

The bestest PawPaw

■ 9-year-old Silas boy pens book in memory of his beloved grandfather

By Dee Ann Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

SILAS – *If bestest was a word that would be how I would describe my PawPaw. He was the best PawPaw any body could ever have.*

The words – and the man who inspired them – are forever etched in the mind of the little boy who wrote them. They are a tribute to a man who made a profound impact on his family, especially his young grandson.

And now they are forever recorded in a newly-published book that has become a treasured family possession.

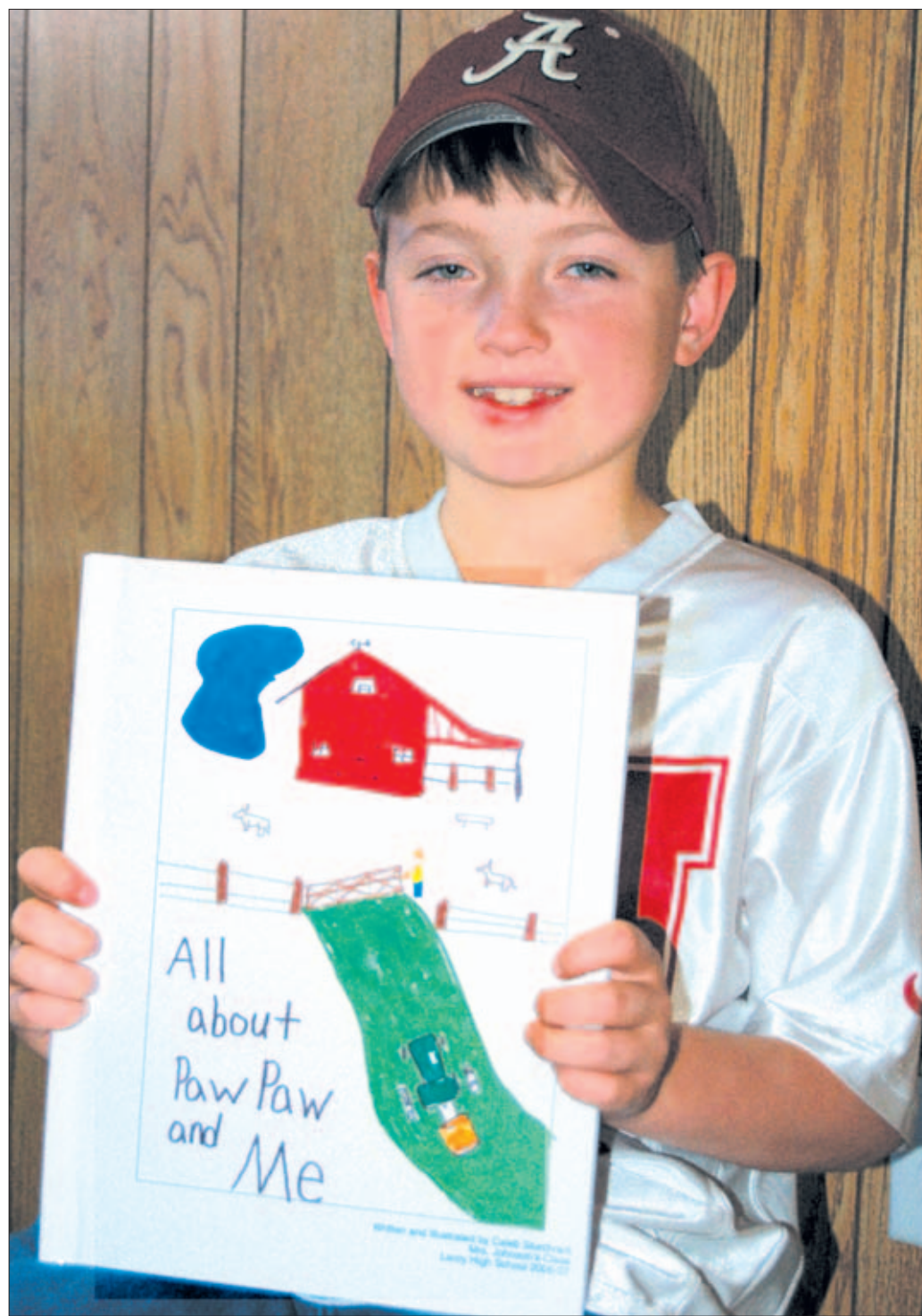
When Caleb Sturdivant of Silas got the opportunity to write a story for his 3rd grade class, he chose a subject that was near to his heart. From the first, there was no doubt about it – he would write his story about his grandfather, Charles 'Doll' Worsham.

