

Remembering a man who made a difference



PART ONE

It really does not take very long for our innovative English language to adapt to any situation and make it a part of the daily speech. Consider the Jackson Lumber Co. camps that were here earlier, the cooks in the camps, boiled coffee, and a special type of wedge. When these elements were brought together, a saying developed around them that lasted for several decades, although it is never used now.

The wedges that were used on the Jackson jobs to separate and widen the space between logs as they were sawed with crosscuts were made of persimmon wood that was shaped and tapered to a fine point. The wedge was then tempered in an oven of the type that was used in baking bread. After being baked, the wedges were really light and very strong. However, each sawing crew had an iron wedge for extremely hard jobs. It was very heavy, and was not carried around by the sawyers.

Mix these elements and learn a unique method for describing the cook's coffee, even while praising the cook: His coffee is strong enough to float an iron wedge. Life in the camps was hard, but for teenage workers, it was also a learning experience that was filled with fun. Consider Coy Kelley's rude awakening one cold morning as he was asleep on the ground near the camp. The foreman came by and scattered Coy's fire with a good swift kick. Even quicker, the foreman went up a tree, with Coy's help.

Coy was reared in Land. His first job was



This picture was taken before Rusty's birth. Coy Kelley is standing behind Annie Grace who is holding Pat. Buster is on the horse.

hauling lumber and logs for Cleve Kelley, and then for Newman Owen. He married Annie Grace Kelley, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Kelley of Land. Because of his work experience in the woods and with trucks, he was able to go to Waynesboro and work for Grover Scott. On all his jobs, Coy noticed a certain fact about all the big logging operations and learned from it; all the big companies passed up or ignored small tracts of timber because they were hard to reach or did not seem to be profitable. Coy was able to see a lot of profit in their smallness. When the time came, he acted upon his learning.

We are writing here about a man who made a tremendous difference in the lives of numerous persons. Even more, we personally owe a debt of gratitude to Coy that we will repay near the end of this article. There was a virtue in small things, and Coy was able to see it. It was necessary for him to work for others for a few years to raise cash before he could put his plan into operation, but when the time came, his plan worked handsomely. Bigness is not always the only way to go.

When Coy was finally able to put his plan into operation, he bought a sawmill and moved back to Land. The mill was small, but that was his intention, and for a spe-

cial reason. Since the tracts of timber were small and could be cut in a short time, Coy moved the mill to the tracts. This method of logging saved both time and gasoline, a major expense for a small operator. He trucked his rough lumber to Land and had it planed at the Nettles Lumber Company.

Moving the mill was no problem, for Coy could move it in one day and saw the next day. He bought two logger's dreams in Waynesboro and brought them to Land. Before the invention of trucks, vehicles of this type were mounted on railroad cars and used to handle cross ties. The idea behind these vehicles is very simple because they consist of booms, cables, and windlasses. When one is mounted on a truck, it is always placed at least half way from the front of the truck for balance.

The vehicles were used to "snake" logs from the woods to the trucks. They replaced mules and horses. But they also had other uses such as lifting heavy construction beams and other heavy pieces that were needed for buildings. The vehicles could move through the woods in any kind of weather because if they became mired down in mud, the cable would also pull them out.

Over the next few decades, Coy moved his sawmill to twenty dif-

ferent locations that included Tibbie, Scott Mountain, West Butler, Land, the Wallace Road, Riderwood and several locations east of Highway 17. After buying a seemingly unreachable tract of timber, Coy spent his last few minutes before going to sleep that night contemplating just how the timber could be reached. He had the answer the next morning.

The mill was different from those that are in use now, for the saw was a circular blade that was turned by a gasoline engine. The log was pushed against the spinning blade by a carriage which actually carried the log into the saw. The procedure now, in most cases, is to use band saws that can cut numerous boards from a log at one time. The log is usually pushed against the bands, but in some cases, the bands move along the log.

The thickness of the boards of lumber is determined before the cut is made, but in the old mills, acute coordination was required between the sawyer and the block setter who set the circular blade according to the sawyer's orders so as to get the most cuts from a log. Coy's sawyers through the years included John Tyson, Homer Champion, Mason Tyson, and Henry Broadhead.

