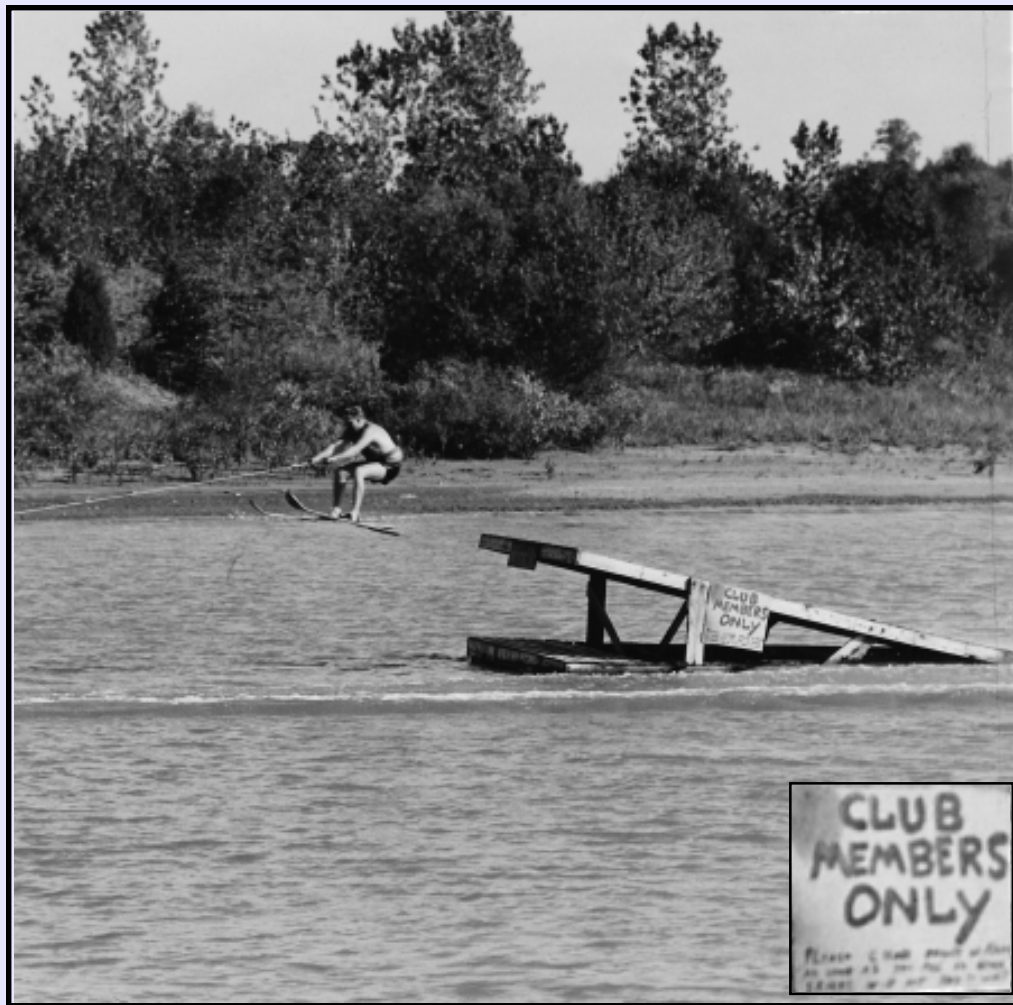


MY MEMORIES AND ADVENTURES



BY
PAUL WILLIAMS

NOTE OF APPRECIATION

Dear Paul,

Thank you for sharing your memories and adventures with us. Through them you have given us an understanding and appreciation of our area.

Your stories have entertained, encouraged and enlightened your readers.

Best wishes for continued good health and good stories.

Brenda and Charles Fiddler

Christmas 2007

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I hope to add to my book and appreciate your interest in MY MEMORIES AND ADVENTURES, ©2008. Stay Tuned—I hope to hear from you.

Paul Williams

1st day of April 2008

TERROR IN THE LATE AFTERNOON
Published in *The Lexington Progress*, April 3, 1996

When I got home from work on the afternoon of April 3, 1956, there was no way I could ever imagine what was going to happen in about two hours. Peoples' lives were changed forever. It was a horrible time, but even with the tragedy some humorous things happened to me. Many people showed a lot of courage, but that's just the way Lexington people are.

I came home from work feeling very feverish—I thought I was taking the flu. I put my car in the garage and locked the front door so no one would know I was home. I went to bed, and I had to feel bad to do that, but I didn't want to be disturbed. Later when Mary Sue came home from work, the storm was beginning to look bad. I was inside asleep as she was trying to get inside. Since the door was locked, she thought I wasn't home so she ran next door to Dutch and Esta Lee Thomas' home to get in their storm house. She thought that was where I was. When I heard the door shake, I went to open it and that is when I saw the street lined with cars. Nearly everyone on Brown Street (except me) was in Dutch and Esta Lee's storm house. I ran to the back door to look out toward town. What I saw nearly scared me to death. All I could see was shingles, sheets of tin, and all kinds of debris swirling through the air. I literally flew out the front door with only my pajamas bottoms and barefoot. Believe me, there wasn't enough time to to put my clothes on; it could have easily been my fruit-of-the-looms. Luckily, I already had my pajamas on.

As I ran out the front door, the TV antenna slammed to the ground right behind me. When I jumped the hedge and hit the Thomas' concrete drive, the wind of the tornado hit. It slid me down the wet driveway just like I was in swift water. I got back on my feet, dodging debris and ran to the storm house. No track star could have run faster—I was only 29 then. By this time the tornado was in full force. Herman Holmes was standing in the storm house door looking out. He was giving everyone a blow by blow description of what was happening. I remember as I ran up to him, he said, "It is going to take everything on this street." Thankfully, I recognized my wife in the very back of the packed storm house. She was crying because she didn't know where I was.

By this time, the tornado had moved on. The first thing I saw as I walked back up the street was the old high school gym. The front third of it was gone and the twisted iron and steel girders were still showing. That's when I realized we had just witnessed a full-blown tornado. Thankfully, our street was spared except for broken windows, trees uprooted, roof damage and TV antennas blown down.

Mary Sue was sent for to come back to work. She worked for Dr. Ramer, Sr., at that time. It was a very hectic time in Dr. Ramer's office. The part of town that was hit hard had a very eerie look because the power was off. You had no idea what you would run up on or find. Everyone was in shock, but thanking God they were alive. Dr. Ramer and Mary Sue worked all night treating the injured. They had no electricity and worked by candle light. Husbands and wives and children were separated all over the section that was hit. Dr. Ramer sent me out to try to locate family members of the injured. While I was out searching, I ran into my own mother who lived in Jackson at that time. She was crying, not knowing whether we were dead or alive. She had walked all the way from where Memorial Gardens is now to where Piggly Wiggly is located. I felt really bad about not letting her know we were okay, but during the excitement I couldn't think.

The law enforcement people were stopping traffic at the edge of town because of looters and sightseers. At that time I really didn't know the extent of the damage or how many people were dead and injured. I was out all night searching for people and strangely enough I forgot about having the flu.

The next morning I went to work as usual. I remember the day was bright and clear, nothing like the day before. My milk route was all intact. Nothing on my route was damaged, not even one stop had lost electric power. My route covered everything on the east side of Broad Street. As soon as I

finished my work, I rushed home and grabbed my movie camera. I only had two rolls of film. I walked across the damaged part of town taking movies. As I was filming down by Huntingdon Street, a National Guardsman stopped me and said, "You are not allowed in the damaged area. Take your camera and go home before you get hurt." I knew he was just following orders, but nothing was going to stop me from filming the damage. (After all these were my friends and neighbors.) I knew the area well enough to dodge them and kept filming until my roll of film was used up

The men must have reported me, because just as I walked in my yard, a National Guard Staff car drove into my driveway. There was a full General sitting in the back seat. His aide stopped me in my yard. He said, very business like, "Were you the man who was taking pictures?" (I thought I was going to be arrested.) He said, "The General wants to talk to you." I went out to his car not knowing what to expect. Since I had disobeyed their orders, I thought they would try to confiscate my camera and film. Believe me, the fight would have been on.

The General introduced himself very politely and asked me if I had any more film. I told him I had one more 50-ft. roll but I didn't want to part with it. He said, that if I would please get in the back seat of the car and make movies for him, he would pay me for my film and my time. I was so relieved to not get arrested I would have agreed to nearly everything.

The funny part is as the General and his aide were driving me through the damaged area, the very same guardsman who had told me to take my camera and go home saw me in the staff car. There I was being chauffeured around with the General. I guess he thought I was being arrested. I'll never forget the puzzled look on his face, (I didn't bother to tell the General that I had already been ordered out of that same area.)

This is just one account of the tragedy that hit Lexington forty years ago. I knew personally some of the dead and injured. I hope I never see another tornado or its effects. People who say they are not afraid of a tornado are either fools or they have never experienced one. I realize there are many stories about the "Tornado of 1956." Many people showed a lot of courage. It was a terrible time. Lexington recovered and is a more beautiful town now than then. It has always been my home, and I love it and its people.—Paul Williams

THE GREATEST GENERATION
Published in *The Lexington Progress*, July 11, 2001

I have read all three of Tom Brokaw's books concerning the depression years and World War II years. He called the people who survived these years "The Greatest Generation." This was a special time, there never has been and never will be again, a time like the 30's and 40's. The people who lived then know exactly what I mean. People were willing to sacrifice for their country. They went through all the hardships of the "Great Depression" only to get caught up in World War II. The loss of their loved ones, the dreaded telegrams telling them their sons or daughters were killed or lost in action. All the shortages and rations for the war effort. Let's hope this never happens again. They say that one thousand World War II vets are dying each day, and at that rate, we will all be gone soon.

I'm proud to say that since I was born in 1927 and grew up during the darkest days of the "Great Depression" that I'm a member of the Greatest Generation. I went into the service when I was seventeen and the war was still going on. Being raised during the depression was a great experience, even though times were hard for every penny we had, as I'm sure millions of other people did. We had three big gardens, a fruit orchard, hogs, chickens, and so forth. We raised nearly everything we ate. About the only thing we bought was flour, meal, sugar and coffee. My mother canned everything we raised and we killed hogs each fall, and we grew frying sized chickens to eat and sell to the neighbors. We also had a fine Jersey cow that gave six gallons of milk a day. We pulled the bitter weeds out of our cow lot by hand. We ordered pint bottles and caps from Sears Roebuck and sold milk to the employees of Salant and Salant for 5 cents per pint.

My daddy, Roy C. Williams, had a knack for knowing how to make extra money. He worked for United Wholesale Grocery Company, started when he was seventeen years old in 1917. He retired in 1950 and died of a heart attack four months later. This seemed so unfair at the time, but it was God's will and should not be questioned.

When Natchez Trace first opened in the 1930's it was the place to go, about the only place. We operated a store for the people who rented the cabins at Cub Lake. We would haul one thousand pounds of ice and a load of groceries out there every other night. The road was gravel at that time. This was done in a 1937 Chevrolet car with a wooden trailer with Model T wheels. My daddy did this all summer after he had worked a full day. We sold bait to the people who rented the cabins; we thought they were rich. James Roy and I would buy worms from the neighbor children for 15 cents per hundred and sell them for 25 cents per hundred. We had roach traps in the back of grocery stores and sold roaches for 5 cents per dozen. We put them in little sample Ball fruit jars that were supposed to be children's coin banks. James Roy and I would walk the banks of Cub Lake to find the jars and reuse them.

We would go into the cabins after the tourists had checked out and get the ice that was left. We would chop it into a smaller size and resell it for 5 cents a block. The cabins didn't have electric refrigerators in those days.

I had several yards that I mowed each week for 15¢ and 25¢ per yard. Some people couldn't afford to have their yards mowed each week, so they let me mow it every other week. This was especially hard with the old type reel mower. I also delivered papers on my bike for 30¢ per evening.

My daddy bought James Roy and me a big pony and wagon and harness for forty dollars. This seemed like a fortune to us back then. This was in the 1930's. We rode him for fun but we used him to work our gardens, dig potatoes, break it up, and just about everything. I also would rent him out to our neighbors to work their gardens. I got 50¢ for his labor. My daddy had special small plows built for him to pull. We also had a beautiful black saddle horse named Prince. We bought him from Bro. Herbie Birch, a Baptist minister. He rode the horse all the way from Yuma to Lexington because

he didn't have any way to haul him. He was such a fine gentle horse, that all the neighbors loved him. We all rode him. When he died from colic, after I had stayed up all night with him, all the neighbors, young and old, came by our barn to express their sorrow. It was just like a family member had died. I'll remember that if I live to be 100.

Even though our daddy was strict and allowed no disrespect, vulgar talk or profanity, he was fair and generous. When I was a teenager, I asked him if I could get a part-time job. He said he needed me around the place. He gave me an allowance of \$5.00 per week and use of the family car. I thought that was a good deal, but I earned that \$5.00.

I remember when the Western Auto Store first came to Lexington. My dad bought me the first big Western Flyer bike they put in the window. This was the best bike I have ever seen. It had two chrome head lights, tank with horn, luggage carrier with tail lights, whitewall tires, steer horned handle bars, spring fork for knee action. It was like a dream come true for me. I rode it to grammar school every day. He bought my brother one at the same time.

The CCC Camp came to Lexington about 1936. On Tuesday nights, the Princess Theatre would have 5 cent night for the CCC boys. That is when all the neighbor kids would go to the show together. We flew our kites on the CCC parade grounds. One of my closest friends was Billy Priddy. We started the first grade together, went through school together and volunteered for the Army side by side. We still remain friends after nearly seventy years.

I remember after getting my new bike, I went into Joe V. Holmes Grocery and asked if he needed anyone to deliver groceries on a bike. He asked me if I could deliver a 100 pound sack of feed on it. That had me stumped. We had a big laugh about that.

One spring, my Dad told me and James Roy we could plant a crop of popcorn and maybe sell it to Mr. Amis at the Princess Theatre. We grew and hand shelled a 60 pound lard stand full of popcorn, only to find out he could not use it because it had husk in it. This taught us to deal with disappointment. That same summer we grew a big crop of tomatoes. We sold them for 25 cents per bushel. Daddy let us keep the money. We sold vegetables to Mr. Locie Derryberry at South Lexington. Sometimes we swapped vegetables for ice cream. We picked wild plums and blackberries to sell after our mother had made all the jams and jellies she wanted to. We sold them for 20 cents per gallon.

It may seem that with all the *work* we had to do, there was no time to play, but we had great times. I had a room full of model airplanes I built. My daddy bought me a big gas model free flight plane from William Arnold for \$12. This was my present for graduating from the 8th grade. I would never fly it because I was afraid it would fly away and I would never find it. One Christmas, I got a gas washing machine motor, I guess I built the first go cart in town. I saved up enough to order a pair of boxing gloves from Sears. We built a boxing ring in our hog pen. Cars would atop along the street to watch us box.

I used to make extra money by finding scrap iron. The scrap iron man would stop by once a week to pick it up. He paid me 25 cents per 100 pounds. I didn't know then it was being shipped to Japan to be used against us later.

As we were growing up before the war, there were lots of kids in our neighborhood, we all played together but there were no organized sports. We built tom walkers, and soap box racers to coast down hills. We made rubber guns out of inner tube rubber, we made bows and arrows, and we all had sling shots around our necks, or hanging out of our overall pockets. We played marbles a lot, but my mother would not let me play for keeps. She considered this gambling.

We had great fun playing Cowboys and Indians in the big gullies that were close to town. We all had dogs that went everywhere we did. Our best playground was in Beech River bottom. We swam in it when we could find a deep place. We built rafts and floated it when the water was up. We

built a small wooden boat and peddled around the swamps beside the railroad track. We didn't worry about seeing a cottonmouth every now and then. Carrington's Pond on old Huntingdon Road was our best swimming hole, and a place to have mud wars. You haven't lived until you have been hit in the face with a "lob" of mud. We started going barefooted as soon as school was out for the summer.

When we were pre-teens, we could play out under the street lights in the summer. We would ask our parents if we could "play-out" after supper. We would sit around and tell scary stories, than be afraid to go home. We would run as fast as we could to get into the house. Mrs. Silas Ross would tell us 'ghost stories' on summer nights. You could hear a pin drop while she was talking. During the war, they had "black-outs". My daddy was an air raid warden for our end of town. I was his massager on my bike. It was an "erie feeling" to ride up and down the streets in total darkness.

