



## He never knew the meaning of self-pity

### PART TWO

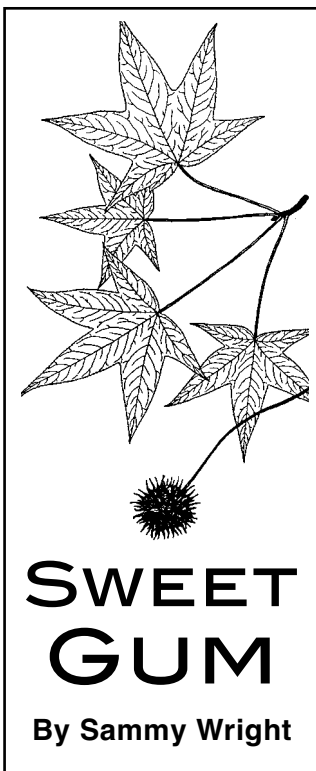
Fully aware that the grenade had completely severed his arm below the elbow, Jessie Abston thanked the lord that his companions suffered no ill effects from the blast. He made up his mind that the pain would not cause him to pass out, for fainting would increase the fear that his companions were experiencing, and they were already under a strain because the battle was still raging. Jessie told one of the men to wait until the Japanese were driven away, and then go for the medics.

He showed the men how to make a tourniquet from the empty sleeve that was still on the lifeless arm on the floor of the foxhole. He slipped into an unconscious state, not from the pain, but from a loss of blood. The next few days were mostly erased from his memory because of the heavy doses of morphine that the medics gave him to relieve the pain. He was carried by stretcher to a field hospital a few miles from the battle site.

A week later, he was loaded onto a hospital ship that already had several hundred wounded men on board. Because of his weak condition and exposure to thousands of mosquitoes, he developed malaria. The doctors moved him to a top bunk by an open porthole so that he could breathe fresh air. The ship sailed for the states, but it was a slow journey. The ship stopped to pick up other wounded men on some other Pacific Islands.

One day when a doctor was treating him, Jessie mentioned that he felt a movement within the stub of his wounded arm. He stressed that the movement caused no pain, but it was inside the arm. "Indeed, there is movement inside the arm," the doctor replied, "and you owe your life to what is causing it. The field medics infested your arm with maggots that are eating the dead flesh and preventing gangrene. The maggots will not touch the living flesh."

After the ship reached the states, Jessie traveled on a hospital train to an Army base in Ohio and underwent surgery on the arm. He was then sent to an Army hospital in



### SWEET GUM

By Sammy Wright

Atlanta for rehabilitation. Following a Brief ceremony in which he was awarded a Battle of Atati medal and a Citation for Bravery, a Good Conduct medal, and a Purple Heart, he was discharged.

Returning to Melvin, he started putting his cherished plans into action at once. Like most soldiers who returned from battle, he never talked about his experiences. He bought a farm north of Melvin and repaired the house that was on it. He farmed with a mule until the time came that he could buy a tractor.

Jessie never viewed himself as a handicapped person for he adjusted quickly to the loss of his hand and arm, and there was nothing on the farm that he could not do, and do extremely well. He never experienced self-pity. Instead, he found himself in his work, family, and church. An excellent cook, he could do everything from fry eggs to bake cakes. He loved fishing and learned to bait his hooks with just one hand.

One of Jessie's greatest achievements was calling up turkeys on a little box-like device that he carved from cedar. When a lady from Melvin went to a medical clinic in Meridian one morning, her doctor mentioned going turkey hunting near Melvin and having no luck at all. He also said that

he would do anything to bring home a turkey. The lady gave him Jessie's address.

The doctor approached Jessie a few days later with a proposal; he and some of his fellow doctors would pay Jessie to take them hunting. Jessie loved turkey hunting so much that he met the doctor's proposal with one of his own; if no one in the hunting party killed a turkey, there would be no charge. That agreement was followed for many years, and Jessie seldom failed to get paid.

Some of the doctors brought their teenage sons with them, and one cold March morning, Jessie used a variation of a timeless old story to give one of the boys a gentle lesson about life. The boy had left his gloves at home, and he complained about his cold hands several times. Jessie walked along, holding his gun over his shoulder with his ungloved right hand. The boy knew nothing about the left hand and arm when he asked if Jessie's hands were cold.

