EARL STORIES—updated 10/20/23

Collected, slightly edited, and arranged by Calvin Mercer (mercerc@ecu.edu)

EARL STORY ARCHIVE

The full archive of "Earl Stories" published to date can be found on the Pitt County Historical Society website
https://pittcountyhistoricalsociety.com/
under the "More" tab. --Calvin Mercer

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DR. EARL TREVATHAN'S 50-YEAR PERSPECTIVE ON OUR CITY

PRESENTED AT GREENVILLE, NC COUNCILMEMBER CALVIN MERCER'S "GREENVILLE GOOD GOVERNMENT" RALLY AT THE HILTON IN JUNE 2015.

TAKE A JOURNEY THROUGH GREENVILLE'S HISTORY

In the next few newsletter editions, I'll give excerpts from Earl's talk. Here you'll meet interesting figures and get Earl's perspective on important moments in our city's history. Among the people you'll meet are:

Booger Scales, Dr. Andrew Best, Jim Fleming, Dr. Malene Irons, Dr. Ray Minges, Supt. Cleetwood, Dr. Leo Jenkins, Henry Aldridge, Gene West, Hartwell Campbell, Dave WhichTard, Dr. Robert L. Humbar, John Howard, Charlie Horne, Father Mulholland, Henry Harrell, Gene West, Dr. Ralph Brimley

COUNCILMEMBER CALVIN MERCER'S INTRODUCTION OF EARL TREVATHAN AT THE GOOD GOVERNMENT RALLY

In my public service, I've been greatly blessed to have the support, mentoring, and friendship of some really incredible people in our city. Central place on that list is our speaker. Our keynote speaker said keep this introduction short. Many of you know Dr. Trevathan, but for those of you who may not I want you to have a sense of the honor it is to have him speak to us.

I'll start with a quote from **Dr. Tom Irons**, a great citizen of our city in his own right. He said:

"Most pediatricians are loved by their patients. Earl Trevathan is loved by just about everybody and respected as much as anyone I know."

As a pediatrician in private practice in Greenville for 23 years and then as a member of the Brody School of Medicine faculty, Dr. Trevathan both elevated and expanded the scope of medical care for children in eastern North Carolina and beyond.

He served four years in the U.S. Navy during World War II. Following his medical training, he joined a group practice here in 1954. Twelve years later, having recognized a lack of pediatric neurology care in eastern North Carolina, he went back for additional training in this specialty.

He returned to Greenville and began to work with a large population of children with neurological and mental health disorders, especially those from families of limited means

I'll leave out dates and details and just list the service--you can imagine the deep service this list represents:

- President of the Pitt County Medical Society
- Chief of the medical staff at Pitt County Memorial Hospital
- Chairman of the North Carolina Pediatric Society
- Board member, NC Tuberculosis Association
- President of the Pitt County Tuberculosis Association.
- In1977, Dr. Trevathan joined the Brody School of Medicine faculty as clinical professor of pediatrics and pediatric neurology and later professor of pediatrics
- Pitt County Department of Public Health--he served over time as medical consultant, board vice chairman, and acting director. The Pitt County Health Center was re-named the "Earl Trevathan Jr., MD, Public Health Center" in 2012
- Extensive, breakthrough work with the Crippled Children's Program of the North Carolina Department of Human Resources.

Here's a special line on his resume for me. He has always been active in his community, and not just in the health care realm. He served on the **Greenville City Council in the 1960s.** He has this broad perspective on the importance of the democratic political process and good government.

He also found the time and energy to be a leading advocate for environmental and conservation issues in the state. He was among the founders of the North Carolina Nature Conservancy and an early leader of the northeastern North Carolina chapter of the Sierra Club.

On a personal note. I recently worked with Earl on a project, not yet realized. He brought forward the idea and vision, pulled together the key people, and pushed this project along. Early on he said, very simply, *"I don't want any credit for this, I just want to see this happen for our people."*

No one better exemplifies good citizenship, good government, and community service than Dr. Earl Trevathan. We are delighted to have him speak at tonight's Greenville Good Government Rally.

DR. TREVATHAN:
Installment 1—The Early Fifties

I recall an experience in 1986 when my wife, Ruth, and I led a Rotary Exchange Group of five young business ladies to Australia for a five week visit to communities in New South Wales. Often we spoke at Rotary Club meetings. At one Club with a ladies night crowd, I spoke briefly and before I could sit down a distinguished gentlemen stood and began commenting on US and Australia trade relations as it related to the sheep wool. He was forceful, deliberate and passionate. "The United States sneezes and Australia catches pneumonia," etc., etc.

The audience was getting a little edgy. I was looking a bit bewildered trying to prepare how to respond. When he finished his tirade I slowly proceeded to the microphone, paused, (you could hear a pin drop) and looked straight at the audience and said, "What did he say?" The crowd bellowed with laughter, including the gentleman, and the evening ended on a good note. I tell you the story because I don't want anyone to look at this neighbor when I finish and say, "What did he say?"

I assure you that Greenville, in the early 1950's was no shinning city on a hill. The facts:

- Our narrow Main Street was built for horse and buggy.
- There was one stop light, at five points.
- We had one city park, on Elm Street, in the flood plain, with two asphalt tennis courts.
- There were two railroads lines bisecting the city.
- A land-locked teachers' college.
- Tobacco market warehouses on each quadrant of the city.
- A scenic river with raw sewage floating by. Interesting stuff.
- A five-doctor private hospital
- A city with a slogan: "Our Greenville, Yours if You Come".
- A baseball team called "The Greenville Greenies." Now that is imagination.

This was post-World War II and many of us were furthering our education at government expense on the GI Education Bill. Farmers in Pitt County were getting price support for their major income producing crops by limiting production and the crop stabilization allowed for a farmer to survive economically.

In the congress Senator Lister Hill of Alabama and Rep. Burton of Missouri sponsored the Hill/Burton Act which provided funds to build public hospitals in areas of need. Our local governmental bodies petitioned our representative in the congress, Herbert Bonner, to help us obtain funds for such a hospital. My father mailed me a newspaper clipping of the proposal when I was in medical school in Denver.

From that beginning there is a story to be told. Call it good government if you wish.

Five local physicians had to agree to close their privately owned hospitals so the new, modern hospital could be built. It was opened in 1950. Choo Choo Justice was made All American in football that year. Secretary Ewing, in President Truman's Cabinet, crafted legislation that would provide federal funds for health insurance for the low income citizens. It went nowhere, until 65 years later when the congress adopted the Affordable Care Act.

The new public hospital changed the face of medical care in our region. An open hospital brought physicians, board certified specialists, ENTs, OBGyns, ophthalmologists, internal medicine doctors, psychiatrists, surgeons and pediatric specialists to Greenville.

The right individual was made the president of our "college"--Dr. Leo Jenkins. Next, the college was elevated to university status. Dr. Jenkins had a vision. WE were becoming a medical center--a medical school should be next. You know the rest of the story. Recall those five physicians who gave up much for a greater public need.

NEXT INSTALLMENT--MY BAPTISM IN POLITICS

DR. EARL TREVATHAN'S 50-YEAR PERSPECTIVE ON OUR CITY

PRESENTED AT THE "GREENVILLE GOOD GOVERNMENT" RALLY AT THE HILTON JUNE 2015. SPONSORED BY GREENVILLE, NC COUNCILMEMBER CALVIN MERCER

MY BAPTISM IN POLITICS--INSTALLMENT 2

DR. EARL TREVATHAN'S 50-YEAR PERSPECTIVE ON OUR CITY

My baptism in politics, if you can call it that, occurred with the campaign of Dr. Robert L. Humber for North Carolina State senate.

Dr. Humber was well known far and wide. He was a Wake Forest and Harvard graduate and became a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford. In France, with an international law degree, he became legal counsel for a Texas Oil Company, married a French citizen and they had three children born there. In Paris in 1940, the day before the Nazi invaded Paris, he fled the city with the aid of his Greenville neighbor, Jim Fleming, made the arduous trip to Lisbon, Portugal, and boarded the USS Manhattan for the US.

In America he promoted peace through the World Federation for which he became famous. This was before the United Nations was established.

Back in Greenville in the late 1950's several of us "young turks" thought Dr. Humber would make a good candidate for State Senate. I recall us "young turks" being Dave Whichard, Charlie Horne, Booger Scales, Henry Aldridge and myself. We approached Dr. Humber and he was reluctant. Jim Fleming probably talked him into running.

At our first meeting someone suggested the first matter of business was to select his campaign committee. Humber's response was *"You all are my committee."* None of us, including Dr. Humber, knew a thing about politics.

We began by attending a Pierce Fellowship Meeting on Contentnea Creek in Grifton. Here was gathered our local yellow dog democrats, "Tammany Hall" heirs apparent who were selected for the upcoming election. When our group walked into the meeting the presiding judge announced, *"Here comes the Boy Scouts."* Their chosen man for Senate was a local lawyer, Henry Harrell.

Support for Humber grew slowly. Booger nick-named him "the Horse," and we were to ride him to victory. Some wondered if we should call his cosmopolitan wife "The Mare."

The next thing we had to do was hide his big old black Cadillac Limousine ... a political liability in those days. We locked it up in Jim Fleming's garage. Next, we had to buy some flannel shirts. Those black suits with white, starched collar shirts were a killer. I rode him around the county in my little Ford Falcon. With Humber in his flannel shirt, we were two of the "good ol' boys."

NEXT INSTALLMENT--SPYING ON THE OPPOSITION

DR. HUMBER'S ELECTION AND SPYING ON THE OPPOSITION--INSTALLMENT 3

PRESENTED AT THE "GREENVILLE GOOD GOVERNMENT" RALLY AT THE HILTON JUNE 2015. SPONSORED BY GREENVILLE, NC COUNCILMEMBER CALVIN MERCER

DR. EARL TREVATHAN'S 50-YEAR PERSPECTIVE ON OUR CITY

In the last installment, Dr. Trevathan explained how he and friends came together to work for the election of Dr. Robert L. Humber for NC State Senate. –Calvin Mercer

We all had our assignment. I was to spy on the opposition. One night I learned that their campaign committee was meeting in Lawyer Harrell's office next to the courthouse downtown. Dave Whichard and I went down there to check it out.

The office door was closed but we could hear what was said over the door transom. There was a chair in the hall so Dave brought it for me to stand on. I could hear everything spoken. And this was long before Watergate.

Dr. Humber won his election by 200 votes. He co-sponsored legislation to establish the community college system in this state. He supported increases in teacher pay. He raised funds to help build the NC State Art Museum.

One of the most contentious times in the political life of Greenville was in the early 1960's. Most of our citizens were for or against public housing needed for those people being displaced by the downtown redevelopment project--slum clearance. In a divided city, each side had its arguments, whether to tackle the problem with federal funds or respect proper rights and let city ordinances requiring house upgrades help resolve the problem.

The referendum with the election in 1962 for federal support passed but the elected mayor and council did not favor the referendum. Thus, for two years the city was in gridlock and nothing was accomplished regarding housing or slum clearance. Two years later it was an even more intense campaign to resolve the issues one way or another. The previous mayor, Gene West, ran again. Ed Waldrop urged me to run. Making up the ticket of those supporting the projects were Hartwell Campbell, CEO of TV Station WNCT; Dr. Ralph Brimley, ECU; and John Howard of Greenville Tobacco Co. A rather strong ticket, even if I say so. We were elected. Animosity rapidly subsided; citizens stepped up and served on commissions and authorities and the work got done. The lesson I learned was how much could be accomplished with team work, industrious city officials, and respect for one another.

I shall briefly mention another period of great unrest in our city and the nation. It was in the 1960's when racial strife over integration was rampart here and over much of the state. Greenville made some good decisions during this time and we thus warded off turmoil, confrontation with police, and riotous behavior. There were street demonstrations but no gunfire. A near eruption occurred when Golden Frinks, a demonstration organizer, was jailed and his bond was not accepted by the magistrate, whose excuse was that his office was closed for the night.

There were many individuals who knew it was time to step up and speak out and challenge the status quo.

- Dr. Andrew Best, a black physician in Greenville, was the go between person bridging the two races for meetings and dialogue. He was well respected and was wise beyond measure. More than any person he helped hold the city together and find solutions. Dr. Best's roots were in the very segregated, rural section of Lenoir County.
- Father Mulholland. He helped organize the Good Neighborhood Council and conducted countless meetings late into the night.
- Dr. Malene Irons, mother and pediatrician, who demanded the hospital change the way we were segregated to integrated services.
- Dr. Ray Minges spoke for the medical staff in expediting integration.
- School Supt. Cleetwood worked hard resolving school conflicts.

NEXT INSTALLMENT—READERS RESPOND—"RIDING MY HORSE DOWNTOWN"

CITIZENS RESPOND

I've received so much positive feedback about the first three installments in this newsletter of Dr. Trevathan's reflections on 50 years of Greenville's history that I thought I'd take this half-time break to share a sampling. Dr. Trevathan's stories kicked up many memories from readers. –Calvin Mercer

I used to ride my pony to Wahl-Coates and tie her to a tree and I also rode her downtown and put her in Savage stables. My street of Rocksprings was dirt. Interesting times I miss.

Calvin, we LOVED reading Earl's history. Thank you for sharing this. I'm in a family memories writing class with him and every week we look forward to his stories. Greenville is truly blessed to have him.

Calvin, thank you for paying honors to Dr. Earl Trevathan for the many good deeds for people of Greenville and so many other areas and countries. He is a smart, humbling and wonderful person. I am so glad that he is being recognized. I am honored to have known him since I became a member of our church and he cared for our daughter when she was born. Thanks to Dr. "Earl" and to you for taking your time to honor him in your email.

Hey Calvin, I have enjoyed receiving your letters for several years. You do a great job of keeping us informed about the politics of Greenville and I appreciate this a lot. Really enjoyed this. Thanks,

Thanks a lot for this continuation with Dr. Trevathan and post with the three of you pictured together. When we moved to Greenville, he was one of the first pediatrician for our son. We mostly attended the Presbyterian church with him and his very wonderful wife Ruth.

Thank you for this newsletter, fascinating to learn how elections were run in the "good ole' days".

Earl was my pediatrician when I was a kid. He literally saved my life when I had double pneumonia. Came to the house, put me in a cold bath (I was 10) and took me to the hospital. He's been a friend, along with his family. He was ahead of his time and maybe still is. You have a great person in your corner.

Any way I could get a copy of Dr. Trevathan's 50-year perspective? I see a wonderful learning opportunity for our high school students.

Please do print Earl's remarks for all of us who were unable to be at your Hilton's campaign event. He is such an inspiration and a treasure to be shared with as wide an audience as possible.

Calvin--I was among those unable to hear Earl Trevathan's talk about Greenville history at your campaign rally, and also among those who so highly respect this unique, wonderful man. So, I will look forward to excerpts about him and from his talk. Thank you.

Calvin, as you may or may not know, in those days Earl was the father of my best friend and I was across the street at the Trevathan's as much as I was at home. I remember many of these things like it was yesterday. He was and is very close to my family and was and is a second father to me. We all need to take his lessons seriously. I know I do.

Thank you so much for including this speech in your newsletters. It provides a wonderful historical perspective for Greenville, also. Students can't see pre-today in Greenville and don't realize the tremendous growth that has occurred and continues to occur. This perspective helps to glean appreciation for how far we've come.

I enjoyed reading this. I grew up in Black Jack and remember Five Points being the center of town and going on Saturday afternoon. Brings back some great memories and provoking thoughts for the years to come for Greenville.

Wow, what an inspiration. He basically told the whole story of Greenville.

He has inspired me to study Greenville history--this place where I have unfurled my roots.

Earl's address was spot on, full of useful history and insights, and suggestions for a cooperative council. At his age, he is still thinking ahead about what we need to do in this community. Thanks for having him speak.

A lot of the feedback consisted of short comments, such as:
That was great.

Thanks for an interesting read.
Interesting story form Earl. Thanks for publishing it.
These Trevathan stories are great.
Thank you for sharing more about Dr. Trevathan's perspectives and historical reflections.
I love Earl's talk. What a wonderful citizen of our community.

NEXT INSTALLMENT FROM DR. TREVATHAN—"GREENVILLE'S GROWTH"

DR. EARL TREVATHAN'S 50-YEAR PERSPECTIVE ON OUR CITY

Here's the next installment of Dr. Trevathan's ***sometimes humorous, always interesting*** *remarks. A councilmember from the 1960s, Dr. Trevathan drew upon Greenville's history to urge* ***sound planning, partnerships, integrity, transparency****, and other good government principles to carry our community forward in the coming decades. I'm honored and appreciative of the long support of city elders like Dr. Trevathan who share their wisdom and leadership and, along with the energy and new ideas of a younger generation, make our city a vibrant intergenerational hub of eastern North Carolina.*

GREENVILLE'S GROWTH--INSTALLMENT 4

DR. TREVATHAN'S REMARKS

Greenville's growth has been phenomenal. I could never have imagined a city of 90,000 or 25,000 students at our university.

During these years of growth we have had good leadership, both mayors and councilmembers. Individuals holding office have at times shown tendencies to be miffed or disrespectful when in disagreement with fellow members. Citizens don't expect agreement and harmony on all issues, but it is not good to have animosity or bitterness as part of the governing process. It is a poison. No one wins. In such situations words should be well measured and spoken only if constructive. A lot of good groundwork should be done outside the council.

This can also be an issue with our employed officials. They have always been approachable in my memory and respect shown them is critically important. It is the city that has much to lose when valuable department heads choose to leave us.

We should acknowledge that the State of North Carolina pours millions of dollars into this city annually for state operated services. We owe the State accountability and wise

decisions--a livable, safe city for our people and those who continue their education here.

I like Calvin's "Mission Statement." It says it all. (Editor's note: The "Mission Statement" is found at the bottom of this newsletter in purple.)

In 1970 Secretary John Gardner, in the Johnson administration and founder of Common Cause, wrote: "We all agree and share a common purpose to:"

- create excellent public schools
- protect the environment
- preserve livable communities
- enforce the laws
- administer justice

I think it is obvious to all that this rapidly growing city is not keeping up with our needs, especially traffic issues. We have one of the highest accident rates in the state and with the university we have a young driver population prone to misjudgment and accidents. Yes, accidents are caused by speed and alcohol but also often by inferior street design. We are improving. Note the roundabout at Portertown Rd.--beautiful design, which results in fewer accidents. Let us plan more roundabouts and mediums.

Our streets are too congested to carry traffic at 45 mile per hour. Cut the limit back to 35 MPH. Our rural area roads are deadly. At intersecting roads, move the stop signs to the middle of the road, not on the right side near bushes. And add more right turn lanes to avoid rear end collisions. Keep an eye on Highway 264 east.

At all costs avoid strip development like Greenville Blvd., which is sure to happen unless we scream. We didn't scream enough in 1965 when Greenville Blvd was laid out and a developer threatened to remove his property from inclusion in the city if limited access and parallel service roads were constructed.

NEXT INSTALLMENT: CITY PARKS, GREENWAYS, BEN FRANKLIN, AND FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES

DR. EARL TREVATHAN'S 50-YEAR PERSPECTIVE ON OUR CITY

CITY PARKS, GREENWAYS, BEN FRANKLIN, AND FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES--INSTALLMENT 5

In spite of much progress in securing parkland and open space in recent years, I fear we are not keeping up with needs in the west and southwest area where much

development is occurring. If the city could park property in this area now rather than facing prohibitive price later. If only.

Many years ago when Lynndale was proposed for inclusion into the city the council tried to establish a formula whereby a small acreage would be designated for a park for each 100 acres for development. The home buyers didn't want a park. Most had beach houses and country club membership for recreation. Parks would attract the wrong crowd. Of course no one thinks that way today.

Let's look at our nation's history. Benjamin Franklin helped lay out the plat for the city of Philadelphia in 1760 and included a park or open space for every fourth block. He named the streets after trees.

Minneapolis was recently called by the Wall Street Journal the "nicest city in America." I took a tourist trip there last summer to learn why they have that distinction. The Mississippi River separates it from sister city, St. Paul. The ice age left the area with 17 lakes which have been spared shore line development left for public space. It has the largest population of bicycle riders in the country, and it has 18 Fortune 500 companies. When the city was founded in 1854 the charter stated 17 percent of their budget was to be for recreation and parks.

Several years ago our city council made a visit to Columbia, MO, a sister city, comparable in size to Greenville and with a University like ours to discuss issues, problems and seek solutions. Town and gown stuff. I thought it was a good idea. Cities across America are doing interesting things.

Chattanooga, Tennessee is noted for its Greenway system. Natchez, MS has struggled for years to make the transition from industry loss to historical interest. They have tried to raise money for sidewalks and repeatedly failed. The city street department director had an idea. He redesigned the city with "trails" and markers instead of sidewalks, then applied to state, private citizens and endowments and raised two million dollars. I hope our bond fund for sidewalks will allow for some imagination and beauty.

There is so much good going on in this city. I must express my pride in what I see about me. Recently, in my church I walked by the sanctuary and had to stop and listen. The Epps Middle School orchestra was performing before a full audience of family and friends. Imagine. Minutes later I drove up Elm Street passing by Stallings Stadium and saw it filled with spectators and families watching the young athletes play ball.

That same week Ann and Vince Bellis took me on a tour of the Greenway section along the river where Tar River apartments were. Such a beautiful section and I was surprised to see the activity there---joggers, walkers, singles, doubles, dogs on leashes, bikers.

And I'll mention the miracle of the medical district, remembering those who worked months hammering out the zoning ordinances that became a workable creation. Thank you, Ruth, and others.