I remember hearing on the radio when Pearl Harbor was attacked. I was fourteen years old. I told one of my best friends, Luther Craig, that we could whip Japan in no time. We didn't realize then that before Japan was whipped, we would both be in the service.

One of my beat memories of growing up was our family sitting around the fireplace on long winter nights and listening to the radio. We had a big radio that had five shortwave bands and it would pick up foreign countries at night. We would hear the Hitler speeches and youth rallies from Berlin. We could get Moscow and Toyko. We didn't know what it meant, but we found out when war was declared. We didn't have a clue of what was ahead.

When I was a junior in high school, an officer from the Air Force came and offered to give us a test to become pilots when we graduated. The test had 300 questions and lasted three hours. Only three passed it out of the junior and senior classes. I was fortunate enough to be one of the three that passed. All I ever wanted to be was a pilot. I was supposed to go into flight training after graduating, but I was only seventeen and my daddy would not sign for me to go. He finally agreed to let me join the Merchant Marines. I later volunteered for the Army. I always thought he kept me from being a pilot, but he said he was trying to save my life. Looking back he was probably right.

One thing that really stands out in my mind are the men who "hopped" off freight trains, that came to our house and asked for something to eat. My mother always gave them a full meal and would not let them work for it although they offered to. I always felt so sorry for them, because they looked so sad. This was in the days of the darkest depression. The look on their face still haunts me today. It was a look of despair and hopelessness. Growing up during the "Great Depression" and the war years was a great experience despite all the hardships and things that happened, I would gladly live them over. I had good Christian parents; we had wonderful neighbors, that were kind to the children of the neighborhood and would help you in sickness and deaths. We all pulled together.

I realize that my family was more fortunate than most, because my dad had a good job all through the depression and war years, but we worked very hard for what we had. We saved and did not waste anything. I know millions of families were about like ours, some better off than us, and some in desperate conditions. I know we tend to block out the worst times and remember the best. I'm sure a lot of older people can relate to this story. I hope it brings back pleasant memories for them as it had for me. I can close my eyes and re-live my childhood. God has truly blessed me with a good memory.-Paul Williams, A grateful member of the Greatest Generation.

SIT BACK, CLOSE YOUR EYES, REMEMBER
Published in *The Lexington Progress*, June 5, 2002

Sometimes it's good to just sit back, close your eyes and remember the days gone by. I guess as we get older, we do this more and more. At the risk of being accused of living in the past, I would like to share some of my memories.

Do you remember first Mondays? During the 1930s and 1940s and even much earlier, every first Monday of each month was a trading day or mule day. People from all over the county would bring their livestock to town to sell or trade. The street down by the fairground would be full of everything imaginable. During those days I had a halfwild mustang. It was even dumber than me. He was what people called green broke or halfbroke, which meant you could ride him, but he only knew one thing and that was to run. Getting him to stop was another thing. On first Monday, my daddy told me to sell him before he killed me. He said all over \$50 that I got for him I could keep. I rode him at a full run for 6 miles just trying to calm him down. Then I slicked him down with a feed sack and rode him to town. I thought I would get \$100 for him. No one would buy him because he was so high strung and he had a brand on his hip. We finally took him to our farm and hooked him to a turning plow with an old mule. That calmed him down pretty quick. The old mule had enough sense for both of them.

Do you remember medicine shows? During the '30s and 40s, these shows would come to Lexington each summer. They would put on a three-act minstrel show each night. Between acts they would sell medicine. The show under a big tent was free; the showmen made their money by selling what was supposed to be patent medicine. According to them, the stuff would cure anything. People would pack the tent each night because it was free, and buy the concoction like crazy. I don't know what was in the bottles, but if it ever cured anything, I didn't know it. We all did enjoy the comedy and minstrel shows.

Do you remember Bisbee's Comedians? Each summer Bisbee's Comedians would come to Lexington. It was in a big tent on the fairgrounds. They would have a three-act play each night. They always had a real handsome young man for the leading man and a beautiful girl for the leading lady. The star of the show was Boob Brasfield, a brother to Rod Brasfield, who performed with Minnie Pearl on the Grand Ole Opry. Before the show started they would sell candy and packages that had a ticket for a prize. By some pre-arranged signal they would always pick some awkward, bashful person like me, and his prize would be ladies pink panties. This would really embarrass the winner, but the crowd really thought it was funny. The show was a clean show with no profanity or vulgar language.

Do you remember when our boys went to war? During the 1940s each month the draft age boys would leave for service. The big parking area between the United Grocery Co. and the Depot would be full. I think the draft age was 18 to 38 years old. You could be drafted even if you were married with children. One example of this was Joe V. Holmes who had a baby girl and two small boys. Mr. Holmes operated a farm and a grocery and feed and seed business. He was just a few months under the maximum age limit and could have gotten deferred but chose not to. That's what I call patriotic. I am sure there were other similar cases. It was a sad time while waiting for the train. You would see little groups of people and that would be the boy who was leaving and his kinfolks. Most of the draftees tried to put on a brave front and be cheerful. They laughed and told their folks that they were going to get Hitler, but in their hearts they were scared. They didn't know what to expect. It was sad to see and hear their wives and mothers crying, and some mothers fainted as the trains pulled away. Some boys never returned. Some of my older high school friends were killed. One was John L. Lewis, son of Mr. and Mrs. Pat Lewis; another was Kenneth Wadley. I could name

many more. The last time I saw John L. Lewis alive was when I waved to him as the train pulled away. I almost envied them because I thought they were going to some great adventure. I was young and foolish and thought Lexington was a dull place. I found out later how wrong I was.

Do you remember when they brought our boys home for burial? After World War II was over, the military began to bring back the remains of the boys killed in action. When a body would arrive, a military funeral would be held. All the businesses around the square would close out of respect during the services. The late Tillman Stewart would help with the burial. My mother, Mrs. Ona Belle Williams Attaway, now deceased, had a portable organ. She would have it carried to the graveside and would play and sing for the soldier's family and friends.

One of the most touching services was one that as a teenager, Leeburn Ray Harris climbed up in a tree at Lexington Cemetery and played "Taps" on the trumpet. He did this as the body was being lowered into the grave. If that didn't touch your heart, nothing would.

You won't remember this, but when I was 16 years old I wanted a 1937 Harley Davidson motorcycle that belonged to the late Lyman Love. He wanted \$275 for it. That was a lot of money back then. There was just no way I could save up enough to buy it. My dear mother talked my daddy into buying it for me, against his better judgment. Her argument was that soon I would go into the service (I joined at age 17). She told him if I got killed they would always regret not buying it for me. I was so proud but I know now it caused them a lot of worry. That is what I call parents' love.

Do you remember outdoor skating rinks? One fun thing that many people have forgotten was the outdoor skating rinks that came to Lexington in the summer. They were under a tent and had net wire fencing around the outside to keep you on the rink. I remember one that was on Church Street about where Swifty's is now. It was away from the highway so cars could park all around it. People would sit in their cars or on the car fenders and watch us skate. There were colored lights under the tent and when couples skated the manager would turn them on. This was very romantic to a teenage boy. I remember a lot of good music was played while we skated. It was great fun and didn't cost much. I especially remember when the night session was over and "Good Night Sweetheart" was played. We would go home tired and happy.

Do you remember the great days of the Princess Theater? They would have five western shows on Saturday and two shows each night. This was in the 1930s and 1940s before television became so popular. I remember when Roy Acuff and Bill Monroe came to the Princess. Once they even had Rex the Wonder Horse on stage. They used to have midnight shows on Saturday night. Usually, they were scary shows like Wolf-Man or Frankenstein. We would run all the way home after seeing the scary show.

Do you remember steam powered passenger trains? There were four passenger trains during the day and two during the night. When I was a very small boy, there was a gracious lady who lived on Spring Street behind us. She had no children of her own, so she loved me like I was her own son. It was almost like having two mothers. She would take me to Jackson on the train. Her name was Mrs. Minnie Montgomery Wallace. Her husband, Vincent Wallace, worked for the railroad as a water pumper so she had a train pass. I could ride the train to Jackson for 25 cents and ride the street car to Woolsworth for 5 cents. We would shop at downtown Jackson and eat at the Woolsworth lunch counter. This thrilled me very much. It all seemed fancy to me. She would buy me a toy each trip and we would get popcorn and candy to eat on the train coming back to Lexington. We could leave Lexington at 10:30 a.m., and be back by 4:30 p. m. I really enjoyed those trips. I had no idea later on that I would be riding Troop Trains across the U.S.

Do you remember Friday night fights? Boxing matches would be held at the fair building. I think this was in the 1930s. It was promoted by Leesal, Hershel and Parker Azbill. We even had a Henderson County Heavy Weight Champ. He was a black man named Nathan Phelps. I really looked

up to him. They had great fights in all different weights. One funny thing I remember was the bell. It was a plow point they hit with a hammer. The boxers were my heroes back then.

Do you remember when the schools went to Natchez Trace on picnics? When I was in high school, we would go to Natchez Trace when school turned out for the summer. At the Lodge we would play the jukebox and dance the jitterbug. That was during the Big Band Days. Tommy Dorsey's Boogie Woogie was our favorite.

Do you remember the Streaking Craze that went around colleges? Ira C. Powers, Jr., and I invented streaking years before the college craze. When we were about 13 or 14 years old we were paddling our little homemade boat in a swamp beside the railroad track. A big snow was on the ground. The boat flipped us out in the icy cold water. Some of the boys built a big fire so we pulled our clothes off to dry them. We were running around naked and barefoot trying to stay warm. We heard the 4:30 p.m. passenger train approaching Lexington. Some of the boys dared us to stand beside the railroad track naked and wave at the passengers, so we did. I can still see the startled look on the passengers faces. My dad and mother never found out about this, and I never did it again. (Boys will be boys.)

A funny thing happened when my brother James Roy and I were kids, although it wasn't funny then. This happened in 1941. I remember because we had a new 1941 model car. It was Saturday morning and our dad told us to be home at noon when he got off from work. He said he had work for us to do; we knew what that meant. Just as soon as he left for work, we slipped off to Beech River to go swimming. We listened to the trains going through Beech River bottom to tell the time. We heard the 12:00 p.m. passenger train pass through and thinking it was the 10:30 a.m. train, we thought we had plenty of time. We were swimming with two big shaggy dogs. Suddenly we looked up on the bridge and there was Daddy in his new car looking very mad. We knew we were in big trouble. As we scrambled out to put on our clothes, he opened the car door. About that time both wet dogs jumped in the back seat, shaking muddy water all over the car. This really made him mad. Disgusted he slung the dogs out of the car and told us to walk home and to bring a switch with us. It was a long walk on a gravel road for two barefoot boys and two wet dogs. We changed switches several times on the way home. We didn't want a switch too big or one too little. By the time we got home he had decided not to whip us, due to our mother's persuasion.

This is just part of my memories of days gone by and I hope that readers can relate to this with their memories. I hope this will bring a smile to your heart. I have more memories to share later.—
Paul Williams, retired stalker, age 75

MEMORIES

Published in *The Lexington Progress*, Feb. 5, 2003

This old house, what stories it could tell.

How many times have you driven across this great land of ours and seen old abandoned home places? They are usually out in a field all alone, some are almost bent to the ground. Most look like the least puff of wind would finish blowing them over. Some have been vandalized, but most have just been neglected for years and left to the mercy of the elements.

As I drive through the country, I see less and less of these old home places. There is no way you could know just what happened at these old home places. You think about the old saying, "It takes a lot of living to make a house a home." You wonder how many generations lived in these old home places. You wonder, how many babies were born there? You wonder, how much happiness and sorrow the old home place has seen? You wonder, did they have sons or daughters? You wonder if they had sons that went to World War I or World War II? You wonder, if they had a son that was killed in one of these wars?

You think about the Thanksgivings, Christmas times and 4th of July's and how they were celebrated. If there were only some clue of what these old homes have seen. You wonder, when the last family lived there, and what became of them? You wonder, what their names *were*? There are so many unanswered questions about these old home places.

I once stopped at one of these old homes, and I decided to explore around the place. I just wanted to look inside. It is a little risky coming up to one of these homes of old. First, you do not want to be accused of trespassing, because you know it still belongs to someone. It was really grown up with weeds and vines, a perfect place for snakes. Then, when you step on the front porch, you hope it will hold your weight. Another thing you run into is wasp nests, spider webs, and rotten floors. As you walk in the front door, you see an old open fireplace. This makes you think of how many meals were cooked there, like potatoes baked in the ashes, and beans cooked in an iron pot over the fire. You see the broken form of an old straight chair, the cane bottom long gone. There were no recliners when this house was young.

You see the old walls papered with newspapers. You check the dates on these old tattered, worn, and yellowed newspapers. They date back to the great depression. All at once you've stepped back in time. You creep carefully into the bedroom, and wonder how many quilts it took to any warm in this unheated room. Then on in to the kitchen where some old long benches still stand. It makes you wonder what size family last lived here. As you start out, watching for rotting floors, you are ready to go back to the 21st century. It makes you think. The next time I explore one of these old homes, it will be in the winter.

I guess a lot of people are like me when they see these old home places, a lot of questions form in your mind. Some never give it a second thought, but these old home places have fascinated me. Soon they will all be gone, then nothing will be left to the imagination. Next time you drive through the countryside and see an old home place, think of me, and wonder what stories these old home places could tell. I guess we should be proud and thankful for all our conveniences—our warm homes with central heat and air, our big screen televisions, computers, and all the things that we take for granted.

When these old homes were young, it was a different time period. People would cope with hardships, sickness and death the best they could. The whole family worked hard from daylight until dark, and I bet had more peace of mind than today's families. Most only worried about the weather, because too much rain or too little affected their crops. This was their only source of income. I know most of us would not like to live their lifestyle now.

The reason I know as much as I do about these old home places is because my dad owned a farm with two home places on it. When I was a small boy back in the 30's, I used to stay out there some in the summer. Our farm supported a lot of our kin folks. I know first hand how hard they worked. Theirs was a hard harsh life. I remember spending time with my Uncle Ervin Cagle. He was one of the kindest, most gentle men who ever lived. He taught me to drive a team of mules when I was a very small boy. He worked from daylight until dark in the summer. I remember him disking what we called new ground, with mule drawn disks. This was land that was just cleared of trees and brush. He didn't own a tractor; few cotton farmers had tractors in the 1930's. All equipment was mule drawn. Times were hard and money was scarce. By the time Uncle Ervin quit in the fields and got home, it would be way past dark. Then we had to feed and water the mules and have our supper, which Aunt Eura Mac prepared by lamplight. Uncle Ervin would be exhausted and would retire to bed after supper. Air conditioning was something we never heard of or ever dreamed about. When I look back on those times, I wonder how they made it. There is not many people today who could work like they did back then. They might could, but wouldn't. Their only link with the outside world was a battery powered radio. They played it very sparingly because the batteries were expensive. There were no telephones or electricity.

Every Sunday after church, our family would drive out to the farm to see how the crops were looking. I learned to drive by going to the farm each Sunday. My brother, James Roy and I enjoyed playing with my cousins. I would take my boxing gloves and we would have some real good scraps. We built truck wagons, at least that's what we called them, and took turns coasting down hills. We hardly ever just sat around with the adults. We had a lot of fun fishing the creeks that ran through our farm with just cane poles. A rod and reel was unthought of.

When we would go out to the farm on Sunday afternoons, my Dad would take a 50 pound block of ice and we all enjoyed homemade ice cream. Other times, he would carry a sack of lemons and ice, and we would enjoy a big churn of lemonade. This all took place at my Grandpa Williams' home, which was one of the home places on our farm. The biggest day of the year was the 4th of July. We always barbecued a hog and all of our kin folks would be there.

They really loved my Dad, because he gave them something to look forward to. They worked so hard during the week that Sunday was a welcome relief. About this time, war was beginning to break out in Europe. We didn't know it then, but things were going to change in a big way. Some of my cousins and uncles would be drafted, so many other families' lives would be changed too.

The old home place where my Uncle Ervin and Aunt Eura Mac and their daughters, Mary and Evelyn, lived is gone now. The old home place where my Grandpa Williams and his family lived still stands. It is all abandoned and brush grown up around it. I feel sad when I drive by it and think of all the wonderful times we had there. Those days are long gone and are now just a wonderful memory. They were some of the happiest days of my life. Simple things made us happy back then.

