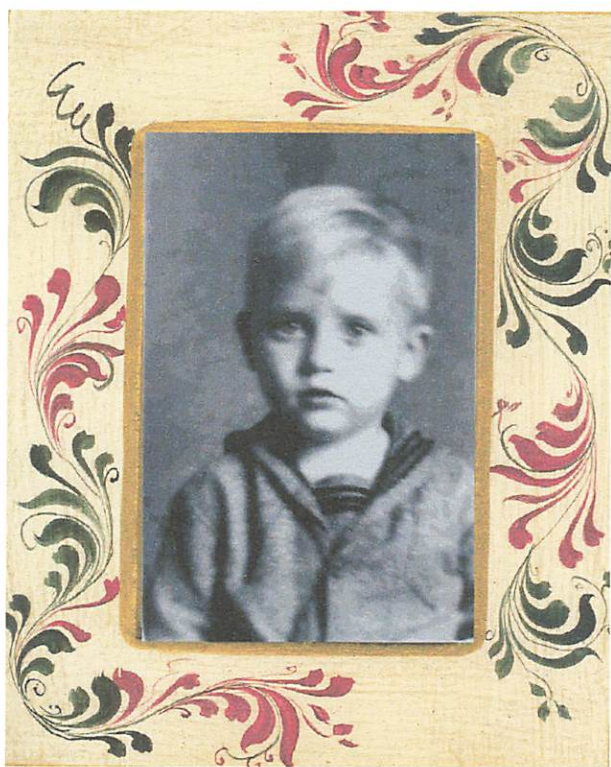


*Reminiscing*  
*The Good Old Days*



*Volume 1 - 1932 - 1942*

**Benny B. Bristow**

# Reminiscing The Good Old Days

Volume I

1932 - 1940

Benny B. Bristow

# Living In The Good Old Days

## My Journal

**O**n December 23, 1932, there was born to Pelham and Coy Bristow, a baby boy, and they named him Benny Brooks Bristow. At the time of my birth, I had a four-year-old sister named Barbara Jean. She and I were born in Lynn, Arkansas; Lawrence County, and in the house that mamma and daddy had built in the early years of their marriage.

### The First House

The house was constructed with wide one-inch rough sawed vertical oak boards. The roof was made from split red oak shingles. Daddy, with mamma's help, split all these shingles with a tool called, "a fro."

As I got older, I became familiar with this house. It was located about one fourth mile from the Lynn school. There was a footpath that curved its way through the woods near the school. That path also led to town. I vividly recall that there were two small stumps located on this path, and instead of going around them, my brother and I would jump over them.

### A New Brother

Speaking of my brother, in 1936, when I was four years old, my brother Burrell was born in this first house.

When it was time for Burrell to be born, his birth also took place in this first house, and Dr. Guthrie delivered both of us. I can still remember when he was born. Barbara and I did not have any idea that we had a new brother on his way. At this time, it was a deep dark secret about how babies were conceived and born.

When it was time for Burrell to be born, daddy rushed Barbara

and me away to spend the night with Grandma and Grandpa Bristow. They lived less than a mile through the woods south of our house. Again, we were not told why we were spending the night away from home.

However, the next morning bright and early, daddy came and got us. Can you imagine the surprise we received when we walked into the back corner bedroom of the house and found mamma in bed with a new baby boy? In those days, new mothers stayed in bed several days after giving birth.

## A Painful Face Washing

Since mamma was not able to take care of us, a friend called, Miss Clinton, came to see that our every need was met. But she had a problem with me! I didn't want her to do anything for me. When it came time to wash my face, I refused her and said, "I want mamma to do it." Mamma said, "You need to let Mss Clinton wash your face." I said, "I don't want Miss Clinton to do it, I want you to!"

Miss Clinton said to me, "If you will let me wash your face, I'll be real easy." When mamma insisted that I let her wash me, she just barely touched my face with the cloth. Then when she had finished, she said, "Now you see, I didn't hurt you, did I?" My response to her was, "You just almost killed me!" At the age of 92, Mamma still enjoys telling about this.

## Happy Memories

As the years passed, this first house helped make many happy memories for all of us. I can still see this house in my mind. The front of the house faced a dusty road that made its way along the side of a wide ditch. On the other side of the ditch was Mr. Dieter's large field where corn was planted and cultivated every year. In the early spring, there were pools of water in the ditch, but one place directly across from our house was the deepest one, and it was alive with tadpoles, bugs that swam on top of the water, and very small perch.

This is where we spent many happy hours playing and fishing.

Our fishing was very simple. Since we did not have store bought fishhooks, we had to make our own from strait pins. We took daddy's wire pliers and shaped the pin like a hook. With white cotton string from Roy Pickett's store, we tied one end to the head of the pin and the other to a small tree limb. Therefore, with a little luck, a few happy accidents, and a tiny piece of a tempting red worm on the pin hook, we would catch a tiny perch. This was a thrill, and at each success, we would cry out with excitement, "Look, I got one!" But the best thrill of all came when we caught a little sun perch as its rainbow colors sparkled in the sun. That was truly the catch of the day.