THIS IS THE LAST INSTALLMENT FROM DR. TREVATHAN'S SPEECH AT THE HILTON EVENT. HOWEVER, GOOD NEWS. EARL HAS SENT ME A FEW OTHER PIECES THAT I'M PLEASED TO HELP DISTRIBUTE IN FUTURE NEWSLETTERS.

DR. ANDREW BEST
A 1963 "REPORT TO THE PEOPLE"

Thanks to Dr. Earl Trevathan for providing a hard copy of this inspiring 1963 address by Dr. Best, Vice-Chair of the Pitt County Interracial Committee, to the Greenville Rotary Club. It is entitled "A REPORT TO THE PEOPLE."

This well-crafted speech provides an interesting look at a slice of life in Greenville, now more than a half century ago. Indeed, it refers to the tone and tensions that characterized much of our nation in that turbulent decade.

Dr. Best speaks about the "responsibility of shaping the future of a community, a people" and tells his audience "you hold the complete fate of our community for a hundred years to come." The speech is bold and direct, asserting that "All is not well in our city and community." He said the community has assets but also many liabilities. To avoid the worst troubles of many communities, Dr. Best said people of all races must draw upon the best of the community and be brave, courageous, clear-thinking, tolerant, patient, and in communication.

He said if "required responsible leadership" does not prevail, then "we may rest assured that irresponsible leadership will fill in the vacuum to the detriment, and possible disaster of us all."

He refers to local events and situations, such as a threatened boycott and the inability of a visiting black choir to secure motel accommodation. He shares about his own childhood in segregated Lenoir County.

The full speech can be found by clicking
https://files.constantcontact.com/670eb50e301/76c27e81-9197-482c-a3c1-3abb84c0050d.pdf

SAVE THAT BABY

NOTE: I was with Earl yesterday at an event, and learned that we both getting much positive feedback from the community about the "Earl Stories." Earl has given me a couple more stories, which I'll feature in future newsletters. It's a good sign that so many

citizens are hungry for stories about the history of our community. For now, check out this opportunity to hear directly from Dr. Earl Trevathan in this **ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH DR. TREVATHAN**
https://digital.lib.ecu.edu/60339

In this interview, Dr. Trevathan discusses the history of health care in eastern North Carolina, the difficulties that arose when East Carolina University first attempted to create the medical school, and how general health care has advanced in the last fifty years. Topics mentioned in this interview are relevant to the years 1954 to 2001. – Calvin Mercer

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

“Doctor, do all you can to save my baby,” were the first words I heard as I walked into the hospital room of Beatrice Maye, on July 20, 1954. I was the Pediatrician for Mamie Maye, just delivered, and weighting less than three pounds. Because of a fertility problem, Mrs. Maye could not have more children. She had a 5-year-old son at home. Mr. Maye was a principal of a county school and Beatrice was a school librarian. They were well known educators and very active in community affairs.

I felt the pressure of her concerns as I tried to be reassuring that I would do all that was possible to meet the baby’s needs. This was before integration, so the preemie was placed in an Armstrong incubator in the “colored” nursery, at least providing warmth, isolation, and oxygen as needed. On the fourth floor of the hospital was the “white” nursery, and it had a very new Air Shield Isolette with several newer features, monitoring devices, lights etc. I had much respect for the experience of some of the nurses in that nursery, too. Mrs. Maye’s appeal must have gotten to me.

Without forethought, I took that baby up to the white nursery and put it in the new Isolette. The skin color of all small preemies is pink, so I assumed no color code was broken. It didn’t occur to me that family members would be coming to the fourth floor to see the baby or whether that would cause a ruckus.

When I returned to my office, I received a call from Mr. C. D. Ward, Hospital Administrator. He said something like, “You know that placing that baby in the white nursery is against hospital policy”. He said he had spoken to the Chairman for the Board of Trustees and was told to respect hospital policy. Later in the day Dr. Malene Irons, Pediatric colleague, stormed into Mr. Wards office and apparently got his attention. She threatened to take up the matter with the medical staff. Dr. Irons got something done because I got word from Mr. Ward that an Isolette for the colored nursery, costing a few thousand dollars, would arrive in five days.

This might have been the beginning of integration of the hospital, but it was six years later when the medical staff took action to integrate. Dr. Andrew Best, a black physician, was a major leader in getting this accomplished, peacefully. He was a mild tempered

man, who knew it would take time and patience to work through integration successfully and without violence. Pitt Memorial was one of the first hospitals in the state to do so.

After 54 problem free days in the nursery, Mamie Maye was discharged home as a healthy infant. In childhood she loved music and took piano lessons. She majored in music in college and joined the music faculty of the University of Nebraska. Years later, I went to her mother's funeral and to my delight Mamie Bryan played Sebelius "Finlandia" on the piano as part of the service. My thought was, "What a success story." Beatrice Maye, educator, writer, community leader, was duly honored for her good works. She was proud of her daughter. So was I.

FEEDBACK FROM CITIZENS

'll soon publish another story Earl sent me, "The Night Downtown Greenville Didn't Burn." For now, I've received many positive responses about the series written by Dr. Trevathan. There's much to learn here that can be useful for those who lead our city. Here below is some feedback I've received, beginning with an extended, very thoughtful response. --Calvin

PEOPLE NEED TO GET OUT MORE--Reader Response

Thanks for the excellent series by Dr. Trevathan. People need to get out more, and some of the decision makers are among those that can be the most myopic. I recently visited Charleston where my daughter lives. We have no excuse not to learn from others.

Charleston has a strong history to attract. But it also has sidewalks in every new development and multiple swimming pools and park areas in large developments. In our daughter's development, a park has sufficient room for a pick-up football or soccer game, a nicely designed playground, parking spaces all around, and organized food trucks on Fridays to bring the community together and offer outdoor entertainments. There are trails that end between and on the edges of the developments and containment ponds that have fountains for aeration that attracts ducks, turtles, and alligators. The HOA maintains these spaces for the benefit of the homeowners

There are also excellent art galleries and museums, children's museums, a train museum, and an aquarium. The county has a well-organized recreation program that includes several spray parks and an excellent water park run by the county. True, Greenville does not have historical attractions, but is it possible that we could have? Have we explored our Indian heritage or our history as an inland port? Have we jumped into ecotourism in the same way that Windsor, N.C. has, or embraced the development of the arts district in a way that appeals to even slightly more mature crowds? Have we taken an interest in our African-American community to acknowledge their history with the Rosenwald Schools, the history of separation of schools now

merged to be better than the sum of its parts? An aside with that is that we need to separate the needs of ECU to form a broader identity.

If our imagination only extends as far as how many buildings we can place on a block, without a clear direction of how that can grow in a more dynamic, rich way, we will forever be an ugly stepsister to those places that see the jewel a well-planned city can be.

Dr. Trevathan's wisdom and words are still needed. I've enjoyed this series.

COLORED RESTROOM SHOCK--Reader Response

What a great story, "Save that Baby." In 1967, I drove across the country to participate in the "Washington Semester" program at American University. The Civil Rights Act had been passed a couple years before, but I still remember the shock of seeing a restroom labeled for "colored" at a Dairy Queen, or someplace like that, where I stopped to get something to eat.

OTHER FEEBBACK--Reader Responses

He was my doctor when I was a kid---saved my life. A friend now.
The "Save that Baby" Maye story was heartwarming.

What an inspiring story. How wonderful to know that there are people who stand up for what they know in their heart to be right. Thank God Dr. Trevathan, Dr. Irons and Dr. Best did that and that is what made them community activists and leaders.

Thank you for that important information. That made me feel special today.

Thank you for this, Calvin. We knew them all. Our fifty-two years in this area creates a true perspective.

THE NIGHT DOWNTOWN GREENVILLE DIDN'T BURN

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

During the 1960's eastern North Carolina was ridden with racial strife and unrest. In California the Watts inferno was on everyone's TV screen. Greenville was trying to peacefully work itself through many tedious steps of integration of businesses and schools. There were demonstrations and marches in most cities here in the East. Committees and Interracial Councils were actively working to find common ground where progress could be made.

In August, 1971, in Ayden, NC, a highway patrolman had an altercation with a black man and believing his life was in danger the patrolman drew his gun and killed him. Threats and fear reached a fever pitch in both the white and black races. Outside organizers poured into Greenville. One black leader and organizer, and well known in our part of the state, was Golden Frinks, “The Great Agitator” he was called by some. He was field secretary of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and organized protest rallies and marches in most of Eastern North Carolina.

On the night of September 9, 1971, a permit was requested by Frinks to allow a march in the downtown area. It was denied by the Chief of Police, citing threats of rioting and difficulty with crowd control. Golden Frinks initiated the march anyway and was promptly arrested and placed in the city jail. The crowd demanded he be granted bond and be released so the magistrate set the bond at 4500 dollars. The money was raised quickly, but the Magistrate, Fountain Harrington, would not grant release, stating it was after hours and personnel had departed for the night. Furthermore, there was no place to secure the money.

About this time in another section of town the Interracial Council was conducting their monthly meeting. Word got to them that there was a ruckus developing downtown around the jail. A large crowd gathered and demanded that “Frinks be freed or downtown would burn”.

The interracial Council adjourned and Dr. Malene Irons and my wife, Ruth, members of the Council, visited the site and they were told by bystanders that something had to be done. This was an angry crowd crying “Burn baby, Burn.” It was 11 P.M. when Ruth arrived home and found me sound asleep. She awakened me and said, “You must get up and go downtown immediately or there will be bad trouble. You know some of those people and you can do something or else someone is going to get hurt.”

I put my clothes on and reluctantly drove to the trouble spot, not having a clue what I could do to relieve the situation. Having served on the City Council, I did know the city officials. On arriving I found Green Street full of blacks in small groups making much noise. I asked a cop if D. D. Garrett or Dr. Andrew Best, two black community leaders, were in the crowd. He said he had not seen them. A member of the crowd did come up and showed me the 4,500 dollars in a wad of bills. Several other people gathered around and told me what was going on. The jailer had gone home. I was told the City Clerk had keys to the courthouse.

On a pay phone I called H. L. Lewis and told him the situation, and he said he had no authority, suggesting I call Judge J. H. Roberts. Judge Roberts was asleep and seemed confused over why I was calling. I described the situation and what needed to be done. I told him if he would order Mr. Lewis to take the bond money and release Golden Frinks he would be saving the city from a riot and more. Judge Roberts knew who to call and in a few minutes someone came to the jail and released Golden Frinks.

I departed for home and didn't linger to see if the crowd would disperse. It was 1:30 A.M. when I got home, and Ruth was sitting up waiting for me. If she had been asleep that would been grounds for divorce. I knew she was worried. It did take awhile for me to fall asleep.

FEEDBACK ON THE EARL STORY, THE NIGHT DOWNTOWN DIDN'T BURN

BOMB IN THE SCHOOL WHEN I WAS IN THE TENTH GRADE

This was the same time that a bomb was placed in Ayden-Grifton High School and detonated. The bomb was placed close to the auditorium and, luckily, the class scheduled to be there had been cancelled. No one was injured but everyone was frightened. I was a tenth grader sitting in Biology class when all this occurred.
I love reading about Dr. Trevathan. Thank you. Old Greenville stories are good too. Though I was born and raised and still live here, some of them escaped me.

THE KLAN AND A SNIPER ON THE ROOF

I was just reading your newsletter about racial unrest in Greenville during the 1960s and 70s. I'm reminded of the day in 1992 when The Klan conducted a march in downtown Ayden in order to attract new members. Ayden is where I live, and I witnessed that event.

At that time, the town manager denied them a permit to conduct a march. While I would never support The Klan, I do recognize and support The First Amendment which protects the right of the people to peaceably assemble.

That was an interesting time. A week before the march, an FBI officer knocked on my door, and told me a sniper would be placed on my roof, and I had no choice in the matter. Police from several surrounding towns separated the crowd from the marchers. It was a very tense hour or more.

Do you have any information about the public swimming pool in Greenville that was filled in when Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act in 1964? Retired faculty have told me about it, but without much detail.

OTHER FEEDBACK

Thank you for posting this story. These important details of local events often are overlooked. I am so thankful the Trevathans were compassionate and involved with the social issues of that time.

A NICKEL'S WORTH

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

In the hot summers after1932, one of the great joys and relief for the kids of my generation was the Farmville swimming pool. It was built with WPA funds in the early years of the Roosevelt administration. For five cents we could play and cool off in the chlorine treated water for one hour.

That is, if you were white. I don't remember any black child indulging. I don't remember ever asking why.

We would rush to get to the counter, lay our nickel down, swing left into the men's dressing room, pull on our bathing trunks, and dash into the pool at the sound of the bell. We had to step into a pan of water with a chemical to prevent athletes' foot, which was prevalent, before jumping in.

The pool was usually full to splashing kids. The life guard was Horton Roundtree, he sat in a high mounted chair midway of the pool, and he kept an eye on all that was going on. He later became our state senator. We older boys spent our time diving off the low diving board or seeing how far we could swim under water. There were no plastic toys and gadgets in those days. At five o'clock, when the pool would close, we would stand by to watch Horton dive. HIs beautiful swan dive and back flips were something to watch.

We were then looking for a ride home to Fountain, at times hitch hiking, smelling like chlorine and ready for supper. Farmville had no swim team, but other nearby towns had them. All the larger town had WPA built pools of varying sizes. Tarboro had Olympic size lanes and some fast swimmers. Goldsboro had the best divers in Buddy Crone and Prince Nufer. and they had a high board for spectacular diving. They both went to Carolina on the swimming team, winning many trophies. Wilson had the prettiest pool, in the middle of a large city park, covered with trees and landscaping.

I remember vividly the first time I swam in the Greenville Pool. It was located downtown next to the ECU campus and was a nice place to dump us children when the parents were in town shopping. As usual, we moved quickly to get into the pool at the beginning of the hour for more swim time. I put my coin in the counter, turned swiftly to the left, by habit, and dashed into the dressing room. Only this time finding myself standing in the middle of the girls dressing room filled with girls with varying degrees of undress.

They screamed. I fled. I swore next time in a new pool I would read the signs before entering.

Those pools were public funds well spent. They were the key recreation activities in summer for so many young people. In the 1960's integration was underway, and many of the pools closed. By that time all of our cities had country clubs or private pools. Greenville, in later years, built a beautiful public pool in the western area of town and has been a valuable facility for many.

CAPTAIN THOMPSON

NOTE: The periodic series of stories from Dr. Earl Trevathan, long-time Greenville pediatrician, have been among the most popular editions of this newsletter. I think Earl is one of the heroes of our city, and I'm honored help distribute his stories to a wider audience. The story below is a tribute to those who serve in our armed forces. –Calvin Mercer

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

It was September 20, 1945. The war was over, and my ship was moored in the harbor at Manilla Bay. Being a Pharmacist Mate 3rd Class in the Navy, I was anticipating a lot of work and responsibility as we were awaiting the boarding of 300 former prisoners of war, many of whom were suffering from malaria and parasite infestation.

Practically all of Manilla was destroyed by the Japanese, and the stench and rubble made it nearly impossible to administer any definitive care on shore. Loading and unloading docks had to be improvised for our ship to take on passengers. The Filipinos in large numbers were busy putting gang planks in place and unloading supplies on their backs.

Across from our ship was a Dutch ship unloading troops from Southern France. They had just arrived after 52 days at sea and looked weary and tired and not in shape for duty. On the other side of us was anchored the Carol Lombard. I remembered when it was launched and christened by Clark Gable.

The first to board our ship was four British officers with papers for the captain, I supposed. An hour later our passengers began coming up the gangplank to salute and come aboard. They were British and Canadian, mostly, but a few were American. You could recognize officers, because they were better nourished and had experienced less abuse.

I spent over an hour visiting with Captain Thompson of the British Army. He was taken prisoner by the Japanese in Hong Kong In December, 1941, after a 17-day battle. He assured me that any infamous tales of cruelty I would hear among the passengers of our ship would not be exaggerated. Since my specialty field in the medical corps was malaria, we talked about that disease and how it was treated in Hong Kong before he was captured. Captain Thompson told me of the amazing surgical work done by British surgeons on the Japanese who needed medical care.

We talked about the American cinema industry, and the Captain noted that the last movie he saw in 1941 was “Manhunt”. He expressed a great desire to see America and especially to visit Hollywood. Thompson’s unit was bought to Manilla from Hong Kong by an Australian ship after the British Navy took the city at the end of the war. Captain

Thompson had three sons, ages 11, 9, and 6, and a wife he had not seen in four years. I could easily imagine why he would say, “I can’t realize what is taking place.” I enjoyed his British accent. He reminded me of Donald Crisp in the movie, “How Green Was My Valley.”

There was so much to observe on board as these passengers made their way about the ship. Their clothing was pieced together with parts of a uniform, so it was hard to tell what army unit they came from. Many were officers and of very high rank. Some were rather elderly and quite dignified. There was very little noise or conversation about the ship. What were they thinking at this moment, realizing they were preparing to go home after 4 or 5 years of imprisonment?

Most of the men were very thin and malnourished. Their skin was stained yellow from the drug, atabrine, given to them for malaria. Skin ulcers were common. Some had missing arms or fingers. Pellagra and other vitamins deficiencies were evident in nearly all of these survivors. My most concern was with those who were in a stupor, or dazed, condition, and I wondered if they realized what was happening In their lives.

The greatest thrill was when our ship got underway moving towards the United States. The sun was setting, and the stench and smell of the destroyed city was changing to the clean air of the sea. The clouds were resting on the mountain tops and it was cool. The flying fish on each side of the ships bow were escorting us towards home.

MEMORIAL DAY

June 6, 1944. D-Day. The large seaborne invasion of Normandy that initiated the liberation of France from Nazi Germany in World War II. This is a good day to help more widely circulate Dr. Trevathan’s memoir, for those who missed it.

“Precious Cargo, Coming Home: A Look Back in Celebration of Memorial Day”

By Dr. Earl Trevathan
Daily Reflector Section D “Look” Section, 5/26/19

Reader Hansy Jones suggested The Reflector publish the following memoir about the end of World War II from Dr. Earl Trevathan of Pitt County in honor of Memorial Day. Trevathan, who was in the navy, shared it with the paper. Our ship, the USS Gosper, a Navy casualty troop transport vessel, was returning from the Philippines in early October 1945. The war had just ended and the invasion of Japan was no longer anticipated.

From the ravaged and war-torn city of Manila we brought aboard our ship 300 American, British and Canadian former prisoners of war. I was a Pharmacist Mate Third

Class assigned to help provide medical care for these malnourished, malaria and parasite-ridden soldiers. Their wasted extremities, swollen abdomens and atabrine-yellow stained skin were the marks of four years of imprisonment.

Our destination was San Francisco, where families of our POWs would be waiting for their loved ones. About a day out from the continental United States, Radioman John Leonetti received a message from Naval Command to proceed to Seattle as Frisco docking was filled. Disappointment, yes, but then we were advised that all the family members of our “precious cargo” would be flown to Seattle to meet our arrival at the army’s expense.

Twenty-four hours later and we were nearing the American continent. By mid-morning we were covered by a blanket of fog so we made our way very slowly, neared and nearer, taking no chances, not even trusting radar, having gotten our passengers this close to their last destination.

We knew that land was about us, only the fog prevented the liberated from seeing their Canada and their USA for the first time in four years. Slowly the fog lifted on the starboard side and the men were ignoring their first cold wind in years to see the warm sun break in its afternoon position and to see the trees along the shore of Washington state. Everyone was on deck shivering in the wind and as night fell we could see the lights from mining operations on Canadian soil.

The seagulls were gone for the night and lights from a city shone faintly overhead. Slowly, the Gosper moved forward like a stranger, all alone, approaching the little port of Victoria, British Columbia, where we were to disembark our British and Canadian former prisoners of war.

We seemed to be slipping up on a quiet little town that was preparing for sleep. An orange moon was rising and made glittering reflections on the water and on the windows of houses.

A little tug came out to meet us and nudge us into the harbor. The Gosper looked like some giant coming in, with the shoreline so close by.

But — we were no strangers. Suddenly, there was a blast from the tug as if to tell the town that a stranger was arriving, and all the citizens knew what was aboard our ship. Instantly, sirens sounded, horns blew, ship whistles let go the greatest noise imaginable. Then spotlights filled the air, lit up the harbor and covered our ship, and it was then that the tense souls aboard realized we were getting a hero’s welcome home. And oh, what a welcome.

No one on the ship spoke a word. All were too thrilled and emotional to utter a sound. The whole city of Victoria, B.C., had turned out to welcome us.

A hush fell over the crowd, choked with emotions as the stretcher cases were the first to disembark down the gang plank. Then the revelry resumed and one by one members of the families came forth to embrace their long imprisoned loved ones. Precious cargo, on American soil again.

After World War II, Trevathan became a pediatric neurologist and practiced for decades in his native Pitt County.

FIRST STOPLIGHT IN PITT COUNTY

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

Our favorite store was Mr. Claud Owens' drug store. He stocked several health items, appliances, and bed pans, and his overhead fans keep the store cool. He had round tables where we could sit and sip our fountain-made cokes if we had any money to cover the cost. To hear Mr. Owens wiggle that spoon in that coke glass to stir the syrup was worth waiting for.

About that time, on the corner a cinder block service station was built. The blocks were made on the site and I was fascinated watching the process. Ruby Stancil put a small restaurant there, the town's first. I got a part time job, pumping gas and selling beer. Boars ale was a best seller. Ten cents a bottle.

There were other ways to make a little money. Used drink bottles could be returned for a penny apiece. I sold magazines, such as *Ladies Home Journal* and *Country Gentleman.* And the *Grit* newspaper. I delivered milk to three customers at daybreak. My uncle Hardy milked the cow. The Bank of Fountain was on the other corner. Behind that iron barred screen worked Mr. Jimmy Horton. Daddy served on the bank board and it had survived the depression. An initial investor was my grandfather, Henry Turnage, and some of that stock has passed down to my brother and me, through BB&T. A nice little inheritance.