"This one without the glove is a little cold," Jessie said, while removing the handleless left arm from a pocket, "but this one is not cold at all." The boy realized that having no gloves was not comparable to having no hand. He never complained again.

Jessie and his wife reared nine children. The family worshipped at Donald Assembly of God Church on the Hurricane road with a congregation that was organized in 1944 by Rev. Alpheus Broadhead of Needham. Jessie was quickly appointed as a teacher of the Adult Sunday School Class, and as song leader. He kept both positions for over two decades. He bought a pickup and made removable wooden sides for it to keep young children from falling out. He drove through the neighborhood each Sunday morning and gave church member and their children a ride to the church.

One Sunday morning during the song service, the top of the church caught fire, probably from the spark of a nearby forest fire. Some kids pointed to the fire, and several men left the church to fight it. Jessie



Jessie Abston ... could still bag a turkey even with only one arm!

realized that a crowd would gather and hamper the men in their work, so he moved immediately from the end of one song into another, and the pianist, Mrs. Lena Atchley, realized that Jessie was using crowd control. Her fingers flew over the keyboard as Jessie, in a scene that resembled the sings at the Old Lusk Tabernacle sang: "Angels Rock Me to Sleep, In A Cradle of love." The family lived well, for the farm and Jessie's ability in the woods and on the streams provide plenty of food. When his luck was especially good, he held cook-outs and invited everyone in Melvin. He did all the cooking. Several people stressed to us that Jessie was an excellent cook.

Jessie loved children and kept a friendly relationship with all the youngsters in Melvin. Several folks who first went to church as kids on Jessie's pick-up are still in the church. We are writing about a person of

quality who touch many lives and made a difference. It was always that way with Jessie. He allotted his paychecks to his family during his Army service, and helped provide for his aged parents during their declining years.

Jessie saw an opportunity to make some money in the dogwood trade, a very lucrative business in the county for several decades. He built his own machine for processing the wood into blocks. He helped the local landowners by buying the wood from them, and also provided work for some of the men and their boys.

The dogwood blocks were sawed to specific lengths, and the ends of them were dipped in melted wax to prevent excessive drying. The blocks were sent to Mobile and other towns where they were made into spindles for knitting mills. The invention of a special hard plastic sent the dogwood business into oblivion.

Jessie lived a full life and passed away in 1987. His funeral, by his own request, was at the tabernacle in Old Lusk, and it was preached by Rev. Nin Duncan who had once served as Jessie's pastor at the Donald's Assembly of God church. Jessie is resting near the Old tabernacle where he spent so many happy hours.

We started this article over a year ago, with the help of Mr. W.D. Abston, Jessie's brother. Our own illness forced us to put it on hold. About the time that we were ready to start again, W.D. was killed in an automobile wreck. The situation appeared hopeless until recently when we met Mrs. Dawn Sikes in Butler and learned that her mother, Mrs. Betty Busby of Melvin is Jessie's daughter. With her help and that of Mrs. Nettie Marie Turner, another daughter, we were able to finally put this together. We thank all those people.

We took some notes from W.D. that seem rather appropriate now. He told us that Jessie opened up to him one day about the war, the first time that he ever actually wanted to talk about it. These are the exact words that Jessie spoke to W.D.

"I learned so much about the value of life on that ship back to the states. I met a man who had no legs, and several more who had limbs missing. One poor man had lost both eyes. I tried to teach him how to eat by showing him how to press a fork between his thumb and middle finger. He would guide the fork to his mouth by first locating it with his index finger. Eating was an ordeal for him, but he was getting better at it by the time that we reached the states."

"I saw a man with only a hollow cave in the place where he should have had a stomach. Those sights moved me, but every one of those men wanted to live and were eager to get home. Looking at them, I realized that I would never wallow in self-pity or complain. Losing a hand and arm is a small price to pay for living — — —"

In such a great country."

## Johnny Wyche: A soldier who loved God, his family

### JOHNNY LOUIS WYCHE PFC - CPL U.S. ARMY

Johnny, as most of us would call him, was born in Meridian, MS on Jan. 17, 1932 to Harry Joe and Nancy Carleen Connell Wyche. Johnny grew up in the Russell area, went to school, and had a good life as a young boy.