## The First House Described

The first house that we lived in had a pointed style-paling fence that surrounded most of the yard. The back of the house had a long porch across its width with a cistern on the end near the kitchen door. Since the porch was low on the ground, it was convenient for us to run in and out of the house. However, when this happened too often and mamma got tired of hearing us slam the screen door, she would say, "You children stay outside and play."

The front of the house faced the road and ditch, but it was high above the ground and was not used too often. Should anyone choose to go out the front door and down the steps, they were greeted by a large, beautiful rosebush. In the spring, it displayed a ten-foot diameter bouquet of red roses growing upon long, arched canes. Mamma told me recently that her mother, Ma Boatenhammer, gave her a cutting to begin this rosebush.

## Inside The House

Located on the north end of the house were two rooms, the kitchen on the back, and what we called the front room on the front. The interior doors in this house were made from one by fours, covered

with cardboard panels that were cut from boxes. Instead of having factory made doorknobs, there were string latches. To open and close the doors, when the string was pulled, a wooden latch was lifted from its notch. When the door was closed, the latch dropped back into its notch. Well, don't laugh, because they worked!

The front room had a keen-heater, wood-burning stove to keep us warm, and the kitchen had what we called a "wood-stove" for cooking. In addition to the split wood used for heating, there was a large pile of very small pieces of split stove-wood used for cooking. We also used these small pieces of stove wood to build things.

The fires in these stoves were started most of the time by using kindling and kerosene that we called coal oil. Another way that was sometimes used to begin fires was to have dry corncobs soaked in a can of coal oil (kerosene). Speaking of coal oil, we had only a small one-gallon size coal oil can that provided oil for the lamps and fire starting. Therefore, many trips were made to Roy Pickett's store to get oil. Roy filled the can with only one turn of a handle mounted on the red coal oil square oil tank. The one-gallon can had a small spout with a cap to close it, but in the event that the cap was lost, a small potato was pressed over the end of the spout.

## Inside Games

In the wintertime, we were confined to the house, but still needed to play. To help entertain us, daddy hammered in large nails on the wall between the living room and the kitchen, just above the wood box. Therefore, we spent many hours throwing rubber canning jar rings trying to catch one of these rings on these nails. Each nail represented different numbers, and we always tried to ring the largest number.

## The Kitchen

In the kitchen, mamma cooked all our meals on the wood-burning cook stove. She used the stove also for canning food from

the garden. I remember mamma getting her arm burned while canning corn. This was a very upsetting time for me.

But there were times when food was very scarce, especially when gardens failed. In fact, one year the rain stopped early in the spring and many had crop failures. This failure included gardens, and this caused many families to need and receive help from the government. Among the commodities that we received was a large supply of grits. We probably ate them three times a day, but that was fine with the Bristow children. I remember saying, "I like grits because I can swallow them without having to chew." Mama continually told us that we must be thankful for what we have. I don't ever remember being really hungry.

## A Great Garden

At this first house, I can still remember the large garden. It was located near the barn and close to the very popular outside "two hole" toilet. The fence around the garden was made out of wide tall wooden palings that were pointed at the top. There was a large gate that seemed to always drag on the ground when it was opened.

One day I came home from school and daddy was using a horse with a breaking plough to prepare the garden for planting. For the first time in my life, I smelled the freshly plowed soil, and saw the red worms wiggling from inside the clots of dirt. Perhaps this is where I first became hooked on the joy of gardening. Mamma always kept an old worn out galvanized washtub, located just inside the entrance of the garden gate. In this tub she grew early lettuce and all kinds of plants to be later set out in the garden.

Just north of the barn was a large wooden gate, but this gate was used only when something like horses, wagons, and cows needed to be brought through. On the side of the gate next to the barn were steps that we used to get over the fence. These were used often by all the family, or by anyone crossing our property to take a shortcut to town.

## That Mean Old Rooster

At one time, we had an old rooster that loved to attack anyone who was afraid of him. Mamma recalls that Barbara was his favorite target. When she came from school, she would call from the steps for mamma to come meet her because of that old fighting rooster. Mamma probably carried a big stick, and this old rooster knew not to mess with mamma!

## My Friend Bob

Between the steps and the barn was a stack of oak fence posts. They were stacked by pointing the top ends, in the shape of one side of a pyramid so that water would drain off to keep them from rotting. What was so special about these posts? Well, this is where I discovered a lizard that became my pet and friend. It was different from other lizards because it had lost its tail. Therefore, I named it Bob, because it was bob-tailed. Every day I went to these posts to see Bob. In fact, this lizard Bob got to point where it was not afraid of me.

## The Card Class

As early as I can remember, mamma made sure that we attended Bible class and worship at the Lynn Church of Christ. Dolly Pickett taught my first Bible class. Her class was referred to as the card class. For many years, the church at Lynn used literature published by the Gospel Advocate Company located in Nashville, Tennessee. The material that was provided for my first class was a small card. On the front of the card was a picture that represented a Bible story with a different Bible verse each week called "The Golden Text." On the back of the card was a printed Bible story relating to the picture on the front.

Some time ago, I wrote Dolly a letter telling her how much I appreciated that first class, and how much it had influenced my life. Dolly has now departed this life, but surely her years of teaching will live on in the lives of her students.