The first stop light in Pitt County was put up in Fountain. Like a real town, we were proud of it. On that corner was Riddick's Esso Station. And in the back was Ernest Mosley and his auto service shop. There was always a car up on the rack over the grease pit. Mr. Mosely could fix anything. Up front was the ice cold drink box and it was a landmark.

We had security in town with Chief Bryant and a jail. The Chief was so labeled because of respect. He was a heavy weight, had big arms, and had that pistol hanging on his right hip, right out of *Gun Smoke*. He made his rounds at night punching his clock at several designated spots in the business area of town. One winter night we had a real John Dillinger experience. Our Chief walked up on an active bank robbery. He ordered, "halt, don't move". Pistol shots were fired, and Chief Bryant was hit in the thigh. He fired back. The robbers abandoned their acetylene tanks used to cut open the safe, leaped

into their get-a-way vehicle, and fled the scene. Now that was big city stuff. We “made believe” cowboy kids were so excited we searched the bank building the next day to find bullet marks. We mimicked drawing our cap pistols, firing from the right hip and holding the flashlight up and away from our bodies.

Our jail was about as large as two outhouses, and the walls were as thick as a fortress. If Chief was making an arrest, we guys would watch him put on the handcuffs and follow him to the jail and lock the door. Most often the jail bird was drunk, so there was no resistance.

About 3 p.m. several Saturday afternoons in the tobacco market season Jefferson’s Merchandise Store would have a “drawing” to promote business. When you shopped there, you would be given a ticket for every dollar you spent, and the matching ticket was put in a slotted wooden box. Dawson Jefferson would park his flatbed truck in front of the store and a hundred people would stand around as a young child pulled out three prized ticket worth five dollars each. My dad would give me any ticket that he earned from making purchases. I had observed how the child reached into the box to retrieve a ticket, so I bent the ticket to make a right angle, easy for the child to grab. That resulted in two winning tickets for me. Smart me.

The R. A. Gardner business was managed by his son-in-law, Albert Mercer, who handled the money loaning and insurance. He was always dressed in a black suit and white shirt, immaculate looking, befitting the black Packard car he drove. Rumor was that Albert was a Republican. If so, he was the only one in town.

SATURDAYS IN SMALL TOWN USA 1933, FOUNTAIN, HEAD LICE

NOTE: The "Earl Stories" have been quite popular, and here's another one about Fountain. Earl is such a treasure and an unassuming one. I worked with Earl on a couple of projects when I was on the Greenville City Council. Here's my own typical "Earl Story."

Earl wanted to make a worthy project happen for the community, and he needed help. My colleague on the Council Dr. Rick Croskery, Earl, and I sat down for coffee at the Scullery. The first words out of Earl's mouth were, "Now, Rick and Calvin, I want to get this done, because it'll be a good thing for the community. But I don't want any credit. I prefer my name not be used. I just want to get it done."

--Calvin Mercer

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

Reflecting back on those long ago times, living in Fountain brought precious memories of my childhood days. I had just turned nine years old. I had a bicycle. I had a dog, Topsie. There was a town full of young people. I had a brother and two cousins in our family.

There was one day in the week that was so special. It was a Saturday. Country people would come into town to shop and also to socialize. If it was early October, the weather was cool, and the town smelled like tobacco. Or smelled like money, the farmer would say. There were so many people on the sidewalk that you had to step onto the street for space to walk.

Mack Smith had a parched peanut rig in front of R. A. Fountain and had a good business at five cents a bag. One would crunch the shells along the sidewalk stepping on those spent peanuts. A wad of chewing tobacco in the gutter was another reason to watch your step. Around the corner along the brick wall of Smith and Yelverton there was always several people propped up there absorbing the warm sunshine and greeting friends riding by. A majority of those coming into town came by wagon or Hoover cart and tied up their mules on log railings back of the stores, provided by the merchants. The smell of horse manure, the abundance of flies and empty wine bottles set the scene.

The main street in Fountain had recently been paved with concrete. I remember that being done. It was mostly a hands-on operation with shovels, rakes, and wheelbarrows, and workers with rubber boots did the work. The job was a WPA project that the Roosevelt administration had initiated. Every store in town had a WPA poster in the window. Years later the town constructed a wastewater system and a deep well for water. That was progress.

The financial strength of our little rural town came from the farming economy, and that was mostly tobacco. There were four merchants in town who sold food and supplies and also financed the farmers' crop. The merchants were in the farming business, also. In the Great Depression many farmers lost their land when they couldn't pay their debts to the merchants. They would then drop down to the lower class as sharecroppers. If there was any money left over the family could buy a stand of lard, overalls, and brogan shoes.

Mr. Herman Owens had a grocery store about midway on main street. Here you could get fruit and bananas, cereals, and meats. My mother had an account there so she paid Mr. Owens every month for our goods. I remember one month it was 30 dollars and she had a conference with the adults at home as to how we could reduce the expense.

Leonard Brothers was our barber. HIs sister was Mrs. M. D. Yelverton. They came to Fountain from Manteo and brought their speech accent with them. We would imitate their dialect as an unkindly jester. A hair cut was 25 cents. He put a board across the arm rest for children to sit on while he slowly snipped away. It was difficult to stay awake.

After my brother got a haircut, on one occasion, Mr. Brothers informed my dad that Blacky, my brother, had head lice. Now there was a minor crisis at home that evening. My grandmother was with us at that time and she organize the attack. She put a clean white pillow in our lap and with a very fine tooth comb she would pull this through our hair and look for any of those little boogers on the white pillow. There was some kind of smelly purple salve put on the head for eradication. At school you could tell which child had the affliction because the remedy was to cut off the hair. If you looked ragged headed everyone would know why.

Pigeon Troubles

NOTE: ***NOTE FROM MERCER:*** *I've been reading about World War II and and the lead-up to this horrific period in human history. Earl's story provides a glimpse of how life goes on in a local community, even in the midst of such severe international events that were unfolding, as Earl and his brother enjoyed life in Fountain and Greenville. The story also gives a snapshot of downtown Greenville in the mid-1930s. Wow.* –Calvin Mercer

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

Growing up in a small southern town we children had to create our own entertainment and not infrequently it would lead to conflict, at least according to our parents. We did the usual “taking a dare,” such as climbing to the top of the local water tank at night, carving our initials on the town’s favorite tree, driving the family auto around the block at age 14 when the grown folks were out of town, and throwing rocks at the overhead street lights after dark--and occasionally making a hit.

In the summer of 1936, there was another confrontation but not in our town. On this day my dad asked my brother and me if we wished to go with him to Greenville where he had to attend to a business matter. This was always a pleasing experience for he often stopped at his favorite fillin’ station to buy us a Coke. Riding in the cab of his green dodge pickup truck to a big town was exciting. For some reason we had to comb our hair and put on our Buster Brown shoes. Country comes to town, guess you would say.

Parking was always a problem in Greenville, so dad drove to the alley behind Blount-Harvey’s store to park, leaving my little brother and me in the cab, as trusting as ever. The alley parking area was unpaved and with the usual mud puddles and surrounded with wooden storage buildings, stables, and hitching post for mules and wagons.

Our critical eyes could not keep from watching those pigeons flying in and out of those pigeon boxes over the sheds. Getting on top of the shed and taking a peek for squabs was a cinch. My brother and I were really in the pigeon business. I had obtained a pigeon care merit badge in scouting and knew a lot about pigeons. But we didn’t have any of those white, speckled ones that caught our attention. Being the older brother, I suggested he climb atop the shed and check out what might be in the nest.

My brother was 8 and I was 13 years old and the whole adventure seemed harmless to me. I stood on the ground and coaxed him along as he relayed his findings. Squabs were there with wing feathers.

Someone must have been observing our escapades, for suddenly an adult with his apron flying in the breeze came running out the back door of the Busy Bee Café shouting with a foreign accent, “You steal my pigeons, you steal my pigeons”! My best Boy Scout pleading did no good. The man could not be convinced we were not crooks with a record of stealing pigeons. He waited for my brother’s decent from the shed roof, then grabbed him tightly by the arm and said, “We go see the police.” In vain I pleaded his case of innocence as I trotted along behind.

Were we going to jail? How did dad know where we were? How do they punish little folks? Who would hear our side of the story? Why did the old man have to squeeze my brothers arm so tight that he was complaining it was hurting?

A block away at the police station we were met by an officer who heard the complaint. The officer made the man release the arm and swiftly ushered us into the office of the chief. As we stood there before the chief shaking with fear, the chief barely looked up from his desk as he directed a question at the older brother, me.

In a calm voice he said, “Son, where are you from?” In my creaky voice I answered, “Fountain.” “You mean you don’t live in Greenville?” “No sir. We were waiting for our dad to do some shopping.” At that moment the chief must have decided we were not pigeon criminals and said we could go. He apologized for the inconvenience. As we departed the police station, I could hear the man with the foreign accent still complaining about our stealing his pigeons.

The trip back to Fountain that afternoon with Dad was very quiet, indeed.

HOT AS HELL

NOTE: For those who have encouraged me to post more “Earl Stories,” here’s another one, appropriate for the end of the most sultry “Dog Days” of summer. –Calvin Mercer

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

Recently, my granddaughter asked me, “Papa, what was it like long ago without air condition”. My thought was, “has it been that long?” I started thinking of the many ways we tried to “beat the heat” in those days, when all the doors and windows were screened and open, the ice was in an “Icebox” on the back porch, and those living in town had an oscillating electric fan sitting near a window.

This was before Roosevelt gave the rural people electricity in the early 1930s. Ice came from the “icehouse” in big blocks about three feet by a foot and a half, wrapped in a heavy canvas blankets and delivered on the back of a pick-up truck or wagon. The driver took his ice pick and chipped out a block about a foot and a half square and with his tongs brought the ice to the back porch, slinging it into the icebox. It was fun to

follow the wagon and pick up the chips that fell to the pavement and then cool off by sucking on the ice.

I think children endured the heat better than adults. As a child we stayed out of doors all day. If not weeding the garden or working in tobacco, we played hard most of the day. After lunch my mother required us to rest an hour, during which time we were to read. Perhaps some of you remember Jack London and “Call of the Wild” and “The Five Little Peppers and How They Grew.” Everybody knew where the swimming holes in our creeks were. This was before swimming pools were built in our towns. Swimming holes were the best relief from the summer heat anywhere. If nature didn’t provide vines from a large tree to swing out over the water, then someone would hang a large hemp rope to accomplish the same purpose. Cheap recreation.

Sleeping on hot nights was a problem. The humming of an electric fan and movement of air helped. No bed cover was needed. Many homes had a large fan in the upper story or attic, moving the air to the outside. Too hot to sleep, adults often moved from the bed to the porch where the night air was getting a bit cooler, to get relief. The most common device for moving air was the hand fan. Every woman had a pleated, colorful fan in her pocketbook. Fans were available everywhere with advertisements.

In our church every pew had fans provided by Farmville Funeral Home, and they were put to good use in July and August. In the rural areas the Primitive Baptist Churches had large windows, and their services went on for two or three hours with every worshiper flapping their fans, trying to get some relief from the heat. Remember, in the early days there was no electricity. Fans served another purpose also. They kept the flies away.

People in the country usually had a shallow well that served many purposes. Well diggers dug about 15 to 20 feet down before reaching a pure cool water vein. The well was wood framed with a shingle roof and shelf space where the galvanized metal bucket rested. On a nail hook was a metal or gourd dipper for cold water, and that was a treat. The cold water in the well served as the refrigerator. In a half gallon mason jar filled with milk, one would tie a strong cord around the top and lower it into the water, preserving fresh milk for a few days. The icebox required attention. The melting ice dripped down through a small pipe and into a metal pan. Before it overflowed, it had to be emptied or else you had a mess.

After World War II, many vets married and returned to school. The University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill brought army barracks onto campus, creating eight apartments in each building. They wouldn’t pass for human habitation today, but at that time of meager means, my wife and I thought it was heavenly. The housing people supplied us with an icebox for the kitchen. We were on the second floor and could just about see our neighbors through the cracks in the floor below.

There was another problem we had to deal with. The icebox came with a pan to place underneath to catch the water from the melting ice. As busy as we were as new

students, we would forget to empty the pan of water. Below, the Williams family would take their broom and bang on the ceiling under the icebox when it was overflowing and dripping on their kitchen table. We remained good neighbors, though.

My First Pork Bar-B-Que

NOTE: A lot—a whole lot—of positive feedback has been given to Earl and me about his stories circulated in this newsletter. So, kick your feet back, forget about viruses for awhile, and enjoy. More Earl stories will be coming. –Calvin Mercer

When I was very young my family would occasionally visit relatives in Chapel Hill. A real treat was to go to Josh Turnage Barbeque for a meal in Durham. Josh was a cousin of my mother. This writing is more about Josh than my early addiction to pork barbeque.

At the beginning of the Duke Medical School the new Dean, Dr. Wilbert Davison, had a recruiting resource that played a small part in the ritual of securing a favorable impression from individuals visiting Durham, mostly from Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. That resource was Josh Turnage Barbeque.

Josh was a cousin. He was the oldest child of Aaron and Carrie Speight Turnage. His father, Aaron, was the younger brother of my grandfather, Henry Calhoun Turnage. As a young man, Josh was a cotton buyer and worked himself up to full time employment with Erwin Cotton Mills of Durham, NC. He became a major official of the company and was well known in the area.

One thing Josh missed being so far from his Pitt County home was pork barbeque. Thus, in 1920's he established a weekend retreat in the country just outside the city of Durham where he began cooking Eastern Carolina style barbeque and Brunswick stew for his friends on weekends. Word got around about the good food and fellowship, so he was encouraged to commercialize. With the help of Jimmy Warren, they established a successful business.

In early 1930's, Dr. Davison was appointed dean of the new medical school. He was a pediatrician from Johns Hopkins, a jovial, portly man who became a friend of Josh Turnage for no less reason than his love for Josh's barbeque. An added attraction at the gathering place was a back room where a home-made libation and cigars were evident. No wonder prominent medical school department heads: pathology, surgery, physiology, pediatrics and more were recruited to create the foundation of a future great medical school at Duke.

There is no monument to Josh Turnage on the Duke campus. Old timers still talk about the good food and fellowship of this quaint little shack in the woods, adjacent the Duke University campus. The idea of a barbeque restaurant must have caught on in eastern North Carolina because every major town had well known establishments that satisfied hungry, working citizens. We all knew Wilbur's in Goldsboro, Bob Melton's in Rocky Mount, Parker's in Wilson, Respess Brother's in Greenville, and more.

Sound and Smell of Rain, Nature's Concert—An "Earl Story" with a VERY Funny Ending"

NOTE: Although the "Earl Stories" are quite popular with this readership, I hit the pause button as much of the country became troubled by COVID-19. The pandemic, along with the related economic, educational, and other issues, will be at the forefront at least into sometime next year. So, we all have to settle in for the longer haul, attending to the various facets of our lives as much as possible and finding new ways to contribute.

The "Earl Story" below is a reminder to be creative and savor the little things of daily life in the midst of national and personal challenge. So, I'm resuming the "Earl Stories," historical and humanitarian reflections by a Pitt County icon, Dr. Earl Trevathan. I came to know Earl personally when I was on the Greenville City Council, worked with him on a number of projects, and have the deepest respect for his integrity, wisdom, and commitment to community. His stories, while not explicitly about the challenging issues facing our community and country, reflect values and wisdom that are sorely needed in these days. And, a story like the one below reminds us to appreciate the seemingly small things. --Calvin Mercer

By Dr. Earl Trevethan
Rain was the lifeblood of our farming. The only rhyme I knew about rain was, "Rain, Rain, Go Away, Come Again Another Day." The other words I remember were, "Pray for rain." That is because dry spells were a mid-summer experience when I was a boy. April and May were usually good growing months on the farm, because rains came on a regular basis and we could predict a good crop of corn or tobacco.

In the hot month of July, there often was a dry spell of two weeks. The crops were showing their lack of rain. The soil was powder dry, the green corn leaves were curling up to conserve moisture, and the tobacco broad leaves were drooped and looking lifeless. It was anxiety time and a common saying was, "Pray for rain." That's all you could do. The farmer was always dependent on the good will of the Lord.

The blessings would often come late into the night after an insufferable hot day. In bed you felt sticky with sweat. You didn't even need a sheet. There was no air conditioning in 1935. Flashes of lightening sent ghost shadows around the bedroom. Then the boom, boom of thunder announced the arrival of rain. Dogs are frightened by thunder, so our dog came to the front door and whined and scratched until my dad let him in the house to crawl under the couch.

Dad, in his bath robe, would take a chair on the front porch and savor the sound and smell of rain. I knew he was there, because I could see that red tip of his Old Gold cigarette when he took a draw. It was music to his ears, he would say. First, the large drops fell and sounded like popping popcorn. Then, the harder, smaller drops hit the roof, sounding like kettle drums. The gurgling noise came from the overflowing gutters. When the rain began to slack off Dad would return to bed. He didn't miss a beat of nature's concert. The morning after a night's rain was a refreshing time--the blue sky and earthy smell in the air, the vivid green color of the crops. Prayers were answered.

I remember a story told by my grandfather about an event when he was a boy. Living in a small house with several siblings, he was relegated to sleeping in an upstairs room, which was actually just attic space. It was quite a walk to the outhouse. One night during a hard rain, my Grandfather Henry had to go, meaning, had to pee. There was a two feet by four feet window in his space, which he pondered while needing to relieve himself. Henry decided to go over to that window, lift the lower sash, lean forward, and let go.

It was raining hard, so no one could hear whatever noise he was making. It just so happened that his father was standing below at the side door relishing the much needed rain. He felt this warm "rainwater," with a foul smell, splash down on the top of his head. Henry said his father gave him a whipping like he will never forget. Henry lived long enough to have indoor facilities in his old age. There are many legendary stories about outhouse experiences still left to be told.

NEIGHBORS

Amanda Ruth was born with limited "smarts" you might say. Much like Forrest Gump, but she didn't have the breaks he did. Her family was over-protective and kept her from developing even a small bit of independence. Even in her 40's she still dressed in little style. She didn't drive a car, nor did she look after her business affairs. Self-expression was all but absent. Few heard her talk.

When all of her family members had died except one cousin, many worried what would happen to Amanda Ruth. She was left alone in her home. Could she take care of herself?

In a few weeks she began to walk a block down her street to briefly visit an elderly neighbor. This was a short visit in which she would sit on the front porch and rock a few minutes, then she would get up and return home. She was always received warmly, with an attentive ear and show of kindness.

Soon visits two or three times a week became a regular occurrence. Then, visits would be accompanied by a little gift of food or nuts or other shared items and in return, her neighbor shared her interest, with conversation and a show of concern.

The warmth of friendship, neighborliness, and sharing gifts began to do more for Amanda Ruth than just break up a monotonous day. Kindness and caring began to

kindle a new “spark” in her and new creativity. All could see a “new person” in her community.

Amanda Ruth began to be a regular presence in her church, with neighbors providing transportation. She began to create some of her own clothes and shared in food preparation for church functions. Her comfort in the presence of other people began to improve and she began to talk more freely. She became surprisingly conversant on local matters.

Was this person emancipated? Liberated? Discovered? Most likely, Amanda Ruth was a person revealed by kindness and caring given by a friendly neighbor.

The elderly friendly neighbor was my mother, 97 years old.

How We Selected a Dean For the Newly Established Four-Year Classes, East Carolina University School of Medicine

Note: In these times, when the medical side of town is playing an important role in the COVID-19 pandemic, it’s appropriate to reflect on the history that brought us to being the medical hub of eastern North Carolina. –Calvin Mercer

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

The School of Medicine was the successful end of a 10-year struggle. First, a one-year class as an appendage to the University of North Carolina School of Medicine. Next, effort to add a sophomore class independent of UNC, which didn’t happen. Then, an affiliation with Pitt Memorial Hospital or build a new medical school hospital. Didn’t happen.

The hurdles included the North Carolina Board of Higher Education, the North Carolina General Assembly, collaboration with UNC--Chapel Hill, and the practice physicians in Pitt County. The final hurdle was the Liaison Committee on Medical Education, American Medical Association. It would take a book to cover the subject matter dealt with over those 10 years before the approvals came and the money was pledged.

In July, 1975, under President Bill Fridays direction, a dean’s search committee was appointed by Chancellors Fordham and Jenkins. I was put on that committee by Dr. Fordham who was a classmate of mine at UNC School of Medicine. The committee chair was Dean Wally Wooles who had been dean when the one-year class was created. A nationwide search was begun, and applications poured in from all over the country.

As the weeks went by, the committee was busy meeting and screening the applicants and reviewing letters of recommendation. We set number ratings until we settled on the top ten. Dr Jenkins was monitoring our work, urging us to “move along.” In October we had settled on three candidates and Dr Wooles suggested we make personal inquiries about the three top choices.

One of the three was from the Medical College of Virginia, and since I did my pediatric training there, I volunteered to make a call to someone I knew. Dr. Bill Laupus was chairman of the Pediatric Department, taking that position the year I finished my residency. I knew him very well and he was familiar with me. He would be a good resource contact.

I’ve forgotten the name of our finalist candidate, but Bill knew him well and gave me a thorough impression of the individual and his qualifications for the deanship at East Carolina. We conversed about fifteen minutes, and I thanked Bill for his help, wished him well with his job as Chair of his Department.

At that point there was a long pause and silence. I didn’t know whether to hang up or not. Then, in his very soft voice he said, “Send me an application.” I rose out of my seat, about to shout. I knew how fond Dr Wooles was of Bill Laupus, so I called him immediately and said, “Wally, we have our dean.”

