



Pen has East

By: Mike Adams

There is the head of Blair Branch, which is situated as a tributary of and about midway between the head of Rockhouse Creek where it starts in Knott County and empties into the Kentucky River at Blackey there in the lower end of and beyond Letcher County, all this talk of year, back in the sixties, had to do with squirrel hunting. And, as far as I know, the preponderance of autumn discussions among men and boys on the holder had, for decades, centered around what the game crop was like or going to be like for the rest of the hunting season.

At least that's the way I grew up. There is never gonna be plenty squirrels or nearly none. Plenty of rabbits for the dogs to chase out of the fence rows or better patches, or the laurel and huckleberry thickets on top of the ridges or alongside the railroad tracks so that you could get a glimpse of and bag one with your shotgun. Or no real reason to buy more than a fistful of shotgun shells instead of a whole box if there wasn't going to be anything to shoot at where we normally hunted and back then you could buy shotgun shells one at a time or save a quarter if you wanted a

whole box. And a quarter was a lot of money back then too.

We'd sit on the porch of Arizona Adams' or Minnie Blair's grocery stores there on the holder when I was a teenager, and over a bottle of Coke or RC or Peach Nehi Colas that we had carefully opened, without breaking off the bottle neck or splitting off any glass from the rim so that it fell down into the bottle, on the catcher mounted there on the cooler, and with a little bag of shelled and over-spiced peanuts to season our pop, we'd put our chins to elbows and try to figure out the game situation. Arizona and Minnie would listen in and try to figure out how many shotgun and 22 caliber shells they ought to be stocking based on how much hunting and shooting they thought we'd be doing.

And back in those days, you didn't pick up the phone and call the whole-sale company. You had to, if you saw a country grocery store, give your word to the salesman when he drove up and then you told him what you wanted on the truck that might run a week later and when the truck driver put it in the store, it was yours. In other words, it didn't pay to be sitting

ting on too many shotgun shells if nobody was gonna buy them.

We don't have time or space to give you a lesson in small business inventory control here, but suffice to say that you didn't want a bunch of expensive ammunition sitting on your grocery shelf for a year from one hunting season to another if you ran a country grocery store back then. But the only thing that gained in value by sitting on the grocery shelf was Horner's Pickled Pig Feet which, to this day, is my favorite country store delicacy and I wouldn't swap a jar of pig's feet to an equal amount of the finest Russian Caviar if I'm the man that did to choose between one or the other.

Anyway, we hunted squirrels, mostly with shotguns, this time of year, and we climbed the steep high hills to every hickory, beech, white oak or walnut tree we knew to be bearing nuts or acorns there on the holder, or wherever hit the top of the hill and ran out of room, we might just wander across the ridges into the higher reaches of the mountain tops that formed the heads of Spring Branch or Johnson's Fork and we stalked the ever-wary squirrels more carefully and quietly than did any frontiersman looking to kill a buffalo.

We were in the woods of a week-end morning well before dawn—or during the week, just after school or work, at dusk, listening for the pitter-patter of cuttings trickling down amongst the leaves. To hear that sound was the equivalent of hearing a buck snort in this day and age.

In the late fifties and sixties we had no deer in the mountains. No wild turkeys. And at the same time

we hunted squirrels and rabbits because they contributed heavily to our source of food. Fresh meat, and delicious too, between hot weather and hog killing time. I remember one shot squirrel that I didn't clean and cook. Never once ate one that I didn't think it was a delicacy better than chicken. Never once thought of a squirrel or rabbit as a trophy and never thought I'd always thought of hunting them as a cross between survival and sport.

But somewhere along the way, the sport has gone. Now I have to drive carefully along Highway 21 between my house and the office to keep from running over a rabbit or a squirrel on the road every morning and every afternoon. If killing them were a matter of survival or getting fresh meat the way it was when I was growing up, a slingshot would be a more appropriate weapon than a shot gun or f-22.

I'd love to have a mess of fresh squirrel with gravy the way my mom used to fix it and served with baked sweet potatoes and flat beans and corn bread.

I still have a good 22 and I can still shoot pretty accurately. I just can't bring myself to shoot a squirrel, sitting ten feet away, staring me down, and then expect to skin and eat it—I don't raise flying chickens any more either, for similar reasons, but I still like fried chicken if somebody else does the dirty work.

And right now I can't think of anything I'd rather have for supper, and it isn't chicken and it does not taste like chicken. Squirrel gravy and sweet taters is about as good as eating gets. I just don't know how to get it anymore without feeling guilty.



T.J.'s Journal

by: Tonya J. Cook

Years ago, when I was living just outside of Providence, Rhode Island at this time of year, I had a special longing to be back in this area. It wasn't just to see friends and family, but it was on old family custom that had been handed down through at least three generations. That custom was going to the Broadhead Fair.

The custom of going to the fair started with my great-grandfather and great-grandmother, Joe and Melvina Bustle-Norton. They lived in Mt. Vernon and had twelve children, the eldest being my grandfather, Roscoe. They attended the fair every year and took their children. I'm sure it was quite an entertainment for them to escape the chores of a large farm for a well-deserved break.

Back then, the county fair held more interest for people because they deemed it a special event. My grandmothers and her daughters always had a prize quilt or two to enter in the quilt judging as well as some canned good or garden vegetables. My grandfather and the boys would have some prize-winning livestock. I loved to see the judges. They even had some thoroughbred horses, and the boys or occasionally some of the girls would ride them at the Saturday night horse show.

The fair was not only a place for livestock and handicraft judging, it was a gathering place to see all of your friends and family you hadn't seen since the last fair. The fair could and sometimes did develop into a rowdy situation. There was usually some non-official sampling and judging of a little Kentucky "shine" or other spirits. Needless to say, more than one or two little friendly fights had broken out to erupt.