## Scared To Death

Henry Osband's wife was named Nora and she had a mental illness. In fact, she spent time over the years in what we called in those days, "The Insane Asylum." One Sunday morning during worship, Nora had some kind of mental seizure, and it just about scared us children to death. I didn't know whether to stay in worship or to run for my life. Later, mamma told me that she was sick and couldn't help what she was doing.

Recently, mamma told me of another thing that Nora did. She said that she heard a man coming down the road in front of her house, in his wagon pulled by a team of horses. She put a large black coat over her head, and just as he passed near her house, she ran out screaming. This scared the horses and the man had to control a run away. Mamma said that Nora said, "I don't why I did that, but something just came over me to do it!"

## How Are You Doing?

There was also a lady who lived up the road near Henry and Nora Osband, named Riller Noland, and she also crossed our property on her way to town. It seems that she couldn't go to town without talking to mamma on the way. Mamma would ask her, "How are you doing, Riller?" She would always answer, "Oh, I ain't no ciant." Even today at the age of 92, when I ask mamma how are you doing, she answers, "I'm like Riller, I ain't no ciant."

## Let There Be Ice

In these early years, we didn't have electricity or any type of icebox for keeping our food cool. In fact, most of the time we didn't even buy ice. Bill Casper lived in town and had an icehouse in front of his house with blocks of ice for sale. He had 25-pound blocks for 25 cent and 50 pound blocks for 50 cent. But most of the time we didn't have the money to buy ice. On rare occasions when we bought ice, the block was tied in crisscross fashion, with grass string that we called "Ice String." By the time daddy carried a 25-pound block home,

water was falling from it like a heavy rain. When he finally got the ice home, it was rolled up in an old quilt to slow down the melting.

Sometimes, to keep food cool, it was placed in a bucket and let down into the cistern just above the water level. There is one thing for sure, with this method of cooling; we never had any food to freeze!

## A Hole In The Ground

The cistern was our only source of water. The cistern was a deep hole in the ground that was approximately three feet in diameter, and about twelve feet deep. The walls of the hole were plastered with a thin coat of a mixture of sand and cement, mixed with just the right amount of water so it would spread evenly and smooth. The opening of the cistern was extended about the ground, about two feet, and a wooden platform covered the top. Located in this top platform was a small-hinged wooden door that was opened when drawing water, or when running water into the cistern with the trough.

Water that went into the cistern came from the roof of the house. The troughs were “V” shaped, and were made out of wood. These caught the rain that fell on the roof. As the water ran down these troughs, it poured into another wooden trough that emptied into the cistern. The cistern trough was set aside when it was not raining, because it would be in the way of drawing water. It was common to hear mamma say to daddy when it began to rain, “Did you fix the trough?” Sometimes daddy would answer, “No, but I will as soon as the rain gets through washing off the roof.”

## Source Of Water

To get water from the cistern, there was a galvanized bucket with a rope and a hook, that attached to the bail of the bucket. The bucket was let down to the water with the rope that fit over a ten or twelve-inch pulley. Once the bucket reached the water, the secret was to give the rope a tug so that it would sink under the water. When

the bucket finally went under, it was time to begin drawing up the bucket filled with water.

There were two situations when I dreaded drinking the water from a cistern. One was when a cistern was new and the water had the flavor of cement. The other was on rare occasions when a dead mouse was found in the water of the cistern. But whatever problem that had to be faced, we still had to use the cistern for our source of water.

## Dig It Deep

There were some people in Lynn who had enough money to have a water well dug. Only a professional could do this with a drilling rig mounted on a truck. When we saw a truck with a tall derrick pointing toward the sky, we knew that there would soon be a new well. The man would bore a hole in the ground about six or eight inches in diameter until he reached a stream of underground water. Then he would insert a large metal pipe or casing into the hole.

Then to get water, a special long metal bucket had to be used. Once the bucket was let down to the water and filled, it was brought up out of the well. To empty this long, narrow bucket, there was a trigger at the top of it, and when this trigger was pulled upward, water came gushing out from the bottom of the bucket. The water was most of the time pure and cold.

We never owned a water well while I was growing up at either of the two houses where we lived, because the underground streams where we lived were deep. I recall that they had a well dug at the Lynn school, and they had to drill over three hundred feet. But down in the bottom land only a few miles away, they would just drive a metal pipe down only a few feet and would strike water. When we went with our Uncle John Penn down to the Penn farm, they had a hand pump where we would get a drink of water. He would pour in a small amount of water to prime the pump, and in a minute or so we had good tasting cool water. They had just driven a pipe down a few feet and found plenty of water.

## Wash Day On Monday

I recall vividly that every Monday was washday at our house. Mamma used most of the day to wash and dry our clothes. Washday involved drawing many gallons of water from the cistern to fill a large iron black pot and three galvanized tubs. First of all, a fire had to be built under the big black pot to provide all the hot water that was needed. Daddy usually built the fire before going to work, and then mamma kept it burning until the water was hot.

One of the galvanized tubs was used for washing the clothes with soap by scrubbing them on a rub board. The rub board was a wooden frame with a piece of metal built into the frame. The piece of metal had a series of raised ridges for the clothes to be rubbed over. Evidently, to use this board for hours was a backbreaking job. Most of the time for washing clothes, mamma used the lye soap that she had made in the big outside black iron pot. She had a recipe that she used to make the soap. However, on a few occasions, I recall her using a big white bar of P & G soap that had been purchased from Roy Pickett's store.