Shortly after that, the committee met. We discussed Bill’s accomplishments: Chair of the Department of Pediatrics, Medical College of Virginia, and the same at University of Georgia. President of the American Society of Pediatric and much more. His wife was from Ahoskie, NC. The application was forth coming, as was the unanimous vote of the committee. I’m sure Dr Wooles shortly put Dr Jenkins at ease. The only hurdle left was for Jenkins to send his choice to President Bill Friday and the Board of Governors. That happened. Bill Laupus lived up to all expectations.

Heritage

There is something satisfying about saving, preserving something of great value—A Heritage.

I can imagine the feeling that enveloped Conner Eagles and Les Turnage in successfully getting the Village of Yesteryear project accomplished and the satisfaction that their daughters must feel knowing that it is now well placed in its new home and preserved in perpetuity just on the outskirts of Greenville, NC.

What is a keepsake? Why do we save things that have no use or functional value to us? When is it clutter? When is it priceless? In my family, my grandmother saved very little—she even threw away my grandfather’s civil war uniform. My mother saved everything—her thousands of pictures and old magazines, and even my baby cap and carriage.

Our heritage is what we are made from, our inheritance. Collectively, it is the larger fabric of our past. From it we see and feel and experience an emotional attachment. My personal relationship to the ancestral home of my family that I am restoring provides me pleasure beyond ability to explain. My mind is transformed, just to reflect, to imagine, to feel what it is like a long time ago.

The story of our past is often told in museums—the respiratory of items, tools, writings, pictures, art and on and on.

The "attics" everywhere are filled with these keepsakes from the past. Some are worthy of public ownership and should be preserved for future generations. Pitt County needs such a repository, a Heritage or History museum. Our state government supports this type of facility providing guidance and tax breaks for homes and property of a long-age generation.

As we get older, we become more sentimental, more appreciative of things old, remnants of the past. That explains my interest. Clinging to something precious, something priceless, and that is what Heritage is all about.
(Comments spoken to Friends of Yesteryear, Myrtle Grove, 2012)

The Greatest Generation

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

A book by Tom Brokaw, so named, inspired me to attempt to locate three of my closest military friends during the time we served in US Navy during WWII. Even though I assumed some of these men were now dead, I had hoped to reach family members and learn what happened to them after the war and if they were a part of the "Greatest Generation."

During the time I spent at Navy Midshipman school at Columbia University, I had a roommate from Akron, Ohio, who was several years older than me, and from whom I learned a great deal. After I was denied a commission as an officer because of my myopic vision, I was transferred to Pharmacist Mate school. I was very despondent. My roommate's name was Ford Dickerhoff, and as I learned later, he wrote a beautiful letter to my parents that included kind remarks about my attributes, such as easily making friends. He predicted I would have a good future.

Ford was first on my list to locate, and I hoped to learn something of his life. There are many ways today to find an individual. I started first with a phone call to Akron, Ohio. The friendly operator answered, and after giving her the name I wished to contact, she replied, "There is no such listing of this individual." There was a pause, and then she said, "I have a Ford Dickerhoff listed in San Clemente, California". I said, "There can be but one in this country with a name like that." She replied, "I'll ring him up."

"Hello," a female voice answered.

"I am Earl Trevathan from Greenville, North Carolina, calling for Ford Dickerhoff," I said.

“I know who you are. I am Ford’s sister. He is in the shower after removing his cast for a broken back from a fall,” she replied. “He spoke of you often. I’ll have him call you back, shortly”.

I had found a member of the “Greatest Generation.” Ford had finished his Navy career with rank of Lt. Commander. He settled in southern California with his sister and was highly successful in real estate. He never married. He was active in Rotary International and became Lt. Governor of the southern California district.

Ford asked me about my navy duty, which was abroad an assault hospital ship in the south pacific, bringing POW’s home from the Philippines. With that information he told me about his neighbor whose life story was just published in a book, “Unbroken.” He thought I would enjoy reading it. That I did indeed, and it was a best seller for a year. It made a good movie.

Another close friend aboard ship in the navy was Tom Meany, from Austin, MN. Tom’s uncle was a long-time head of a labor union. When I called the operator in Austin, I found that there were several Meanys in that city. I spoke to a Tom, Jr. Yes, he said he was Tom’s son, and his father served on the USS Gosper with me.

Another member of the, “Greatest Generation.” Tom became a successful lawyer and was on Vice President Walter Mondale’s legal staff. He had a winter home in Florida and often drove through North Carolina. His son told me Tom Sr. died three years ago.

Gene Jenkins was also a friend and befriended me in a very special way after our ship returned to the US. We were docked in Bremerton, Washington, only a day and a half drive from my fiance’s home in Grand Teton National Park, WY. I was very disappointed to learn my ship’s section didn’t draw leave time, so I could make the trip and have a week with my future in-laws. Gene saw my plight and kindly gave me his leave time. I asked him what I could do for him. He replied, “Bring me back one of Lassie’s puppies.” Lassie movies were the movie hits at this time.

Fifty years later, I attended a ship reunion and heard that Gene would be with us in Fort Worth, Texas. Around the luncheon table with the small number of veterans gathered, I told the story of how Gene had been so kind to me in giving me his leave time. For this he only asked for one of Lassie’s puppies in return. I handed him a large package, and in it was a stuffed look alike dog, named Lassie.

Gene Jenkins and his wife edited newspapers in a town in West Texas and he was a writer. He died about five years ago.

For a couple of individuals, I could not find any of their family members.

Of that generation I think we would all agree, good marriages and the G.I Bill were the catalyst for success and the start of a good life. We had purpose, we had supervision, we were provided for, we grew in wisdom, and most of us survived war.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE—AND COMPASSION

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

In 1929, the deepest part of the Depression, I was five years old and experienced justice served.

My parents had recently made a trip to our farm in southern Edgecombe County where they loaded up on food for our table. There was little cash in pockets at that time and what could be raised or grown in the garden kept us reasonably well fed. A basket of eggs, a cured ham, sausages and collards were unloaded onto the back porch. All was well protected from spoiling because if was January cold.

The next morning, after awakening and dressing, my mother went to the back porch to retrieve the ingredients for a great breakfast. The eggs and sausages were gone. Dad checked the screen door and found the wire cut and the hook released. Even at my young age, I could sense that there was trouble just by seeing the worried look on the faces of my parents. I learned what the word “burglary” meant.

Before calling the sheriff, Dad and I dressed for freezing weather and went outside to look around for any clues. We saw a broken egg near the bottom porch step. The hunt was on. On the street beside our house was another egg broken. Across the street on the sidewalk was another. We were on the trail of the thief.

After walking a short distance up a wooded path, we stopped and returned home. At the end on the path about a quarter mile down was a shack where a family lived. Dad suspected that was where we would find the culprit. The sheriff’s investigation confirmed our suspicions. Our sausage and eggs were there. The thief was charged and taken to the county jail and locked up. That is not the end of the story.

My mother asked the neighbors about the family who lived up the hill at the end of the path. She learned there were young children with their mother living in destitute circumstances. After a visit to the house, she felt something had to be done. Their need for food and clothing was desperate. Her appeal for help from the neighborhood brought forth a box full of food and clothing.

Years later I recalled that cold January day, and I asked my mother what ever happened to the man that stole our eggs and sausages. She said that the morning after being locked up, my dad went to the jail and asked Sheriff Wyatt Stallings to release the man, because my dad would not make any charges. I don’t remember ever learning who got to enjoy the eggs and sausages: the thief, the sheriff or my folks. I do remember that the event was a great lesson of benevolence and compassion--something I was exposed to many times in my youth.

AN EARL STORY

The turning of leaves around October makes trips to the North Carolina mountains well worth the effort. And, if you cannot make a visit this season, the next best thing is a set of images. Here's another story from Earl about his time in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY--MEMORIES OF A SEASONAL RANGER

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

I reported for work June 1, 1946, swapping my Navy uniform for a ranger outfit. I had recently married and needed summer employment before returning to the University of North Carolina in the fall. My wife was the daughter of a park service family. Her father contacted Supt. Sam Weems of the Blue Ridge Parkway and urged him to give me employment as the government was giving priority to veterans.

Mr. Weems knew nothing about seasonal ranger employment, but he gave me a job. That enjoyable work lasted for three summers between medical school classes at Chapel Hill. District Ranger Granville Lyles was my boss. I was given a green, 1938 pickup truck and a 45-Caliber pistol. My territory to patrol was from the French Broad River to Grandfather Mountain.

It was the end of the war, and there was little activity on the Parkway as travel was limited with gasoline shortage and aged automobiles. So often cars ran out of gas, so I began carrying a fuel can on my truck. I could reassure visitors at Mt. Mitchell that they could coast all the way down to Buck Creek Gap, about 15 miles, without using the motor. Work during the weekdays was to paint flashings on right-of-way trees along the Parkway. Cleaning up litter--especially watermelon remains covered with bees--from Sunday picnics on the grassy shoulders of the roadway was no fun,

The Parkway was not open for travel to Asheville, so most work days I'd drive to Marion and on up to Buck Creek Gap. The return trip to Asheville involved 32 switchbacks, driving that incline to Ridgecrest. Weekends were relatively busy, mostly with local visitors. Unlike today, there were few motorcycles.

I was told to be respectful of locals as they were suspicious of "government folks." One misstep I took involved "moonshine" activity in the lower ravines near the roadway. Firing was at night when smoke could not be seen. During the day I heard chopping of dead chestnut, which was plentiful. One afternoon I heard voices, so I decided to slip down through the bushes and watch what was going on. The workers were filling their mason jars with "mountain dew." Ranger Lyles got wind of my exploits and gave me a bit of wisdom I never forgot. He said if they felt threatened by a ranger, they would set the woods on fire. Enough said.

One other event I recall was a difficult moment for the Parkway. Twenty-seven acres of land, where the proposed Parkway intersected with Highway 70, was owned by a Mr. Hemphill. He had apparently just settled with the North Carolina Highway Commission to sell his land. It was my first day at work, and I drove by the site. I saw horrible destruction. Twenty-seven acres of giant oak trees were cut to the ground. An act on vengeance, I suppose.

Within a few years the Blue Ridge Parkway was completed. The Lynn Viaduct around Grandfather Mountain was the last obstacle overcome when settlement was made with landowner, Hugh Morton. Now it is the most visited National Park in the nation.

ROADS BACK THEN—AN EARL STORY

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

I wonder how many of my friends remember when the street or road in front of their house was paved. In my childhood, road paving was big-time stuff, because our small southern towns had dirt streets. In 1932 our governor was O. Nance Gardner. Because of his help in getting connecting highways between towns paved, he become known as the “North Carolina Good Roads Governor.”

Dirt streets were like playgrounds for children. Dodge ball, bike races, hopscotch, and baseball helped fill our free time, and there were fewer bloody knees than on paved roads. In winter, after bad weather, school buses couldn’t get through the ruts and mud, so school was canceled. Remember scenes in the movie, “To Kill A Mockingbird”? Scout and her friends were always running and playing up and down dirt streets. That must have been about 1935.

Mr. Frank Lewis was our district road maintenance man. He had that big old yellow blade road machine, setting it at an angle and plowing along the ditch, moving the dirt to the center of the road. Then, the next pass smoothed out the surface, making a wonderful riding surface for cars and bicycles.

The first paving in my town was poured cement, and I watched the work being done. Sections were created with framing timbers. The cement was mixed on site in a large drum and hauled by wheelbarrows. Men with heavy black boots spread the mix, and after a couple of days of “setting up,” we had a paved main street. By that time we had put our initials in the cement. That street is 90 years old.

The next North Carolina governor to be associated with road paving was Kerr Scott. He was noted for getting the farmers out of the mud. Rural roads over the state were hard surfaced so the farmer could haul his tobacco and other products to market. These roads were mostly asphalt. Our dirt streets were graded and then the black, tank truck sprayed the hot liquid first coat on the surface. In hot weather, we children were usually bare-footed. That meant tar stuck on the bottom of our feet if we ventured near the roadbed. Eventually, we had to cross the street, so a clever plan was created. We used a couple of 8-inch boards for the sole of the foot, cut a ring from an innertube, and then stretched it around the foot and board. We walked wherever we wanted with no tar on our feet. Smart kids.

I learned to drive an automobile on dirt roads, and it could be hazardous. If you drove through a sandy area, you had to keep the wheels in the ruts or else the automobile

might twist sideways and give you a scare. If the surface of the road was clay, then you navigated a “washboard” section that could shake your teeth out. It wasn’t surprising to see cars sitting in the ditch, awaiting a pull-out. Today, an unpaved public road would be hard to find. Little maintenance, and safer driving is everywhere.

Earl Story “Roads Back Then” Feedback—Rockachaw, Sand Spurs, Devil Grass
Earl’s story “Roads Back Then” prompted this reflection from a reader:
Even in the small coastal town of Pascagoula, Mississippi, I only remember paved roads. You had to drive to the country to see an authentic dirt road, and those were mostly fire roads cut by the Forestry Department to help in preventing and containing forest fires. But most of our barefooted summers were spent navigating the broiling asphalt roads from point A to point B without needing major skin grafts. The secret was to run from one shaded area to another, and thank God for the abundance of trees that draped over portions of the roads. However, there was one dreaded enemy that most of us feared more than the fires of asphalt--the infamous and dreaded "rockachaw." Many areas call them sandspurs, but we preferred its regional name that provoked fear even in the burliest of men. Living in an area that had an abundance of St. Augustine grass, it was a breeding ground for those "fiends from hell." Stepping on a rockachaw was like stepping on a punji stake, which stopped you in your tracks and brought tears to your eyes. The only recourse, although quite uncomfortable, was to pull it out immediately while biting on your bottom lip. Stepping on a rockachaw was a rite of passage that most Southern kids wore as a badge of honor, tucked away in the vault of memory to share with grandchildren in a future chapter of local folklore. (Lauren Clark)

AN EARL STORY
With stay-at-home protocols in place for much of 2020, cleaning out long-neglected basements, attics, and closet corners were a part of some people’s experience. Perhaps you found your version of the “cigar box.”

THE CIGAR BOX

By Dr. Earl Trevathan
I guess every young person had a special place for hiding things they didn’t want to discard. Maybe a certain drawer, desk, or metal container that was available to no one else. I had a cigar box, and certain things ended up there that I wanted to keep and easily retrieve. A cigar box was readily available. It was lightweight, made of thin cut basswood, and sported a nice lid and a pleasant cigar odor. The labels were of no particular interest to me—such as Hav-A-Tampa and Tampa Nuggets. The box would certainly not attract anyone’s attention.

It is interesting to think back and recall some of the things I kept secured in that little box. One item was my roller skate key. It was something I was always losing, so it was smart to have a place where it always should be. The key was metal with a square slot and was essential for tightening the clamp that secured the skate to the sole of the shoe. The key was looped with a blue ribbon to wear around the neck. We skated on

sidewalks mostly, if we could find a cement sidewalk like the one on main street. We needed a key many times before we tired of skating.

Another fun childhood game was “shooting marbles,” a warm weather sport. The marbles in my box were either glass, with a pretty color pattern, or clay, which we called “pee wees.” The big marble called a “loaded” was actually a steel ball bearing and could break open a stack of marbles. Mothers hated our playing marbles, because we wore out the knees of our pants or “britches.”

I kept a school picture of my girlfriend in my cigar box. The picture was from the fifth grade, and she was seated at her desk with no smile—and with straight hair. I don’t remember any girl with curly hair in those days.

My dad smoked Old Gold cigarettes during these years, and I salvaged the tinfoil wrappings and compressed them into a square block. That grew in size to become big enough to be a desk heavy weight. There was a deck of Old Maid cards in my box. That was before Monopoly, and on rainy days we stayed indoors and played Old Maid. Now I have forgotten what the game was all about.

Of course, every boy had a small collection of arrow heads, Indian beads, and pipe stems. There were sites in fields and adjacent creeks where such Indian artifacts were common. It was hard to discard Boy Scout memorabilia, but in time those items dominated too much space. There were pins for Tenderfoot, Second Class, First Class, Star, Life, and Eagle. Merit Badges represented multiple subjects, were awarded by our Boy Scout adult leader, and were very special keepsakes.

And so it goes. It’s time to close the lid of the cigar box. Some of us are “savers,” some of us discard. One man’s junk is another man’s treasures. That’s the way it is.

EARL STORIES GO TO SCHOOL—Reader Feedback

I get a good bit of feedback about the Earl Stories. Here's an excerpt from a teacher. -- Calvin

Calvin, the “Earl Stories” are wonderful in many ways. Dr. Trevathan was my doctor when I was a kid, so I have a strong emotional connection to these stories from Earl. I teach middle grades here in Greenville and sometimes use the stories to teach students about values and local history. Even though the stories are about a time long before they were born, my students relate to the stories, especially when I provide context for them. Their lives are so different, and yet there’s much we can learn from the past. It’s important to remember our history and to pass it along to our children.

AN EARL STORY FOR THE COVID DAYS

With the news all about the pandemic, mass vaccinations, and untimely deaths, it’s refreshing to sit back with an “Earl Story” about a simpler time and simpler doctoring.

DR. BEASLEY AND NO PANDEMIC—JUST FOOD POISONING AT THE LOCAL WOMAN'S CLUB

By Dr. Earl Trevethan

I could not recall the most important individual citizen in our small town without thinking of our local doctor. There are many events in my memory that involved that kindly little man, always nattily dressed with neat, wavily gray hair. You had to pay attention when he spoke, for his speech was rapid fire and you didn't want to miss a word.

The doctor's office was beside his home, so he was always available for immediate service when Nannie Pat Dozier, his nurse, called him. They were a working pair in the community for 40 years. Nannie Pat took care of many patients who came in the office for service or for advice on health matters. For part of every day, Dr. Beasley made house calls, and, depending on where he was going, he took his nurse with him.

It mattered so much for a doctor to walk into the bedroom of a sick patient. The family was generally put at ease just to watch and listen to the doctor's findings and recommendations. Blood pressure and temperature were taken; stethoscope to the chest and heart. Often, medication was dispensed on the spot. That little pink pill was an aspirin compound; that injection was a low dose of dilaudid for pain; phenobarbital was given for sleep. There was not much else. Maybe a cough syrup with codeine, or a laxative. If consultation or hospitalization were needed, Dr. Beasley sent the patient to Dr. Armstead in Greenville or Dr. Rasberry in Wilson, both Internal Medicine specialists.

I remember one occasion when the doctor had his hands full. After a luncheon meeting of the local Woman's Club, all the women developed food poisoning from a tainted chicken salad, causing severe abdominal cramping, vomiting, and diarrhea. Dr. Beasley, walking from house to house with his little brown bag, administered a shot of low dose morphine to all of his suffering patients. That did the job. I've been a little wary of chicken salad ever since seeing my mother moaning with pain.

Many of the doctor's patients arrived with injuries. Farming people were often hurt at work, and our doctor and Nannie Pat were ready and able to treat and triage. I don't think Dr. Beasley thought much of local anesthetics. My brother, Henry, had a four-inch long slice of his leg cut with barbed wire. I went with him to the doctor to get help. A little iodine into the wound produced enough burning pain to let out a scream. But what was worse, I had to hold Henry down while Dr. Beasley closed the wound with four metal clips and no anesthesia. Henry still remembers that occasion.

Dr. Beasley did not have X-Ray, but he still took care of many simple fractures. One of the twins, Claud Owens, fell out of our holly tree and broke his arm (humerus). It was displaced slightly, so the doctor put on a heavy wrapping and sling. Then, during the day for three weeks the patient was to carry a coffee can filled with sand in the hand of the broken arm. This was to correct the slight displacement. Office visits were three dollars, and house visits were five. We got an occasional statement, because we

utilized the office for many minor visits, such as getting our throat swabbed for a sore throat.

In later years, I began to pay attention to Dr. Beasley's work for I was thinking about a career in medicine. He knew of my interest and let me come in his examining room and observe his work. I remember a visit to his office when I was in medical school. On the examining table was a middle age man who had multiple complaints. Dr. Beasley asked me to examine the patient and report back to him my findings. I diligently examined the man, textbook fashion, and could find nothing. Back to his office, I reported my "finding" to the doctor. I was wondering what I had missed. He leaned back his chair and said, "That will be the case with many of your patients." A lesson well learned.

EARL STORY--A KINDNESS STORY FOR THANKSGIVING
Most of us have much more to be thankful for than we're usually aware of. There's the obvious food, clothing, shelter, friends, and family. There's myriad kindnesses extended to us through the years that we likely forget. In that spirit, here's another Earl Story to remind of how we can make someone's day by extending kindness. Give yourself a good holiday. --Calvin

A GOOD SAMARITAN

by Dr. Earl Trevathan

My granddaughter, Lauren, had just completed her voyage around the world as a student on the USS Universe, Semester at Sea. She arrived in Seattle with four friends from the East Coast. They decided to jointly rent a car and drive home. The car, packed tightly with luggage and bodies, headed east.

After an early start, during late afternoon, all tired and hungry, they pulled into the little South Dakota town of Sturgis, thinking this would be a nice place for overnight accommodations. As they reached the city limits, they noted many motorcycles up and down every street. Two of the friends were asleep in the car with their feet hanging out the back window.

Moments later, the driver noted a whirling blue light through the rear view mirror. The patrolman must have been highly suspicious, so he chose to at least check for drugs. He approached the driver, checked the license, and asked all to get out of the car. With all that luggage, what would he do? They pleaded no drugs and the girls began crying, and begging, "call my daddy, call my daddy." The scene was getting out of control, so the officer, in frustration, ordered, "Get in your car and follow me. The town is filled with bikers for their annual convention."

