



When I was growing up, every little holler in Letcher County had two or three little companies operating in the Elkton or Whitesburg coal seams 30 to 70 inches deep, severing the hills we call home and employing as few as two and maybe as many as thirty miners to extract a mineral that had no local utility unless you lived far away from the woods where you could cut fuel saplings and have it burn without stinking you out of house and home.

Kentucky River Coal Company owned most of the mineral rights and it would lease out a little test-acre block for mining if you had the wherewithal to grade a road, build a loading chute and talk the pover company into running some wire up the side of the mountain so you could have juice to run a breast drill for blasting holes, a fan to pump out dynamite smoke and a pump to keep water off the coal so you could load it in either electric buggies or pony-powered ches and get it out from under the mountain and ship it off to Pittsburgh where the mineral owners wallowed in the wealth of your sweat and blood and earned many dollars on every dime they paid you for risking your life, breaking your back, and breathing in the fumes and dust destined to kill you.

In other words, if you could come up with a few hundred dollars, you could start your own coal company and many people with pull at the banks did just that. More often than not, two or more brothers would get together and form a company wherein they pledged everything they and maybe several other relatives owned. Name a last name in Letcher, Knott, Leslie, Perry, Pike, Harlan, and Floyd Counties and I guarantee that at one time or another there's been a coal company named after a bunch of brothers.

When the last names ran out and you could no longer use Adams Bros., Collins Bros., Cassell Bros., etc., etc., because the state understandably had this rule about not using the same names for corporate identification; the little companies resorted to using the first names or initials of wives and daughters or just the capital letters of their names. A.A. & A.B., B.B. & B.C., even X.Y. & Z. (Xerxes, Young & Zeiger) Coal Company. Little Brenda, Big Lucy, Uncle Henry, and countless other kinfolk had mines named for them. Mines destined to last for no more than a couple of months or two or three years if you were lucky and then it was off to another lease or more often broke and the bank got the collateral or you started over and prayed that the next seam would have had top (a roof of shale or slate prone to caving in, instead of sandstone).

In the late 50's/early 60's Letcher County alone had more than 300 active coal companies from year to year and they were going out of business about as fast as they started but it took about seven years to get your way off the books once you were incorporated. Pretty soon you run out of names if you are competing with all the brothers in several surrounding counties.

But what many of the mine owners had in common was fighting

chickens. I happened to live in the head of Blair Branch, a deep little valley in Letcher County which had as many as five different "companies" mining coal at the same time and four of the five owners of those mines shared a passion for gamecocks. Rooster fighting is what we called it on the hill.

These guys had converted old barns into arenas and on Saturday nights they converged and encouraged game roosters to engage in mortal battle. They bet big money on the outcomes of these fights and I dare say that many a brother has lost everything he made in his coal company by betting on the wrong chicken.

By living at the foot of the hill below the mines on 60 acres of beech and poplar covered hillsides, my family had an ideal place for game chickens to roam and forage. We'd take a rooster and a dozen or more hens each from several mines, put them in the barn, teach them where to roost and turn them loose about that time of year. Given room to run, the males didn't fight each other and tended their own broods. The deal was that we got \$5.00 a head for all the male chickens when they were around 6 weeks old and we got to keep the pullets for fryers because that's about all they were fit for. The hens only laid about 20 eggs a year and if you don't know much about chickens, let me assure you that does not pay the feed bill when the weather gets cold.

On the other hand, fried chicken got to be less than a delicacy during the summer and fall on Blair Branch but we had plenty of it, sometimes three meals a day. I've actually swapped fried chicken for cold bologna many times and thought I had the best end of the bargain. Still

\$5.00 bucks a head for fledgling roosters in 1963 was a huge price. You could buy a decent mule or draft horse for less than a hundred bucks. A fat hog was less than \$20 and a regular fryer chicken no more than a quarter and it better be fat.

Late this evening a brilliant-red, black-capped little cocky cardinal flew up to my window and he could see his reflection in the glass and he commenced flapping at himself and making all those chirps that cardinals make when they are really mad. He could see his reflection in the window and he was more than ready to fight his own reflection. Hewas beating off his feathers against the window pane and they were literally falling on the snow while his Mrs. sat on the limb of a nearby maple and obviously wondered what the fuss was all about.

And I thought to myself that Bill Proffitt (Proffitt & Sons Coal Co.) would have given any amount of money to breed that attitude into his stupid game chickens back in the sixties.

I shoed the redbird away and then threw a snowball at him as he flew across Lowell Branch and into deep timber.

A similar bit of reproach is needed in our world just now because it is too full of arrogant little fighting cock who wish to pitch battle simply for the patently stupid sake of showing who has the best feathers and the sharpest spurs.

Silent Angina

Presented by: Dr. Karen Saylor

Angina is chest pain caused by the heart. It occurs when the circulation feeding the heart is diminished due to narrowing of the arteries, and it is felt as a crushing chest pain that radiates into the neck and left arm. It often causes nausea and sweating.

Angina is a warning sign telling you to slow down and let the heart rest.

Although the reasons are not known, many people do not get these angina pains when the coronary circulation becomes tenuous. The person has no warning that he is over-exercising. The angina is "silent." Diabetics are particularly likely to have silent angina. In fact, diabetics are likely to have heart attacks without even knowing it unless other symptoms, such as shock or palpitations, occur.

Although it is painless, silent angina may be as significant as painful angina. And diagnosing silent angina is more difficult since the person does not know it is happening.

The two ways currently used to diagnose silent angina are treadmill testing and heart monitors. Of these, the treadmill is more helpful in diagnosing significant artery obstruction and prescribing an exercise program that is safe and appropriate for the degree of heart disease. Further studies, such as an angiogram, may be needed.

The heart monitor is a device that records all the heartbeats during a 24-hour period. The person keeps a diary of his activity level and any symptoms he develops. The symptoms are correlated with the findings on the recording. The heart monitor is most useful for finding abnormal heart rhythms that may need medical attention.



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Cardiovascular Disease #1 killer in American men and women February recognized as American Heart Month

In less time than it takes to wash and dry four loads of laundry, you can learn to save a life. Join the Health Department in recognizing February as American Heart Month. Cardiovascular disease is the number one killer of American men and women. Be good to your heart this month and every month. The message for American Heart Month 2003 stresses learning CPR and supporting community automated external defibrillator (AED) programs.

Four hours of training can save someone's life. In less than four hours, you can learn CPR and how to use an automated external defibrillator (AED). Communities are helping to save sudden cardiac arrest victims by placing AED devices in public places to be used in emergencies by trained individuals. People who suffer sudden cardiac arrest can usually be rescued within 10-12 minutes, unless they receive prompt defibrillation.

AEDs analyze heart rhythms to determine whether a lifesaving shock is needed. Once the electrodes are attached, the machine guides resuscitation.

With verbal prompts such as "stand clear, administering shock," and "resume CPR."

Take a little time this month, American Heart Month, to learn these skills. A common myth is that potential rescuers witness sudden cardiac arrest in public and the victim is a stranger. In truth, about 80% of sudden cardiac arrests happen at home. Could you respond in such an emergency? With training you could. In four hours or less, you can easily learn CPR through an American Heart Association HeartSaver CPR for AED course. If you're already trained, be sure to renew your skills every two years.

For information on CPR and AED courses near you, call toll free 1-877-AHA-4CPR or log on to americanheart.org/cpr and type in your zip code.

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