

Remember The Long Day In The Mill ...The Kind Doctors

By W. Leo Kirby

I remember when there were very few cars in our village and when anyone was sick and after the drug store had closed for the day, we all went to Dr. Campbells, the Pharmacist. He would walk to the drug store and get the medicine and fill prescriptions, a distance of about 1/3 mile downhill. He had been known to make the trip two or three times during the night and never received extra pay and would not accept any money for his services.

I remember some of the tales Plato Holland would tell around 1919. He told us about airplanes and said some day they would be so common we would not go to the trouble of looking up to see them. He also told about television, radio, and trips to the moon. Plato sold fried ice cream sandwiches.

I remember quite a few tales told by "Unk." Gossett, Uncle Bunion Hodge, and "Frog Eye" Davis. I remember Oscar Brown and his 15 cent haircuts and 10 cent shaves. I remember Charlie Jett's shoe shop in his home on Stone Street and then on Milliken Street.

I remember when about 1925 when the mill started up at 7:00 AM and ran until 6:00 PM. If you worked in the weave room and were out for the day, you would have to go back at 11:00 AM and work until 1:00 PM. This was called "quartering". This gave the hands time to go home to dinner.

I remember Dr. Kirkpatrick, Dr. Stowe, and the present Dr. Hill. They were all very faithful and received all kinds of vegetables, eggs, chickens, milk, butter, and most anything the people had for there was very little money. Dr. Stowe was a great believer in calomel.

They say the late Mr. Tom Hartness would peddle soft drinks all day and would have sugar or syrup in the depot and would not have the money to get it out. He would come to Pacolet to Mr. John S. Brown, borrow the money, go back to Spartanburg and get the sugar or syrup out and then he and Mrs. Hartness would bottle drinks most of the night. Mr. Hartness would deliver them the next day.

I remember the great ball games and the rivalry between all the mill teams in this area and about the crowds, most of the games were played on Saturday afternoons. The mills only ran until 12:00 Noon Saturdays. Mr. M. B. Lancaster, the superintendent at the time, was at all the ball games and sat in the dugout with the players. His favorite words were "By golly boys let's beat them."

I remember working in the mill during high-water with water up to our knees removing cloth and belts.

I remember the early fire protection we had. There were fire hydrants scattered throughout the village; there were pumphouses where the equipment was kept. When a fire was discovered the "wildcat" whistle (siren) would blow and all the shop men would be required to answer the call. They would have to go to the pump house nearest the fire, get a little two wheeler, roll the hose to the nearest fire hydrant and fight the fire. Luckily, we never had any serious fires or injuries.

In the early 20's, we had the biggest attraction in the county, "The May Festival". People would come from all over to see it. It was put on by the school, under the direction of Miss Myrtle Venable and Miss Katherine Dozier. The festival consisted of all kinds of dances, songs, exercises, and gymnastics. Mr. V. M. Montgomery was head of the company and he had a large stadium built on the side of a hill at the school in which the festival activities were held. It was made of concrete and still stands overlooking part of the village. It cost quite a few thousand dollars.

I remember the day nursery that the company operated for the mothers who worked. They would bring their children to be cared for while they worked. The children were cared for by a nurse and a cook prepared the meals.

I remember the clinic the company set-up with quite a few beds. It was staffed by three nurses--Miss Belle Fuller, Miss Harmon, and Miss Gaston.

I remember the old mill bell ringing every hour on the hour and the first ring was at 9:00 PM. That was the signal for me to head home or else. I remember the whistle blowing at 5:30 AM to wake everyone so they could be at work at 7:00 AM.

I remember the Employee's Saving Bank which went through the depression with flying colors under the direction of Mr. J. R. Westmoreland. The only place we had to swim was in Pacolet River. My father told me to never go into the river until I learned to swim. I have never learned.

I remember before the company had trucks that they used mules and drag pans. They would have from 20 to 30 mules and they usually worked together and when dinner time and stopping time (6:00 PM) came they would turn the mules loose and they would go as fast as they could to the barn. Each mule knew his own stall. It was a very dangerous practice but every one watched for them and no one was ever hurt.

I remember when the mill stood idle for 10 weeks -- no one had any money and not much credit. The company stated it would extend credit in the amount of \$2.00 per man and wife and 25 cents extra for each child per week. Everyone thought it was a gift and was very disappointed when we learned we had to repay it. Most people used "jay flips" for money. Jay flips were denominated coupon books which could only be spent in the company store and the value of the coupon book was deducted from one's pay check.