I hope reading this, you have enjoyed taking a stroll through memory lane—Paul Williams

WHERE HAVE ALL MY BUDDIES GONE
Published in *The Lexington Progress*, June 2, 2004

Recently I watched the mini-series "Band of Brothers" on TV and it occurred to me how close the GIs were to each other. Reading the book also made me realize that the best thing a service man can do is earn the friendship of a good close buddy. A buddy is one he can share his troubles, laugh and even cry with. The most valuable buddy would even risk his life for you, and you would do the same for him.

The story of Easy Company told how the service survivors kept in touch after the war. They had reunions after the war, so they could talk of the experiences and the horrors they went through.

Some returning soldiers won't talk about what happened because it was so horrible, they can't. But, they can talk about it with their old buddies. They know they are the only ones who saw it and lived through it together. At the end of the book, it told what happened to the ones who made it out alive. There was one who never seemed to amount to much; he was just the town handyman, but 1,800 people came to his funeral. I guess he was the richest of them all, because he had so many friends.

This all made me think of some of the good friends I made while I was in service. I joined the U.S. Maritime Service when I was seventeen. I was placed beside another seventeen year old named Ward from Waycross, GA. We hit it off real well and became close friends. Neither of us had ever been very far from home. We were raised in Christian families and neither of us smoked, drank, or used profanity. We were just out of high school. When we got our first liberty, we decided we would go into town and get a big steak with all the trimmings. We were stationed in St. Petersburg, Florida at the Merchant Marine Academy. There were a lot of retired wealthy people who lived there then.

We went into this very fancy restaurant, not knowing we could not afford to eat there. When we looked at the menu, we couldn't even read most of what was on it. We finally ordered the lowest priced thing that we could read. Picture us, two kids, one hillbilly from Tennessee and one swamp rat from Southern Georgia in one of the fanciest places you could eat in all of St. Petersburg.

As we were eating, we noticed this elderly couple watching us. I remember telling Ward that we must be doing something wrong. We were acting as nice as we knew how.

After we finished our meal and went to pay the cashier, she smiled and said, "You boys don't owe a thing, the elderly couple paid for your meal." We were surprised and glad, since we had very little money. I told my buddy that I was glad we had been mannerly. We must have done something right after all.

After we graduated, I was sent to Graduate School at Norfolk, Virginia Navy Base. I was then placed on my first ship. I never saw my buddy again. All I have is our picture together. I often wonder what happened to him. I wonder *if* he is still alive.

I was on one ship, an Army Transport Ship bringing our vets back from Europe. We made several trips to France, Italy and England: World War II was just over. I became friends with a boy from New York City. Being a country boy from Tennessee, I really enjoyed him telling about growing up in New York. It seemed so exciting to me. The ship we were on docked at Staten Island. This is just across the bay from Manhattan, and that was where my buddy's home was. He invited me to visit him, he said he would take me all over New York. You could ride the subway for 5 cents back then. I went home first because we had a few days before the ship would leave for Naples, Italy.

I got off the train at Grand Central Station, then took a taxi to his address. I was really dreading meeting his family because I was afraid they wouldn't like a redneck like me. I was so shocked when I got to his address. His family lived in a loft over a butcher shop. They were very poor. I felt so

sorry for them. It seemed his dad had left his family and my friend was their sole means of support. I had to really admire him for being so responsible, and being so proud of his family. I did not stay but one night because I knew they could not afford it. The only remembrance I have of him is his picture. I don't think you could find many 18 year olds now that would support his brothers and sisters like he did. I often wonder what happened to him and if he is still alive.

After I made my last trip across the Atlantic to Rotterdam, Holland it became harder and harder to get a ship because shipping slowed down so much after the war. Since I had seen all the ports in Europe, I decided to volunteer for the Army Infantry. I hoped I would be sent to Japan and sure enough I was. After being processed at Fort Bragg, NC, we were sent to Fort Polk, LA on a troop train. That was some experience, and we all joked that our car had "square" wheels.

While taking basic training I became good buddies with two boys from Drummons, Tennessee. When our basic was over, we got a 14-day furlough, then we were to go to San Francisco, California to go to Japan. We made a pack that we would stick together no matter what. This is real hard to do. When we left Fort Polk, we found there were no trains or buses out till the next day, so guess what, we hired a taxi all the way from Fort Polk to Memphis. This was not cheap! We met at the train station at Memphis and traveled across the U.S. together. We were lucky enough to get on the ship together. We sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge Christmas Eve 1946 and stayed together until after Christmas of 1947. Being away from home at Christmas time is about the most lonely thing that can happen to a 20 year old kid. I know it must have been very lonely for the ones who spent more Christmas than I did.

After coming home together in 1948, my two buddies and I drifted apart. After watching the "Band of Brothers" I decided to try to find my old buddies. The only ones I knew about were the two from Tennessee, so I drove down one Sunday to locate them. What I feared the most came true. They were both dead. Now all I have is their pictures. As I look through my service album and see the pictures of all my old friends, there is one up side. To me, they will never grow old because in all my pictures of them, they were 19 and 20 years old. I wish there was some way I could find them or at least know if they are alive or dead because they were truly like brothers. The memories I have of them is all I have. As I grow older, I cherish my memories more and I wonder where have all my buddies gone. They say 1,100 WWII Vets die each day.— Paul Williams

P.S. To all the old soldiers, sailors and airmen out there, I hope this reminds you of your old buddies. I know you will never forget them, and I know you will never forget how good you felt when you came home by the Statue of Liberty or under the Golden Gate Bridge—Back to the Good Old USA.

MEMORIES OF TWO SPECIAL COMPANIONS
Published in *The Lexington Progress*, Sept. 15, 2004

This is a story of two dogs. Since most of my stories have been serious, I thought I would write about two odd dogs. I've owned a lot of dogs in my lifetime but these two were the most unusual. I hope you get a laugh out of this little story. Please don't say I've gone to the dogs.

When I was in Japan, just after the war (WWII), the Japanese people were almost on starvation. They could barely feed themselves and sure didn't have food for pets, so all the dogs from miles around came to our army base. Most companies had a dog that they adopted for a mascot. We had a dog that looked a lot like a fox. Since our company was F Co., which was called Fox Company, we named him Foxy. We all fed him and petted him, so he just thought he belonged to everyone. Foxy had one odd habit that we all got a kick out of.

Late every afternoon, we would have a ceremony called retreat. The whole Battalion would meet on the drill field and while the flag was lowered, the bugles would blow retreat. As this was going on, Foxy would stand beside him and howl. He could howl just as loud as the bugles could blow. He did this everyday. It got to be the highlight of our day. We all waited to make sure Foxy took his place beside the bugler. He gave us a lot of laughs when there was not much to laugh about.

One day Foxy failed to show up for his daily ritual. Everyone was wondering what could have happened to him. We later found out that one of the GI had been transferred and took Foxy with him. We really missed him because he was all we had.

About a month later, Foxy came walking in the company area. He was just skin and bone and his paws were cut and bleeding. He was almost starved, but he was so glad to see us he tried to wag his tail. There were lots of tears that day, because we all loved Foxy. He had walked sixty miles down the railroad track to find us. I call that devotion. We all wondered how he found us.

Back in the fifty's, I owned a big brown boxer named Skipper. The only reason he was my dog was my name and phone number were on his collar. Other than that, he was everyone's dog. He was what I would call a Free Spirit. He loved everyone and everyone loved him. Space does not permit me to tell all the things Skipper got into, so I'll just name a few.

Back in those days, there was no law about dogs running loose, and since Skipper loved his freedom so much. I didn't have the heart to keep him penned or chained. Skipper always made it to high school. During the lunch hour, after eating lunch with the kids at school, he would watch the football team practice. Then he would visit the jail for a while. He ate supper with them. One night, he walked out on the stage during a play. He got a big ovation for this. That is before Mr. Bobbitt sent him out the front door with the toe of his shoe.

Then one night, he walked out on the football field during a real game. The refs were afraid to get him off the field, because they thought he would bite. This held up the game for a while, but the crowd loved it. I guess Skipper thought it was ok since he went out on the field during practice. It seemed no matter what he did, people still loved him and he never harmed anyone.

When the first basketball game of the season was to be played, I chained him to his dog house with a big bridge nail. I didn't want a repeat of what happened at the football game. Guess what, right in the middle of the boys' game, in walked Skipper dragging the chain with the big nail still in it. All the little kids came out on the floor and were hugging him. Skipper was so happy to get all this attention. The whole gym was laughing and Skipper was wagging his bob tail. I came down out of the stands, red faced and all and took him home. He was just constantly getting into something, but he meant no harm and everyone loved him.

The final straw came when I carried him with me to check on my boat one real cold day. We were at the old Beech River Boat Dock and it was duck hunting season. Skipper was chasing some

tame ducks when he fell in the ice cold water. Since he was slick haired, he was very cold. When I got ready to leave, I could not find him. He had crawled into a man's station wagon and tracked mud all over his seats. I thought, "I'm really in trouble now." When the man came out, he just laughed and said not to worry, it was just his duck hunting car and he should not have left the door open. It would have been all the same to Skipper if it had been a Rolls Royce.

I decided on the way back to Lexington that I would have to do something before he really caused trouble. I gave him to a man that promised me he would take him away from Lexington. This was hard to do. This all happened over 50 years ago, but there are people who still remember him. There was never a dog that was loved by more people. Arf, arf.—Paul Williams

CHILDREN OF THE DEPRESSION AND THE GOOD TIMES WE HAD

Published in *The Lexington Progress*, Dec. 22, 2004

A few days ago I went out to the City Park to watch my brother's grandson play soccer. I don't have any grandchildren, so I haven't spent much time at our park. I was really surprised. I couldn't believe how patient the coaches were with the kids. It was like a breath of fresh air just to watch them play. Their mothers and dads were helping and their grandparents were cheering for them. I was really impressed. The kids were so cute in their little uniforms. I think our city park is a wonderful place.

As I was watching them, I couldn't help but think back to the 1930's when I was a small boy. It was like a whole different world. Times were so hard that parents just couldn't play with their children. Most men had hard jobs and worked long hours for low pay. Most mothers stayed home and kept house. Most families only had one car and a lot of families didn't even own a car. The men walked to and from work. When they got home, they were so tired and worried about how they were going to make ends meet that they didn't play with their children. It was not because they didn't love them. Most of us kids just made up our own homes and didn't have any help from adults. In fact, when we did not have to work around our home, we were glad to be away from any adult supervision. In the neighborhood I grew up in, there were lots of boys and girls and we really knew how to have a good time when we got the chance. We played football and baseball in our cow lot because it was the only level grassy place we had. It also had a lot of "fresh" cow patties. We really didn't know the rules, so we made up our own, and the same with baseball. The biggest problem we had was not to get tackled in one of those cow patties. I don't remember any adult telling us the rules. If there was any organized sport for children back then during the summer, we never knew about it. All we knew about football was to run from one end of the cow lot to the other without getting caught.

Most of the pre-teens back then had some kind of bike. We called them "wheels" back then and we went nearly everywhere on them, especially to school. One afternoon as I was going home from school, I saw this airplane pulling a Glider. I knew what it was because all I thought about back then was airplanes. As I was looking, the Glider came unhitched from the DC3 that was pulling it. I watched it till it went below the tree line. The next day was Saturday, so all of us that had "wheels" decided to go out and see the Glider. We heard it had landed in Piney Bottom, out 104 South. It was a gravel road then. We all rode all the way out there and found it on Brown Williams' farm. We had never seen anything like it, except pictures. We started the long pedal back to town, but stopped at the top of river hill. It was a lot steeper then than it is now. We all said we were not going to put our brakes on going down the hill. We said anyone who did was "chicken" and a "rotten egg". Those were expressions used back then. I guess that was the fastest I ever went on a bicycle. If one of us had fallen on that gravel, it would've really been bad. But, luckily no one ever did. One thing we could do back then was swim and ride bikes.

We had most of our fun in the summer playing in Beech River and the swamps. You haven't lived till you've been swimming in a swamp and come out with black leeches stuck all over you. We explored Beech River from the bridge on 104 South all the way around town, under the railroad to the bridge on the Old Jackson Road northwest of town. When the river was up, we made rafts and floated it. We also would jump in when it was flooded and let the strong current carry us downstream. Then we'd grab a root or bush and pull ourselves out and run up the bank and do it over and over again. I realize how dangerous this was now, but it was so much fun then. We only had one boy to drown, and that was in Carrington's Pond on Old Huntingdon Road. The pond is still there, behind Bobby Dyer's house by Mile Branch. Most things we did didn't cost anything. "We swam in our birthday suits!"

In those days, Beech River looked like the Everglade, from about where the Grecian Restaurant is now on north to the headwater in Black Bottom. One Saturday, three of us boys decided to follow Beech River all the way to Black Bottom. We planned it for a long time. That was some of the wildest, swampiest “cotton mouth infested” places *you* could ever be in. It took us all day to follow the river all the way there. We fished some on the way. We had two dogs with us. They really enjoyed the trip. We didn’t take any food and got our water from springs. To top it all, we were barefooted. God must have been looking out for us, because all we had when we came out were cuts and scratches and a lot of insect bites. We thought it was our greatest adventure tip to then. My daddy didn’t know about that, which was good for me. The people who live on Beech Lake now would never believe how it used to look. When I was a boy, if someone had told me that the jungle it was then would be what it is now, I’d think it would be impossible.

In those days, all the boys in the neighborhood wouldn’t be caught dead without a sling shot, either hung around his neck or in his overall pocket. We had wars with green plums for ammunition. There were wild plum thickets everywhere, but none ever got the chance to get ripe because we shot them in our sling shots. I don’t know how we kept from getting hit in the eye. Another thing we had was pocket knives. We never dreamed of hurting anyone, we just used them to cut fishing poles, sling shot sticks, and toy guns and boats.

We all had tom walkers. Some were so tall you had to get up on a truck bed to get on them. We also made our own kites. We made paste out of flour and water and used newspaper and tall weeds for sticks. Some of us had single shot 22 rifles. You could “send off for one from Sears for \$12.95. That was a lot of money back then, and it took a long time to save up for one.

Some of the games we played around the house were corncob wars in the hog pens. It really hurt to get hit in the face with a muddy corncob. When we went to what we called “the show” on Saturday afternoon, it would usually be a western so when we got home, we would play cowboy and Indians. Everyone wanted to be the star of that day’s show—Stars like Buck Jones, Tim McCoy, Lash LaRue and Red Ryder. There were some big gullies at the edge of town and they made a perfect place to play.

We also played cops and robbers or G-Men. The famous bank robbers like John Dillinger, Pretty Boy Floyd, Baby Face Nelson, Bonnie and Clyde, and Al Capone were talked about a lot, so we played like we were them. One thing we did that we thought was very funny was put a ladies purse out in the street and tie a string to it. We would all hide behind the hedge and when someone would stop to pick it up, we would yank it out of their hands. My dad put a stop to this after someone didn’t think it was funny. If we happen to kill a snake, we would tie a string to it and pull it across the street when someone walked by. It’s a wonder we didn’t cause someone to have a heart attack. We would do this late in the evening when people were walking home from work.

We read comic books a lot then traded them to someone who had one we had not read. I would put a comic book inside my Geology book and make my dad think I was studying. He was very strict on us about studying our homework at night. One thing the comic books had were ads on the back for ways to make extra money, like selling seed or Christmas cards. One ad was the Charles Atlas ad. He was supposed to be the World’s Best Built Man and you could look like him in only 15 minutes a day. Of course, I “sent off” for his “course”. One morning, I was out on our screened-in back porch before daylight doing his exercises when I slipped and fell, which jarred the whole house. This woke my dad up. He said, “What are you doing?” I answered, “I’m exercising.” This really irritated him. He said, “If you need exercise, I’ve got plenty of work for you to do.” I remember him telling my mother, “What’s that boy going to get into next?”

We used to fill a no. 3 wash tub full of water in the morning and let the sun warm it all day. Then me and my little brother would take our bath in it late in the evening. This was before we had a

bathroom installed. A lot of folks back then didn't have indoor plumbing.

One thing that was good back then was that you could walk or ride your wheels to school. Lexington was small, there wasn't much traffic and we had never even heard of a child molester.