The patrolman led them down a residential street to his home. He told the kids there were no overnight accommodations for miles around, so they could have his back yard and camp out with their sleeping bags. He said his wife was at a meeting and would

check on the “guests” in the morning. Hospitality, with sweet rolls and coffee, greeted the campers the next morning, and then the overnight guests packed up and headed home. I’m sure they will reflect on that act of kindness for years ahead.

MULES AT R. A. FOUNTAIN, NURSE NANNIE PAT

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

An interesting event in Fountain didn’t occur on a Saturday, but rather any day in the fall of the year. It was the arrival of the train carload of mules from East Tennessee for R. A. Fountain stables. Unloading was a show to watch. Mules were a critical resource for farming in 1933, as tractors were expensive and rare. The draft animal was the mule. They were docile animals, easy to love as pets, and stronger than a horse. They were mares, and given names like Bet, Maud. Daisy, and Molly, to recall a few of our loved animals.

When the train unhitched the mule car on the sidetrack, there was no wasted time to proceed with unloading. I guess they had been fed hay and watered along the way. The unloading ramp was pushed into place and the car door rolled open. Mr. John Fountain, on his chestnut colored saddle horse, moved in place and led the fast moving and spirited mules, nearly jumping out of the train car, down the street and into the stable. There, water and hay awaited them.

Each mule, all black or dark brown, had a tag with a number glued on their rump. The number was for the papers on the mules. The farmers would gather around, leaning on the railing, giving good judgement as to which animal to purchase. Several hundred dollars, at least.

Yes, we had mules, but we also had a doctor. Dr. E. B. Beasley had his office just off Main Street. He operated his small clinic with a nurse, Nannie Pat Dozier. They made a team and you could make your preference to see the doctor or Nannie Pat. That little black bag and the doctor would often be seen leaving the office, making a house call in town or in the country. Injuries and accidents made up many of those calls. We didn’t have OSHA then. Home deliveries were a good part of Dr Beasley’s practice.

Two blocks from main street was an important operation that the farming community depended on, Johnny Owens and his black smith shop. Any metal work and Johnny could do it. My daddy would get Johnny to do his horseshoe repairs, and I enjoyed watching him fire up that forge, pull out that red hot metal, and bang away. There is much more to cover in recalling life in a small southern town. I tried to limit this piece to the business area, knowing that there are few of us living who could recall what life was like through the eyes of a child 87 years ago.

AN EARL STORY

In the early part of last century, as automobiles became more common, the demand for gasoline of course increased, bringing with it the "filling station" and all the attendant cultural trappings of this institution.

THE FILLING STATION

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

You don't hear that name being used today as a place to purchase gasoline. Not too many years ago, there was such a place of business at nearly every crossroads. They were there primarily to sell oil and gas. The first job I had as a teenager was working at a "filling station." It was a proud moment when I received my Texaco jumper suit, dark green in color with the label TEXACO and a red star over the left chest pocket. It made me feel more important than the small bit of money I earned.

That filling station was made of brick; the pumps were on a concrete slab. That was unusual. Generally, wooden structures were common, and the pumps sat on the ground. The pump had a large wooden handle you pulled back and forth, while watching brownish colored gasoline fill the glass cylinder up to number ten. That was ten gallons of gasoline at 25 cents a gallon. Everything was cash, and seldom did one buy more than 3-5 gallons.

Filling stations were open long hours and served the community in many ways. When your automobile was not running right, you stopped here to get service or an opinion. Usually there was a "rack" made of large timbers where the car was driven on for oil change, greasing, or checking for motor problems. The smell was that of fuel and grease, the turf was dark brown. I learned to change oil, but mostly I dispensed gas, cleaned windshields, and inflated tires. All my buddies had bicycles, so an air pump for slack tires was convenient.

I don't remember when automobiles moved the gasoline tank to the back of the car, but I do remember that many cars had the tank in the engine section under the windshield. You step up on the running board, remove the cap, and gas up. Seldom did anyone say, "Fill it up." Usually, just 3-5 gallons. Empty gas tanks and empty pockets went hand in hand.

A filling station was not just about cars. It was the social gathering place for many men. Where else would you go to meet your friends, get a bottle drink or pack of cigarettes, share the news, and gossip? Nowhere else. Carbonated drinks were big time. There were no drink machines or other sources for a 12-ounce, cold Pepsi. It seemed like there was always a drink truck parked on the lot unloading wooden crates of Cokes, Pepsi, Nehi Orange, Grape, Dr. Pepper, and later, RC Cola.

The drink crates were very useful, serving as a nice seat for lingerers. The bottom of the crate was used for the checker board. Bottle caps were the checkers. With no electric refrigeration, the cold drinks were stored in a metal box filled with ice. A spout drained the excess water. Pepsi was new to our area and their bottles used paper adhesives labels which soaked off and stopped up the drain spout. I hated having to clean out the labels several times a day. The bottling people soon fixed that by using bottles with the name imprinted in the glass. With 12 ounces for a nickel, Pepsi became a best seller. For a few weeks one summer, we sold the “Three Cent Cola,” believe it or not, but that didn’t last, for obvious reasons.

In the glass cabinet were a few special candies for a nickel a piece: Baby Ruths, Hersey Bars, Butterfingers, and Milky Ways. Mr. Blackwood’s car back seat was loaded with boxes of candy. He came every two weeks to restock the candy, as well as BC headache powder, aspirin, and tobacco. Chesterfield, Lucky Strike, Camel, and the Bull Durham “Roll Your Own.” The Lance man brought “nabs” and peanuts. Many of our customers would buy a coke and load the bottle with Lance peanuts for their midday refreshment. I know some people today who still enjoy that combination.

Much information was disseminated at the filling station, and some of it caught my attention. Politics was all Roosevelt, but not at first. It took much persuasion for some farmers to sign on to the tobacco allotment and price support programs. The subject was well hashed out by those sitting on drink crates or nail kegs where I worked. The “no government” voices cooled down as WPA projects brought jobs and rural electrification brought electricity to the rural people. There were many people with only a mule and car and living in the dark at that time. They didn’t have a voice at the filling station, either.

Now, we have merchandising blocks selling everything from snuff to the *New York Times*, and fuel for the car seems incidental. This is the “filling station of the future.”

AT THE DOCTOR’S OFFICE--UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

Our youngest daughter, Sue, frequently spent the weekend with her grandparent in nearby Fountain, a real treat for our children. One weekend, when she was about three years old, I got a phone call from my mother telling me she was worried about Sue. It was midday, and she was sleeping and difficult to arouse. I told mother to bring her to my office.

Yes, she was sleeping inappropriately. She responded to my voice but then resumed sleeping. She had no fever, had not had a fall, and had gotten into no medicines. It was a puzzle. To relieve my anxiety, I took Sue across town to see Dr. Malene Irons. She examined her and could find nothing to explain the problem. Again, we questioned whether she could have gotten into any cough syrup of other medicines.

At that point mother mentioned that Sue had difficulty having a bowel movement, so she inserted a suppository for relief. I then drove back to Fountain to check things out, to see if I could find any clues. In mother’s bedroom, I found a piece of silver wrapper paper on her dresser. “What is this?” I asked. She showed me the box that the suppository came in. Mystery solved. The suppository was 200 mg of Seconal, used to calm a patient prior to surgery, and this was enough to put an adult to sleep. Since mother was from another generation, she didn’t know medication could be administered by that route. She was more that chagrined. I was relieved. Sue was up and playing by evening.

I recall another mystery case from the past. Kathy was about four years old when her mother brought her into my office with the complaint that she could barely walk. Sure enough, she staggered like she was drunk--a few steps and she would fall. There was no fever, no pain, no history of spider bite, and she was not taking any medicines.

I suggested to the parents that they go home and search the house to see if they could find anything Kathy could have gotten into. I reassured them that the problem would clear. Later the parents called to report that Kathy was much better, and they thought they had an explanation for her problem.

The parents had a bridge party the night before, and in addition to party food they served old fashion cocktails, which included a slice of orange and a cherry in each

glass. I'm sure the parents overslept, and Kathy missed her breakfast. She made the rounds finishing off the cocktail delights at each table. I reassured the parents there was nothing abusive about that but please don't call me if she awakes with a headache. I wondered if I should get a breathalyzer for my office.

THE SNAKE PIT

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

In the summer of 1949, after finishing my second year of medical school, I worked as an extern at Dix Hill (North Carolina Hospital for the Insane) in Raleigh. On more than 100 acres of large oak trees and rolling hills sat this huge granite-walled building with iron metal windows, looking like a large fortress or prison. It was Dix Hospital, named after the pioneer crusader for the needs of the mentally ill, Dorothy Dix.

There were nearly a thousand patients in that facility, the only such facility in the state taking care of the mentally ill. Treatment was very limited, so care was more like warehousing the sick and making them comfortable. In mild weather the patients were often taken to a small, grassy, enclosed compound and seated against the wall much of the day. All were clothed in gray stripped gowns. The vocal sounds from the area were humming noises as the patients rocked back and forth. Occasionally, one would cry out, maybe for attention.

The term "snake pit" originated from looking down on this pathetic site from a hospital window. The movie, "The Snake Pit," was an Academy Award winner. It was based on the story of a mentally ill patient played by Olivia de Havilland, hospitalized in an insane asylum and whose life included time in the snake pit.

In my earlier years I recall hearing adults make reference to common mental disorders. If it involved older folk, it was referred to as senility. Aunt Betsy, getting lost in town or not remembering who you were, was an example of senility. "She's just senile," they'd say. No treatment existed for that condition. Younger or middle-aged people were subject to "nervous breakdowns." They were thought of as being stressed with overwork or suffering from extreme anxiety. Treatment was often a few weeks rest at a resort near a natural spring. Warm mineral water must have therapeutic value, it was thought.

At Dix Hill, many of the patients were frail, toothless, with stringy gray hair, and often found swaying, rocking, or rubbing their face or joints. There was no eye contact, only vacant eye movement. Despite disinfectants, scrubbed floors, and washed walls there remained a hospital stench you couldn't ignore. My job was to do physical exams on new patients and write up medical histories. I remember finding my first carcinoma of the cervix and getting verification from my attending. It gave me the feel of being a physician.

Many of our patients at Dix Hill were severely depressed. Treatment options were available. On two mornings a week, we assisted with insulin and/or electric shock therapy. A room was set aside especially for electric shock procedure. A special insulated table contained positive and negative electric paddles ready for placement over the temporal area of the head. With the patient's head strapped to the table, electric voltage caused a convulsion. Afterward, the patient would be relaxed and alert. There was usually a complaint of headache. Treatment with insulin was designed to induce a brief coma. Although riskier, it was used in cases of schizophrenia.

Depression was called manic-depression in these early days and was known to have genetic causes. My mother began to show signs of depression after her two sons left home for college. Our absence changed her life and precipitated worry, loss of sleep, heart palpitations, and nervous disorders. She was referred to Duke Hospital where shock therapy was recommended. I concurred, but since I had some experience with the procedure, I ask her neurologists to give her sedation before treatment. She was given IV sodium pentobarbital.

By this time antidepressant medications were available. My mother remained on drug therapy for the rest of her life. I later learned several of my relatives were treated for "bipolar disorder," the new term for manic-depression. My great grandfather must have been the genetic connection. He had several admissions to Dix Hill. Each time after he improved, he walked home to Pitt County.

There were wards at the hospital for cases with brain impairment from conditions like tertiary syphilis, tubercular encephalitis, and alcohol brain damage. With penicillin becoming available, many of our patients could be treated for some conditions, but the brain damage was unchanged.

At Dix Hospital, lobotomy was used for treating schizophrenia when patients were excessively restless, destructive, and hard to manage. I remember Edna, a young girl who was endangering herself and thus had the procedure. Because of her age, she was special to all of us on the staff. We cheered her off to Duke--with her parents--where she was lobotomized. The procedure involved drilling a hole through the skull over the frontal lobe and then inserting a long, thin surgical blade through the gray mater. We awaited her return to Dix from Duke Hospital and hoping to see improvement. It was a different Edna. She didn't speak. She had no facial expressions, and I thought she looked like a zombie.

The world of mental health changed in early 1950s. A new drug, Thorazine, was developed in Europe and was found to be effective in treating schizophrenia. It had calming effects; patients were more manageable. No more lobotomies and less shock therapy. President John F. Kennedy signed the Mental Health Act of 1962. His sister, Rosemary, had been lobotomized years before.

The state asylums were closing down, because medication was helping control patient behavior. New, modern hospitals and mental health facilities were being built. There

was a better day for the mentally ill. The beautiful campus of 100-plus acres, once Dix Hill, in the center of our state capital, is now a city park. It should serve as a memorial to the memory of thousands upon thousands of North Carolinians who spent their last days in the wards and “snake pits” of our state asylum for the mentally ill.

MANILA, SEPTEMBER 1945--AN EARL STORY—Part 1 of 2

by Dr. Earl Trevathan

PART 1 OF 2

The War, WWII, had ended with the surrender of Japan. General MacArthur had kept his promise to the Philippine people, “We shall return,” when he landed his army on Luzon Island and moved south. The battle for Manila left the city flattened, totally destroyed.

My ship, the USS Gosper 170, was an assault transport vessel, and shortly after the end of warfare we were dispatched to Manila to transport prisoners of war back to the United States. Because of the presence of so many naval vessels, we were anchored six miles from the harbor in Manila Bay. We had several hundred troops to disembark for service in the Philippines. The images of a war-torn city are what I recall so vividly.

The skyline of Manila was deceiving, and from our distance it didn’t look like a war-torn city. I took the first opportunity to get “liberty” and take one of our LCVP boats (Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel) ashore to explore the city. It was a rough trip in the rain and in a rolling boat, but we made it. The bay water turned brown as we made our way up the Pasig River to the Jones Bridge to disembark.

Our eyes were eagerly taking in everything, such as the sunken ships in the harbor and destroyed buildings along the shore. Some of the liberty-bound sailors were in for different purposes than I was. I had long planned to see a few famous historical places and as much as possible of what war had done.

From the start--it was awful. The stench was hardly bearable. As soon as we put our feet in the mud, little kids were tagging along, trying to sell us Japanese money and whatnots. Most everyone took packs of cigarettes ashore to use as money. Cigarettes were much more valuable than money.

Every single building was a hollow, burned-out shell. Where walls were standing, you’d find a shop selling everything. Some Americans are suckers for anything, all sold at outrageous prices. Handkerchief—one dollar; Palmolive soap—one dollar; whiskey--45 a bottle. I did bargain for a few pictures.

Most civilian cars were hidden during the Japanese occupation. American Jeeps filled the streets. I bought lemonade and donuts from the Red Cross Canteen. There were lots of nurses, WACs (Women Army Corps), and Australian troops on the street.

To be continued in two days.

MANILA, SEPTEMBER 1945—Part 2 of 2

by Dr. Earl Trevathan

PART 2 OF 2 (Part 1 was posted Friday)

The Pasig River divides the city of Manila. Across the river from the mobs and shops stood the beauty of Manila. I crossed the Jones Bridge, once old and beautiful, now bombed. In the rubbish along the streets were 1942 license plates, the last issued.

I traveled to McArthur's headquarters, at the City Hall building. Of all the large and beautiful buildings in this part of the city, this one was the least damaged. This is where emissaries received surrender instructions. Every wall standing was literally covered with holes from shell fire, the ground was torn asunder, and trees had shattered. In this area of once beautiful buildings, many were so destroyed that they could never be used again.

I surveyed the Congressional building, with only the ground floor standing. In the rubbish I saw skeletons of those Japanese killed in battle defending the building. Everywhere could be found piles of unexploded projectiles, stacks of cartridges, and roles of barbed wire. The historic Walled City was just across from this area. That is the original city of Manila, built with a wall around it and where the Japanese made their last stand against American forces coming from north and south of Manila.

It started raining, so I stopped under a ledge of what was once a beautiful old church where, according to a Filipino standing there out of the rain, the "rich people" got married. It rained an hour as we talked, and he told me stories of his experiences during the Japanese occupation. I asked many questions, and in his poor English he gave me an impressive picture of how things were during this terrible time.

His name was Melchior Fenquez, age 31. He studied engineering at the University of St. Thomas. Before the war, his father owned a steamship line and was wealthy. He had visited his brother in the US. When the Japanese took Manilla, the women and children were moved into the Walled City, where we were talking, and some of the men remained there. He was one of them.

While a prisoner, Melchior was beaten often; he showed me his scars. With rubber hoses, water was forced down his throat until he became unconscious. On Bataan,

before it was taken by the Japanese, Melchior fought there with his brother. He didn't surrender with General Wainwright, but rather escaped to Manila. There he treated his brother for malaria.

Many thousands died from malaria on Bataan Peninsula, more than from gunfire. Incidentally, he gave his brother the medicine Atabrine, which in 1942 had become available for our military. While in Walled City, six of his family members died, as did 17,000 others. Many were murdered. When the Americans came from the south, Melchior escaped from the Japanese and into the American lines. Over 70 percent of the population of Manila was killed or murdered before peace came. Melchior had only a brother who survived with him.

It stopped raining, so Melchior and I walked among the ruins of the Walled City, made up mostly of churches. In an American gymnasium the Japanese had their headquarters. St Augustine, the oldest church in the city, was damaged the least. The Japanese used the churches as their final fortresses, so the American fire power gutted them. We walked back to the bridge, and he went on his way home, living with an uncle and working with American engineers. I made my way back to the dock.

Joining a crowd of my shipmates, we waited for a "PT" boat to ferry us back to our ship. Some sailors had drunk too much, and I was amused at what they purchased: birds, Japanese sabers, and pictures.

Questions aboard ship were, "Who are we transporting back to the United States?" and "Are were returning on the northern route?" Our passengers were 350 prisoners of war, mostly from the Bataan Campaign.

Leaving the once beautiful--now bombed war-torn city and going home, there was so much to look forward to, celebrate, and be thankful for.

HIROSHIMA—AN "EARL STORY"

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

For the year that I missed the fall in North Carolina, only the third time I my life, I had a joyful time absorbing the beauty surrounding the Peace Park, in the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Cradled by mountains that were speckled by orange and red maples with a chilly light wind scattering yellow gingko leaves along the walkways, I sat in the cool air watching school children in their colorful uniforms frolicking and chatting in small groups on their way home. It was a special day but for a different reason.

On August 5, 1945, at 8:15 AM, over this spot in the heart of Hiroshima, 500 meters above ground, the first atom bomb exploded. It hastened the conclusion of World War II, but it introduced to the world a weapon of such power of destruction that mankind has wrestled with its containment ever since. Hiroshima was flattened for a distance of over two miles. 140,000 citizens were killed outright. Most were families—

parents and their children. The deaths from radiation killed many quickly, but thousands died over the next few months and years from radiation sickness, leukemia and burns.

A second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki five days later. The Japanese surrendered on August 15, 1945. On that date I was a Pharmacist Mate in the US Navy aboard the USS Gosper in San Francisco Bay, preparing my ship for the invasion of Japan.

The beautiful Peace Park now represents the extent to which Japan has recovered from the war. The Museum records the horror of that day with vivid images of human suffering that is painful to view. Recorded reactions from world leaders spoke of the necessity of removing nuclear weapons from the face of the Earth and that no human should ever have to face the possibility of a nuclear holocaust. Reductions of nuclear warheads is not the answer. It may be a start, but universal removal of all nuclear weapons is the only answer to the nuclear weapon dilemma. Let's hope the "peace children" of tomorrow can live to see this accomplished.

VETERAN'S DAY

Here's to my dad, who served as a radioman on the USS Arkansas in World War II, and to uncles and other family members who served in other wars. Thanks, Earl, for another reflection on times past. –Calvin Mercer

CHAPEL HILL, 1942

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

Having just read D. G Martin's article in *The Daily Reflector* about time spent on the UNC campus by our late president, George H.W. Bush, as an 18-year-old pre-flight cadet, I began reflecting on my student days there at that time and place.

It was a time of great upheaval in our nation as World War II was just beginning, and young men were signing up for military service in droves. The university was chosen as the site of one of several pre-flight schools where cadets were given three months of intense physical fitness training in preparation for becoming naval fighter pilots. Sports facilities, dormitories and the gymnasium were taken over by the Navy. They also built an outdoor swimming pool, an administration building, and a naval store on campus.

Martin's article dealt with a proposal for placing a memorial plaque on the UNC campus, noting that our 41st president spent time as a cadet. It was about this time that many young men in uniform were filling up the campus, too, and this included several well-known outstanding sports figures. It was a sports hero worshiper's paradise, and I was one, in spades.

My favorite baseball team was the Boston Red Sox, and, in the afternoon, I could watch Ted Williams at batting practice, along with Johnny Pesky, Dusty Baker and Johnny Sain. I remember Dusty Baker hit the ball over Lenoir dining hall. Otto Graham, of football fame, quarterbacking for the Cleveland Indians, was there in the mix.

I worked that summer in Lenoir dining hall and had a good look at the guys. Most were from up north and made fun of our southern drawl. Mr. Gooch was the dining hall manager, and he had the bright idea of serving a special meal for these Yankee cadets

so they would experience a taste of the south. He brought in Bob Melton's Barbeque, with slaw and cornbread, from Rocky Mount to give them a feast. The barbeque came in a barrel. The look on those cadets faces when they put that strange, chopped meat in their mouths – it was a disaster. "What is it?" "Is it spoiled?" Poor Mr. Gooch. He was so disappointed. The barrel of barbeque went back to Rocky Mount hardly untouched.

With so many boys on campus, there were girls about, especially on weekends. One handsome dude sat on the rock wall beside Whitehead dorm every afternoon after classes with a beautiful woman. She was Helen O'Connell, Jimmy Dorsey's vocalist, of "Tangerine" and "Green Eyes" fame. These were great dancing tunes of the 40's. Another group on campus at this time was a contingency of German prisoners of war. They were enclosed in an area of Cyclone fencing and barbed wire. There were guards there and we could go up the fence and try to communicate with the group. They were young and good looking with blonde hair and very friendly.