Once the clothes were thoroughly scrubbed, they were placed into the tub of rinse water. But the white clothes were placed into the third tub where bluing had been added. The bluing was supposed to make the clothes whiter. I could never understand how blue water could make white clothes! Once the clothes had been washed and rinsed, they were placed on the fence to dry. I cannot remember us having a clothesline at this first house. However, I do remember clothes covering the fence that surrounded the house.

## Also Bath Day

Washday was often bath day! Mamma didn't want to waste anything, and especially that tub of bluing water. Therefore, when I was very small, she put me in that tub of bluing water for my bath. I guess she thought the blue water bath would make me clean and white. There is one of these bluing baths that I will never forget!

To keep from bending over while rinsing the clothes, she set the tubs on wooden strait backed chairs, the same chairs we used at the eating table. On this particular occasion, I was doing a lot of moving about while getting my bath. When I moved too close to the edge of the tub that was hanging over the chair, down came tub, water, Benny, and all! I literally created a tidal wave on the floor of the kitchen. Well, I didn't get a spanking, but mamma sure had a few words to say about me not being still while getting my bath. That was my first and last spill, while taking a tub bath!

## We Named Him Bill

Also, at this first house, there was an elm tree close to the corner of the back porch. One day a young squirrel appeared in this tree that was very gentle. We kept playing with him until he became a real pet. We named him Bill, and early in the morning before we went out to play, Bill would be hanging on the back screen door. It seemed that he wanted us to come outside, and perhaps wanted us to feed him. One day Bill just disappeared and we never knew what happened to him. But before his leaving, Bill brought a lot of happiness into our lives.

## A Super Car

Inez and John (mamma's older sister and her husband) always had more money than our family, therefore, John had purchased a new 1929 Chevrolet car. I thought that car was among God's greatest creations, and longed to go home with them from church so I could ride in it.

When I was at their house, I would go out to their red unattached garage where they kept it, and then I would take imaginary drives. It had a large wooden steering wheel that I enjoyed turning to the right, and then to the left, but the greatest thing of all was the large porcelain knob on the shift that towered high above the floorboard. The background of this knob was white and shiny with a pattern of red swirls encircling it, and it almost looked good enough to eat! I thought everything about that car was so beautiful.

## Trip To Heaven

One day when I was not at my best behavior, mamma said, "If you don't act nice, Jesus won't take you to heaven with Him." I immediately said to her, "I don't want to go to heaven with Jesus! I want to go with John and Inez in their car." At the age of 92, mamma still remembers me saying this to her.

## My First Trip To Town

One of the great joys of my early life came when I convinced my parents that I was old enough to walk to Lynn by myself to Roy Pickett's store to get a sack of dried pinto beans. As a general rule, we always bought a quarter's worth, and in my case, this was as much as I could carry. In fact, the fifty-cent size sack looked like a large size sack of sugar, and there was no way that I could carry a fifty-cent bag. Finally I was told that I could go to town to get a twenty-five cent sack of beans. It was probably close to a half-mile walk, and I felt a little anxious during the trip. But I felt very important when I told Roy that I wanted to buy a quarter's worth of pinto beans.

With a big silver scoop, he poured the beans into a brown sack and weighed them on the platform of his shiny white scales. Then he wrapped the sack with a few strands of white cotton string. From the front pocket of my overalls, I gave him the quarter that I had guarded with my life, because mamma had told me, "Don't you dare lose that quarter." Then I hurriedly made my way back home with my mission accomplished. For the first time in my life, I felt like a big boy.

## The Old Storm Cellar

In this first house, there was a storm cellar. Daddy knew that mamma would never be happy living anywhere without a storm cellar. The cellar at the first house was constructed out of concrete, and it had the damp, musty smell that was associated with cellars. Moisture would form on the walls, ceilings, and floor, and during an extremely wet season, water would collect on the floor.

When it looked like a storm, daddy had to make sure that there were no snakes in the cellar. In fact, this was the only time she could get him inside the cellar. For some reason beyond my knowledge, most of these storms came in the wee hours of the night when I was so sleepy. Mamma would wake us up by saying, "You boys wake up, it is coming up a bad cloud, and we're going to the cellar."

She would always try to get daddy to go with us, but he would never go. Sometimes she would say, "Pelham, you better go with us, this looks like a bad one!" He would say, "If it gets too bad, I'll come on." But he slept through all of them.

One time I told mamma, "Why do I have to go, daddy is not going!" She would say, "Your daddy is big enough to make up his own mind, but you're not, so you have to go."

It was always a rough trip! Most of the time it would be raining, with lightening flashing and thunder crashing. The tall gum trees between the cellar and the barn would be swaying back and forth from the forceful wind, but we still had to go. I can remember the smell of a flickering kerosene lantern as it gave its tiny light in a cool, damp, and musty cellar. As we sat in the cellar on seats that were made from a rough sawed, oak board, time seemed to stand still. So, anxiously, but not too patiently, we waited for the storm to blow over.