When I was in the 5th grade, there were 2,525 people in Lexington. So you can see, it was not dangerous to walk to school. That's something that very few kids can do now. We did have a few bullies to contend with. My little brother, James Roy, had to walk by Danny Summers house on the way to school. One day when I was not with him. Danny took his lunch bag away from him, threw it on the ground and slapped him a few times. That night, when my dad found out about it, he was pretty mad. James Roy was in the 2nd grade and I was in the 7th and Danny was too. I'll never forget what my dad said. He said he wanted that boy whipped and if I didn't whip Danny, he would whip me. I was mad too, but I didn't know whether I could whip him or not, but I wanted to try. It was like the old saying, 'One is scared and the other's glad of it. That afternoon when school turned out, I went after him. To my surprise, he started to run. I chased him all the way home and into his house, 'cause I knew I had to do what my daddy said. I knew I could not come home and tell him I had not whipped Danny. When he got in his house, he grabbed his mother around her waist and started crying. She wanted to know what was going on. When I explained everything to her, she told me to run on home, she would take care of him. He never bothered James Roy again.

I nearly forgot to mention building soapbox racers and coasting down hills. We could do it in the street. Of course, there wasn't much traffic.

Those days were happy, carefree days, even though times were hard. I hope all of you that were children during the Great Depression have related to this story. It's all true. I know you all did a lot of the same things we did. Even though our parents were struggling, we had some good times and I guess it was our happiest days. I'd sure like to live over just one summer. But the best thing of all are our memories of those times. Nothing can take them away. I think a lot about how good it was, that we didn't know WWII was near, 'cause some of our playmates never made it home. Wouldn't you just love to hear your mother call you to supper one more time?—Paul Williams 77 years old



The Roy Williams family at home on Maple Street in 1946

THIS IS TENNESSEE
Published in *The Lexington Progress*

Tennessee has so much to offer from the Great Smokier to the mighty Mississippi. It's listening to the Blues on Beal Street and remembering W. C. Handy, the Father of the blues. It's fish fries and potluck supper at community fire stations. It's the giant cotton pickers and combines in the fertile fields of West Tennessee at harvest time. It's simple things like grandparents sitting in rocking chairs and watching the grandchildren play. It's flea markets and yard sales on weekends in small towns. It's the sound of some mother calling the children in from play, saying, 'Come on, it's supper time.' It's high school football games and half-time bands playing on Friday nights. It's the Tennessee Vols playing before 100,000 screaming fans. It's 4th of July barbecues and family reunions. It's Decoration Day with caring people placing flowers on the graves of loved ones. It's dinner on the ground begun some 100 years ago with church and gospel singers singing, "That Old Time Religion." Yes, this is Tennessee.

It's visiting kinfolks at Thanksgiving and grandparents saying, 'Ya'll come back now and be sure to bring the children.' It's all the family saying Grace before Christmas dinner. It's Christmas parades on cold winter nights. It's waking up in the morning to a big white snow and the smell of wood burning in someone's fireplace. It's fundraising benefits and festivals in small towns. It's proud parents welcoming their sons or daughters home from the war and thanking God they made it out alive. It's the University of Memphis playing their special brand of basketball. Yes, this is Tennessee.

It's the dogwood tree booming in the spring and fishing for crappie. It's welcoming the robins and purple martin back after a long winter.

It's children catching brook and catfish in a farm pond with cane poles. It's young people water skiing on our scenic lakes. It's a picnic on the bank of the beautiful Tennessee River as the big boats go by. It's camping in our state parks and all the family setting around a campfire at night. It's young boys skinny-dipping in a crystal clear creek in Middle Tennessee. Yes, it's Tennessee.

It's a quiet stroll through Shiloh Park and remembering the brave men who died there. It's a grieving family taking food to the funeral home after a close friend has passed away. It's hand clapping and toe tapping at the Grand Ole Opry on Saturday nights. It's a group of old men sitting around a country store playing checkers after a lifetime of hard work. It's the breath-taking beauty of the fall foliage in the Great Smokier. It's white water rafting in the dear rushing streams of East Tennessee. It's the World's Largest Fish Fry at Paris and all the pageantry that goes with it. It's city parks with children playing and parents and grandparents cheering them on.

It's floating the Buffalo River on a hot summer day. It's antique cars and tractor shows, mule pulling and tractor pulling contests in small towns. It's horse shows, rodeos and coon hunts.

It's watching the graceful sailboats on Pickwick Lake and fishing for big catfish in the water behind the dam. It's visiting Graceland and remembering Elvis singing 'How Great Thou Art' and 'Love Me Tender.' It's county fairs in the fall and the screams of children enjoying the rides. It's the sheer beauty of white face and Black Angus cattle grazing in lush green pastures. It's small children trick or treating their neighbors on Halloween. It's the magnificent stride of the Tennessee Walking Horses at the World Champion Horse Show at Shelbyville. It's the view from Lover's Leap and riding the famous incline at Lookout Mountain.

It's the former home of Andrew Jackson, Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, Cordell Hull, Alvin C. York and too many other great people to mention. It also has our war vets, and let us never forget what they did for us.

Yes, Tennessee has all this and so very much more. There is no other state like it, from the great cities to the small towns. It's our home and we are proud of it.—Paul Williams, A Native Son

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES OF A NEIGHBORHOOD COUPLE

Published in *The Lexington Progress*, July 6, 2005

As I grow older I think more and more of the people in my life. There isn't a day goes by that I don't think of Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Wallace. They lived in a big white house on the street behind our house. They were the most important couple in my life other than my parents. They were the kindest, most thoughtful, generous and courageous people I ever knew. If they aren't in heaven, then no one is.

I called her Mrs. Minnie and him Uncle Wallace. You could walk through our garden to the street right in front of their house. We had a beautiful walk with flowers on each side leading to their house. I think back on it as the "yellow brick road" because it led to such a happy place.

I was born when my mother was 22 years old, and at that time Mrs. Minnie was only 37 years old. They were not our kin folk and had no children of their own, but our lives were very involved. Mrs. Minnie lived to be 85 and we kept in touch all my life. They are buried next to my mother and daddy. I visit their graves often.

When I was very small Mrs. Minnie kept me a lot because my mother was sick and she needed help. It was almost like having two mothers and two daddys. The farthest back I can remember is her keeping me while I had scarlet fever and my mother was in the hospital.

Mrs. Minnie was not a lady of leisure by any means. Her lot in life was to take care of Uncle Tommy Smith, who had adopted her when she was very young, and his son, who was in a wheelchair. She kept them clean and their clothes were always starched and ironed. Uncle Tommy was a retired mail carrier. He was born in 1861 and died in 1939. He always wore white. He was a true southern gentleman. James Roy and I learned a lot from him while sitting in his lap. He called us both "Burrhead". We still call each other that, 70 years later.

The reason I called Mrs. Minnie courageous was the many times Gale (Uncle Tommy's son) had seizures, but Mrs. Minnie never let him fall out of his wheelchair. He would become very violent and hit her, not knowing what he was doing, but she kept him in his chair and never let him fall. I remember this many times and I never saw her get cross with him. Sometimes I would wonder how she could take it, and when I was very small it would scare me. She kept him until he died in her fifty's and never thought of putting him into some kind of home.

Uncle Wallace worked on the railroad. He was called a pumper. His job was to run a steam powered pump house about a mile down the railroad track that pumped water out of Beech River into two bay tanks close to the Depot. This furnished water to the steam trains that came through Lexington. It was a lonely job. During the summer I would ride the hand car with him and stay all day. He welcomed the company. I really enjoyed riding on that hand car. Uncle Wallace could build or repair anything, even some of mine and James Roy's wind up toys. He would carry them to work with him and they were always fixed when he brought them home.

The oddest thing about Uncle Wallace was he never owned a power tool. He just had hand tools which he kept razor sharp. He would trust me to use his tools. All he ever said was, "You know where you got it, put it back at the same place when you get through." I guess what little talent I have for wood working I learned from him.

I remember Uncle Wallace paying me a dollar a day to help him lay brick for a storm house. I would have done it for free because I loved him so much. Mrs. Minnie would pay me 50 cents for mowing her yard when everyone else would only pay 15 cents and 25 cents.

Mrs. Minnie did have a black lady hired to help get the noon meal prepared and help with the house work. She would go home about 2:00 in the afternoon. Mrs. Minnie could never have done all she did without the help of this kind lady. Her name

was Rexie Buckley. She had a son my age named L. M. We played together a lot.

When I was small, Mrs. Minnie would read the funny pages to me every day. She would help me with my school work too. I would always show her my report card. She always bragged on me, even if I didn't deserve it.

Once when I was in Grammar School, I made a beautiful Valentine card for my mother. I was under strict orders to come straight home from school, but I went by Mrs. Minnie's to leave the card with her until Valentine's Day. When I got home, mother wanted to know why I was late. She gave me a spanking because I wouldn't tell. When Mrs. Minnie found out about this she explained to my mother why I was late. My mother cried because she was so sorry she spanked me. Mrs. Minnie always "took up" for me if I was right.

When my brother James Roy was born, my mother and daddy left me with Mrs. Minnie. I remember till this day what she said. She said, "Paul, your mother and daddy have gone to get you a baby brother or sister." I remember how proud I was the next morning when she told me I had a baby brother. She took James Roy into their lives just like me. Her home was just like our home and we felt free to stay there. It was like a second home. We spent a lot of time in the summer sitting on their front porch with Uncle Tommy and Gale, or Mrs. Minnie. One thing we did was make homemade ice cream. James Roy would crank until it started to freeze, then I would crank it until it was froze hard. While we were cranking, Mrs. Minnie would bake big cookies which we called T-Cakes. She needed our help cause she could not crank the freezer. We were always ready to help. Who wouldn't have been.

One of my most cherished memories is the way we celebrated Christmas. The men would take all the furniture out of the big room with the fireplace and put a real cedar tree in the corner. It would reach the ceiling. Then the mothers and Mrs. Minnie would take over. They would place chairs all around the walls, then decorate the tree. We didn't have lights, but ornaments from Germany, Switzerland, and Holland. They were very old and fragile, but very beautiful. Remember, this was before World War II, and during World War II. Most of the gifts were already at Mrs. Minnie's because they kept them hidden from the children. They would work all Christmas Eve placing the gifts under the tree and decorating the room, making boiled custard and cake for everyone. Some of our other neighbors were involved in this. About 7:00 Christmas Eve, everyone would walk in. Those were the most wonderful Christmas anyone could have. I would read the names the gifts were for and James Roy would take them to the person getting the gift. The floor around the tree would be piled with gifts, and after the gifts were passed out, we all had cake and eggnog and boiled custard. We would take the decorations off the tree and place them very carefully in their boxes and the men folk would take the tree down and put all the furniture back in the room. Remember, this all took place at a home where they had no children and were not related to any of us. They were just wonderful people. Mrs. Minnie told me once that I took my first steps at one of these Christmas parties.

When I was a boy it seemed I was always getting hurt. I was always cutting my fingers or mashing them with a hammer or stepping on broken glass while barefoot or something. I guess it was because I was into so much and always making something but any time I got hurt I always went straight to Mrs. Minnie. She had a big first aid kit and she could patch me up just like a doctor. Once when I got hit in my eye with a "lob" of mud playing in Carrington Pond, I rode my bike across town, never stopping at home, to Mrs. Minnie's. She would get all the grit out of my eye, and she never once said she didn't have time or was too busy. How would I have ever made it without her.

I remember a perfect example of Mrs. Minnie's love for me. There was a lady in our neighborhood who was prone to gossip and stretching the truth. She spread around the neighborhood that since I learned to drive, I had "gone wild" and was staying out late at night. Those were her words. When Mrs. Minnie heard this, she set the record straight. She said. "I know exactly what time Paul

gets home at night because I sit up until he comes in," she said. "When he turns in his driveway, the car lights shine in my window. Then I go to bed." I had no idea she was waiting up for me, but I was glad. What greater love could a boy have.

When I was leaving to go in the service, I went by to tell them goodbye. They were both very sad and tearful. They wished me well but I could see the sadness in their face. I hated to leave them as much as I did my family and Mary Sue. I guess they thought one of the sons they never had would forget all about them. This sure was not true because when I got home we started back just like I had never left.

Mrs. Minnie was at my wedding along with a lot of my friends. When the wedding was over, I heard a faint cry. It was Mrs. Minnie. When my daughter Judy was born, they had a window to view the baby. I was in the room with Mary Sue when I heard a clear ringing laugh. When I went out in the hall it was Mrs. Minnie. She was laughing and crying at the same time. "What greater love."

After I was married a while I built a woodworking shop with all new power tools. One day as I was working, I looked up and there was Uncle Wallace with a big smile on his face. He was so proud for me. Here was a man that never owned any kind of power tool, but could build anything. He taught me everything I knew. I guess he felt like the time he spent with me had paid off. He died at 81 years of age, a little while after that. I loved him so much. I was so lucky to have his friendship.

You might wonder why we called older people aunt and uncle back then. It was out of respect and love. I remember a real old black man that passed our house late in the afternoon. We called him uncle. He was born in 1856, born a slave. He was always cheerful when we would wave at him. He could barely walk. There was also a real old black lady that lived up the hill from us. Her name was Aunt Doney. She loved children. It didn't matter to her if you were black or white. If there was sickness or death, she was the first to help out. I guess they are both in heaven now.

I wish I had space to tell more of the things Uncle Wallace and Mrs. Minnie did for me and James Roy. Like taking me to Jackson on the train and then on the street car to Woolworths and always buying me a toy. I hope this has touched your heart. It has mine just thinking of them. James Roy and I were blessed so much just to know this couple and so were my parents.

God bless you all.—Uncle Paul Williams, 78 and still kicking.

P.S. I hope I did them justice, they deserve it.



Mrs. Minnie Montgomery Wallace
1890-1975

OUR TOWN

Published in *The Lexington Progress*, Sept. 28, 2005

I have always been proud of living in Lexington, Tennessee. I was born and raised here, went to school here, rode my bike to school and roller skated on the side walk. I remember all the big two story antebellum homes that used to line Main Street. Just a few are left. Our main street used to look like a scene out of a movie. I used to know every one, where they lived, what they did for a living, and even what church they went to, that might seem like a stretch, but that's how it was. I have so many good memories of growing up in Lexington.

When I am out of town and tell people I am from Lexington, I say it with pride. I think it is one of the prettiest towns in the state. I guess a lot of people thought the recent up grading of the square was not needed, cost too much, or caused too much inconvenience but I think that the end result is worth it all. I take great pride in our downtown. I think it's beautiful.

Once when I was walking by Hennessee Soda room on my way from high school, the Greyhound bus pulled in. Just as the bus stopped a soldier stuck his head out the window and yelled, "What's the name of this little old town"? It happened that brothers John and Red Hinson were standing on the curb. John was Wayne Hinson and Mrs. Bob Henderson's dad. Red was Debbie Hinson's dad. They were quick to answer. John said. 'Lexington Tennessee, The garden spot of the world'. Then Red said, "Why don't you get off that bus and help us hoe it"? The guy stuck his head back in the window and had nothing else to say. Somehow I never forgot that.

One time while I was on my milk route, a big fine car pulled up beside me. A man started to ask where a certain street and house number was. He was looking for someone who had moved here from up north. I told him not to tell me the street or number, just tell me their name and I could probably tell him exactly where they lived. You could do that then but not now. As he started to drive off he said, "This must be a nice town, the biggest things here are your bank and churches." I thought back to what John and Red said, "It's the garden spot of the world".

One thing I'm proud of in the downtown area is that it's still going strong, it's alive and busy. Despite all the shopping centers and strip malls and Wal-Mart, "our town" to me is still the Square, because that's where I had my first adult job and the place I went to when I was a boy. It's not that I'm against progress, far from it, I'm proud of all of Lexington. I think our downtown area is well kept, the merchants should be proud, after all they are the ones who keep it this way. There are very few empty buildings, this is not true of most small towns.

One store that has stood the test of time is Stewart Drug Store. I know it is the oldest store in town and I guess Davis Dry Goods and Holmes Motor Co the next oldest. The neon sign that says Stewart Rexall Drug was there when I worked there over 50 years ago. I'll bet it was one of the first neon signs in Lexington. I would like to tell you about Stewart Drug Store and how Lexington was over half a century ago.

I'm just one of a long line of men who worked behind the fountain at Stewart. They called us soda jerks back then, I guess the term "jerk" still applies to me. I began working at Stewart Drug Store in February 1948, two weeks after I got out of the Army. I had been away from home since I was 17 years old, I was nearly 21 when I went to work at Stewart.