A student at Leroy Elementary School where his mother teaches, 9-year-old Caleb authored the book *All about PawPaw and Me* as part of a voluntary class assignment that would result in the one-time publication of the hard-back picturebook, printed by a publishing company that promotes creative writing in schools. Caleb's book, as well as with the work of some of his classmates, was published by The Publishing Team at Nationwide Learning, Inc. in Topeka, Kansas.

For Caleb, the assignment was more than just an opportunity to write his own book. It was an chance to pen his thoughts about his beloved grandfather who had passed away only a few months before. The touching story is written with the innocent yet profound insight of a child who understood what it meant to lose someone he loved, someone who had been a treasured part of his young life.

'PawPaw Doll' had taught Caleb to love the outdoors, to love sports, and especially to love animals. With a knowledge of animal care, he would often help others tend to sick animals, and he would take Caleb along with him when he was called.

Me and him went to the cow paster with each other and we went to check and see if all of the cows where out there and we see do we have any



Choctaw Sun photo by Dee Ann Campbell
Caleb Sturdivant holds a copy of his new book *All about PawPaw and Me*, a tribute to his late grandfather. Caleb is the 9-year-old son of Royce and Kathy Sturdivant of Silas.



Caleb illustrated his book using pictures he drew about his grandfather, including this drawing of his PawPaw on his tractor in his pasture, where Caleb spent much time with him.

new calfs, wrote Caleb in his book. PawPaw would get a vet call and I would go with him if I could. He could help deliver a calf and I would pass him the "tools" he needed. Sometimes I would just hold the light so PawPaw could see. He was blind

in his right eye so sometimes I had to stand real close while he worked.

Weaved into Caleb's story are little tidbits that give the reader a glimpse into the heart of a grandfather who loved his grandchildren, and spent much time telling

them so.

My PawPaw enjoyed life. He enjoyed watching all of his grand kids play ball, Caleb wrote. He loved to watch 'D' play football for that was the



Drawings by Caleb Sturdivant

The last illustration in Caleb's book is a final tribute to his grandfather.

last game He got to see. But 'D' will go on to be the best quarterback Paw-Paw said just wait and see.

Justin likes to throw a baseball. PawPaw said he has such a great arm. "Throw that strike." I can still hear PawPaw say "You go, boy! That 'a way."

Throughout the book, Caleb talks about the time his grandfather spent with him, drawing vivid word pictures of his life with his beloved PawPaw.

PawPaw even took me hunting. He had a tree house we would go sit in. Being quiet and not talking to PawPaw while we were in there was hard to do.

In addition to the storyline, *All about PawPaw and Me* is illustrated by Caleb's own drawings – with a little help from his family.

"We knew that they were going to publish the book," says his mother Kathy, whose father inspired the story. "But then we found out at the last minute that we had to be finished by the following Monday morning, so he had to work fast to get it ready, and we helped him do a little bit of the drawing."

"We had to stay up until almost midnight finishing it," Caleb adds with a grin.

The heart of Caleb's book comes near the end of the story when he talks about his grandfather's illness and his final days with him.

My PawPaw got cancer. It took away a lot of his energy. Sometimes I would just tell him we had a new calf. He was too weak to go an see.

On September 17, 2006, My PawPaw went home to be with Jesus in heaven. My Momma's friend, Miss Tonya, told me to always remember that when I miss My

PawPaw to look up at the sky at night and he would be the brightest star shining.

With no certain publishing date, Kathy says they had no idea when the book would be finished. But an unexpected gift – a box of 17 books – came just before Christmas. Caleb and his mother kept the books hidden until their family members were together to celebrate the holiday. It was holiday that would be difficult for the family, with the loss of their father and grandfather still fresh.

But when Caleb brought out copies of his book and presented them to each family member, it was an emotional gift that became the most treasured part of the holiday.

"It was very emotional," says Kathy, dabbing her eyes at the memory, her son's eyes welling up with tears as well. "Caleb read the book out loud to everyone, and we were all in tears."

For Caleb and his family, the memories that were captured in the book were a much-needed gift that would last not only for Christmas, but each time they thought of 'PawPaw Doll'.

Although the book was a one-time publishing, with no more copies available for now, Kathy says that those few copies are treasures that will last forever for her family.

And for Caleb, the book is simply the story of him and his PawPaw – the man who had made a lasting impression on his life.

PawPaw I loved you and I always will. Life seems strange without you here. I know you fought to live til the end. I miss you so much. You were truly the bestest Paw-Paw of them all.



Choctaw Sun photo by Tommy Campbell
Caleb recently got the chance to meet fellow author and veterinarian Dr. John McCormack during the Christmas festival in Gilbertown. The two authors had much in common, from writing books to caring for animals. McCormack will be the keynote speaker for the Cattleman's Banquet this Saturday evening at the Butler Senior Center.

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