Finally, we would slightly raise the cellar door, peek out and say, "It's over!" Sometimes mamma would say, "Not yet, it is still lightening and the wind is still blowing." Those were sad words to hear.

## Mamma's Surgery

During those early years, mamma had to have surgery in Batesville, and while she was away, we stayed with Pa and Ma Boatenhammer (mamma's parents). Pa and Ma lived on a farm about two miles south of our house. We visited with them as much as we could, but never as often as we liked. Therefore, it was good to spend this time with them.

## The Itch

But there was one part of this particular visit that we didn't enjoy. That which was called in those days "the itch" began to be passed around in school. When Ma heard about this, she was not taking any chances of us getting it, so she got out the big jar of yellow sulfur. She covered our bodies from head to toes, and the odor from this stuff was sickening. If we had entered a "Stink Contest" with a skunk, the skunk would have lost. But that ended any problems that we might have had with "the itch."

## Going To Town

I enjoyed going to town with Pa in his iron-tired wagon. His two horses were named Jim and Charley, and Pa talked to them often and made them walk the line. To get to Pa and Ma's house, there was a road or lane that began next to John and Inez's house. The road was made of two ruts that were often rough and very nose-y. However, occasionally we would come to some sand in the ruts, and all of a sudden the noise would cease, except from the occasional clonking of the wheel hubs. When we turned onto this road, we knew that we were almost home.

## Ma And Pa's Farm House

Pa and Ma's house was built upon a hill with the back porch high above the ground. They had a big dog named Bozo, and the only real talent that he had was his skill to catch a biscuit in his mouth that was thrown to him from the back porch. When Bozo did this, it was always a big thrill to me!

Down the hill from the back porch, were a small creek, a pond, and Pa's barn. There was a corner of Pa's barn that was called "the cotton seed room," and it was fun to play in the seeds. Across the rolling acres from the barn were the fields where Pa farmed. I remember the long curved rows of terraces that Pa made to keep the land from washing away. The terraces and all the space between them were planted with rows of cotton and corn.



South of the house, also under the hill was the water well. It was covered with a split-board shingled roof shed, that was supported by four vertical posts. The well provided plenty of running water, but someone had to run down the hill to get it!

## The Orchard and Garden

Then, north of the house were the orchard and the garden. These provided fresh fruit and vegetables for good, healthy eating. There was a pathway that led from north of the garden that provided a short cut to our house for those who were walking. Wanda, mamma's youngest sister, would pack her suitcase and would come to visit us for a few days. Mamma had a brother named Bryan, and he was drafted into the army during World War II. All the family was concerned for his safety, but all were happy when he finally came home without any injuries.

## Mom and Dad's Families

All of mamma's family was close to us, but we were not very close to daddy's family. However, while daddy's parents were living, we visited them often. When mamma would take us to visit them, she would say, "You kids don't ask your grandma Bristow for anything to eat." Well, we said we wouldn't and kept our word, that is, up to a point, because we had ways and means of getting grandma to give us food.

Sometimes we would go to the pie safe near the kitchen and would just stand there and look. Grandma would ask, "Do you children want something to eat?" When we said yes, grandma Bristow went to work to provide cookies. Then we had another method that we used to get something to eat without asking. We would say, "Grandma, mamma told us not ask you for anything to eat." This would also open the pie safe doors for some treats.

We were also close to Maggie, one of daddy's sisters. She never married, so she wanted to visit with us often. She would walk through the woods between our house and grandpa and grandma's

house, and she would talk every minute at full speed. She seemed to think of us as the children she never had.

As to the rest of daddy's family, we saw them only on special occasions, but even daddy seemed to enjoy being with mamma's family more than his own. As I got older, Burrell and I would occasionally go to the Bristow Dam. This was daddy's home while he was growing up. His brother, Archie, his wife myrtle, and their boys lived there. But these were only rare visits. Most of our years growing up were spent around mamma's family.

## Christmas Gifts

It is true to say that the early years of our lives in Lynn were years of poverty. We were rich in so many ways, but as the old saying goes, "Money was as scarce as hen's teeth." Daddy worked at every possible job, and we always had food, but we had very little money. When I was born, this nation was coming out of a severe depression, and times were difficult.

Therefore, we did not expect many gifts for Christmas, but we were thrilled about what we received. I vividly remember one Christmas when Burrell and I each received a very small cap gun that cost a nickel, and a penny box of caps. The box of caps was a red sheet filled with small dots of powder. We would tear off a single cap, lock back the hammer of the gun, insert the cap, and it was ready to fire. When we pulled the trigger, there was a thrilling blast as blue smoke came from the gun. We used those caps sparingly, because once they were used, we knew that they could not be replaced.

## My Greatest Christmas

As we got older, there seemed to be more money for Christmas. The greatest Christmas that I can remember was spent with John and Inez Penn. Inez had a big green Christmas tree that was decorated with red and green roping, shiny foil icicles, colorful balls, and lights that had little glass stems that were filled with tiny

moving bubbles. To make that night even more beautiful, John and Inez had electricity in their house. We never had electricity in the first house, only kerosene (coal oil) lamps. Therefore, the lighted tree and their house filled with so much bright light was an amazement within itself.