During those days, Dr. Warren Ramer Sr.'s office was upstairs over Stewart. Dr. Ramer and Mary Sue Boling ran the office alone back then. Mary Sue started working for him when she graduated from high school in 1945. I guess her working upstairs had a lot to do with me taking the job at Stewart's. She was my high school sweetheart. We were married July 22, 1948, that's around 68 years ago. It was pretty handy for us to work that close together. I think Dr. Ramer Jr. was 2 years old when Mary Sue started working for his dad. He was very good to Mary Sue.

There have been lots of different stories about when the fountain was installed in Stewart Drug Store. It was installed in the summer of 1948. I know because I helped install it. They had a fountain before, a real antique model of marble. Stewart's was also the first air-conditioned store in Lexington, I also helped install it. The corner Stewart is located on was rated by Dun and Bradstreet as the best location in town at that time. The crowds that came to town on Saturday were unbelievable. It seemed to us working there that every one was thirsty. We gave free water to anyone who asked.

We opened at 7:00 a.m. and closed at 9:00 p.m. except on Saturday when we stayed open until 10:00. We were open from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Sunday. We had curb service to anyone who drove up and blew their horn. Most of our curb service was on Sunday afternoon, because it was hard to find parking space during the week days. School buses would stop for a while when school turned out. We would be very busy for about 30 minutes. When the school kids would rush in, we made sure everything was full and ready when they arrived.

I was working at Stewart when the potent medicine "Hadicol" was very popular. It was the best selling patent medicine in history at that time and I guess still is. Also "Tony" home perms came along and were a big hit. Sales tax was only 2 cents at this time.

We had to crush our own ice, so we had ice delivered to us from the ice plant. There were no small crushed ice makers that I know of back then. We made fountain cokes out of coke syrup, carbonated water and crushed ice. We had 5 and 10¢ cokes and cherry cokes, ice cream cones and popsicles were 5 cents. Ice cream sodas and Sundaes were 15 cents and milk shakes and banana splits were 25 cents.

There were four drug stores around the square, Davies Drugs, Lawlers Elk Drugs, Holmes Drugs and Stewart Drugs, all had fountains but Lawlers. Hennessee soda room had a fountain and the old Blue Bird Cafe next to Holmes Motor Co. also had a fountain. At that time most of the businesses were around the square and parking was hard to find. There were several stores in south Lexington. It was a busy place with service stations and grocery stores and barber shops. Most grocery stores had home delivery and most sold groceries on credit.

People used to call the older Mr. John Stewart, Dr. Stewart and the younger, his son Threadgill, was called Gaggy. When people couldn't get a Doctor, especially at night they would trust the older Dr. Stewart to help them. Once a man brought his tiny son in, he had ingested a whole box of Exlax, thinking it was chocolate candy. Dr. Stewart gave him a big spoon full of Ipecac, he vomited the Exlax up and was ok. Things like this happened all the time. I used to enjoy listening to Dr. Stewart tell stories of how it was around the square when he was a young man. He told of hogs and chickens roaming up and down main street when it was a dirt street. Could you even think of a hog walking down main street now? It would more likely be a deer. He would tell me these stories at night when business was slow.

It was interesting working at Stewart, despite the long hours. They tried to get me to go to college on the G I Bill and be a pharmacist, they even offered to help pay for it but I just couldn't see myself working on the inside all my life. I admit I had second thoughts when I was delivering milk on those snow and sleeting mornings.

It is nice to be able to walk up to the fountain I worked at over a half century ago. Dr. Stewart asked "What for you", they would say "I don't know", so they made a drink called "I don't know". He said when people came in to get something cold to drink, they would get the drink called "I don't know". He said it was a sweet fruit flavored drink.

I would ask kids that I thought had a cocky attitude a question just for fun. If they ordered a drink, I would say, "Do you want a stem, straw, quill, or cane?" They were all the same thing but the kid didn't know this. I had a lot of fun watching the kids try to decide which one he wanted. They didn't

want to admit they didn't know; we put a straw in every drink.

People would come to town on Saturday night and just sit in their cars and watch the people walk by. It is hard to believe the crowds that came to town on Saturday and Saturday night. When I drive through town now I remember those days. I'm very proud of "our town". I never dreamed it would be this pretty.

I have a few tidbits that a lot of younger people probably don't know. Boswell Street, (that's the street behind Big Star) was called "lovers' lane" years ago. There was also a dairy on Boswell Street called Sunshine Dairy. Cows grazed on the land where the hospital is now. The land Wal-Mart is on was once a lake. It was called Ledbetters Lake. Morgan's service station was right in front of it. That was the western edge of town then. All the young people used to drag race at "Hearn's Lane". It's on 412 W. It seemed way out in the county then, I had a yellow Ford convertible that I thought could outrun anything. It was lucky that some of us didn't get killed.

There is so much I could tell about Lexington, but I hope you have enjoyed this. I hope everyone who lives here loves it as much as I do. Lets all be proud of "Our Town".— Paul Williams, old jerk



Delivering milk and gathering information at Troy Gilliam Grocery, 1953

GLORY DAYS OF STEAM TRAINS
Published in *The Lexington Progress*, Dec. 21, 2005

I'm very lucky to have lived in the time period that I have. From the horse and buggy days till men have walked on the moon. I've seen a lot of great things come and go. One of the things that came through Lexington were the trains, both passenger and freight trains. I remember when I was a boy laying snug in my bed listening to the trains come through. I loved to hear the whistle blow especially at night. They always had a lonely sound. I never dreamed that in a few years we would be in a world war and I would be riding a train across the nation.

When I was a boy, we had two train lines here in Lexington. One was the main line called the NC & St. Louis. It ran the big freight train and 6 passenger trains a day, 4 during the day, and 2 at night. With all that traffic plus the freight train I don't know how they kept from having collisions, especially during the war when so much war supplies were coming through as well as lots of troop trains. Sometimes when the big freight train came through it would make the ground shake. A lot of freight came through without even slowing up. To me they were pretty awesome. I have seen trains so long they had two engines pulling them, we called them "double headers". As a boy, I never got tired of seeing them pass through. The engineers were my heroes. Sometimes my neighborhood buddies and I would stand beside the track, and wave at the engineers and they would wave back and sometimes throw us candy and chewing gum. This really thrilled us. We got so, we would remember the number on the engine that threw the candy.

Then we had the Perryville branch railroad. It was called the "pea vine" and went from Lexington to Perryville, about 25 miles. The "pea vine" made it's first run June 30, 1889 and its last run October 31, 1936. I was just 9 years old when it made its last but even though I never rode on it, I remember it very well. It used to turn around late in the afternoon close to my house. It would pull forward to a siding close to where the Panoply factory is now. During its early days it made two trips a day to Perryville, but *after* they built the 412 highway and the new bridge, both finished about 1930, it only made one trip a day. The highway and bridge proved to cause it to go out of business.

A lot of children rode the 'pea vine' to school at Lexington when it was making a trip a day. Mr. Nolen Deere and Mrs. Willie Trammel are the only two that I know of that rode it but there were a lot of children that rode it. Most are not living now. Mrs. Trammel told me that she would ride the "main line", she called it, from Luray and they would walk to high school together. This must have been about 1920 because my mother would have been 15 years old .

Mr. Deere told me the stops it made and what freight it hauled. The first stop from Lexington was called Taylor Crossing and that's where the Shady Hill road goes through now, then Warren's Bluff; I think Mrs. Trammel and Mr. Deere lived there, then on to Chesterfield, Darden, Beacon, Parsons and finally ended at Perryville. The last train in the evening stayed at Perryville at night. There was a turntable at Perryville so the engine could be turned around and headed back toward Lexington. The seats on the passenger cars were designed so the back would fold back or forward, so when you were riding toward Lexington you would be facing forward or if you were going the other direction, they could be made to face forward. A lot of people thought it had to back all the way back to Lexington, but this was not true.

Mr. Deere said there were tie yards and stock yards at the stops so the farmers could drive their cattle to the stock yards to be loaded on cattle cars, and cross ties could be loaded on the freight cars. A lot of farmers cut cross ties to make cash money back then.

The "pea vine" hauled sand and gravel from Perryville and freight from river boats. Also logs and nearly any kind of things too heavy for horse and wagon to pull. Remember this was before the highway was built. The only road from Perryville to Lexington was a crooked gavel road.

I was lucky enough to find the remains of the turntable, I was riding my track bike through all the back alleys and old roads around Perryville and came upon this big concrete round slope, I knew this had to be what was covered with vines and high weeds, because it had been there over 75 years. It probably had its share of snakes around it too. Mr. Deere told me there was one grade that the engine had trouble pulling over so sometime it would have to back down and try again.

During the “pea vine’s” busiest time it had four engines and ran 7 days a week. It ran 45 years and is a great part of our local history. You can still find traces of the old railroad bed. Two of the engine had names, one was “canon ball” and one called “hot shot.” They seemed funny because with so many stops so close together, it never had time to get up much speed but compared to a team of mules pulling a wagon, it seemed pretty fast.

I used to stay on the Tennessee River around Perryville a lot years ago. I hung out at the old Beech River boat dock and got to be good friends with a Mr. Young that worked there. He had lived at Perryville all his life and he knew a lot about what was loaded and unloaded on the “pea vine” and I spent a lot of time listening to him. One thing that was very interesting was around 1930 when the new bridge was built, he was the first one to sell tickets to cross the bridge. The fare was 5 cents for each passenger. He said the first day he sold 60 tickets and his last day he sold 120. It pays to listen to elderly people cause they can teach you a lot. I’ll never forget him. Then was also a ferry boat that you could drive on that only charged a quarter to take you across. I remember when I was a small boy, I was really scared to cross on the ferry. My dad went to visit his folks and to hunt and fish. I would always beg him to cross on the bridge

One thing a lot of people don’t know is without the Perryville branch railroad there would not be a Parsons where it is now. Around 1880, a man came up from Georgia named George Parton. He built a big store about a mile north of where Parsons is now. A community sprung up around it so when the postal people formed a post office there, he was the first Post Master, and they named it Partonville.

When the “pea vine” railroad was being built, it went through about a mile south of Partonville. Mr. Parton moved his store next to the railroad track. Then a Mr. Myracle donated about 143 acres for a town to be built. It was called Parsons Flat because the town was laid off on a by parcel of flat land. That’s just a brief history of the start of the present Parsons. It’s very sad that most of the people who rode the “pea vine” are not with us any more. It was a very colorful part of our history. I really thank Mr. Nolen Deere and Mrs. Willie Trammel.

I feel lucky to have lived close to the railroad. It made our childhood a lot more interesting. I especially remember walking down the railroad to the trestle that crossed Beech River. When it had rained a lot and Beech River was high, we would jump off the bridge into Beech River. The only problem was when we heard a train coming we had to get off that trestle quick. It was hard walking on the gravel barefoot. I hope the readers of this story enjoy it, and I hope I got my facts straight. I really want to thank Mr. Nolen Deere and Mrs. Trammel for giving me first hand experience. There are very few left like them.

Old choo choo Williams ex-train watcher and rider—Paul Williams

REMEMBERING "THE FACTORY"

Published in *The Lexington Progress*, Feb. 1, 2006

This is a story of Lexington's first factory. The first of many more, in later years. The Salant & Salant factory was built in the very early 30's, and opened for business in 1933. It only had ten operators when it first started. It was a lifesaver for a lot of people in the Lexington and surrounding areas. It touched more lives than any other thing in those days. There were just no jobs for women in this area. There were also very few jobs for men. This was in the very darkest days of, "The Great Depression", and any kind of job was hard to find. People were very glad to get a job at what was known back then as, "The Factory".

In those days, if you asked anyone who worked at Salant & Salant, they just said, "the factory". Because it was the only factory in Lexington. You can hardly find anyone, especially senior citizens, that didn't work at the factory. If they didn't, some of their relatives may have worked there during some part of their life. It was the only job a lot of people ever had. Some people worked there all their working lives. Some Salant employees purchased homes, cars, and farms with money they made. In those days, people knew how to manage their money, and even though salaries were low, they knew how to make the most of their money. It was just a Godsend for people of this area.

Salant was active continuously from 1933 till 1981. Then a Thompson Company took over and only stayed in operation until 1985 making pants. There were several Salant and Salant factories in Tennessee, especially in West Tennessee.

Around January 8th, 1937, a Memphis newspaper started investigating factory conditions in the South. Newspaper articles, as the public knows, can be written favorable or unfavorable. But the representatives of The Memphis Press Scimitar could find nothing unfavorable about the Salant & Salant factory. They found plenty of light in the plant, working conditions good, far better than the average plant of any kind. They found all of Lexington proud of their only industry. They found that Lexington had suffered less than any town in West Tenn. They gave credit to Salant & Salant for their bi-weekly payroll.

Salant & Salant management were very civic minded. They gave a \$2,000 scholarship to outstanding children of their employees. They did this for several years. Mrs. Lois Yates' daughter, Janice, would receive a \$500.00 scholarship each year for four years. These scholarships were not easy to get. The student had to make excellent grades and if they failed to make good grades, the scholarship would be taken away.

Mrs. Lois Yates started working in 1933 when she was only 20 years old. She didn't live in town, so since she had no car, she had to board in a Lexington home. She paid \$15 a month for rent, which took a chunk out of her paycheck. A lot of young ladies did this in the early 30's. People were glad to rent out a room because times were so hard and they needed the extra money. Mrs. Yates worked until she was 66 years old. She is 93 now, and very active.

Mrs. Gladys Gibson was also a longtime employee of Salant & Salant. She started work in 1938 and worked her way up to manager of the factory. Gladys was one of the players on the factory basketball team. I wish I could name all of the hundreds that worked there through the years but there is just no way I could do that.

The Wage and Hour Law was passed in 1938 and it was 25 cents per hour. Before that, most of the employees were paid on a piece work basis. I know it is hard for young people to realize that people could work for \$2.00 a day, but they were very glad to get it and knew how to make it last. I knew of one man who walked all the way from Life Community on the railroad track to get to work. Who would do that now?

Salant was very good in showing their appreciation for long term employees. They gave all

expense paid trips to Washington D. C. for 20 year employees. 15 year employees were rewarded a trip to Biloxi, Mississippi, and 10 year employees to Paris Landing. Mrs. Yates won some of these trips and was also awarded, along with others, a gold watch and \$100 bond for long service. This was something they didn't have to do because they didn't have any other factories competing with them. The factory sponsored a lot of ball teams for all ages. They paid for their uniforms and expenses to travel to other towns. They tried and succeeded in being a good neighbor to this town.

The Salant & Salant employees produced a very excellent product. The shirts went through several inspections and were not allowed to be shipped until they were perfect. Maybe their standard of excellence was what kept them in business so long.

Salant had a very strict dress code. The women were not allowed to wear shorts or slacks to work. They had to wear dresses with stockings, but were allowed to roll down the stockings during business hours because of the heat. They had to roll the stockings up when they were leaving work. During the years around 1936, the women were furnished uniforms. They were blue dresses with white collars and white buttons.

I remember when I was a little boy. I would walk by the factory on my way home from school. I would look in the window and watch the people work. It always amazed me how fast they worked and the roar of the machines. Mrs. Gladys Gibson told me that at one time, they had around 600 employees.

At one time, they converted the old gym on first street to a factory and a warehouse and shipping department behind it.

There were a lot of husband and wives, mothers and daughters, and fathers and sons who worked there. Some factories discourage this practice.

I remember when I worked at Stewart's Drug Store, they would have a lot of cash on hand on the day Salant would get paid. They wanted to make sure they had enough money to cash Salant's paychecks. I guess it was one of the only regular paychecks they could count on. The factory was actually the life blood of the town, because their payroll was very important to the Lexington businessmen.

The roar of the machines are quiet now. The once busiest place in town is gone forever. There is not a trace of it left, just a memory. Most of the once proud employees are either deceased or retired senior citizens. I bet they have some fond memories of their day at 'The Factory'. I hope I have my facts straight in this story and if I didn't I am sorry. Well, thanks for the memories of a time that is gone forever.—Paul Williams



Paul and Mary Sue Williams

ANGELS OF MERCY
Published in *The Lexington Progress*, March 2006

This is a story about nursing homes. A lot of people have the wrong impression of these wonderful places. They think it is a place where people's loved ones are just left to die, but nothing could be farther from the truth. I think there is a special place in Heaven for the caretakers in these homes. They have to be able to cope with all kinds of problems, and not lose their "cool", no matter what the conditions are. If it is possible, they try to get the residents better so they can go home if they want to. I think people need to be better informed about what nursing homes really do for people. A lot of residents are sick and disabled, some are retarded, what we call "God's special people", they are there because their parents are no longer living, or are unable to care for them. Some residents are there because they are no longer able to live alone because of a death of their spouse. Some patients have some stage of Alzheimer's, otherwise called "Old Times Disease". They will gradually get worse, but are given a chance to live clean and comfortable until the disease finally consumes them and God calls them home. This is very sad, but nothing can be done, except make them as comfortable as possible in their last days. This terrible disease can happen to anyone.