With the War in Korea raging, Johnny got his greeting — as most did — from his local Selective Service board. I loved the way those notices read: "having submitted yourself to a local board composed of your neighbors for the purpose of determining your availability for service in the Armed Forces of the United States, you are hereby ordered to report to the local board named above at 104 Shields Bldg. Meridian, MS., at 9:30 a.m. on the 5th day of March 1953, for for-



### Our Veterans

By SFC Richard M. 'Pete' Allen (Ret.)



warding to an induction station. Board will furnish transportation to an induction station, where you will be examined, if accepted, you will be inducted in the Armed Forces."

Johnny passed and reported to Jackson, MS., where he and others took the oath. He reported to Fort Jackson, S.C. for his Basic Training, better known as "The Sand Box". After weeks of hard training, Johnny came home for a short visit.

Now, all of us veterans know how it feels

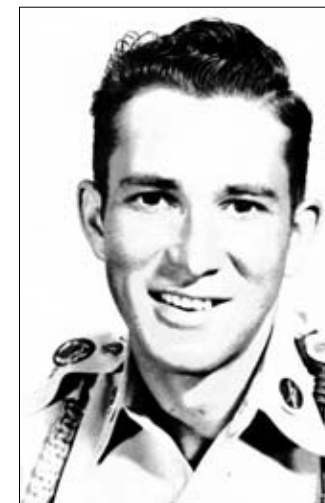
to come home in a uniform, look at the eyes of all the girls, and know that you are the man in control! Johnny would report back to Fort Jackson for orders. With orders in hand, he left for Fort Benning, GA., where he was placed in Company "H", 30th RCT, as a Heavy Weapons Infantryman. Here he would train both in Class and Field Training with heavy weapons.

Johnny enlisted in Basic Non-Commissioned Officer School, and when this training was over, he

was released from Active Military Service and transferred to the 100th Special Infantry Company, USMCR Marine Corps Reserve Training Center at Key Field Meridian, MS., to complete eight years of service under the Universal Military Training and Service Act. Among his medals and decorations were the National Defense Service Medal and Good Conduct Medal.

Johnny went to work for Motor Supply Company in Meridian. He married Sue Nesmith on December 7, 1955 at South Side Baptist Church. Two years later their first child, a daughter, Suzie Suzanne, was born, and four years later, a son, Johnny Louis Wyche, Jr. came on the picture.

In October 1966, they moved to Butler, Ala., where Johnny and his family joined First Bap-



Johnny Wyche, Sr.

tist Church. He was an ordained Deacon, and worked with the R.A. Boys and the youth choir.

Johnny managed Motor Supply's Butler Store and when the store closed in 1987, went to work for Greers, and later at James River Paper Mill where he spent eight and one half years.

On Jan. 11, 1996, Johnny had a stroke and was paralyzed on his left side. He was confined for eight and one half years. In August, 2004, he became very sick and went in the hospital for some time. He returned home, but had to be placed in the nursing home in Butler.

Johnny passed away on Sept. 30, 2004.

He was a good person, husband, father, and he loved his children, and grandchildren. Most of all he loved the Lord. Johnny and Sue lived here for 38 years, and he was buried in Butler Cemetery.

A lot can be said about Johnny L. Wyche. As a person, he was there when needed by all, his church, and the R.A. boys.

(ED. NOTE: Readers may get in touch with Pete by email at allwis64@yahoo.com.)

## Arrests made in car wash burglaries in Butler, Pennington

By Tommy Campbell  
The Choctaw Sun

BUTLER — Burglaries at two car washes in different towns led two local chiefs of police to compare notes last week, leading to a joint investigation that culminated Friday with the arrest of two Pennington residents.

Butler Chief of Police Chuck Breland said that the car wash on North Mulberry Street next to Country

Corner was broken into with "brute force" sometime early Friday morning.

"The burglar entered the room where the money-changer is located and made off with several hundred dollars in quarters and tools," Breland said. The burglar also caused several hundred dollars worth of damage to the building and equipment.

After learning that Pennington Chief of Police Kenneth Thomas was investigating a similar burglary at the Hampton Car Wash on Ala. 114, Breland and

Thomas began a cooperative investigation that led to the arrests of Joseph Dillon Mazingo, 20, of 83 Seminole Street, Pennington, on charges of burglary (3rd degree) and theft of property (3rd degree), and Joseph Adam McIlwain, 20, of 106 Lake Lane, Pennington, on charges of burglary (3rd degree).

Bond for each man was set at \$5,000 in the Butler cases, Breland said.

The Sun was unable to contact Chief Thomas prior to presstime for information on the Pennington cases.