Many of our young men, after fight training, went right into the fighting in the South Pacific. Some never returned. Thankfully, President George H. W Bush returned after narrowly surviving a crash off New Caledonia. I'm pleased he is getting his plaque on UNC campus to remind us of a great hero of another time.

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO PRUNES? (The Awful Truth)

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

For whatever reason, in early childhood, my mother would serve us prunes and All Bran cereal for breakfast. I'm sure the results were quite healthy, and I never objected. The volume of advertising laxatives on TV today made me reflect on the subject.

I spent many summer days living with my paternal grandparents, and I remember seeing in their medicine cabinet a bottle of Sal Hepatica and a bottle of castor oil. Well, I knew from experience what a tablespoon of castor oil in orange juice would do to restore good health. Dynamite might have done the same thing.

In my pediatric practice one night I received a phone call about midnight. The father on the other end said, "Doc, my baby is straining and can't have a BM." I thought, "You called me at midnight for that?" I had very little sympathy, so this I advised. "Get a bar of Ivory soap and a sharp pocketknife, whittle the soap down to the size of a pencil, insert it, and you should get good results. Good night."

I knew by the time he found a store open and could fine a bar of ivory soap, and also find his pocketknife, and whittle on that soap, it would be daybreak. I think the baby complied since I got no follow up.

From the looks of laxatives advertised on television, this nation must be clogged up. Right out of Star Wars, we get MiraLAX. Given the taste and looks of the product, I'm

sure it was originally antifreeze. It is what the doctors are prescribing today, and it is such a “smoothy” that it’s leading the pack in sales.

Next, highly advertised is Senakot. You see a pretty lady wearing a dress and with an uncomfortable expression. She walks into a brick facility, and then you see her walking out with a smile on her face. Job well done. Colace haș the cutest ad of them all. A little ditty and song, and you are tempted to sing along. The last verse notes comfortable relief.

The next product from the past is our old standby, Fleets. They don’t use the word, enema, assuming everyone who has endured the discomfort knows what’s in store. Who can forget a colonoscopy? New to their armaments is Fleets liquid glycerin in an eye drops size collapsible bottle. A miniature appliance, I suppose.

My youngest daughter, then about three years old, was spending the weekend with her grandparents. I received a phone call from my mother stating that Sue was sleeping too long and seemed to be hard to arouse. “Bring her to my office, now,” I ordered. Yes, she was sleepy, but able to be aroused and with no signs of illness. She had gotten into no medication, I was told. Examination was normal.

She began to be alert, so I took her back to her grandparents. In looking for a clue there, I noted a piece of tinfoil on my mother’s dresser. “What was this from?” I asked. Mother had given Sue a suppository for constipation, but this one was prescribed and contained two grams of Seconal for sedation. Mystery solved. Grandmother learned all suppositories were not the same

Now, tell THE AWFUL TRUTH. How many of you had prunes for breakfast?

A TEASER

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

In my youth, my little town had no “industry,” but we did have a grist mill. It was situated beside the railroad tracks, and when Mr. Gardner started that “antique” six-cylinder engine up, the pow-pow-pow could be heard all over town.

I was fascinated enough to visit the site and watch the gigantic millstones do their job, converting corn into powder. The warm and toasty smell of meal made you want to put a handful in your mouth and eat it on the spot. Ten-pound paper bags were filled with the corn meal and then tied with a heavy cotton string, ready for sale. I learned how to tie the knot, but got paid very little for my work.

I don’t know whether the presence of the grist mill and its product were responsible for a little mischief or just that “idleness caused the work of the devil.” In any case, on a warm summer night we kids could think of naughty things to do. After dark we’d take one of

Mr. Gardner's corn meal bags and stuff it with straw. Then, with a handful of meal, we hiked down the road going into town.

Finding a hiding place in the weeds beside the highway to have our fun, we tied a long string to the corn meal bag and then placed it beside the road, sprinkling the area around the dropped bag with the powdered meal. Hidden in the bushes, we sat awaiting our first victim while holding the end of the string.

The first car to drive along stopped just past our trap. After backing up, a passenger jumped out of the car and walked back to the fake corn meal bag, as we slowly pulled it out of his reach. We could hardly suppress our laughter. We heard a string of expletives plus words we never heard before as he returned to his auto and sped away.

We were successful to trick a couple of more motorists who took the joke in strides and laughed just as hard as we did. So much for a warm summer night and two bored boys.

THE OTHER PANDEMIC

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

It wasn't long after COVID-19 began to dominate our lives that friends began to ask me, "Earl, how did the polio epidemic in late 1940s compare with what we are experiencing today?"

There seems to be some similarities but also many differences. The first label used to identify polio was "Infantile Paralysis." The characteristic of the disease in early times was that it occurred in young children and often left them extremity paralyzed. I don't recall that there were any global epidemics when I was a child. I do remember the "March of Dimes," and I learn of our then president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, having paralysis of both lower extremities. I doubt anyone at that time used the term "virus infection" to describe the cause of the disease.

We were obsessed with non-viruses, bugs we could see with the microscope. "Flu," a short term for influenza, has been with us forever and was always seen as a mild, late fall and winter disease of short duration, highly transmissible, and accompanied by a temperature elevation. We have learned this disease was caused by a virus, could be seen by the newly developed electron microscope, and produces immunity when vaccinated with the attenuated or the killed virus.

We have had pandemics from polio and COVID-19 in our lifetime, so people ask how the two episodes compare. How did we react to each, as a public health issue? I was a licensed physician during the polio epidemic and a retired physician in the present crisis of COVID-19. Fear of disease 70 years ago was much more intense, because availability of vaccine, antiviral agents, antibiotics, and critical care skills were limited. No one challenged public health mandates. No one, to my knowledge, resented closing

swimming pools, theaters, or large gatherings. No mask was necessary, because we knew polio was not transmitted air born. There was no vaccine to exercise your rights to reject.

With polio, our technical equipment included the iron lung and the ability to measure oxygen blood levels of patients with impaired breathing. Today, the more sophisticated ventilators are saving lives by keeping patients alive while the body's immune system is fighting the infection. We have hyperimmune globulin to support this process.

Polio cases were very visible. A small majority experienced paralysis of an extremity, but crutches, braces, slings and wheelchairs reminded us of the dreadful outcomes. We could help our "bulbar polio" cases, with respiratory failure, live for varying periods of time with the iron lung. With the COVID-19 virus, in our country one in every 500 succumbed and usually from pulmonary failure.

In both pandemics, infections were mild and in many cases those infected didn't know they were sick with covid or polio. We have a good handle on counting Covid cases, because we are in a pandemic and there are symptoms of illness. A mild fever with little symptomatology and no weakness was not enough proof of what illness you had. In a pandemic you might assume you had the polio virus.

Due to brilliant science, we have eradicated polio nearly worldwide, eradicated smallpox from the earth, and seen multiple childhood diseases prevented with vaccine immunizations. How could nearly half on our citizens resist getting the COVID-19 shot? There is something wrong. We are in trouble as a nation. Imagine, a vaccine developed for a pandemic disease that saved lives, created in less than one year, but rejected by many. What does the future hold for the science of immunology?

DINNER TIME--AN EARL STORY

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

There were rules and discipline in my childhood home that were far different from the restrictions that govern children today. Our manner of conduct at mealtime would be laughable today.

Mealtime was a family affair. Except for Sundays, we ate in the breakfast alcove--four boys sitting on a bench surrounded by an uncle, mother, and father. Mother held court. When she announced from the kitchen, "dinner is ready," we followed orders. Had we washed our face and hands? Had we combed our hair?

Always, a short blessing was spoken by my father or my uncle. Food was predictable. Pork from the smokehouse, biscuits made with lard, molasses in a mason jar, and homemade butter. We ate together, and no one asked to be excused until we were all finished with our meals. Often, my mother said "clean your plate" when one of us

begged exemption and didn't eat our collards. Deserts were rare, either jello or apple jacks.

Being around the table was a time for adult conversation, usually about someone who had a ruptured appendix or other physical ailment. Pneumonia was a frightening word for we all knew that the next news might be a death.

We were wedded to the saying "children should be seen and not heard" at the dinner table. The depression was upon us, so we felt the gloom in the adult voices when the conversation drifted to reduced farm income--tobacco at 10 cents a pound and milk 15 cents a quart. My mother spent 30 dollars a month for our food, and I remember when she asked my uncle for an increased contribution. It was a serious deliberation for a few moments.

Table manners required us to says "please" when asking for the potatoes and "yes sir" and "yes ma'am" when speaking to adults. Our table was not noisy, and we children could speak up. Dad often made us laugh—what fun occasions. We were not allowed to rush through our meals. After dinner one of us had to dry the dishes. Dinner was midday, and an hour of reading was required afterwards. *Five Little Peppers and How They Grew* was boring as heck. *Call of the Wild*, by Jack London, was my taste.

My friend Billy Goodwin ate dinner with us one day. We were served boiled eggs, and Billy put half the egg in his mouth just when Dad was telling a funny joke. With uncontrolled laughter and his mouth full of egg, it went flying across the dining room table and into everyone's lap. At least he didn't choke to death.

All this doesn't sound like the typical family meal today, I suspect. There is no allotted time. Children often eat alone, or with their head buried in a phone. Who says "chew your food" or "don't eat so fast." Who has time to discuss the events of the day or hear a good story. Where is Daddy? Maybe watching the basketball game.

The WWII Candy Bomber

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

Shortly after World War II, Germany was divided into Eastern and Western Blocks, leaving Berlin isolated in Russian-controlled territory. Necessary supplies were prevented from being brought by train to the city. Thus began the Berlin Air Lift, providing food and clothing for over a year. Cargo planes from six countries delivered tons of materials to Tempelhof Airport.

Colonel Gail "Hal" Halverson from Provo, Utah, was an Air Force pilot who flew his C-54 Douglas plane hundreds of times into Berlin during that year. One afternoon, in a moment of leisure, he had a chat with a group of German children hanging onto the wire fence enclosing the airport.

When he pulled out a pack of Wrigley's chewing gum, they clambered around him with interest. Recognizing the children had seen no candy or gum in their short

lives, Hal gave away his remaining two sticks. Their reaction shocked him. He promised more.

The kids asked how they would know his plane when he returned. He said he would wiggle the wings. Thus began the saga of “Uncle Wiggly Wings.” For the next flight, Hal tied candy bars to pocket handkerchiefs and dropped them for the children as parachutes. Other pilots joined in with candy drops. American candy companies supplied tons of candy and the world heard the story of “Little Vittles” and happy German children.

Colonel Halvorsen’s story has endured all these years. Our family has felt connected to this American hero in a special way.

My wife, Ruth, spent her teenage years in Zion National Park where her father was superintendent. Her closest friend was Alta Jolley, classmate and neighbor. I married Ruth after WWII, and Alta married Gail Halvorsen. Christmas cards, letters, and rare visits west ensued.

In the lobby of Zion Lodge on a visit west in 1994, Hal told the story of the Berlin Airlift, and the candy drops for the children of Berlin. It was an unforgettable experience for our grandchildren Jennie, Lauren, and Kelly.

This story has a nice ending. Granddaughter Lauren learned the Candy Bomber, Colonel Hal Halvorsen, age 99, would attend the first annual First Flight celebration at Kill Devil Hill on the Outer Banks. Remembering her visit with Colonel Halvorsen as a teenager and wanting her two boys to have a similar experience, she calls me with a must-do request.

On a beautiful Sunday, we drove to the Outer Banks. The Dare County Airport was crowded with about 2,000 people, half of them children. The big four-engine C-54 Air Force plane was parked at the gate. On the tail was printed “Berlin Air Lift.”

The American hero, in his tan jumper suit, was in the crowded lobby sitting in a chair, getting his picture taken with the children. At 1 PM the Colonel and his crew went aboard the replica C-54 plane, making two passes over the crowd and dropping the parachutes with bars of candy. It was a delightful moment for the kids.

I had a chance to visit with Hal’s adult children. They were pleased to meet Ruth’s husband and told me how often their mother spoke of her cherished friend, Ruth Franke, and their high school years together.

Rain, Nature’s Concert—And Is that Really Rainwater Coming Down on my Head?

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

Rain was the lifeblood of farming. The only rhyme I knew about rain was, “Rain, Rain Go Away, Come Again Another Day.” The other words I remember were, “Pray for Rain.” That’s because dry spells were a mid-summer unwelcome experience when I was a boy.

April and May were usually good growing months on the farm, because the rain came on a regular basis, and we could predict a good crop of corn or tobacco. In the hot month of July, we’d often get a two-week or so dry spell. The crops showed their lack of

rain. The soil was powder dry, the green corn leaves curled to conserve moisture, and the tobacco broad leaves drooped lifeless. It was an anxious time. “Pray for rain.” That’s all you could do. The farmer depends on the good will of the Lord.

The rain blessings often came late into the night, after an insufferable hot day. In bed, sticky with sweat, no need for a sheet. There was no air-conditioning in 1935. Flashes of lightning sent ghost shadows around the bedroom.

Then, the “boom boom” of thunder announced the arrival of rain. Dogs are frightened of thunder, so our dog came to the front door and whined and scratched until my dad let him in the house to crawl under the couch.

Dad, in his bath robe, took a chair on the front porch and savored the sound and smell of rain. I knew he was there, because I could see that red tip of his Old Gold cigarette when he took a draw.

Rain was music to his ears, he said. First, the large drops fell, sounding like popping corn. Next, harder, smaller drops hit the roof, sounding like kettle drums. Gurgling noise came from the overflowing gutters. Only when the rain slacked off did dad return to bed, not missing a beat of nature’s concert.

Henry, my grandfather, talked about living in a small house with several siblings and relegated to sleeping in an upstairs room, barely attic space. It was quite a good walk to the outhouse. One night during a hard rain, Henry had to go, meaning, had to pee.

There was a two-foot by four-foot window in his small space, which he pondered as an easy, quick outlet for relieving himself. Henry stumbled to that window, lifted the lower sash, leaned forward, and let go. Since It was raining hard, no one heard him open the window.

It just so happened that his father was standing at the side door, below the window, relishing the much-needed rain. Then, warm “rainwater,” with a foul smell, splashed on his head. Henry said his father gave him a whipping like he will never forget.

Henry lived long enough to have indoor facilities in his elder years. Many legendary stories, about outhouse experiences, remain to be told.

DINNER ON THE GROUNDS

Earl’s story, “Dinner on the Grounds,” brought back my own memories of growing up in rural eastern North Carolina and attending a small country church. Deacon Lawrence Houston, a deer hunter, always graced the “Dinner on the Grounds” table with venison, cooked to perfection. We kids scrambled to be first in line to the venison plate, although there was always plenty to go around. The Pitt County Historical Society has an annual membership meeting, which includes “Dinner on the Grounds” at the historic Red Banks Primitive Baptist Church, now on the National Register of Historic Places and located between Meeting House Branch and E. Firetower Road. –Calvin Mercer

DINNER ON THE GROUNDS

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

Ever since Charles Kurault and Loomis McGlohon came out with that wonderful piece, NORTH CAROLINA IS MY HOME, I've loved that part about "Dinner on the Grounds."

My memory flashes back to those Primitive Baptist Churches in October and the "Yearly Meetings." I was blessed to attend that annual affair with my grandparents. I didn't attend the service, but I was blessed to feast on that great spread of country food referred to as "Dinner on the Grounds."

The Primitive Baptist members were mostly our elderly country folk, and I thought they were called primitive because they had so many primitive beliefs and customs. Their churches were simple, white clapboard buildings and always aside a creek into whose waters the baptism was consummated. That, in itself, turned me away to a more modern rendition of baptism.

My grandfather was a Primitive Baptist preacher, so he had his time in the pulpit. Church members referred to each other by their gender. That is, "Brother Henry" or "Sister Mary." My grandfather's given name was Gold, and "Brother Gold" was dearly loved by his congregations. I ask him one time why he wasn't referred to as Reverend? His answer: "Son, there is only one Reverend, and that is Christ Jesus." So much for that question.

My loyalty was attracted to food. It was "Dinner of the Grounds." The location of the church was under large oak trees, giving shade and a little breeze. After sitting through two hours of preaching, the congregation was ready for the big spread.

A roll of wire fencing was stretched a hundred feet over a wooden frame. This is where the membership placed their specialty contributions for the meal. I guess the blessing was bestowed inside the church, and I was glad, because it could seem nearly as long as the sermon.

First on the spread were the pickles. All homemade and my favorite was the watermelon rind. You couldn't miss the collards. They were in the largest bowl on the table near a cured ham from someone's smoke house. Add potato salad, sweet potato casserole, black-eyed peas, corn sticks, and a favorite, corn pudding.

At the end of the line were the choice deserts. And, oh, that four-layer banana cake. And so many choices: caramel cake, walnut, pineapple and more. I'm afraid time has taken its toll on the "Dinner on the Grounds" tradition and the Otter Creek Primitive Baptist Church. They were a fellowship like none other. And they were guided by the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Good morning,
Communities are made interesting and meaningful, in part, by all the delightful characters. Here below is another "Earl Story" about one of the characters in Earl's young life.

But first, a brief note about a book a friend sent to me, "Eastern NC Memories: A Pictorial History of the mid-1800s through 1939," published 2021 by the Adams Publishing
Group. It's a treasure of photos with excellent commentary. One of my favorites: "A man looks over the Tar River from the bridge in Greenville, circa 1912. The sign on the bridge reads: 'Warning. All persons are forbidden to ride or drive over this bridge faster than a walk--Five dollars fine for every offence--By order of County Commissioners.'"

Give yourself a good day, and don't be too busy to be charmed by a character.

--Calvin

"SWEET" TAYLOR

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

Anyone nick-named "Sweet" would get my attention, especially if I were a young boy and that individual was a black man who walked by my house every day.

Sweet's name was John. He was a tall, dark-skinned black man, a good face with big eyes and large statute with a slight forward tilt to his gait, like somebody used to pushing a wheelbarrow or walking with heavy boots on. Always he walked. There was no other transportation for many in those days.

We boys called him "Mister John Taylor," and when spoken to, he tilted his head and nodded, touching the brim of his dark tan hat. As a young boy, I wondered why he was called "Sweet," where he lived, did he have family, where did he work?

And why did we call him "Mister"? Could it be because of his large stature, his big eyes and kind face? My upbringing taught me to address adults with Mister or Misses, and I usually obliged. I tired of hearing my parents or aunts correcting me.

One day my Uncle Floyd heard me call Sweet, "Mister John Taylor," and my uncle gave me a lesson is Southern etiquette. "You don't call colored men 'mister,' you call them by their first name." I reflected on that many times in my childhood. Suppose I had been born black and couldn't be call "Mister."

A lot of things in life were this way or that way and I never knew why. Time has a way of changing customs. We began to notice that our northern friends seldom or ever used the prefix, “Mister.”

In 1966, I was scanning the paper and noticed an obituary of John “Sweet” Taylor. There was no mention of his age. I noticed his progeny were living in impressive places with impressive titles. That spoke well for their humble beginnings.

A couple of weeks ago, I spoke to a gentleman in Fountain who was visiting family. When he heard my name he said, “I’m sure you remember my father, Sweet Taylor.” “Oh, yes, I do remember Mister John Taylor.” I didn’t explain the “Mister” part, and I never learned where the “Sweet” came from.

HILLBILLY PREACHER

"Eastern NC Memories: A Pictorial History of the Mid-1800s through 1939" was published in 2021 by the Adams Publishing Group. It's a book full of photos with excellent commentary on eastern NC. Here's the description of one of my favorite photos: "Evangelist M. L. Cummings speaking in Plymouth, 1938. His sign reads: 'Free Lecture on Crime by Rev. M. L. Cummings the Hillbilly Preacher.'" You have to order the book and see the picture to fully appreciate it.

ANOTHER "EARL STORY"--
Good Story or Good Lessons, or Both?

We live in challenging times--dangerous international situations, political division at home, and increasingly potent technologies with coming impacts not well grasped by the general public. Looking back at our history is not merely an interesting exercise (though it is that); it can provide wisdom and guidance for the tasks at hand. In that spirit, I'm pleased to cooperate with Earl Trevathan to deliver these "Earl Stories." --
Calvin Mercer

The Great Depression—
Part 1: Making Do and Hog Killings

by Dr. Earl Trevathan

I just looked at my I-Phone the other day and the screen told me I had left a window down in my car. Technology. We have come a long way since the Great Depression I experienced as a child born in the early 1920’s in eastern North Carolina. The experience was what I heard in the words and behavior of my parents. If there was anything painful, I don’t remember it.

The common hardship was lack of funds and that affected nearly everyone in my small town. I’ve been asked by grandchildren and friends to write what it was like to grow up during those trying times we called “The Depression.” I look back now and call it the

period of “make do.” From that period, I think we might have seeded the “Greatest Generation.”

After having lost our Tarboro home and the foreclosure of my father’s Ford Motor Company, we moved to Fountain where my mother had inherited farmland. I was eight years old, and my world was changing a lot and in some ways for the better. We were now living with my uncle and his two sons. Their mother, my mother’s sister, had died from pneumonia the year before.

This was farming country. Tobacco was the major crop, and my first job was tying it onto a four-foot stick. It was the hottest time of the year, and workdays were from sunup to near dark. My pay was one dollar a day. I also remember selling drink bottles for a penny a bottle. Later, I sold magazines*: Saturday Evening Post, Lady Home Companion*, and the newspaper, *The Grit*, from Williamsport, Pennsylvania.