I have known some that were sent to nursing homes (especially stroke victims) after the hospital had done all it could. I have seen some people who were unconscious when they arrived, get better, learn to walk and talk again, after excellent one on one therapy, and even get to go home. Without the nursing homes excellent care, they may have died. There are many reasons why people have to live in nursing homes.

I have noticed that a lot of residents have regular visits from family and friends, and then there are some who very seldom have anyone come visit them. This is very sad. The homes try to have all kinds of entertainment for their residents. The ones who are able, are encouraged to attend, but are not forced to do anything. Special occasions, like Christmas, Thanksgiving, Valentines and Halloween are very festive parties, and all the care givers will assist the residents to attend and roll the helpless ones in to be part of the celebrations. The families of the residents are always invited.

A lot of people think that the food is not good. The nursing homes I know about serve excellent food, and if the resident is not able to eat without assistance, they feed them. No one is allowed to do without food. *If* the resident does not like the food that is being served, they will get them something else. Their medication is always given to them on time, and they are also given a bath everyday. Their own personal doctor visits them once a month. There is no reason for people to think that their loved ones will not be treated well. I have heard people say they would never place a husband or wife in a place like that.

These are people who just don't understand what they are really saying. The time could come when they would have no choice, and it could happen in the twinkling of an eye.

We must remember that the residents once led productive and useful lives. They held good jobs, raised families, owned homes and had plans for their golden years and never dreamed to be a resident in a nursing home. God works in mysterious ways and we must accept it. The best thing is that they are being well taken care of. You, that are senior dozens, and are still able to lead normal lives at home, should thank God. I know I do! God has truly been good to me.

One thing I have noticed, the residents are treated with kindness and respect and are never scolded or shouted at. I would just wonder what we would do without these places because most are being treated a lot better than their family could treat them at home.

I realize that some people will say that I just don't know what has happened to some of their loved ones. I know there have been times when people were mistreated, but thank God this happens very seldom. Most nursing homes would dismiss anyone who purposely mistreats a resident. I am

very thankful I have never seen anyone mistreated, and I have spent a lot of visiting hours at nursing homes in Lexington. I do know that disabled people who have refused to go to nursing homes have been injured by falls resulting in broken hips and other injuries. Also, they could not keep clean and get a balanced diet, even though their families were giving them the best care they could.

People in nursing homes are monitored and watched after, and this prevents a lot of falls and injuries. Everything that is done for a resident is done for their well being.

When I was a boy, there was a place out on the *edge* of town called, The Poor House or County House. I used to ride by there on my bike. The people would be sitting on the porch. They would look so pitiful and almost helpless. I felt so sorry for them. I wondered how they lived there in the winter time. I guess it was the only place they had — just compare that to the modern nursing homes we have today. The house was on Poor House Road and Poor House Road still exists.

You might wonder how I know as much as I do about nursing homes. The reason is my wife of 58 years is a resident of a nursing home and I spend a lot of time there. I also eat Sunday lunch with her and attend all the parties with her. I was one of the ones who said I would never leave my wife in one of those places', but I was so wrong. Although it broke my heart to take her there, I had no choice. She is getting far better care than I was capable of giving her. The irony is that she spent 40 years in the medical field, but now is dependant on medical care givers. They are very good to her.

It takes a special person to work in a nursing home. They deserve a lot of credit for what they do. Thank God for them, cause they try their best to make life pleasant for the residents in their care.

I would not want people to think that I believe I know all there is to know about nursing homes. What I know is what I have observed, while my father-in-law was in the nursing home and now my wife. This is her 4th time as a resident, and each time she has been helped and actually got to return to our home. This was all due to the loving care and special therapy she received at the nursing home. Without them I would have probably lost her. The staff at the nursing home has a special place in my heart. Here is wishing everyone good health, especially in your *Golden Years*. — Paul Williams (soon be 79 years old) and still counting.

Ona Belle Dawes Williams Attaway
Paul's mother



THE PET CEMETERY

Published in *The Lexington Progress*, June 21, 2006

A few days ago, I had a pleasant experience I would like to share with the readers of this paper. I had a doctor's appointment at Jackson that I thought was for 9:00 a.m. I left early to be sure to be there on time. When I arrived at the clinic, I looked at my appointment card and realized it was for 10:00 a.m. I wondered how I would spend the time waiting. I had driven by Ridgecrest Cemetery many times and always noticed the small sign that read "Pet Cemetery". I just decided I would go check it out, since I had never seen an actual pet cemetery, so this would be a good time.

When I drove into the cemetery, I had no idea where it was located. I just started driving around the cemetery reading the names on tombstones and wondering about the people buried there. Since it was only a little after 9:00 in the morning, I was the only one there. Ridgecrest is a very large cemetery and very beautiful with big stately trees all through it. It was very quiet, all I could really hear were the birds singing and the traffic in the distance. It was so peaceful that it gave you an almost spiritual feeling. It was a great place to just think and I needed that.

I finally found what I was looking for in the back corner of this beautiful place. There behind a black wrought iron fence was a sign that read "Pet Cemetery". The wrought iron gate was not locked, so I walked in and started walking through row after row of small tombstones. All the pets buried there had engraving on the tombstones: their names, when they were born and died, and the person who owned them. I was really amazed that it was so beautiful, but so sad too. There were dogs, cats, parakeets, cockatoos, canaries, and all kinds of small animals. All the stones had little messages engraved on them about how they were loved, how much pleasure they had brought and how they would never be forgotten. A lot of them had outlines of the dog or cat carved on the stone. You could actually tell what breed of animal, especially the dogs, that were buried there. You could almost picture in your mind the pets playing and romping with their owners.

Since I have always owned some type of dog, (or they owned me) I was really touched by all this. In fact, I was almost overwhelmed by it all. I walked along every row of the small tombstones, read most all of the names, looked at all the engraving and found three markers with my own dog's name, Pumpkin, on them.

All I have to say is this was a very pleasant experience. I am glad I was alone because no one could see the tears in my eyes. You would have to be a pet lover to appreciate a place like this. To me, it was a special place. The people that buried their pets here must loved them very much. Most of the markers said this. I guess these people thought it was the least they could do for something that gave them so much devotion. These little animals were someone's constant companion. The only bad part of owning some kid of pet is their life span is so short, compared to humans. The average life of most of the pets was around 12-13 years.

As I walked out through the iron gates, I thought back to all the pets I've had throughout my long life. I am 79 years old and can remember every pet that I have ever owned and all of them gave me so much pleasure. People who have never owned any kind of pet have missed a lot. They require so little, yet give so much. People who have owned a pet and lost it through death know the heart-break. It's like the old saying, "It was just like a member of our family".

I guess some of you will say that this is just the ramblings of an old man, that I have finally "lost it". Maybe so, but I am glad I get pleasure out of simple things and I'll never forget visiting the Pet Cemetery. When I left, I felt richer for the experience. I forgot to mention a lot of the little graves had fresh flowers on them. All these pets gave someone a lot of love and devotion. I don't think I could have spent the extra hour I had in a better way. I hope this little story will bring back pleasant memories of your beloved pets. From an old pet lover.—Paul Williams

THE VIOLIN AND THE OLD MAN
Published in The Lexington Progress, August 2, 2006

Many years ago in a small town, they were having an estate sale of a once famous musician. People were there from miles around, hoping they might be lucky enough to purchase one of his prize possessions. They never realized a miracle was about to take place. Like most auctions, most lower price article are auctioned off first. The auctioneer picked up an old dusty violin with loose strings barely hanging on. He asked if anyone would start with a \$3.00 bid, no one responded so he ask for a \$2.00 bid, but still got no response. He finally asked if anyone would bid just \$1.00 but still no one made a bid. By this time the crowd was growing impatient. It seemed no one was interested in the old violin.

Suddenly, from out of nowhere, a tall very distinguished old man came walking down the aisle. His very presence demanded attention. No one in the crowd knew who he was, or where he came from. He approached the auctioneer and quietly asked to hold the violin.

He carefully removed his handkerchief and cleaned the violin of years of old accumulated dust, so you could see the beautiful finish of the wood. Then he held the violin up to his ear and carefully tuned the strings. He very carefully placed the violin up to his face and began to play. The crowd was spellbound. They didn't know what to expect. Beautiful music seemed to just flow from the violin. After playing the violin a few minutes, he handed the violin, very carefully back to the auctioneer. The crowd began to cheer and gave him a standing ovation. They were yelling, "more, more" So at the auctioneer's encouragement, the old man took the violin again. By this time the crowd was very hushed and respectful. The old man played the most beautiful rendition of "Amazing Grace" that anyone had ever heard. Then after looking straight at the crowd, he played, "Nearer My God to Thee". The crowd thought maybe the old man meant for this song to apply for him, because of his advanced age. With trembling hands, the very old man, placed the beautiful instrument back in the auctioneer's hand. He gave a slight bow as he started to walk away. Some whispered that maybe he meant for this to be his last performance

Suddenly people began to bid. Someone said, "I give \$1,000.00", another said "\$2000.00". One even bid \$3000.00. Then someone asked what caused this transformation. The auctioneer asked the bidding to stop. They couldn't understand what had happened right in front of their eyes. Some wondered why such a great violinist had come to their midst. The auctioneer gave them the only answer he knew. He said he believed they were in the presence of greatness and God had sent this wonderful musician for a reason. He said they had just witnessed the master's touch. He asked everyone to just thank God for the experience they had just enjoyed and just accept it as a beautiful gift from God.

It has been said many times that God works in mysterious ways. This was one of those times, where an old dusty violin, a Godly auctioneer and a very old and great musician were used through God.

Most of the crowd gave their heart and soul to God after this experience.

I hope all you readers have received a blessing from this little story, and maybe it touched your hearts.

Thanks and God Bless you all.--Paul Williams

ROBBERY IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC

Published in The Lexington Progress, April 18, 2007

This is an event that happened to me over 60 years ago, but I can remember it just like it was yesterday.

I was a crew member on a troop transport ship, bringing a load of combat veterans home from Naples, Italy. It was in December of 1945. I was barely 18 years old, not many months out of high school, and a recent graduate of the Merchant Marine Academy. Me and two more of my buddies were the youngest members of the crew. One was a Norwegian boy from Wisconsin, and the other was a Swedish boy from Minnesota. Our quarters were in the stern of the ship, right over the propeller. The nautical term is "the screw". When the ship was in real rough waters which it was in the North Atlantic, the screw would come out of the water and spin violently, and almost shake us out of our bunks. Some of the most profane and toughest members of the crew would wake up in the middle of the night hollering for their mother.

My two buddies and I didn't like to stay down there if we could help it. The air was full of cigarette smoke and there always seemed to be a lot of gambling going on. Some of the crew members were cheating the American soldiers out of their money. We knew this was going on, but there was nothing we could do about it. We were afraid some night that someone would get killed.

They call this place, "The Glory Hole". We tried to only stay there when we slept. My two buddies and I had found a place in one of the cargo compartments where a lot of mattress pods were stored. We would go down there when we got off duty and practice tumbling and wrestling. They had been on a wrestling team in high school and one had taken gymnastics, so they were teaching me how to turn flips and wrestle. I don't know how I kept from breaking my neck, but we had fun and got to be great friends.

The reason we stayed down there was because it was so cold and windy on deck. Sometimes the waves would break over the deck. The North Atlantic can be very rough in the winter. It can be one of the roughest and coldest places in all the oceans. They had a "Hauser"-nautical term for big rope, stretched from mid ship to the stern for us to hold when we went to our quarters to keep from getting washed overboard. We were told that if we were washed overboard, we could not survive long enough to be rescued.

We were on the 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. watch, which meant we went to work at 4 in the afternoon and got off at 8 at night, then we went back to work at 4 in the morning until 8 the next morning, and we were off till 4 the next afternoon. Your work shift is called a 'watch'. There is also an 8 till 12 watch, and then 12 till 4 watch. This goes on 7 days a week. There are no days off for Sundays or holidays. It gets where you don't know what day of the week it is or even what day of the month it is, because all days seem the same.

One night to keep from going back to the Glory Hole, my two buddies and I 'stole' (and I hate to use that word) a 3-gallon stand of vanilla ice cream and a gallon of sliced pineapple, and smuggled it down to our hideaway. The three of us "tried" to eat the whole thing with our bare hands. When we saw that we couldn't eat all of the ice cream and pineapple, we didn't know how to dispose of the "evidence of the crime". Eighteen-year-old boys have a terrific appetite, but there was no way we could eat a 3-gallon stand of ice cream and a gallon of pineapple.

When we went back on deck to go to our quarters, we were all pretty nauseated, but we couldn't let them know why we were so sick. Some were laughing and said we were sea sick. We just let them think that. The next morning when they woke me up to go on duty at 4:00 a.m., I had a terrible pain in the pit of my stomach. The first thing I thought I had was food poisoning, but I could not tell anyone about our "theft" so I let everyone think I was sea sick. The crew thought this was funny

cause we were only about 3 days from the states. By this time, most people are over being sea sick I kept hurting all day trying to vomit over the stern of the ship. When my' time to go back on watch at 4 00 p m., I was really sick so they sent me to sick bay.

The doctor told me I had. appendicitis. He said they would have to operate as quick as possible because it could rupture and gangrene would art in, then I would really be in trouble. I was really thankful I was on a ship with doctors. They were Army doctors and my problems were minor compared to the wounds they had treated. I just wanted some relief.

I went in this little room, climbed up on a table with one little light bulb over me. They told me to lay in a fetal position, while they gave me a shot in my back, then lay on my back. After a few minutes they started to cut. I jumped about half-way and said "Stop, I can feel this". They said I was just scared, they said, "Lay back and be still and let's get this over with".

About that time, four medics came in and one held each arm, and one each leg, then they started to cut again. I told them I could still feel it and if they cut me one more time, I was going to get up. By this time, we were all wet with sweat and they were losing patience with me. Finally the doctor believed me. He said they had not give the spinal shot right. Then a big sergeant came in with a gallon can and a sponge. He poured the sponge full of what was in the can and put it over my nose. I will never forget what he said. He said, "Breathe kid, we only have a gallon of this stuff". It must have been chloroform, because it sure knocked me out. The next morning, when I woke up. I was in a makeshift hospital with a group of wounded soldiers. Some were really hurt bad, and I was almost embarrassed to be with them. We were in the swimming pool before the ship was converted to a troop ship. All they did was put a roof over the pool to make it into a hospital. The Dr. came in and said I was out of my mind when I came to and tried to get up and almost pulled the incision open. I was feeling no pain, so I was thankful for what he had done, cause he was the only one who believed me. I told him I was sorry about causing so much trouble. He said not to worry; he would have done the same thing if someone had done to him what they tried to do to me.

When the ship ducked at Newport News, VA, they started to take us off. They had two gang planks, one for the able bodied, and one for the wounded. They had Red Cross ladies giving out candy, chewing gum and cigarettes to the wounded GIs. But when they came down with me, the ladies all said "What's this kid doing mixed up with the wounded". I guess cause I had blonde hair fair complexion, they thought I was younger than 18. They said I was too young to smoke so they would not give me any cigarettes, I did not care because I did not smoke and still do not!

About that time, a big gray Packard ambulance pulled up. Two guys shoved me in the ambulance and took off wide open with the siren blowing. I did not have a clue where I was going but they sure seemed to be in a hurry. They went to the marine hospital at Norfolk Navy Base. When they got there, they ran around to get me out, about that time a nurse ran up and said I had been operated on. The two guys said they thought they were bringing me there to be operated on. That's the reason they drove so fast.

They put me in a ward with about 20 other men. After about three days I woke up one morning and there stood one of the biggest, ugliest, nurses I had ever seen. She said "I'm going to try to get your stitches out". About that time she jerked my one size fits all pajamas down to my knees, 1 grabbed them and pulled them back up. By this time the whole ward was laughing. I did not think it was funny, but embarrassing. The big ugly nurse slapped my hands, told me to behave myself. She said the only thing about me she was interested in was getting those stitches out. She said in a couple more days maybe I could get back to my ship. I was afraid the ship would leave without me if I was away too long. I did get a pass to go aboard the U. S. Battleship, Missouri, and stand on the deck where the Japanese surrendered to MacArthur to end WWII.

