned due north that led to Mr. Mavin Hildebrand's place. There was a big bois d'arc tree where this road leaves County Road 290. A ways down and to the right was the old "Lish" Meadow place, I can't remember a house being there. Off to the left and down in the edge of Caney bottom was the Imon Wilson

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place. When I deer hunted in this area (some forty years ago) there was still part of an old building standing.

Back on 290 going northeast past where CR40 intersects, on the left was where Henry Whitten lived. The road here was pretty steep and had a lot of red clay in it. When rainy it was something to navigate the "Whitten Hill". Most of the time we could get up it in Grandpa's old T-model truck, but I can remember a couple of times when Mr. Whitten had to hitch his team of mules to the truck in order to make it.

Somewhere on the right Jack and Blanche Crowell lived. When I was a teenager, Dad contracted to put concrete tiles in the old dug well at this place. It was about 40 feet deep but looked pretty solid from the top. When I got down to the bottom and looked back, I couldn't even see any sky. It had such a spiraled curve in it that we had one big chore ever getting the tiles to stack. I believe this was the spookiest one I was ever in.

Next on the right was the Henry Jones place. I believe Henry and Dester lived here before moving to Bluff City and opening their store. When deer season first opened in the early 50's we used this as a camp house. If it was raining, you might have to move your bed two or three times a night to keep dry. Sometimes there were too many beds to find a dry spot, and you just got wet. We built a lean-to in the yard for a cookhouse. Today the guys that have it leased are building a new block building as their old one burned last year.

The only other house I can remember is the "Jap" Sarrett place on the left. After that was the Reader Railroad and Caney Creek.

Back south of our house were two more rent or worker houses. In the first "Shorty" and Vinnie Scoggins lived. They had a daughter named Mareen. She was about my age and we played together quite a lot. I remember she talked so fast that I was always 'jail' to her. She would never say JL, but I didn't mind. Mrs. Vinnie still lives in Whelen

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Springs, or did last year. Martha and I had a nice visit with her. Mareen is married and lives in Little Rock, but I've not seen her.

In the next house Mrs. Sampson and her two sons lived. She must have been a widow as I never knew of a husband. She was a huge lady and just as sweet as she was big. I'll never forget her older son, Everett, he was real tall and every time he could catch a 'chicken snake' or a 'coachwhip' he'd pick it up by the tail and pop its head off. Sometimes it would pop as loud as a bull whip. He was good at this and I don't ever remember him having to pop one twice. Robert the younger son, and Everett both worked for Grandpa.

(To be continued next issue)

COMMENTS FROM READERS--

After we moved back to our place in Nevada County in 1943, sometime in the next couple of years or so I remember visiting Uncle Bob and Aunt Maxie. I went with Mother and her sister Gladys. I remember Aunt Maxie (we were related to her on the Starnes side of the family--my grandfather William Morgan's mother was a Starnes). I remember the place as being a "dream farm" to a little girl (I was 8 or 9). Aunt Maxie was a large woman and they both loved kids or at least I felt they did. There were baby animals to pet and I remember being fed well. I remember the large house and a large barn. It turned out to be a memorable afternoon for a child who thought she was going to be bored. Thanks for publishing the notebook. Looking forward to the other installments!--*Betty Thomas*

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Thanks again for keeping me on your mailing list. I always look forward to your posts. And, thank you for helping to preserve Nevada County history.--*J. Daniels, Prof. Emeritus, Clemson*
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This was a special issue (all are always good). I enjoyed reading J.L.'s reminiscences. I enjoyed getting to know him after he lived not too far from my house when he came to Prescott and we went to P.H.S. What a good writer! I was born in 1928, too!

I really like your poem, too. I know He made it all, and it's a joy to see all those good things set down.

Thanks for your always interesting, informative, and entertaining Chronicles.—*Irma Hamby Evans*

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I ADORE your "Grandma's Bonnet" poem, but ESPECIALLY the picture. I have collected bonnets for years of various and sundry shapes and patterns. I even have an apron that if folded just

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right transforms itself into a bonnet. Don't you just know the old timers loved that one? I also am partial to the quilting patterns of SUNBONNET SUE. I have an entire bedroom decorated with her motif in my old Civil War home. My momma ALWAYS wore a bonnet to the garden, always starched and clean. I draw strength from my past memories to bring me through today. I am quite sure the good Lord wakes up nauseous some days.—*Annette Leamons*

WILDLIFE IN ARKANSAS

I was pleased to see a covey of quail while driving near White Oak Lake recently. Quail were once plentiful in this area, but for some reason they pretty much disappeared in recent years. Some think fire ants or coyotes destroy their nests. Others blame it on too much timber being cut or some other reason.

I found an article in The Nevada News from 1926 which stated that deer and turkey in Arkansas were almost extinct and that quail were very scarce. The man who wrote the article blamed the coming of the automobile and improved roads as being the reason the deer, turkey, and quail were so scarce.

The article stated, “With the coming of good roads and the automobile it is an easy matter for the sportsman to go fifteen miles from home in half an hour. In many cases it is possible for the hunter to go fifty miles in his car, get in a full days hunt, and return home the same day.”

Shorter hunting seasons was the recommendation in 1926 to help increase the number of deer, turkey, and quail in Arkansas.

According to the Game and Fish Commission web site, in the 1920s, many Arkansas counties had no deer and it was estimated that there were only 500 deer in the entire state. Game refuges were set up and a management program initiated under the Game and Fish Commission to increase the herd. By 1985, the herd was estimated at 500,000 and today it is estimated to be about one million. Hunting is a major event in our part of the state. In the fall of the year, one can see many pickup trucks pulling four wheelers in the rural areas as hunters get ready for the season to open.

It seems the hunting season gets longer each year. We have mussel-loader deer seasons, modern gun seasons, archery season, youth hunts, and doe only hunts. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission must be doing something right as far as deer and turkey are concerned. Hopefully, the quail population will increase also. We also are hearing reports of bears being seen in our part of the state. We are well blessed with all types of wildlife in the forests of Arkansas these days.

The deer harvest in Arkansas last year was 33,728 deer being reported killed, according to the web site. The harvest by county is also shown.

Rainfall Record – SEVERE DROUGHT—September (.3 inch) and October (.3 inch)

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A reader sent me this picture recently. One of her friends purchased this picture at a sale in Prescott because she wanted the frame. She doesn't want to just throw the picture away and was wondering if anyone recognized this couple. If you can identify these people, let me know.



WHAT IS IT?

What is the common name for this piece of farm equipment used with horses to pull plows or other things?

Send me your answers.S