Under the tree were many presents, but in one corner there was something hidden under a bed sheet. While growing up, we always received our gifts on the night of Christmas Eve, so we waited anxiously for the moment to come to receive our gifts. How surprised Burrell and I were when the bed sheet was removed and before our eyes was a big, red, shiny wagon. We couldn't believe that we had a factory made toy.

## Hop Into The Wagon

Until this special night, our toys had been such things as blocks of wood and glass bottles used for cars and trucks, bow and arrows made from small tree branches with string from Roy Pickett's store, and sling shots. But now, we had a real red wagon. After all gifts were exchanged, I remember us pulling that new wagon up the lane to spend the night with Ma and Pa Boatenhammer. That was truly a special Christmas to remember!

The days that followed found Burrell and me having a great time playing with that wagon. Bobby Long lived with Grandma Long, Pa's mother. After Pa's dad died, she married a man named Long, and they had a son named Ray. When Ray's marriage broke up, he brought his two children, Melba and Bobby, to live with his mother, Grandma Long. Therefore, we spent a lot of time playing with Bobby. He also enjoyed playing with our new wagon.

One of us would take our turn riding in the wagon while the others pushed. We made up words that were used to communicate with the one doing the pushing when we wanted to go, stop, slow down, to go to the right or left, and to back up. I have forgotten all these exact words, but it seems like the word "cow" meant to go,

“calf” meant to slow down, and “bull” meant to stop. Needless to say that we spent many happy hours playing with this wagon.

## Other Toys

I don't remember too many other toys that we received during these early years. But I do remember getting a red ice truck that had two plastic blocks of ice. Then, some time after this, we each got a large cap gun. It was made different from most cap guns that I had ever seen. It had an extra long barrel, and it used a different style of caps. Instead of the normal roll of caps, it used a small circle of caps that were placed on the spinning chamber of the gun. When one cap fired, it turned the chamber to the next one. This gun also brought many hours of fun as Burrell and I played cowboy.

## Roll The Wooden Balls

There was one game that we received that all the family enjoyed. It had two, 2-inch wooden balls that were used to roll onto a metal pan. The pan was shaped like a horseshoe with six or seven 1-1/2 inch diameter holes spaced to receive the balls. The holes had various numbers painted under them. From about six to eight feet away, we would roll one of the balls onto the pan, hoping it would stop on the hole with the largest number. The adults enjoyed this game as much as the children.

## Look Out Crows

Then I remember a “Crow Shoot” game. It was very simple, but it brought many hours of fun to the Bristows. The game consisted of a cardboard fence, four cardboard crows, a cardboard rifle style gun, and some rubber bands. The crows were placed on the fence, and we took turns trying to knock them off. The rubber band was stretched from the end of the barrel of the gun into a notch just above the pretend trigger. With our finger, we gradually removed that end of the rubber band and it would shoot. If we didn't miss the target, one of the crows would flip off the fence. The crows had numbers 25, 50, 75, and 100. It was a thrill to hit and knock down the crow

with the largest number. When there was a direct hit, the crow would flip instantly backward off the fence. This was one of the few bought toys that we fully enjoyed.

## Sling Shots

But the majority of our toys were homemade, either by Burrell and me, or by some adult. The list included sling shots made from a forked tree branch, narrow strips of rubber cut from an old car inner tube, and a leather pocket, made from the tongue of an old worn out shoe. With these slingshots, we shot hundreds of small rocks at birds or anything else that looked interesting.

## Paddle Boats

We also made paddle sail boats. These were made from a discarded wooden paling, taken from a garden fence, white cotton string, three small pieces of strips of wood, a strip of rubber cut from an old car inner tube, and a soda pop cap for decoration. We would take our boats to the creek, wind up the small paddle with the strip of rubber, and it would go from one side of the creek to the other. This too, brought many hours of fun.

## Peddle Guides

Another popular hand-made toy was what we called a “Peddle Guide.” Don’t ask me where the name of this toy originated, because I have no idea. This toy consisted of two major parts. First of all, there was the medal ring taken from the hub of a wooden iron tire wagon. Joe Adams, the local blacksmith would usually have extra ones for us to use. The second part was a strip of lumber approximately 1/2 inch, by 2 inches, and 30 inches long. A Prince Albert tobacco can was flattened, folded long ways, and formed into a “U” shape. This “U” was nailed to one end of the lumber. The metal ring was pushed along as it rubbed inside the “U” shaped can. We would roll these several miles during a day. We especially enjoyed going up and down the ditch banks near grandma Long’s house. We even invented a brake that would stop the metal ring or wheel immediately. We

didn't get a patent on this, so if you ever want a brake on your "Peddle Guide," let me know and I will share the secret with you.

## Bow And Arrows

We made bows and arrows from small tree branches. Again, we put to use the white cotton string that came from Roy Pickett's store. He had a large spool of string that was about four or five inches wide at the bottom and two inches at the top. It was mounted on a small metal holder that had a small hole where the string was threaded. We used every inch of string that we received for many projects. As to the bows and arrows, don't worry; the ones we made were not too dangerous!