I guess that was the best part of this story. When I got back to my ship, it was getting serviced

to go to France. I found my two buddies, they thought they would never see me again and I thought the same about them. They told me some of the crew had found our hideout and were having a poker game down there and were all smoking causing the sprinkler system to flood the place. From then on we had to spend our off duty hours in The 'Glory Hole' or out on deck.

The name of this ship was the J. W. McAndrew. Some of you old soldiers of WWII might have come home on this ship. There is no way of knowing just how many men went over or came back on the great ship.

I hope you old soldiers can relate to this story, and anyone else who reads it will enjoy it. It was all true. There is a picture of GIs waiting to go on board this ship in the Big Henderson County History Book.--Paul Williams



In the Merchant Marines



Paul Williams, 1946



Japanese Armored

The Lexington Progress, July 11, 1947:
Serving with 24th Division: Pvt. Paul Williams, son of Mr. and Mrs. Roy C. Williams of 322 Maple Street, Lexington, is serving with the 21st Infantry Regiment, a unit of the 24th Infantry Division in Japan. The 24th Division, known as the "Victory" Division, is now occupying the entire island of Kyushu, the third largest and southernmost island of the Japanese home islands.



"Don't believe it! Let your Buddy Re-enlist."

I WAS A BIKER WHEN BIKERS WERE NOT COOL
Published in *The Lexington Progress*, June 27, 2007

As I drive around town lately and see more and more young people riding motorcycles, it seems there are more bikers now than ever before. I'll say there are more than there has ever been. I must say that most of them ride safely and that is more than I can say for the way we used to ride, and I'm sorry about that.

When I pull up to a red light and happen to look beside me in the other lane and see a beautiful shining bike, sometime with the rider dressed in leather and a beautiful girl sitting behind him, most of the time I smile and try to give him and her a friendly nod. Most respond very friendly, to them, I'm an old man but what they don't or can't realize is that I once rode a motorcycle myself, years before they were born. I don't guess they give me a second thought as they ride off.

But as I drive on my way, I think back to the summer of 1943 when I was 16 years old and had a Harley of my own. Those were some of the happiest days of my life. It was during World War II. Gas was rationed and times were hard, a lot more things were rationed than just gas. But being only 16 years old you just worried about the present because you knew your time was coming and you just could not wait. Riding a motorcycle gets in your blood and you never get over it, no matter how old you get. I realize I'm too old, my reflexes too slow, but in my heart I would still like to ride a full size Harley again. I'm 80 years old and still have motorcycle on my driver license. I can think back to the freedom, with the wind in your face and the power you had at your fingertips. The only feeling that compares is riding in an open cockpit airplane, which I have done many times.

In the early 1940's, there were only a few bikes in town. We were looked on with disfavor because of the way we rode. We were too noisy and rode too fast. We welded brass cowbells on our tail pipes which made a beautiful sound but loud. We had never heard of wearing helmets but some did have leather jackets. The only protection I had was a white aviator cap with tinted goggles. After getting hit in the eye by a June Bug, I wore the goggles.

Before this story goes any further, I'd like to explain how a 16-year-old high school boy could even own a full size Harley. The late Lyman Love owned a 1937 610 HV Harley. He worked in Butler Grocery around the square. Everyday on *my way* to school I would stop and look at it. I wanted that motorcycle more than anything I ever wanted in my life. I was so desperate. I even went into Mr. John A. McCall's First National Bank and tried to borrow the \$275.00 Lyman was asking for it. I had no way of ever paying it back, but a 16 year old boy does not think that far ahead. Mr. McCall sent me out of that bank very quick then called my dad—Boy was I in trouble. When my dad came home from work that evening he was very upset with me. I guess as I look back, I can't blame him. I told my dad I would work it out or do anything just to get that bike, but with wages very low I could have never worked out \$275.00. Even though my dad gave me a \$5.00 per week allowance to *stay* home and work and not take a part time job. My dad was so disgusted with me, he was at a loss for words. About that time my mother came to my rescue. She told my dad that in one more year I would go into service.

I wanted to be an air cadet and passed the preliminary test. She said if I should get killed they would always regret not buying it for me. This must have touched my dad because he just took his check book out and wrote me a check for \$275.00, which in 1943 was a lot of money. He must have loved me very much to do this. Even though it was against his better judgment. I have thought about this a lot and really don't think if I had a 16 year old son I would even consider buying him a full size Harley.

They are so much fun to ride but can be deadly because people don't always give you the right of way, and they can be hard to see, and not much protection. The next day I gave Lyman the

check on my lunch hour. The bike had a left foot clutch, left hand gear shift, kick starter and manual spark advance, primitive by today's standard. I didn't know how to ride it but made it back to high school. Classes had already started for the afternoon. That's when I did one of the dumbest things I have ever done, I parked the bike under Mr. Bobbitt's, (the principal), window and started racing the motor with the spark off. This made it back fire real loud, I was really causing a disturbance. Till this day I don't know why I did this, there was no excuse for it. Mr. Bobbitt raised the window up and told me to "get that thing away from there". You guessed it, the motor went dead and I could not start it. I pushed it over to the wood working shop, which was on Broad Street. All the boys in the shop were gathered around looking at it. By this time, I was feeling very happy, but that was short lived. We looked and Mr. Bobbitt was running straight toward me. His face was fire red and he was not just mad, he was seething. I was trying to start when he asked me if my dad knew I was not in school. Before I had time to answer, he kicked me on the hip nearly kicking me over. I started rolling off toward town while he was chasing me, trying to kick me again. Broad Street was just two lanes then with the outside lane being small gravel. About that time the motorcycle started and threw gravel all over Mr. Bobbitt. I did not mean for that to happen, but as I roared off, I knew I was in real trouble. I knew if Mr. Bobbitt called my dad I would get a harder kicking that I already got and they would probably not let me ride it to school.

Mr. Bobbitt did not call my dad and since this was on Friday he had all weekend to get over losing his cool. By Monday he acted like nothing ever happened, he did not carry a grudge and I did not either. I deserved just what he did and I did not blame him. That was the only trouble I got into in high school except for one paddling he gave me for fighting in the classroom. Most of my teachers said I could be an excellent student if I would only apply myself. All I could think of was wanting to hurry and get 17 years old because I wanted to get into something before the war got over. I was looking for adventure. I found it. I did not blame Mr. Bobbitt and always admired him.

Space does not permit me to tell of some of the things me and my best friend Billy Priddy got into during the summer of 1943. One of the dumbest was riding out Natchez Trace Park at a school picnic wearing bathing suits and barefooted. You guessed it; the Harley got out from under us on the gravel road. That was plain old dumb; gravel sure hurts bare skin. We never did that again.

One trick we used to do was cut our lights off and slip up behind a car that was going slow, then we would roar past them with the spark cut off. This would cause a blue blaze to come out of the tail pipe. This would really startle the people in the car. It would usually be someone we knew, especially the girls. You can see why we were looked on with disfavor. We thought it was funny. I am ashamed of some of the things we did. Back then you knew everyone and what kind of car they drove. Gas was rationed, so when they rode around at night, they would drive slow. That blue blaze would be like a big blow torch. Lexington had few policemen back then, and the one they had couldn't catch us. They were more like night watchmen, just mostly around the downtown area, and the sheriff had only one deputy.

I'll always remember the summer of 1943 as one of my best summers. I had other motorcycles but the old 1937 G1 will always have a special place in my memories. Very few 16 year olds rode a full size Harley.

I envy all you young bikers, wish I was young again and could ride with you, just enjoy while you can and if you see an old gray-headed guy looking at you, it just might be me. I've had a great life, full of adventure.

I've been a lot of places, seen a lot of things. I had some narrow escapes but none compare to the summer of 1943. How I wish I could live it over again. God has truly blessed me to keep me alive this long.—Paul Williams

BROKEN, LOST, COLD, SCARED AND HUNGRY
Published in *The Lexington Progress*, Dec. 12, 2007

By the title of this story, you can guess things weren't going too well in my life. This story starts when I was placed on my first ship after graduation from the Merchant Marine Academy. Talk about feeling let down, I was hoping to be placed on a big new modern ship; instead it was an old rusty World War I coal burning death trap. I had been trained to be a fireman in the engine room, but this tub was breaking every safety rule in the book.

As soon as I was signed on and put on the 12-4 at night watch, which meant you shovel coal for four solid hours, then you are off till 12-4 in the afternoon, then off till 12 to 4 in the morning. This is the worst watch you can be on. I thought that if this was the best I could get, I would jump ship and volunteer for the army.

To be fair, they would not have been using the old ships if so many cargo ships had not been sunk off the east coast by German submarines. We were hauling coal from Newport News, VA to Boston Mass. I told the captain, who was a big mean man, that I was getting off when we got to Boston. He said I signed on and could not get off till he signed my release and he was not going to sign, and if I did jump ship I would not get paid. I slipped off the ship when we reached port, but had very little money, I was only 17 years old and really didn't know what I had gotten myself into.

The old captain was right of course, I could not get hired on another ship because he didn't sign my papers, and I didn't belong to the National Maritime Union. They were phasing out these old ships because the war was nearly over. I went up and down the ship yards trying to get hired on another ship but there were no jobs open. I began to realize I was in trouble so I decided to take some of my money and take a train to New York. I thought maybe I could get a ship there.

There I was, a 17 year old Tennessee redneck, trying to find *my way* around in New York. I went to the Brooklyn Navy yard hoping to get a berth on a merchant ship there, but had no luck. My money was getting lower and lower. I was just eating one .15 cent footlong hot dog a day and staying in a seaman hall for .50 cents a night. It was pretty tough avoiding the pan handlers and sex perverts, but since I was about 200 lbs., they mostly left me alone. Try sleeping sometime in a big old building with about 200 men of every kind when all you have is a cot and no privacy. I would go from Manhattan to Brooklyn every day on the subway which only cost .05 cents back then in 1945.

New York City, even though there are millions of people there, can be one of the loneliest places in the world because you don't know anyone and no one will help you. No one cares. I could have called home for money, but I didn't want to because I didn't want my mom and dad to know what a jam I was in. They had tried to talk me out of joining the Merchant Marine, but I would not listen to them. They would have been worried to death if they had known what trouble I was in, and I wanted to spare them that.

I was wishing I had stayed on that first ship because at least I had food and a place to sleep even though it was a death trap. That ship was nothing like the ship I had trained on. It had two big boilers with four fire boxes in each boiler. Each fireman fired four fire boxes. You could compare it to eight train engines lined up side by side. There were three flights of stairs down there and all the steam pipes were vibrating real bad, and if just one had burst, you would have been scalded to death. There would have been no escape, and the heat was unbearable. There was one thing about that place. It made you want to live right, because you wouldn't want to spend eternity in a place that hot. I have to say that later on I did get on some good ships and made trips to Italy, France, Spain, England, and Holland but things were really looking bad at that time.

I was down to \$4.00 so I decided I had better try to get home. I took a taxi under the Holland tunnel and told the taxi driver to take me to the nearest highway south. After this I was nearly broke.

When he let me out it was getting late in the evening and I knew if I didn't catch a ride I would have no place to sleep that night. I was beginning to really get scared when the biggest truck I had ever seen stopped for me. It was called an Autocar. The driver opened the door and said I could ride, but if I went to sleep, he would put me out. He looked like he meant what he said. I climbed up in the monster and it didn't have but one seat so I sat on the gas tank and put my sea bag on the floor, which was a good thing because the floor was so hot you could not put your feet on it. This was a pre-war truck with no air or power like trucks have now. You could not talk because it was so loud and so hot you had to keep the windows down. Even with all this I was glad to get a ride heading south. When the driver stopped to eat I just sat in the truck and waited for him. Later on this thing moved south, you guessed it, I went to sleep, just what he told me not to do. All of a sudden he pulled up and told me to get out. I knew it was no use to argue with him because he said I was making him sleepy and I was going to get us both killed. We were just in the middle of no place. I looked both ways down the highway and could not even see a light. I didn't even know what state I was in. I found a big sign and got behind it and just went back to sleep on the cold ground, but at least no one could see me.

The next morning things began to change. I got back out on the highway and the first car that came by stopped for me. Of all the luck, I had mostly bad, this was really good because it was a U. S. Senator on his way to Washington DC. He was *very* nice, so I told him all about my problems. He said he could help me get my seaman's papers changed to deck dept. or steward dept. He wrote down the address of an officer I should go to and gave me a note to give to them. I don't know how I did it but I found this office and they changed my papers.

I was down to 50 cents, so I decided to take the train back over to Baltimore, Maryland. I stopped at the Stage Door Canteen to see if they had any free food. The only one there in the morning was the caretaker and all they had was stale donuts. They tasted real good to me because I hadn't had anything to eat or drink for a long time. I'm sure the senator would have paid for my breakfast but I wouldn't ask. The caretaker gave me 50 cents to help on my train fare. I would have given anything for one of my mother's ham and egg and hot biscuit breakfasts with a big bowl of cornflakes.

When I got over to Baltimore, I found a ship and things improved after that. After making several trips around the Atlantic my luck ran out and I had to get off the last ship I was on because I didn't belong to the union. I would have joined the union but they would not take any more members because they couldn't get jobs for the one they already had.

I came home and volunteered for the Army Infantry. I was hoping I would get sent to Japan because I had already seen everything across the Atlantic. I wanted to see. My last trip was to Rotterdam, Holland. Sure enough, after basic training at Fort Polk, LA, I was sent to San Francisco and went to Japan on a ship.

I feel very lucky to have seen all I have seen. When I was a boy I never dreamed I would see the places I have and done all the things I have done. God has really looked after me through the good and bad, big and small, I have seen it all and have so many great memories. When I left for the Merchant Marines at 17, I told my dad and mom that I was looking for adventure. They could not understand why I was looking for adventure. They could not understand why I would leave my good secure home and sometimes I wondered the same thing. I hope I haven't bored you with all this but I've had such a wonderful God bless you all and Merry Christmas. Your old friend, Paul.

(I would like to add that if it had not been for the prayers of my good mother, even though most of the time she didn't know anything was wrong, I might not have made it.)

HE'S NOT HEAVY, HE'S MY BROTHER
Published in *The Lexington Progress*, Jan. 2, 2008

My brother, James Roy, and I were talking the other day about the good times we had growing up. Even though we grew up during the great depression, we had a happy childhood. We were very fortunate because our daddy had a good job all throughout the depression and could buy us things that some children just didn't have. He worked very hard and was a good manager with his money. He expected us to work hard around our house and we did, but most of the fun we had was doing things that money couldn't buy. He would tell us what to do at breakfast and it better be done when he came home from work. We still found time to get into some mischief that he didn't know about, even though he was hard to fool. He was also very generous.

One of the best things to happen to us when we were very young was when he bought us a big pony when James Roy was about three and I was about nine. We had a wagon and harness to go with him. His name was Billy and he was just like one of the kids. He would eat anything we ate, he loved watermelon in the summer or candy, just whatever we gave him. If you were eating a sandwich, he would take it away from you if you weren't careful. That's why he was so fat.

One time, all of us boys in the neighborhood built a small boat. We built it out of 8 foot boards that we got from the sawmill (at night). We melted old radio batteries to stop up the cracks so it wouldn't leak. This was a big project for us boys, and it did float. We waited for a big rain so the swamp beside the railroad track would flood, then we hauled it down there with the pony and wagon. When we got to the swamp, we left Billy up on the bluff and slid the boat down into the flooded swamp. None of our parents knew what we were up to or they wouldn't have let us go because they were afraid we would drown. Billy spoiled everything. He got tired of waiting on us, so he got untied and went home by himself. When my dad came home that afternoon, there stood Billy with the wagon, waiting patiently by the gate. My mom and dad didn't know what to think, so my daddy walked all the way to where we were. We were having a big time paddling around in the swamp until all at once we spotted daddy standing there. To put it mildly, he was not pleased. I'll have to admit, it was dangerous... but it was fun to us. That's just one of the things we got into.