With my cousins and my younger brother, there were four boys to raise, and mother assigned us chores. One of us brought in firewood for cooking; one cleared the dining table and dried the dishes; one fed the dog. The yard was swept clean every Saturday with brooms made with dogwoods limbs. We all ate our meals together and were required to wash up and comb our hair, before coming to the table. A blessing was always said.

In this setting I heard and felt the effects of the Depression, as the adults talked about hard times, e.g., the price of tobacco at ten cents a pounds. My Uncle Hardy paid my mother 30 dollars a month for his share of food cost. I heard her complaining that she needed a pay raise to keep food on the table. Speaking of food, we had a cow that provided milk, and we had butter. I delivered milk to three families at 10 cents a quart.

Late November was a special time in the food chain. It was hog killing time and fresh meat adorned the dinner table. I remember the sequence of events vividly. The weather had to be cold. Grandmother Alice Turnage came to our house for the occasion, because she knew how to boil the fat and add Red Devil lye to make soap. That homemade soap was strong and was used mostly for washing clothes. It would take the stains out of our overalls.

Hog killing was an outdoor operation. A wash pot was for cooking the fat. A hole in the ground nearby was where the guts were stripped of their contents. The backbone was the first-choice meat to go on the table, usually served with collards. The hired help took the head and feet home for their pay. “Freshest” included the tenderloin and was the making of a special meal.

In the evening with the tubs full of meat, I helped my dad grind it, while he added sage and red pepper. Making sausage for breakfast was “high on the hog” food. Hams and shoulders were rubbed in salt and molasses and then put in large paper bags hung up in the smoke house. There it was smoked by burning hickory wood and kept for future meals.

There were “Depression” foods, because they were available, from the garden, pantry, or smokehouse. Grits were affordable as were flour molasses and cereals. Chickens roamed the yard and we had eggs aplenty. We had never heard of cholesterol.

There was work to be done for the foods we enjoyed. I hated chopping weeds in the garden. It was usually hot, and several rows had to be weed free before we could join our buddies and play baseball. We had a large canning operation, resulting in the pantry full of mason jars of canned foods. The specialty was “soup mix” made up of tomatoes, corn, lima beans, and okra. It was used in many ways for a good, healthy meal, especially soups during the winter months.

The Great Depression—
Part 2: Making the Greatest Generation

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

Our life was scheduled. That was how we accomplished a lot and stayed out of trouble. My mother required us to read a book for one hour after lunch. She picked the books. Maybe that was why I didn’t enjoy the time spent reading. There were other things I wanted to do.

Our water source was from a hand pump and a shallow well. Light bathing was enough most days during the week, but Saturday night was serious scrubbing. By eight o’clock, around the kitchen stove was the warm spot in the house, so that’s where we bathed. The kettle was full of hot water. On the floor we placed our aluminum pan on a newspaper. Soap and wash cloth in hand and under supervision of a watchful eye, mother made sure we scrubbed hard and covered every crevice. There was always one reprimand. “Did you wash behind your ears?” Oh yes, we were ready for church the next morning.

We did not have central heat, so staying warm required work and preparation. In my earliest days, the “wood stove,” i.e., pine blocks burning in a majestic stove, kept part of the house warm. Splitting those blocks of wood was hard work. There was a wood box beside the stove where we dumped an armful of wood several times a day.

Later, coal was used for keeping warm. It was dirty work, but less time was spent keeping a fire going. And then came the “fuel oil” period. Everybody had a 50-gallon metal tank on an elevated wooden frame near the back door. A

three-gallon can was heavy and taking it to the living room stove resulted in oily hands which were hard to wash free of fuel oil odor. Our next home had central heat and a bathroom with water works so living was much easier.

I'll call it recreation, but we exhausted ourselves playing. On the dirt streets we played baseball, eventually wearing the cover off the ball. It was our only ball, so we made a cover with tar tape and resumed play. On warm summer nights we played "dodge ball" under the streetlight until bedtime. It was played on dirt, so we needed a cleanup before we said our prayers and jumped into bed. In the woods nearby, we built a camp site, with tents made from gunny sacks. There, we could sleep overnight with our parents' permission. A tennis court was built in a neighbor's yard. I spent endless hours on hot summer days whacking that little white ball.

At school, our clothing identified our level of means. Country children wore bib overalls, often with knee patches. I note that today's "ragged" makes blue jeans more fashionable. Girls all wore dresses, but some were homemade from feed bag material. Shoes were worn out with holes in the sole, and often shoelaces were made with tobacco twine.

Body odor was notable in kids from homes without more modern facilities. Rotten teeth or an ear draining pus added to the unpleasant odor. The boys from town wore knickers with long socks and skull caps with chin straps like airplane pilots. Hand-me-downs were a source of good clothing, and my mother did not have too much pride to take advantage of that source. Our doctor's son wore clothes that came from Berry-Burk Clothiers of Richmond, Virginia. I mean expensive stuff. He was two years older than I was, and he was outgrowing clothes long before they wore out. They were a perfect fit for me, so we gladly took the hand-me-downs. Make do.

I had very little feel for politics, but when President Hoover raised our postal stamp from two cents to three, then it was time to change Presidents. We already had the Hoover carts, a simple wooden platform with wheels, two tongues, and one mule. School weekly publications gave us a fair picture of both Hoover and Roosevelt: "*Two Boys Who Grew up to Serve Their Country*." Soon we were like most southern families, glued to our Philco Radio when Roosevelt gave his fireside chats. Mother encouraged me to read Eleanor Roosevelt's article, "My Day," published frequently in our newspaper.

We had a one-doctor town, so he was very busy. House calls were the usual way to be seen for illness. After being examined, we'd get a small envelope

with some pink pills. There were few medications that were specific for what ailed you. A good cough syrup, a laxative, and something for pain were helpful, but there was little else specific for an illness.

Immunizations were given at school by the public health director and shots included tetanus, typhoid, and smallpox. If our sickness was contagious, then a yellow printed placard was tacked on the front door by the health department to advise neighbors to refrain from visiting. This usually included measles, chicken pox, and whooping cough. This was not “Depression” medicine, but it was how it was in the times when few could afford a doctor visit and medical care was not sought. I don’t remember seeing a dentist for preventative care in childhood.

It took several years to recover from the effects of the Depression and prosperity came about little by little. My remembrances are those of an eight-year-old boy. Yes, they were tough times for most families, but something was gained. The family ties were essential. Hard work made life livable. The simple things were valuable. Our parents had to make wise decisions to shelter us children from any suffering or discomfort. A sense of optimism prevailed. As mentioned before, these were “make do” times that were creating the character and resolve of the "greatest generation."

GREEN SNAKE, POOR UNCLE GEORGE, “SINNING”—MEMORIES OF FOUNTAIN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

This is not about the history of my church during my childhood days. It is, rather, a flashback of activities and events that still linger in my mind. Some such memories may have influenced my life in favorable ways.

In January, 1931, at the height of the depression, my family (mother, father, and younger brother, “Blacky”) moved to Fountain to live. We took up residence with Uncle Hardy Johnson and his sons, Dwight and Gibbs. Aunt Capitola died the year before, leaving my cousins without a mother.

Our new home was in the shadow of that large red brick church next door, Fountain Presbyterian Church. The church was built on a lot about the same size as the building and with no off-street parking space. Our streets were unpaved, so they were our “playgrounds” for dodge ball, baseball, and hide-and-go-seek. I remember when Norman Gardner chipped shot a golf ball through a stained-glass window at the front of the church. We boys were shaking over that.

Between our new home and the church building, in the middle of the street, was the largest, sweetgum tree you ever saw. One day Mr. Bass and a town worker came

over to the tree with a crosscut saw and spent the day sawing that monster down. It fell safely in the middle of the street, and afterwards we had more open space to play.

Our minister was Rev. Wilson, and we were paired up with Farmville Presbyterian Church. He served our church every other Sunday and brought his son with him. Preacher kids were accused of being naughty. This kid was no exception. Seems like we boys got in trouble with him. On alternate Sundays, we attended the Fountain Baptist Church. Their minster was Rev. Newman, and he was a stem-winder in the pulpit. Whereas Rev. Wilson put us to sleep, Rev. Newman scared you to death with his rising voice and fist coming down on the pulpit. Nobody went to sleep. I recall when the Baptist had communion, it was for their members only, so on the last hymn we (outsiders) left.

Our church had a big iron stove over in the right front corner. The flue went out the top, and Uncle Hardy built a fire every Sunday morning we had services. He got up early, took an armload of stove wood over to the church, and started the fire. Later he added coal. In summer, we had two large electric fans on stands up front that kept the air circulating.

Hot or cold, Mrs. Lydia Fountain sat on the back choir row fanning like mad with one of those Farmville Funeral Home fans. She was too old for menopause--just hot natured, I guess. Uncle George Jefferson sat midway on the right side with his family. Just above him hung a brass chandelier with that saber-like metal point hanging right over his head. It was a distraction for me as I pondered what if that chain broke. Poor Uncle George.

We had a nice mix of congregation members. From the country came the Cases, Parkers, Dildays, and Newtons. The school principals, Mr. Mayo and Mr. Guy, and several teachers joined our church. They taught Sunday School and led the singing. Miss Rapp sang solo. On one occasion, she started singing, abruptly stopped, and said her voice was not up to “sinning.” I don’t remember the song, but I remember a shocker like that.

My brother reminded me that once I took a green snake to church, causing a couple of ladies to drop their songbooks. I don’t doubt that happened, but, fortunately, I have forgotten it.

We had a large group of young people. Our next minister, Rev. A. G. Courtney, was just the man for us boys. He was Canadian, liked the outdoors, and loved traveling. In 1938, he took Ed Owens, Jim Jefferson, Gibbs Johnson, and me on a summer trip around the Great Lakes and along the southern border of Canada. It was primitive camping. It was hot. Even in the middle of the day, Mr. Courtney often stopped at a business to drink a cup of hot, black coffee. The ice-cold lakes of Canada were a relief. I thought Mr. Courtney was good in the pulpit. He was well liked by all our members. The boys were from the following families: Gay, Owen, Johnson, Peele, Gardner, Fountain, Jefferson, Trevathan, and more.

We reached a time when our membership and finances had grown such that we installed heat and air conditioning. Mr. R.A. Fountain gifted an electric organ. The great pleasure of having Aileen Higgins playing that instrument was one of the most memorable delights of my attendance there.

Every summer we had a week of Bible School. It lasted the morning, and was a valuable time to learn scripture, practice speaking on spiritual matters, and get out of farm work.

I remember one period when we did pack the church, other than for funerals or weddings. We divided the adult congregation into two teams, the red and blue. Each team was challenging the other on who could bring the most guests to Sunday services. This went on for a month, and the team that brought the most guests was fed a barbeque dinner by the losers. Something about food always encourages church attendance to this day.

Many years later, when the membership at the Fountain Presbyterian Church was over a hundred, I learned from my father that the church had the highest per capita giving of any church in Albemarle Presbytery. I was always proud of my home church for that level of benevolent giving.

Over the many years, the church has been fortunate to have had outstanding ministers. They have been well educated, effective in their pastoral work, good citizens, and friends. It is a worthy institution and played a valuable role in my early years of growing up.

As unseasonably warm weather gradually turns to December cold, we can find ourselves reflecting back to warmer days. Here's another "Earl Story" about summertime nearly a century ago. --Calvin

THE DAY I FORGOT
By Dr. Earl Trevathan

One day in mid-July, when we had finished putting in tobacco, my father said to us boys that on Saturday he would take us fishing. In 1933, there was no slogan, "Take a boy fishing," but it was music to our ears. Farmers were busy people in the summertime. How could he take off work and arrange such a wonderful event for my brother, two cousins, and me?

We awoke Saturday morning for an early breakfast. Dad barked out special tasks for us in preparation for our venture. Somebody was to find the cane poles. Another task was helping my mother make sandwiches for our lunch. Another job was to rig the poles.

My job was to dig for fishing worms. I knew how to do my job. Just go out to the horse stable, find an old board lying in the wet dirt, and turn it over. There, squirming on the surface, were these fat, pink worms that fish just love. I found a rusty Louisiana coffee can, scooped up some black dirt, and put a couple of dozen worms in the can.

By mid-morning, we gathered our supplies, crawled in the back of dad's green Dodge pick-up, and we were under way. Our destination was Otter Creek. Dad must have known a good spot on the creek. He drove down a farm road about half a mile. There a path led through the bramble and briars to the shoreline. Plenty of poison ivy kept us focused on where we walked.

We settled on a cleared area to unpack and unravel our fishing gear. Excitement was in our bones. Who would catch the first fish? What would it be? A perch? A bass or a catfish?

I saw my Dad looking around as if he was searching for something. He surely was. We all heard him. “Where are the fishing worms?” No one answered. I was the guilty one. The worms were sitting under that pecan tree back home. I’ll end the story here because that was the end of the fishing disaster, known as “The Day I Forgot.”

SNOBBERY

Note: I’ve been friends with Earl for many years. I’ve never, ever thought of the word snob in connection with this fine gentleman.

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

Although I didn’t have a good idea what that word, “snobbery,” really meant in my early teenage years, I did feel like it was being appended on me by a friend. It was a crushing appropriation. The pain lasted too long.

A lot of my childhood friends had nicknames: Red, Bones, Meat, Blacky (my brother), Shorty, and many more. My friend, Red, called me, “Skinny Bones” and “Little Legs.” Nothing could have been more derisive, painful. I became very self-conscious of my physique. When group pictures were taken I stood on the back row, squatted. or folded my arms. I was growing tall but only led to family members noting, “Earl is growing like a bean pole”.

Being skinny didn’t deprive me from participating in sports. I did well in tennis. My brother was superb in all sports, so I vicariously got my enjoyment through him.

One day after friend Red put that label on me, “Hey, Little Legs,” I got up enough courage to ask him why he teased me. His answer stymied me. “Because you act like you are better than anybody else.”

This became a lesson in self-appraisal. What did I do wrong? It was a worry for a long time. I didn’t need a psychiatrist, but I did need some reassurance. Whether Red was right or not in his judgmental call of me, I never failed to wonder whether I was a snob. Red was a close friend. I never doubted that he didn’t feel kindly towards me in every way.

Connected to this personal story was another happening that influenced my life. My teachers always felt that I was a good student, even though I didn’t show it at times.

Our principal, Mr. John Guy, gave me a book that I devoured, titled: HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE, by Dale Carnegie. It was my “Bible.” Whether Red was right or in his judgement of me, he did put me on a path of self-enrichment I shall thank him for.

I am a faithful member of the local Rotary Club. With a balance problem, I need help getting my food from the buffet line. Every week Jimmy Bryant gets my food and flatware and brings it to my table. Jimmy Bryant’s father was “Red” (Oscar) Bryant, and my friend of childhood who inspired me to try not to be a SNOB.

GRUESOME--An Earl Story

by Dr. Earl Trevathan

EDITOR’S NOTE—“EARL STORY:” *The war in Ukraine gets most of the publicity, but, depending on how war is defined, there are a half dozen major wars currently and many more “minor” conflicts. Refugees, wounds, death, destruction. The human, financial, environmental, and other losses are tragic. Here’s an “Earl Story” that gives one small glimpse into the ravage of war. –Calvin Mercer*

It was September 26, 1945, our second day out from Manilla, Philippines. Destination--USA. I was a Pharmacist Mate and the ship’s corp was adjusting to the 350 former US soldier prisoners of war who had been brought aboard.

Ravages of Japanese imprisonment for four or more years--thin, wasted, yellow-stained men, many of whom were wandering around the ship’s deck as if they didn’t know where they were. As a Navy medical corp specialist, trained in malaria control, I knew I had my work cut out for me.

My work space was a corner of the lab where I had a table top, a microscope, blood staining materials, and a log book. We had a technician who ran the lab, and any passenger who had a fever was referred to me. So many souls looked like they had just survived death. Treatment was effective; we had only one death before reaching our first destination, Pearl Harbor. Burial at sea was an emotionally draining experience--so close to home, but not making it.

I had much time to converse with some of my patients and hear their horror stories. One soldier, I recall his name as “Lewis,” was captured by the enemy and taken to Formosa, where many prisoners were held. He said the Japanese had treated him for malaria. He also said most of the prisoners died who were imprisoned in Formosa. Those taken to Japan usually survived.

Lewis noted 1944 was the worse year and each day was a struggle to get through alive. The prisoners worked in the mountains of Formosa and ate snakes, snails, and grass to

survive. Many got sick when they ate the snakes uncooked, developing dysentery usually resulting in death. As horrible as it sounds, Lewis told me that when a prison mate got dysentery and knew he was dying, he crawled under a building to die “like a dog.” The flies finished him off.

Victory came to the prisoners on August 24, 1945. Lewis was hauling logs from the hills. The Japanese came about 3 p.m. in trucks to take them back to camp. The war was over. Even telling his story, Lewis was overcome with emotions, tears in his eyes. I was stunned. At times like this, I walked to the bow of the ship alone and watched the parting waves, noting the flying fish leading the way. Eleven days and San Francisco--home again for our Precious Cargo.

AN EARL STORY

Editor's Note: All of us with driver’s licenses have tales of that first experience driving a vehicle. Here’s Earl’s interesting first drive. –Calvin Mercer

DRIVING MY FIRST AUTOMOBILE—WHAT HAPPENED TO THE SEED CORN

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

In early summer, when there was much daylight after supper, we young folks had plenty of time to get together in the streets for games and play before dark. It was a good time to get into some mischief, too, especially if our parents chose to go to the movies during those hours.

My dad’s car was left in the driveway of our yard one warm summer evening. And, yes, he left the keys in the car. With no parents around, it was very tempting to sit in that car with my underage neighbor and ponder how it operated. Billy was older than me and said he knew how to drive a car. He offered to show me how.

This was in the early 1930s and the model car had a gearshift that came up through the floor under your right hand. The foot pedal was on the floor under the right foot. I took it all in. It looked complicated to me, but Billy said “crank it up” and that he would guide me along.

The gear shifting was very complicated to me, so he suggested that he would change the gears and I just accelerate by pushing down on the right foot pedal. With a little practice and patience, we had the car easing out into the street. I could barely see over the dashboard as the car rolled down the block at 15 miles an hour.

I feared facing an approaching vehicle, but the steering wheel was working great--so great that Billy and I decided to circle the block where our friends were playing dodgeball. Let's show off our newly acquired skills. Laughing and shouting, we had a supporting cheerleading mob following us around the block. In the back seat of the vehicle was a bag of corn from the farm. We managed to shower most of this over our friends who were chasing us along.

Returning the car back to our driveway where it belonged, I hurried to my bedroom, into my pajamas, and under the covers while mulling over the adventurous evening. Safe and sound. But not really.

My room door opens. The light was switched on. Standing in the doorway was my father. I knew I was in trouble. No spanking at my age. His voice sounded inquisitive, not threatening. I was in a cold sweat. Guilty. That crowd had ratted on me.

Happily, I heard my mother intervene when she said to my Dad, "Earl, lets all go to bed and deal with this tomorrow." Thank God for mothers. In good graces, sometime later, Dad said he was more concerned about losing the seed corn than my driving that car.

HYPNOSIS--OR, THE JOKE WAS ON ME

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

EDITOR'S NOTE: From my clinical training, I'm familiar with the use of hypnosis as a therapeutic modality. Stage hypnosis is a quite different matter, but one I admit to finding fascinating. It has an interesting and controversial history. I show up whenever a show is in town or at the county fair. My most memorable experience is successfully enticing my wife, Susan, to volunteer for the stage at a recent county fair. That's another story, perhaps to be told later. For now, here's Earl's experience. – Calvin Mercer

Early in my freshman year at UNC-CH, a gang of us students heard about a program at Duke on hypnosis. We decided to go to Durham for this “show” and judge if this was just more fakery, hocus pocus.

The auditorium was full of Duke students and some faculty, all chatting away, probably about the mysteries of hypnosis. The speaker, who practiced the art or science of this subject, was an engaging speaker and easily captured our attention. He explained that the basis of hypnosis is an enhanced capacity to respond to suggestions, and he would be practicing “stage hypnosis” for entertainment.

The hypnotist explained that the subject would not do anything embarrassing or uncomfortable. The subject would be given a command and hopefully follow through. The audience was properly informed on what was to transpire.

The hypnotist then called for a volunteer to come to the stage and participate. He paced across the stage, slowly wringing his hands, and pleaded, again, “Could we have someone to come forward?” Quiet filled the auditorium. Nearly a minute went by. Nobody moved. I could stand it no longer. Rather than watch the program disintegrate, I walked to the stage. Horrors!

I was in a mode of compliance and sympathy for the hypnotist. He asked me to recall numbers, take 10 steps and turn left, and respond to numerous other commands. At the end of the performance, he asked me to walk around the auditorium and wake up when he clapped his hands.

Sure enough, I complied and with his resounding clap. I faked the moment as if startled. Before I could think what had really happened to me during this charade, a couple of Duke psychiatrists introduced themselves and riddled me with questions. Were you really asleep? Can you recall what had transpired with the hypnotist? And so on.

A bunch of crap. I closely identified with the hypnotist, from my seat in the audience, suffering the power of suggestion from him, so I played his game. Now years later, in thinking back, I realize I easily identify with friends and patients with problems. This is not always a good trait. I have my share of the empathy trait. Perhaps it made me a better doctor. If this little episode was stage hypnosis and for entertainment, then “the joke was on me.”

Editor's Note: Earl refers to Chapel Hill's Gimghoule Castle, the meeting location for the Order of Gimghoule, a nearly century-and-a-half old society whose history is full of legends (and maybe truth) about fighting a duel to win the hand of "Miss Fanny," ghosts, and a permanently blood-stained rock. I'm sure this Earl Story about dating traditions will kick up plenty of memories. Enjoy. –Calvin Mercer

THE COKE DATES

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

At age 16, when drivers' licenses were obtainable, it felt like "Free at last, free at last." Double dating was about as exciting as life could get, even though there was already evidence of outsiders coming to our town and stealing away our girlfriends. We learned where the backcountry paths were that "parking" took place. Mystery abounded as to what activity occurred in those dark woods' paths.