I remember the brass band sponsored by the mill. Also Harrolds Harmony Hounds and the American Legion Drum and Bugle Corps. We had plenty of good music.

I remember Jack Petty, the mill policeman with one arm and a long sharp hook for the other. He had all the small children well under control, for they were all afraid of the hook. All of his policing was done on foot. He would learn of someone doing something illegal and he would go to them and tell them he knew about it and would catch them if it continued. If he found out that it was still going on, he would stay up several nights in succession and catch him. He would then get a crowd together around the company store and brag about catching him and tell about warning him. Then Mr. Petty would do everything he could to help him get out of trouble. Ocassionally he would put the culprit in jail to await trail.

I remember about a Wofford College student writing about the textile people and their unkempt homes, greasy dishes and yellow teeth that caused quite a stir in most of the textile communities.

I remember a trial held in the YMCA building with about 200 spectators, and when the jury returned with a not guilty verdict, it sounded like someone had hit a home-run in the last inning of a ball game.

I remember when the company store sold caskets. I remember when Mr. Plyler was in charge of the school. I remember going to work in 1925 and working 55 hours for \$9.90. If I had been good, my father gave me the 90 cents. I would get it in nickles and dimes so it would look and sound like it was a lot.

I remember when we were sent to the store for a chicken. We went to a coop outside the store and picked one out; tied its feet together and carried it home; rung its neck; picked all the feathers; then mother would cut it up and cook it.

I remember before we went to bed at night we had to bring in coal and kindling, then in the morning we would have to take out ashes ^{be}fore starting a fire.

I remember when they were working on the Baptist Church we played ball behind Mr. Mabry's and Mr. Harmon's. All of us little boys were imitating some famous ball player. I was Ty Cobb and after Granny called me three times and I did not come she Ty Cobbed me all the way home. M. C. Sullivan saw her whipping me home and as long as he lived he called me Ty Cobb.

I remember when Boyd Green and Jack Petty would bring the money in the box with a strap across his shoulder all through the mill to each person, and if there was not change in Matt James' trouble was on hand.

I remember the tennis courts between Mr. Lancaster's and Mr. Allen's be-

hind Norman Brown's, behind the Baptist preacher's and in the play ground.

I remember the rivalry between each department in the mill playing softball. All games were played where the swimming pool is now.

I remember when the meat market was in a building dug back in a bank across the road from where the boiler room is now. Also when it was where the machine shop is.

I remember when Tom Sutton ran the ice plant, then later George Kirby. They would make the blocks of ice then someone (Les Pierce, Buddy Tate, Soap Henry and others) would put the blocks on a wagon or truck and then drive to all the houses in the village selling nickle, dime, and quarter's worth at nearly every home. No one had electric refrigerators.

I remember when we had two voting precincts--Pacolet Mills and Trough. One voted in the Methodist Church and the other between the doors of the drug store and the company store.

I remember when someone died very few people had money to have a grave dug. Someone would usually hunt volunteers to dig the grave and usually the pall bearers would fill the grave and place flowers.

I remember about 1931 I rented 3 rooms on Stone Street for 75¢ each week with water, lights, toilet paper, and brooms from the mill, all furnished.

I remember when a colored man drowned up the river and was in the water several days, and washed up just above the mill, and the odor was terrible; and the man who recovered the body, while waiting on the reward, sat beside the body and ate hot dogs.

I remember the time someone placed a stick of dynamite against a pine tree near Short Line and exploded it and it shook dishes out of the Super's cabinet; a lot of confusion was raised.

I remember the medicine shows that came to "Can Hollow" with their songs and dances and jars of tape worms and other worms that came from people after taking their medicines.

I remember all the opossums uncle Berry Lee kept in cages in his cellar.

I remember the influenza epidemic in 1918 when a lot of people died.

I remember the disagreement between Dr. Kirkpatrick and Rev. Wilson when Rev. Wilson ordered medicine for the "Flu" and gave it to the sick.

I remember when Coy White was electrocuted getting a bird's nest from among transformers at the power house.

I remember when the mill pond was drained to recover the body of Earl

Green.

I remember when Mr. Rogers and his 3 sons drowned in the Rock Quarry pond. Never learned how or why.

I remember when uncle Davis Kirby and Dr. Blackstock were the only veterinarians in our area.