## A Crawling Tractor

Then we made what we called a little tractor. For this, we used a small wooden sewing thread spool, a small strand of rubber, a matchstick, and two small pieces of soap. The soap was used on each end of the spool as washers, the rubber strand was threaded through the hole of the spool and anchored with a shorter piece of match stick. Then a longer match stick was placed on the opposite end. Holding the short matchstick, the rubber band was wound up with the longer matchstick. Then when it was set down on the floor, it would move slowly across the floor as the rubber band unwound. I thought this was on the cutting edge of modern technology!

## Off To School

While living in this first house, I began attending first grade at the Lynn school. Just like many in my family before me, my first teacher was Miss Maude Brannon. She began teaching others and me how to read by using large charts mounted on the wall. I recall that these charts had pictures to illustrate the stories, and she would point to the words and letters as she told the stories.

One of the stories that I remember was about a little boy who had a hole in his blanket, and he was trying to figure out how he

could get rid of that hole. Finally he had an idea. He said, "I will take the scissors and cut the hole out." So, he cut out a large circle around the hole, but to his surprise, when he got rid of the hole there was a bigger one. I just remember feeling sorry for this little boy!

As I think about the classrooms in this school, I remember the rooms having a long row of black paper near the ceiling with the ABC's displayed. Each year the teacher referred to these as we learned how to form letters and learned how to write. But, from the looks of my writing today, I must have ignored the curves on these letters.

## Our First Move

Sometime during these early years, we had to leave this first house to move to Walnut Ridge. Daddy got a job with the W. P. A., and they moved him up to the position of Time Keeper. But this new position required him to work in the basement of the Post Office in Walnut Ridge. I can't remember too much about living there, but I do recall that we lived in a small house with a garden and "out house" located in the back.

Mamma tells me that on one Easter morning that we awoke to a snow on the ground, and that Barbara, Burrell, and I hid Easter eggs in the snow.

When we moved from Lynn to Walnut Ridge, Pa Boatenhammer (Mamma's daddy) gave her a cow to provide us with fresh milk. However, while living at Walnut Ridge, I decided that I didn't like milk. Since daddy didn't like milk, I guess I thought that I was not supposed to like it. So I rebelled, and it was several months before I would touch a drop of milk. But the time came when I decided that it was all right to drink it. Also in later years, daddy would drink pasteurized milk from the store, but he never liked farm milk directly from the cow.

## To Eat or Not To Eat

But after a short time in Walnut Ridge, we returned to Lynn. We all enjoyed many hours of playing while living in this first house. When our cousin, Jeanette Penn, would visit, Barbara and Jeanette would make playhouses. They would gather small rocks that they used on the ground to mark off the outside walls of the playhouse. After their house was completed, they would do a lot of cooking and baking, but their favorite seemed to be mud pies. To prepare these pies, they mixed up some thin mud and placed it in old worn out canning jar lids. Then they would let the mud pies dry in the sun. After the pies were dried and removed, they would try to convince Burrell and me that they were good to eat.

Yes, I believed them until I took my first bite. I can still feel the sand and grit in my mouth from that very first bite. However, after this, they knew that it was useless to try to convince me that mud pies are good to eat.

## Look Out The Window

I remember some big and beautiful snows while living in this first house. The real thrill came when I awoke early, and mamma or daddy would say, "Get up and look out the window." The snow would be covering every inch of the yard, and hanging on the fence and tree limbs. One of the thrills that came from a new snow was the snow ice cream that mamma made. It was only snow, milk, sugar and vanilla flavoring, but it was so good that I ate it so fast and so much that it froze my throat going down.

On some mornings after it snowed, we would set out a homemade rabbit trap. The trap was a long wooden box with a trap door and trigger. When a rabbit hopped inside the trap to get a bite of food, he bumped the trigger and the trapdoor closed. It was a thrill to get to the trap and see that the door was closed. Most of the time this meant that we had caught a rabbit. Daddy knew how to skin them and we enjoyed the meat that mamma cooked.



## Finding Babies

As I mentioned earlier, we were never taught about how babies and baby animals were conceived and born. In fact, someone told us that baby animals were dug up out of the ground, and we believed them. I remember one morning very early, going to the hog pen and seeing some newly born baby pigs. The thing that bothered me was how did this new mother know where to dig in the dirt floor of the hog pen. The thought occurred to me, if I had known they were there, I would have dug them up myself.

## Bible Classes and Worship

As you might expect, attending all services of the church was very important to mamma. During these first years, daddy didn't want any part of going with us, but this didn't discourage mamma from going and making sure that we were there. The Bible classes and worship were considered as one service, and it was virtually unheard of for anyone to attend only the time of worship. When the Bible classes were over, the singing began as soon as we could assemble.

We did not have a preacher living in Lynn, but we still at times had preaching. Various preachers would visit often, and when they came, they were asked to preach. Also, we had Gospel Meetings that would last up to two weeks.

## A Tempting Penny At Church

Mamma insisted that I always sit with her during worship. However, as I got older, I began wanting to sit with some of the other boys. This idea didn't sound just right to mamma, but one Sunday I convinced her that it would be okay for me to sit with Jerry Morgan. After all kinds of warnings as to what would happen if I misbehaved, she said that I could.