My first recollections of the fair were when I was about five or six years old. I used to think it was the most exciting event of the year. I just know there were acres and acres of non-stop fun. I thought the fair must be the size of Disney World. I loved everything about it: the food, the rides, the games, and especially the horse show. I always thought the horses were so beautiful and I enjoyed hearing the organ music that was played as the horses paraded around the oval track. The only thing that I didn't like about it was that it was overcrowded by a disgusting event the start of school.

One year when I was about ten, we had a house full of company from Ohio as we usually did during the summer. It was my great-aunt, Lucille, her son and daughter, and both of their families. I happened to be during the time of the Broadhead Fair, so on Saturday night, we just loaded up about two or three carloads of Buckeyes and my uncle, Leslie "Junior" Norton led the way to the fair. I was the only child to go to the fair when our family usually attended

each year, but this year, I had a carload or more of kids to go with me.

All of the kids got to go to the fair except my cousin, Beth. She was sixteen years old and had big blue eyes and freckles, and two-pigtail of long, blond hair. She was rather frail and often sick with allergies to dust and horses, and had asthma. She was always very sweet and kind, and very well behaved. She had to stay behind that night, and as a consolation she was promised to play games with our grandmothers and there was a pan of fudge in the deal, too.

We other kids had a blast at the fair. We got to ride the rides, eat at the fair, and with lots of prizes at the sideshows. As we drove through the darkness on our way home to London that night, I thought about what a rotten break for a kid, not getting to go to the fair and enjoy the many pleasures it held in store. We, the other children, were instructed on the way home that when we got back, we each had to give Beth some of our "goodies" such as, food or prizes. We hadn't counted on that, but under the circumstances, it was the only thing to do. I think I gave her a stuffed dog or bear, or something. She was pleased with all of our offerings, but I'm sure it wasn't like getting to go herself.

I only saw Beth a few times after that. She grew up, married, and worked as an R.N. for a few years. Time and distance separated us, but I always kept her in mind.

As the fair approached this year, I looked forward to going, as always. However, about two or three days before the start of the fair, I got a call, that Beth had died from cancer at the age of forty. She left behind a husband and two young children. Now there's a really rough break for a kid.

I wondered why she had to die at such a young age. She had everything to live for, and she had been through so much. I didn't get to go to the funeral due to distance. I did, however, go to the fair, but I remembered the night Beth had to stay behind when all of us other kids got to go to the fair.

When I think about it, one could consider it a rough break for those she left behind. She is now free from the cares of this world, and we're left her to suffer through the misery, sickness, and hardships of life. I guess we all can take a lesson from the sudden passing of a loved one, friend, or neighbor. We have no promise of tomorrow here on this earth, so have we don't all we can to better ourselves and all of those around us today? Have we made peace with ourselves and with God? Let's let those dear to us know that we really care. If we have, "This is the first day of the rest of our lives", so this is the day to start.

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Our Readers Write

Dear Editor,

I see where at least one statewide newspaper gives the 2003 Rockcastle Co. Rockets little credit for success. I admit we have lost several excellent players, such as Aaron Anderson, Mary Reagan and Tanner Abney. However, we will have many good kids stilling to work hard to avoid being the first losing team in football at RCHS since 1985.

I want to congratulate the Rockets for defeating Laurel County. We, the fans are selfishly behind them and believe in them.

I would give the Rockets the same advice that Coach Tom Larkney gave me in my senior yearbook the first season he coached at RCHS. He said, "You have to work hard to make it in this world."

I came up with this to hopefully inspire the players for the rest of the season:

- A is for Attention to everything your coaches teach.
- C is for Concentrating on doing your job, every second of every play.
- H is for Helping your teammate to get that crucial tackle or block.
- I is for Intensity you must sustain for the entire game, all season.
- E is for Entering each game humbly, knowing you can lose, but striving to win.
- V is for Victory that comes from coaching wisdom and player's school pride.
- E is for Erasing confusion caused by using the "cornfield spread" on an unsuspecting foe at the right moment.

Add good sportsmanship at all times and good fan support and the Rockets will be a winner, regardless of the final record.

Good luck men. Show South Laurel the other teams that the Rock Still Rules!!

Don Howard
Mt. Vernon, Ky.

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Old letter mystery solved

Last week we ran a story about a 60-year-old letter found in a dresser drawer by Yvonne Carmack of Mt. Vernon.

The letter was from a WW II serviceman to a Mildred Reynolds of Rt. 1, Crab Orchard and everything was legible except the soldier's name.

The dresser had been purchased used from a furniture store in Richmond in 1971 and the letter had apparently been stuck in the top of the dresser before falling down into the drawer where Yvonne found it.

Yvonne's mother, Helen Renner, brought the letter to our attention because she felt someone from the families might like to have the letter for sentimental reasons. She was right.

The letter was written, in December, 1942, by Henry York of Berea and his daughter, Barbara Warburton, who lives in the Eubank area and works in Nicholasville, called Mrs. Renner Friday night to identify the letter. Mrs. Warburton told Mrs. Renner that her father suffers from Alzheimer's but recognized the letter as one he had written. The Elizabeth referred to in the letter, Mrs. Warburton said, was her mother, Elizabeth Cummings at the time, who died about two years ago, close to the same time the letter was discovered. The Mildred Reynolds the letter was addressed to was Elizabeth's older sister.

In an ironic twist to the story, it turns out that Elizabeth's best friend, with whom she lived and worked in Indiana, was Geraldine Carmack of Broadhead, Yvonne's aunt.

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