The picture shown here was taken while the

family was still in Waynesboro, before Rusty's birth, and after the death of the couple's first child. Coy is standing behind Annie Grace who is holding Pat, and Buster is on the horse. Coy lost his own father at a very early age. Notice the care he is taking with Buster's horse. He was a very kind and loving father.

The family returned to Land during World War II, and there was a crying need for lumber, especially in the shipyards, so there was no problem in selling the lumber that Coy cut from the small tracts of timber. Most of the lumber was shipped from Land on the AT&N railroad. Since it left Land going both north and south, then lumber from Land went to every part of the country. This area has always produced quality lumber in abundance.

Coy was not a contentious person at all. Our own father worker for him several times during the off season for farming, and often described Coy's mild manner. He treated all his workers as equals and never raised his voice. Incidentally, with such an attitude, he never had any trouble finding workers.

The economic standard was different then, for ten dollars would buy enough food to last a family for a week, but Coy saw to it that his workers had more than

enough. The men never had a specific number of hours to work, but they always got paid for a full day.

There was one incident at Land that we have permission to use, so here goes. Coy never cared much for braggers, and he met one at the train station one day. Please understand that everyone in Land met the passenger trains when they came through each day. We will deal with that some more when this column takes up again, but for now just know that meeting the trains was requirement if you lived in Land.

Well, one day when the south bound train stopped, a bragger got off and flexed both his muscles and his ego, and he seemed to have the build to back up his words.

"I am the chief cook and bottle washer wherever I go," he bragged, "and no one challenges me." He was not exactly challenged in Land, but when Coy finished with him, the train was only a few limps away, and he painfully covered that distance in a very short time.

We enjoyed finding out all that was possible about Coy and offer our thanks to all those persons who contributed to these articles. Next week, we will deal more with Coy's wife and life in general around Land during the time that the family lived there. For now, just know that Coy made a difference for the better in the lives of so many.

Perhaps the best way to measure a man is through the depth is his compassion. If so, consider this and know that Coy measured up in every way. We have wanted to tell this story for a long time, and this is our chance.

There was a lady in Land who was dying of pneumonia, back in the days before there were antibiotics or penicillin. She had lingered between life and death for over a week, and it appeared that there would be no improvement.

Coy went to see her one day. After removing his hat, he walked slowly into her room and exchanged greetings. "Ma'am," he said, "I recently bought a different truck and I want you to know that I am available to take you anywhere that you might find some help. Just let me know."

If we seem too affectionate in telling about this incident, then consider that the dear lady

Was our own grandmother.

■ Letters

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tiful service and words of encouragement. And for the wonderful care of the Caring Angels. We want each of you to know how much easier you made this difficult time for us.

All our love and thanks.

**Peggy Ann Turner,
Paulette & Harrell Lafferty,
Misty, Stacey and Cameron Gibson**

We would like to acknowledge each thought, prayer, and the many acts of kindness. Your genuine concern is gratefully felt during the death of our loved one.

These things we will forever cherish. May God continue to bless each of you.

The family of Casey O'Field, Jr.

Thanks to my family, community friends, church family, board members, Central Office staff, senior citizens' group, and all school staff members for attending my swearing-in ceremony on January 3, 2007.

Also, thank you for your contributions of food for the reception and the time that you donated to prepare for the event. I am so proud of the teamwork.

I look forward to seeing you and serving you as your Superintendent of Education. Please drop by the Central Office and see the remodeled superintendent's office which was accomplished by volunteer teamwork from the school staffs and local merchants. Again, this spirit of collaboration to accomplish goals is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Sue Moore
Choctaw County
Superintendent of Education

W.A.V.E. Ministries

has plans to travel to Africa
in May 2007 for the
'Women WithFire' International Conference in Calabar, Nigeria,
sponsored by

The Revival Mission
President & Sr. Pastor -- Dr. Juliet Imaikop.
The American Conference Speaker will be
Prophetess Mia Wilkes.

**Wilkes would also like to take a small ministry team to assist
with this mission.**

However, the project is in need of sponsors.

Donations may be made on line at: www.waveministries.com or by mail to:

**W.A.V.E. Ministries, P.O. Box 8584, Mobile, AL 36689. Make monies,
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Mia Wilkes (For: Missions Ministry).
W.A.V.E. Ministries, International/Vision Church of SW AL
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Get yours on Tuesdays and Fridays!**