Another time, we built a covered wagon out of feed sacks wired together with bailing wire. I painted "Gold Rush" on one side and "California or Bust" on the other side. One day, we all piled in it, girls and boys, and were riding down on Old Wagon Road, where Cherokee Subdivision is now, when we ran off in a ditch and it turned over. One of the girls was Mary Sue, who later turned out to be my wife. We had been hauling barnyard fertilizer before we made the covered wagon, so you can see that it would be crushed to a powder. My little brother, James Roy was in there some place and he drooled or slobbered all around his mouth. When we all got untangled, James Roy had manure all over his face, in his hair, he even had some in his mouth, but he did not cry. We got him cleaned up, turned the wagon back on its wheels, and went home. We all thought it was funny since no one got hurt, "except James Roy". My mother was upset when I took him in the house but by this time, she was used to things like this. That pony gave us a lot of pleasure. He just went along with whatever we wanted to do. He never tried to kick or bite anyone, and we gave him plenty reason to. We kept him until I left for the service, then sold him to the Joe V. Holmes family. If I had stayed home, I would have kept him until he died if I had a place to keep him. My mother and dad, and James Roy, moved from our home place while I was in the service and had no place to keep him. They bought the Summer's Home.

One summer, James Roy and I were bit by a stray dog. We didn't know if it had rabies shots, so we had to get the shots, fourteen in our stomach in a circle. This was not pleasant and made our stomach very sore. This was the same summer that James Roy had boils on his feet and had to walk

on his heels. Because of this, I pushed him around in a Radio Flyer red wagon that we got for Christmas. I had a forked stick over the rear axle so I would not have to bend over to push him. Some of the boys were sitting around a vacant house, so I sat down and one of the boys who was about 3 years older than me started making fun of me for pushing James Roy around. All of a sudden he kicked me in my stomach. It knocked the breath out of me so I fell over on my knees. He jumped on my back and started beating on my head. I was trying to get up when James Roy picked up a big chunk of wood and threw it at him. This gave me a chance to get up real quick so I could fight back. I was lucky enough to hit him one time as hard as I could, right in his face. This took all the fight out of him, so he grabbed the big chunk of wood and started walking backward toward his home, threatening to hit us with the wood. We were stalking him, trying to get another lick on him, but he dropped the chunk of wood and ran home. One thing about the boys in our neighborhood, if you got in a fight, they would not stop it. They would just stand and watch until one or the other got whipped. It was like an unwritten law and that's the only way we wanted it, so you knew nobody was going to help you if you got in a fight. If James Roy had not thrown the big chunk of wood, I would have gotten hurt bad because the boy was trying to hit me on the side of my head, but I was blocking it trying to get up.

James Roy and I did not tell our mother and daddy anything about this. My daddy always said he would whip us if we started a fight, but he would also whip us if we didn't take our part in a fight.

We just decided to make life as miserable for this kid as we could. He worked part-time at Joe V. Holmes Grocery so he passed our house on the way to work. We would throw everything we could at him and chase him all the way down the street. We threw chunks of coal, sticks of stove wood, green walnuts, baseballs and softballs, just anything we could find. We wanted to make him wish he had not kicked me in the stomach.

What we didn't count on was one day, he stopped at our house when he knew we were not home. He told our daddy what we were doing to him, but he didn't tell my dad what he had done to me. When we came in, our dad was real upset with us. We tried to explain but he wouldn't let us. We just knew we were going to get the razor strap used on us but he didn't. I think he had an idea that there was more to it than the boy told him. We kept on chunking him anyway when our daddy wasn't home.

One thing James Roy says he has never forgotten: Beech River was up, nearly out of the banks. We were all taking turns jumping off the railroad trussel, floating down the river then climbing out and doing it over and over again. James Roy jumped off and got swept under a drift, we though he was gone when I got a glimpse of his red head. I don't know how, but some way I grabbed him and pulled him out, all the boys thought he was gone. To this day I don't know how I found him. His hair was the same color of the muddy water but God must have been with us. We never told our parents about this. They just let us be boys and we wanted to keep it that way.

James Roy and I shared a great childhood. We have lots of good memories and love each other very much. Your old friend—Paul Williams

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE AND DEVOTION
Published in *The Lexington Progress*

This is a story of dogs, dogs that I have grown up with, and dogs I have owned during my lifetime.

I am sure most of you down through the years have owned dogs that were like family. You know the heartbreak of losing a dog. If you love dogs, you can read this, and I hope it touches your heart. If you do not love dogs, I guess you will not relate to this story.

When I was a very small boy, a kind lady down the street owned a little Spitz puppy. It was the lone pup born to the mother dog she owned. When I found out about it, I would visit every day to play with the puppy. I wanted that puppy so bad, but the lady wanted to keep the puppy. What I did not know was that my mother had found out about the puppy and bought the puppy with the understanding that the lady would keep the puppy until Christmas.

Christmas morning when I went to see what Santa had brought, there was this box with a big bow on the box. When I opened the box, this little puppy jumped out. I was so proud and happy. I guess this was one of the best Christmas days I can remember. We named her Boots, and she won our hearts. She was cute and playful and even won my dad over. He was more of a hunting dog man, so for Boots to win him was a great accomplishment. Boots gave us many hours of pleasure. She only lived three years and died from distemper. I guess this taught me as a small boy to deal with heartbreak.

A few months after Boots died, my parents found me a new puppy. It was just a medium size mixed breed, black and white dog. I really loved him and named him Dopey. I think every child should have a dog—it teaches responsibility. About this time my dad owned a Lewellen Setter, a big bird dog. He was a very expensive dog and was kept in a pen. It was my job to keep him with water and food. I felt so sorry for him because he wanted to be out of the pen so badly. The only time he got out was when Dad went bird hunting with him. His name was Bill, and I kept asking my dad to let him run loose so he could play with me and Dopey. I didn't realize Bill was a real valuable dog. Finally as I grew bigger and older, and Dad had less time to hunt, he agreed to let Bill out if I agreed to take care of him. My brother James Roy and I grew up with Bill and Dopey. From that time, until I was seventeen years old and went into service, Bill and Dopey followed us everywhere we went. They especially liked to swim in Beech River with us. Bill was so happy to be out of his pen that he even slept under the house where my room was.

After I went into Service and Bill was growing old, my dad carried him out to his good friend Walter Middleton's farm where he lived his last days happily. Roaming on Mr. Middleton's farm, I guess you could say, "Bill was in dog heaven."

While I was in the Army, I spent thirteen months in Japan with the Army of Occupation. The company I was in was called F. company. It was called Fox Company. During this time the Japanese people were nearly starving and had no food for dogs. All the dogs near our camp would come to us for food.

There was one dog that "adopted" us. He looked a lot like a fox so we let him be our mascot. We all called him Foxy. He followed us on hikes and always was around during chow time. Most days late in the afternoon we would have retreat ceremony when we would lower the flag. The whole battalion would gather on the drill field for this. As the bugler was playing, Fox would stand beside him and howl. This was so funny that it got to be the highlight of the day. One day Fox didn't show up for his daily ritual. We all were wondering what happened to him. A rumor got out that one of the GI's had been transferred and took Foxy with him.

About a month later, Foxy came back. He was just skin and bones with his paws cut and bleeding. He had walked sixty miles down the railroad tracks back to our camp. We all wondered how he found his way, but we were glad to get him back and Foxy was so glad to be back with us. This was back at a time when there was not much to look forward to and Foxy gave us some pleasure.

When I returned from Service I went to work at Stewart's Drug Store. The hours were long—seventy hours a week, every other night until 9:00 p.m. and Saturday night until 10:00 p.m., and also Sunday afternoons. My wife Mary Sue was home alone a lot. I decided she needed a guard dog around so I found this beautiful Red Chinese Chow. He took his guarding very seriously. We could leave him in our car with the top down and he would not let anyone touch the car. His name was Pepper and he was devoted to us. One day I came home for lunch and Pepper was gone. Just about that time, I heard a knock on the front door. It was Mr. Edward Bailey who owned a big mill on Holly Street at that time. He said, "I have some bad news for you. Pepper was killed instantly when a load of cross ties slid off a truck on him." He said he was very sorry and would pay for him or do whatever I wanted him to do. I thanked Mr. Bailey for telling me, but I told him not to do anything. It was not his fault. I was just glad he let me know what had happened to Pepper. I would have been looking everywhere for him. We loved Pepper and missed him.

During the early 1950s we bought our home on Brown Street. It was just across Broad Street from Lexington High School. I began to want another dog and found this big Boxer. He was so friendly and lovable. Skipper was his name. He loved everyone and he thought they loved him. Skipper was what I called a free spirit. There was no law then about letting dogs run loose, which was a good thing, because Skipper went anywhere he wanted. He always made it to the high school during lunch hour, and he watched the boys practice football in the afternoon. Skipper was just a town dog and very streetwise. Space does not permit me to tell all the escapades he got into.

One night Skipper went out on the football field during a real game. This really caused a problem because the referees were afraid of him and they couldn't get him off the field. Skipper thought they wanted to play with him but they were afraid he would bite them. The crowd thought it was funny.

When the first basketball game of the season was to be played, I knew I had to keep Skipper out of the gym. I chained him to his doghouse with a big bridge nail.

You guessed it! Right in the middle of the boys game, in walked Skipper, dragging the chain with the big nail still in it. He was wagging his bobtail and happy to see everyone. All the little kids went out on the floor and were hugging him. By this time everyone knew he was my dog so I climbed down out of the stands, red-faced and all, and took him home. Skipper was just getting into something all the time, but he meant no harm.

Once I took Skipper to the Tennessee River with me to check on my boat. It was duck hunting weather. While I was in the boat dock, Skipper was chasing some tame ducks and fell into the water. He was slick haired, so he was very cold. When I got ready to leave, I couldn't find him. Guess what? He had crawled up in a man's nice station wagon to get warm and tracked mud all over the seats. I really thought I was in trouble this time but the owner said not to worry. He said it was just his duck-hunting car and he had left the door open. I was really relieved because it would have been the same to Skipper if it had been a Rolls Royce.

I decided on the way back home to give him one more chance, and then something would have to be done. Well, he did it. He walked out on the stage during a high school play. Then he decided to live at the jail for a while. At that time Mr. George Teague was the sheriff. Mr. Teague called me and wanted to buy Skipper. I told him that it would not be fair to take his money since

Skipper wouldn't stay there.

I have just touched the surface of all the things Skipper got into, but most of them were funny. I don't believe there was ever a dog loved by more people, and although he looked like he would bite, he never harmed anyone. He always had a sunny disposition. This happened over fifty years ago, but I bet some people still remember him. I finally gave Skipper to a man that promised me that he would take him away from Lexington. I guess he made friends everywhere he went. Some would say, "Why didn't you put him in a pen?" The answer is, "I didn't have the heart to take his freedom away, especially since he never harmed anyone."

Our daughter, Judy Carol, was born in 1960. When she was about a year old, I began to think about getting her a dog to grow up with. I found this beautiful Collie puppy that I thought would be perfect. We named him Lad. He was the complete opposite of Skipper. He was always around home and totally devoted to Judy. Lad let her play with him and where ever Judy was, he was close by and loved us all.

The only time Lad left our own home was when Judy and I rode our horses. Once he followed us all the way to Pin Oak Lake and back, about seventeen miles.

During those days I spent all my spare time building cedar chests and picnic tables in my shop. Lad stayed with me and slept under my table saw. Some nights when I quit work, he would be covered in sawdust shavings. He was also my constant companion. Lad and I spent many long hours in that workshop.

I believe all children should grow up with a Collie dog. We were fortunate to have such a wonderful companion as Lad for our family.

One night as I was going to bed, I heard Lad whining out our bedroom window. I went to check on him and found him lying in the snow unable to get on his feet. By this time, Lad was about thirteen years old. He had developed arthritis in his hips. I picked him up and carried him to my shop and placed him under the table saw. This was his favorite place. All night I worried about him freezing to death had I not heard him. I could not sleep for thinking what I should do. The next day I carried Lad to the vet and had him put to sleep. This was one of the hardest things I have ever had to do, but I could not risk him freezing to death. Mary Sue and Judy were hurt that Lad was so sick, but we all knew he would be better out of his misery. I buried Lad under the big oak tree at the back of our lot. Only those of you who have lost a beloved pet companion can know how we felt. It was like losing a family member. My shop seemed so empty without him. It took a long time for our family to get past losing Lad.

A few lonely months after losing Lad, we began thinking about getting another dog. We decided that it might be best to get a little housedog. We picked this small black poodle. She was so lovable and a bundle of energy. We named her Buffy. She brought back so much pleasure to our home again.

One Sunday afternoon, Judy was riding her pony. The pony accidentally stepped on Buffy. We thought her back was broken, so we rushed her to Dr. Moore. Dr. Moore was a little gruff. He said, "Buffy will have to be put to sleep." Judy began to cry and begged to take her home. Dr. Moore said, "Go ahead, she can't feel anything anyway because she is paralyzed." Then Buffy wagged her tail a little, which gave us hope. We discovered that it was just the back half of her body that was paralyzed. I made a little cart for her back legs with wheels on it. She could pull herself around and we would take it off at night. After a few months, we began to notice her wag her tail. Then later her legs began to move and finally she began to walk. Pretty soon, she was running and playing. Buffy lived until Judy was nineteen years old.

We buried Buffy beside Lad under the big oak tree in our yard. It took a long time to get over the hurt of losing her. We decided that we would never get another dog. We just couldn't

bear the heartbreak of losing another pet. The only down side of dogs is they have a short life span. But they sure add a lot to your lives during their lives.

When Mary Sue and I retired, we began to want a little dog that could travel with us in our travel trailer. Judy surprised us with this "little ball of fur." It was a Golden Pomeranian puppy. He was just perfect, just what we wanted. We named him Muffy. He made the perfect dog to travel with. I made him a special console for him to ride in between us in our truck. I would ride him around the campground in a basket on my bike. People would ask me, "What is that in the basket?" I would reply laughing, "That is my grand-dog." Muffy gave us many years of pleasure, and everywhere we went, people loved him, especially the children.

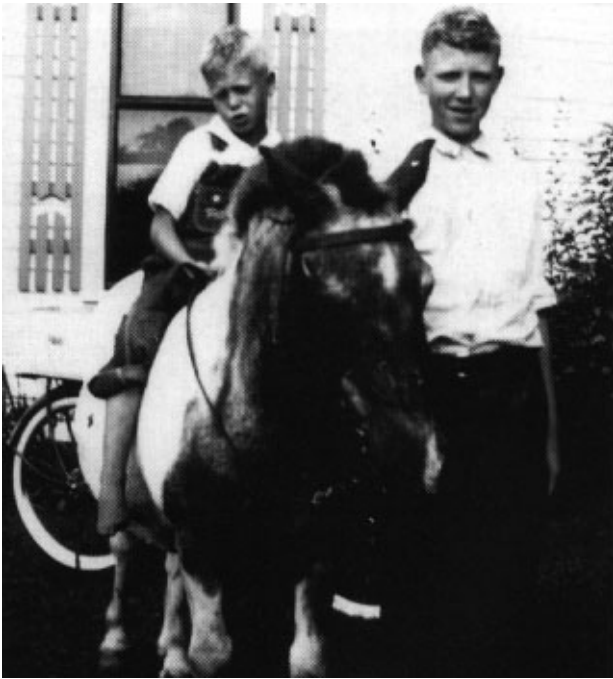
Muffy had one big fault. He would slip out when the door was open and explore the neighborhood. This proved to cause his death. One afternoon I was looking for him when a lady stopped me and asked if I was looking for a little golden dog. I said, yes, I was afraid he would get run over by the high school. She said, "I just hit him and he is hurt bad." I ran all the way to the place she said. Sure enough, he was lying on the side of Broad Street, and he was dead. I picked him up and cradled him in my arms and took him home. We were just devastated. I built a little cedar box and buried Muffy beside Lad and Buffy under the oak tree.

Mary Sue and I said that after this, we never would have another dog. We just thought we could not stand the heartbreak again.

Well, as you probably guessed, we now have a beautiful blonde Pekingese named Pumpkin.

All dogs have different personalities. This one was no exception. Pumpkin is very loving and protective and especially devoted to Mary Sue. We hope that he will live a long, happy life with us.

If there is a Heaven for pets, then I believe all dogs in our life will be there. I am sure you know how I feel if you love dogs. I once read a poem called, "The Rainbow Bridge." It tells about pets that have passed through this life and are at the bridge, well and happy, waiting to meet their beloved human companions. In this wonderful place the pets and their human companions will be together forever, carefree and happy.



Paul stands by as his little brother James Roy Williams rides Billy.



Mary Sue Williams holding Judy Carrol Williams, 1960, Judy's first Christmas



Paul with one of his model planes



Paul and his Bike



Judy Williams