I remember when cold weather came to town, most everyone's water pipes would freeze. When was the last time you heard of a pipe freezing?

I remember seeing a corpse on Stone Street that had money over the eyes. When a person died and the eyes did not close good the money was their way of closing eyes.

I remember when we went down to the YMCA and company store, there would be at least a dozen boys with shoe shine boxes--shining shoes for 5¢. And 5 or 6 boys selling ice cream they made themselves.

Do you remember--the itch, lice in hair and bed bugs? Fine combs, Larkspur lotion and Citizide?

Leo wrote the first part of his memories about 1975. In 1985 he updated them to that year.

1985--What a difference in the Pacolets since my last writing. The Old Mill has been phased out, torn down, and hauled off. The New Mill has been closed. The cloth room still has a few employees making specialty items.

The YMCA building or company store has been torn down.

The mill office was closed but has been leased to the Town of Pacolet Mills.

The hotel has been torn down.

All the houses on "Bossline" and the doctors house has long been gone.

The base ball park has not been used in quite a few years.

At one time we had stores all over the town--Bonner Rothers, "Deck" Gossett, Carl Whitlock, Howard Kirby, Mr. Spake, B. S. Thomas, Oscar Horn, Boyce and Bud Hames, Stop and Shop. Now I doubt if you could buy a dozen eggs in either Pacolet Mills or Central Pacolet. The only grocery stores in our area are Coleman's and Community Cash. Brown's Store, the oldest in our area, has also closed.

When I worked in the company store a coke and hot dog cost 10¢ and a 1/4 lbs piece of candy cost 5¢. Now you can get special 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ ozs. for 35¢.

We do have fire departments and one of the best rescue squads in the state.

When have you seen a bunch of bananas hanging upside down in a grocery store or a 24, 48, or 96 lb. sack of flour?

Pacolet Mills School burned to the ground.

Pacolet High School and Pacolet Primary Schools have been sold. All children in the Pacolet area going to high school have to travel to Broome Hi along with children from the Cowpens, Clifton, Converse areas.

People are living much longer these days. We have four in their nineties or getting close--Forest Kirby, Hugh Jones, Bill Quinn, and Tobe Robeson.

During the Second World War, help was scarce in the mill. People could work as many hours as they wished. Mr. Hugh Jones had a pretty good size family and he worked two shifts most every day. Everybody said, he was killing himself. He is still living while most of the ones telling him they are already gone.

In the 1920s, most every home had a garden somewhere around their homes.

In the 1940s, there were service stations on most every corner. There are very few now. The ones selling gas never come out of the building for any reason; they sell gas about 17¢ per gallon cheaper than the regular stations.

Around the 1950s, we had never heard of Kudzu vines. Some were brought here from China to stop soil erosion; now it just about has taken over.

When the houses in Pacolet Mills were being built, a Mr. Lovling was brought here to beautify the community and he did a very good job, but, he said, a lot of people were stepping on his flowers. He has been accused of planting devil heads. Now they are almost everywhere and if you step on one you will always remember it.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the homes for Whites and Coloreds were built apart. The Whites lived in the village. The Colored lived on Quarry Street, Pine Street, and Mayesville.

When I was a very small boy, the only shoe shop in our area (1920s) was Mr. Charlie Jett's. Mr. Jett, then Mr. Jett, Clyde, and Charles. Clyde who is about 78 years old has been operating the shop continually but he only works from 9:00 AM 'till 1:00 PM. In my opinion, when he finally retires, he will be missed more than any one in our community. He still has people bringing shoes from hundreds of miles away for he has been fixing their shoes for years.

When I went to work in the mill in 1925, there were no "dope wagons" in the mill. I had some spare time on my job and I would go to Bonner's Store for people and get coke, crackers, candy, and Moonpies. I made more doing that than I got for my work in the mill. I also worked part-time for Bonner Brothers and the mill payed-off on Tuesdays. The customers would come to the store after getting off in the mill; they would

pay their bill or at least part of it then they would give the weeks grocery order and most of the folks wanted it delivered that night.

In the early years, most every home would have hogs, cows, and chickens. The company furnished car sheds and cow stalls. After a rain, it sure was a mess delivering Larro cotton seed meal and hulls and the very big, bulky bags of beet pulp. At hog killing time, Arthur Pace and Amos Scales would stay busy killing hogs.

Just think if things were now as they were then--no Social Security or retirement plans. What would we do?

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