I fully kept my promise until Jerry took from his pocket a brand new shiny penny. This got my attention, and I sure needed to

do a little talking with him. So, I came up with the plan of looking toward mamma and talking when she was not looking. For a little time, my plan worked. We were having so much fun with this penny! But there was one thing that I didn't consider. Mamma had eyes in the back of her head.

Therefore, to my surprise, I looked up and here came mamma. I could tell by her countenance and walk that she was on a mission and that I was the target. When she finally arrived, she got me by the arm and pulled me from where I was sitting. She didn't let me walk in a normal way, but with the whole church looking, she lifted me by my arm and rushed me back to where she was sitting. This was when I first learned that crime doesn't pay!

## Milking The Cow

As we lived in that first house, we had a Jersey cow that provided us with plenty of rich milk and butter. In fact, as I got older, I learned how to milk that cow. It was fun at first, but it finally got to be work. There was a man named Henry Osband, who lived a mile or so up the road north of us, who would walk across our property on his way to town. When Henry passed by while we were milking,, he would say, "Why are you milking that cow? It won't do any good, you'll just have to do it again tonight." Sometimes I wondered if he was right, until I remembered that the family needed milk for drinking and for churning butter.

Henry also had an old gray mule that he used to plow in his garden. However, this mule was very slow, but still helped Henry get the job done. From his mule, we developed the saying, "I did the best I could, and that's all Henry's old mule could do!"

## The Construction Business

It was at this first house that Burrell and I decided we wanted to go into the construction business, so we began building a new house. We had big plans! It was to be built out of handmade dried bricks. We began construction by going down to the creek to get

water. The place that we chose to build upon was near the hen house. To make the bricks, we mixed a batch of sandy dirt and water, and then formed them out to dry in the sun.

I recall an incident that happened during our effort to build this house. As a general rule, Burrell and I got along pretty well considering that we were brothers. However, while building this house, we had a serious falling out! I can't even remember what the argument was about, but it got so bad that I remember picking up a rock and throwing it at Burrell. Until this day, I am glad that he was a good dodger, because the rock just barely missed his head. For some reason, the house was never completed. Perhaps the project got into too much work, or maybe we learned that there is a vast difference between dreaming and doing.

## Hog Killing

When the weather became extremely cold, the announcement was made, "Today is hog killing day." We didn't have too many hogs ourselves to kill, but every winter, daddy would get invited to help someone else. I was too young to do much helping, but you can be assured that I knew how to get in the way. In fact, I wanted to get a close-up view of everything that was happening. So, I learned that the first thing that happened was to heat several gallons of water to the boiling point. This was done in the old black iron pots. While the water was getting hot, the men built a three-leg type log scaffold to be used for hanging up the hog for processing.

When the water was boiling, it was placed in a 55-gallon barrel in which the slain hog was placed so that all the hair could be scraped off of the skin. When they were finished with the scalding and scraping, the barrel was removed, and with the hog still hanging, all the inside parts were removed. Then the hog was cut up into hams, shoulders, sides, and other parts. Separation was made of the meat that would be ground into sausage. Mamma would sew small sacks together, made from cloth flour sacks, in which to pack the sausage.

## Let The March Wind Blow

One of the things that we looked forward to every March was the making and flying kites. The only kites that we could use were those that we made ourselves. For the cross pieces of our kites, we chose very small tree branches that would slightly bend. Then we used some of Roy Pickett's white cotton string from his store to surround the branches. Next came the paper to cover the kite. Again, we had to choose wrapping paper from Roy's store. However, one year we found some old paper from a newspaper GRIT. For the glue, we had mamma to make us some flour paste. It was the kind that she used to hang wallpaper.

Once the kite was made, we used torn strips of a worn out bed sheet for the tail. It was so worn and thin that it was easy to tear it into strips for the tail of the kite. Then came the process of getting string. We got our string by using an old woven sock, the kind used by crafters to make stuffed monkeys. When we got the sock to begin raveling, we would patiently wind the string onto a short piece of tree branch.

Finally when the kites, the tails, and the string were complete, we anxiously made our way to the top of the hill on the east side of the cobblestone schoolhouse. Sometimes we were like the Wright brothers who made their first attempts to fly the first airplane. Our kites would not fly. There were usually two major problems, the wind would not cooperate, or the tails on the kites were not long enough. We finally learned that if the kite went around and around and made a nosedive into the ground, that we needed to add a longer tail.

But on the occasions when everything was just right, we spent hours watching them climb so high that we would use the full length of our sock string. Burrell and I always looked for something to invent. Therefore, we came up with the idea of adding a parachute. With a small wire hook, and a parachute made from a large man's handkerchief with strings attached to each corner, we hooked it on the string of the kite as the kite was flying.

At least in theory, the wind would blow the chute up the string. After it climbed up the string several feet, we would jerk the string and the chute would open and float to the ground. It must not have been a raging success since we didn't patent it.

## Conclusion

Well, the time came when we moved from this first house, but you can be assured that we had experienced many wonderful things while growing up there. We eventually moved to the house where Grandpa and Grandma Bristow lived, and there we began a whole new set of memories.

Certainly, there were many other things that happened at the first house that have not been mentioned, but hopefully the memories that have been recalled will stir up your own minds to think about the good old days!

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