My first date was Dorothy, and I took her to the movies. I didn't want to be teased, so we sat on a back row. After the movie, what do you do? We parked for sure, but it was at a Pop City filling station where we had a bottle Coke and listened to the car radio.

Double dating was more fun, sometimes. With Bobby and Mary in the back seat and my date in the front seat and with me doing the driving, we were in for a great evening. It was a full moon and we drove around the countryside until it was time to find our familiar "parking" path.

Now what to do? I think I snuggled closer to my date, but that was about it. In the back seat, I heard a bit of action going on, rolling and tussling. I didn't dare turn my head to look. My date and I looked straight ahead while wondering about that action in the back seat. I cranked the car and announced it was time to find a filling station and get a bottle Coke. That would cool things off.

My first date when a freshman at UNC was the roommate of a friend of mine. One of us had a car, so a double date was planned. Hardy was a first-string football player, so I felt in high cotton. He and Carol eventually married. On the night of the double date, we parked on the

street in Chapel Hill that led to Gimghoule Castle. It was a perfect place to sit and swoon over a full moon.

Then, we drove to a filling station on Franklin Street and had a bottle Coke. My date, Norma, later married a star baseball pitcher who became a big-league club manager. We all went our separate ways, carrying fond memories.

EARTH DAY—2023

Dr. Earl Trevathan's speech at the recent Earth Day celebration in Greenville, NC.

Over two billion people the world over, in some way, are celebrating Earth Day. We are here today in common cause, to enjoy the fellowship, share our interest, and learn what is needed to save our planet. Sixty years ago, I was a very uninformed resident of this community, knowing very little about the environmental issues that were beginning to be written about and or discussed in academic settings.

Parks, recreational areas, and playgrounds were hardly existent. A tree ordinance and greenways were not heard of. No one wanted to be called a "Tree Hugger." In fact, "environmentalism" was a negative word. One had to shelter such interest. But today we see progress being made in all spheres of concern to sustain our planet. That is our theme for this year's Earth Day.

In these brief moments, I want to recall some of the individuals who by action and leadership gave and still give so much that has benefitted our area. The nation has benefitted most by the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, and the Environmental Protection Act. But what about specific projects close to home and some of the heroes who made them happen?

CHICOD CREEK
Who knows the story behind that court victory? It was Professors Phil Adler and Vince Bellis who helped take the issue of channelization through federal court to stop a practice that was destroying our wetlands. Natural streams and creeks were channelized and wetlands drained to have more dry land for crops and pastures. The Department of Agriculture supplied funds.

This was a great victory and my first awareness of environmental damage that needed correction. The National Sierra Club was a plaintiff in this legal action.

THE NEW RIVER

This action took place in the Western part of the state. It was a legal battle against the Appalachian Electric Power Co. that planned to build a dam on the New River to supply electricity for western NC, Virginia, and West Virginia. The opposition was led by Hamilton Horton, a Winston-Salem lawyer, who worked with Senator Jesse Helms. This may seem an oddly led opposition in view of Helms' position on many environmental decisions.

COASTAL NORTH CAROLINA
Senator Willis Whichard, whose roots are in Pitt County, was the leader in getting the Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA) approved. He spent much time and diligence in this very essential area for wise use and protection of the coast. CAMA is, to this day, being threatened by several coastal legislators

COASTAL PROTECTION
Stan Riggs and Oren Pilkey have for years studied the dynamics of our coast. Their studies predicted beach erosion timetables and protection needed from development. Senator Marc Basnight was also instrumental in helping prevent oil drilling on our coast.

BATH CREEK
Dr. Ira Hardy was the leader in the protection of Back Creek, at Bath, NC. Plans for construction of a marina with moorings for 180 slips would have created a cesspool of polluted water and a disaster for property owners and swimmers. Dr. Hardy moved his residence to Bath and became a city council member there, helping the city develop zoning laws that denied the development of marinas.

These are just a few of our heroes who have served us well protecting our environment. We have accomplished so much in these 53 years since Senator Gaylord Nelson woke us up with his call to action on that first Earth Day

There are many issues remaining before us. Some, like climate change, are of the highest concern and beg for national policies to stabilize or reduce planet warming. With much effort and persuasion from our local Sierra Club, our city is considering hiring a sustainability manager who will work to monitor and reduce greenhouse gases in the city departments.

I have just finished reading David McCullough's most recent book, BRAVE COMPANIONS, and made note of chapter 16, "Recommended Itinerary." What a challenge for parents to expose their children to jewels of our country, to see and appreciate or to protect and save.

There's good news. The grasslands of western Kansas are a flowing beauty to behold. But driving the backroads and small towns of our country, we see many businesses are boarded up. Drive through southeastern Kentucky and see the destruction of mountains by strip mining.

McCullough has a good message for us all. His last words to the graduation class of Middleburg College were: “Go from this place with confidence. Prize tolerance and horse sense. And sometime, somewhere along the way, do something for your country.”

The Gifts of My Semester at Sea Voyage

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

EDITOR’S NOTE: I connect deeply with the spirit of Earl’s story below. Foreign travel is, yes, about experiencing fascinating historical and cultural sites and peoples of the world. But the real value is the inner work it facilitates. It is for me, if I may, a spiritual journey, broadening my lens, deepening my appreciation for life, and painfully challenging my assumptions. Susan, other incredible assistants, and I took students on ECU study abroad programs for seven years. Some students who had neither been out of eastern NC nor on a plane saw the world and, according to their testimony, were transformed and renewed as Americans, energized in their citizenship of their own country and the world. Here, enjoy Earl’s reflections. –Calvin Mercer

This was a rare experience, a true odyssey, traveling around the world with this unique community of students and faculty for 111 days. Here are some of my reflections on the meaning and worth of it all.

I asked myself what many of my friends have asked me: “What was the highlight of your voyage?” So much of my experience was new, exciting, dramatic, riveting, often beautiful and at times disheartening. What was also so special was being in the company of so many bright, energetic, attractive young people. I shared their classroom lectures, visited with them while dining, and traveled with them to unique destinations. Crossing paths with bright students was a supreme privilege.

The students were challenged at the beginning of the voyage to open their minds, peer deeply, and engage themselves in all they would see and do. They would travel through the peaks and valleys of many parts of this world, take notes, celebrate, ponder, and at times, weep at what they saw. It redefined their values, challenged their priorities, and changed their lives into better persons. Before their eyes, they saw the dregs of poverty, the poorest of the poor, the shinning city on a hill, and happy faces of children from West Africa to Japan.

They rethought war, the cruelty of oppression, and the maldistribution of wealth. They dwelled on and studied globalization as it impacts our world and puts us on eye level with dominating forces that affect us all. They saw the

economic revolution going on in Asia and the shift of America from number one in areas of economic growth and production.

They tried to match the meaning of those statistics with the personal and social values they have acquired as Americans, such as happiness, joy, and charity that register high on the scale of life's values. I heard students speak with deep emotions on the subject of wealth in too few hands, the conflicted diamond industry in darkest Africa, the plastic waste conundrum, mandatory school student uniforms, fair trade, taser guns, and community service.

I asked myself, as many of my young friends did, what is the value of being "number one" in the world? If China is growing at 15 percent a year in gross domestic production and if Japan has the highest per capita income, what have we lost? The business model which the students have heard much about in their courses on globalization proclaims that production drives the world economy, loyalty is for profit, corporative objective is the client, and the bottom line is the shareholder. With that in mind, America exports McDonalds, Coca-Cola, Starbucks, and Apple Computers, reaping a good profit. These companies are becoming the models for being socially conscience and proactive in their worldwide markets.

This may be the Asian Century, but does this mean we turn away and lose our American values? The political model includes public voices, and this generation can speak to that with great alacrity. As Thomas Friedman noted in a recent article, America is still number one in charitable giving and imagination, and, I might add, innovation. For me, seeing the world as I did, with 520 classmates over those 111 days, was a rare opportunity, a true gift of great value that can only be described as an enriching enlightenment that remains forever.

WHAT IS A HANDOUT?
By Dr. Earl Trevathan

In one sense, it may be referring to a charitable gift, or if from the government, it may be an "entitlement." There are always disagreements over such "handouts" as to whether they accomplish the good that is intended or whether they are addictive wastes of the taxpayer's money that encourages dependency and deadbeats.

In my experience, this conundrum comes up quite frequently when political discourse embraces the larger role of government in our lives. There is hardly any agreement on

the subject when friends begin to state their opinions. It all turns out to be a frustrating waste of time.

We see the “welfare queens and kings” everywhere in our movement about town. People who ought to be working, doing a job, but instead, are idling their time away, it appears. Let’s say in nearly every case we do not know the circumstances. It is an unfair judgment.

There was a time in this nation when charity was given by family or neighbors. It was not a function of the government. Religious institutions established charities, e.g., Catholic charities. They provided food and clothing and sometimes nursing care. Next, local government began providing needed services for the destitute and poor. This was the beginning of “welfare.” “Homes for the poor” or “county homes,” as they were called back then, were common.

A big jump in charitable services, “handouts,” was initiated by the federal government during the great depression in the 1920s and 1930s. Poverty was rampant. Much of the South was without electricity or paved roads. Medical care for many was little to none. “Make work” was nationwide to employ millions for menial pay.
“Handouts” included rural electrification, public housing projects, and medical clinic services in school. For the farmer, handouts became large and generous and continue to this day. Some crop and dairy products were supported by public funds called “price supports,” so the farmer could make enough to continue the trade.

Today, there is a federal department focused on public welfare, and it makes up the third largest budget category after defense and agriculture. We have Medicaid, children’s health services, WIC (supplemental nutrition for women, infants, and children), and food stamps for the needy. And much more. Is this help for our society or does it drag us further into a welfare state? Do these programs give people a lift and a chance to move beyond charity, or do they create lazy, freeloaders who take advantage? Some of both?

My family benefitted greatly from handouts as farming people--price support, farmland tax deferments, agricultural agent services, and rural electrification, to name a few. For myself, the greatest handout I can recall was four years of college and a medical school education on the GI Bill. That handout was a “lift up,” which is what it was meant to be. I’d like to see a GI Bill #2 today to pay community college tuition for our low-income population. President Obama recommended this.

SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES YEARS AGO—TONSILLECTOMY ON THE SPOT, AND THE PRINCIPAL’S DESK

by Dr. Earl Trevathan

Memories of public health services in my elementary school years seem awfully primitive when I recall what was rendered in the early 1930s. Dr. Basnight was the Pitt County Health Director, and he showed up at our school occasionally in winter when there was much sickness.

I can remember the smell of a classmate's draining ear and the health nurse cleaning the ear with peroxide. The odor didn't get much better. Tonsilitis was very common and was treated with a swab of silver nitrate and aspirin for fever.

If mouth breathing and snoring were problems, Dr. Basnight recommended a tonsillectomy. Who would do the procedure? He would. Where? On the principal's desk. The nurse would spread a white sheet over the cleaned-off surface and then she dripped ether over a wire screen mask. The doctor placed his snare loop over the swollen tonsil clamped down on the tissue. He packed the surface with gauze. In a few minutes, it was all over. The patient's reward was ice cream.

Another health initiative was to check every student for hookworm infestation. The diagnosis was made from a stool sample. We were given an envelope with a tongue depressor, a very small tin container, and instructions to collect a portion of stool and return the specimen the next morning. The specimen was examined by the state lab and the infected student treated with resorcinol.

Head lice were a nuisance. If a student came to school with a bald head, it must be lice. The barber usually made the diagnosis. He told the parents, privately of course. The pharmacist prescribed a purple ointment that suffocated the little boogers. Eye problems, impaired vision, and hearing loss were often discovered by an observing teacher, and referrals were made.

Most students had natural immunity, having had chicken pox, whooping cough, and sometimes mumps before school age. Pink eye was common and contagious. It was treated with silver nitrate ointment.

Giant progress in treating children came with the availability of penicillin, immunizations, and early diagnosis.

MISHAPS

By Dr. Earl Trevathan

I spent a lot of time as a child with my grandparents in the summer. My grandmother did me favors, such as giving me a second slice of banana cake, my favorite. Afternoons were rather quiet; the men were at work.

One routine interested me. Aunt Retta, a neighbor from across the street, came over in mid-afternoon to sit with grandma on the porch and talk, or, should I say, “mumble.” I had never heard of anyone named “Retta.” My guess is that it was short for Henrietta.

Anyway, Aunt Retta had a bad habit. She dipped snuff privately. You can’t talk plain with your lip stuffed with snuff. Near where Aunt Retta sat on the porch, the green azalea leaves were stained brown. A few days later, when I noted a few brown stained leaves on grandma’s side of the porch, I had high suspicion she was snitching a tad of that horrible stuff from Aunt Retta. I observed that a good mouth rinse helped her solve the problem.

There is nothing in the Bible that should make grandma or Aunt Retta feel guilty. A promotional verse like this comes to mind: “Crow like a rooster, cackle like a hen.” Rooster Snuff is just the stuff for women folk and men.

Here’s a Christmas mishap. As a child, nothing was more exciting than shooting off fireworks at Christmas. We children ordered our interesting pieces from an outfit in Ohio--noise makers and colorful rockets. We put our money and order form in an envelope, dropped It in the post office box, and the next day, and every day, we’d go to the train station to see if our fireworks had arrived. Excitement ran high.

A few days before Christmas, after receiving our goodies, we pleaded with my mother to let us kids shoot off a couple of Roman candles. Just light the fuse at the tip and a small fireball blasted out about 50 feet. It seemed harmless enough. Not really, as we learned the hard way. Mother said OK, for three or four shots, but not near the house.

After firing a couple of colorful Roman candles, our young neighbor, about five years old, begged me to let him shoot one. He had observed my procedure carefully. I thought it safe to let him enjoy the thrill of shooting off a Roman candle. Well, AC wasn’t as smart as I judged him to be.

His first aim was directed at the box of fireworks sitting in the front yard. He made a perfect hit with the fire ball. The explosives shook our end of town--sky rockets whirling into the air, cherry bombs awakening the neighbors, fire cracker packets sounding like machine gun fire. Before we could disarm him, AC, thinking he was the laugh of the party, turned his fire toward our front porch. The adult observers leaped to the ground and scattered. A disaster was averted. AC left for his home smiling.

I was saddened that our Christmas fun had been cut short. From then on, we reserved fireworks for the Fourth of July. Makes more sense, especially when thinking through this story as an adult.

I recall another Christmas “mishap.” My family visited my grandparents Christmas day, opening gifts and anticipating a good dinner. At about blessing time, the front door popped open and in stepped Uncle Clyde.

Clyde was known to be a little friendly with alcohol, and the look on his face made us wonder what greeting was coming forth. Screwing up his face to belt out a greeting, we heard, “Pisssss-tel Packing Mama.” For a moment there was plenty of apprehension as to what was coming next. We all had a good laugh, even though Uncle Clyde didn’t have a clue as to what was funny. Every family has an Uncle Clyde

Many years ago, my mother did me the favor of helping me clean out my closet of old cloths, misfits and out of style. When the job was completed, I noticed a black suit and plain dark tie hanging on a coat rack in the back of my closet. My thought was why don’t we pitch that antique? The answer came forth surprisingly, “Son, you save that black suit for your funeral.”

I didn’t want to hurt mother’s feelings, but I did raise a question, “You mean with that suit and that necktie on, I am to lie in a casket with the top up and everyone staring?” She looked surprised at my question and said, “Well, son, that is the custom.”

I don’t know where that old black suit and tie are today but they might as well be trashed. I don’t plan for Saint Peter to greet me wearing that outfit.

NOW FOR A PLEASANT NOTE--HEROES IN OUR MIDST

Two of my favorite people are approaching the century mark. Assessments vary about the presidency of Jimmy Carter, nearly 99 years old, but most I think agree he is an extraordinary person with regard to character and post-presidential humanitarian service. Too bad character is not necessarily high on the list of what some consider to be qualities that makes for a great president.

We have another near centenarian in our local community who, for me, is a model of service and decency. If I have my math right, Dr. Earl Trevathan was born—September 29, 1923--one year and two days before Jimmy Carter.

Happy Birthday Earl! Here’s a typical Earl story from my experience. When I was serving on the Greenville City Council, Earl came to me, saying “I have an idea I think would be good for our community, and I want you to help make it happen.” The next words out of his mouth were an insistence that he didn’t want any credit, he just wanted this quality of life feature for the community.

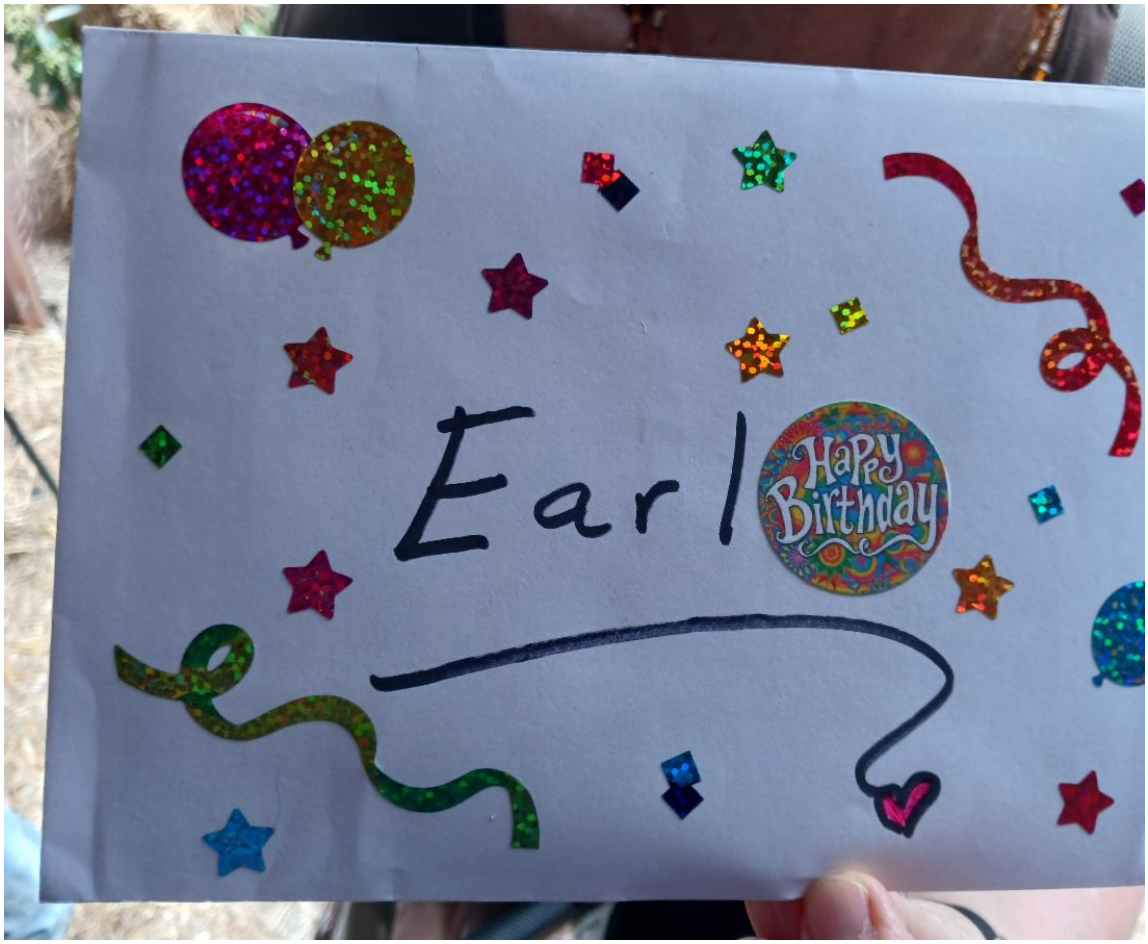
This humble servant leadership has been my long experience of Dr. Earl Trevathan. In a climate of unhappy political polarization, institutions under stress, and existential challenges, people like Earl give me hope. Thank you, Earl, for your decency and service. Thank you for your kindness and good heart.

September 29, 2023, is Earl’s 100th birthday. Earl was in private practice as a pediatrician for 25 years before joining the Brody School of Medicine faculty. In a recent story by Kaysi Kalklweit in *Greenville Living*, Earl said his children tease him that he will never die, because he has too many projects underway. He mentioned

“woodworking, photography, gardening, and restoring the house and farm in Fountain that my grandfather built just after the Civil War.”

In another quote I like, Earl said, “I think another important thing about my long life is that generally I’m a very optimistic person. Usually, I wake up raring to get to the farm or visit family or friends or take in a concert or other performance at ECU.”
Click here for full article

Happy birthday Earl and thanks for all the wonderful and generous contributions you have made for our community over the decades - 10 and counting!



THE "EARL STORIES"--WHAT'S GOING ON?

Earl's 100th birthday prompts reflection on the "Earl Stories" and what they might offer for the next hundred years.

Several years ago, Earl shared with me a couple of stories about his early life. I published them in this newsletter, thinking that would be the end of it. Surprisingly,

at the time (but not in retrospect, as I'll explain), Earl and I received lots of positive feedback from readers. So, Earl shared a few more, I sent them out, and the same robust response resulted.

Dozens of "Earl Stories" have now been shared. I've collected them into an archive, and Earl tells me there may be more coming. At his recent 100th birthday party, I heard a story from one of his relatives that I haven't heard yet from Earl. Maybe that will be one of the new stories Earl passes along to me.

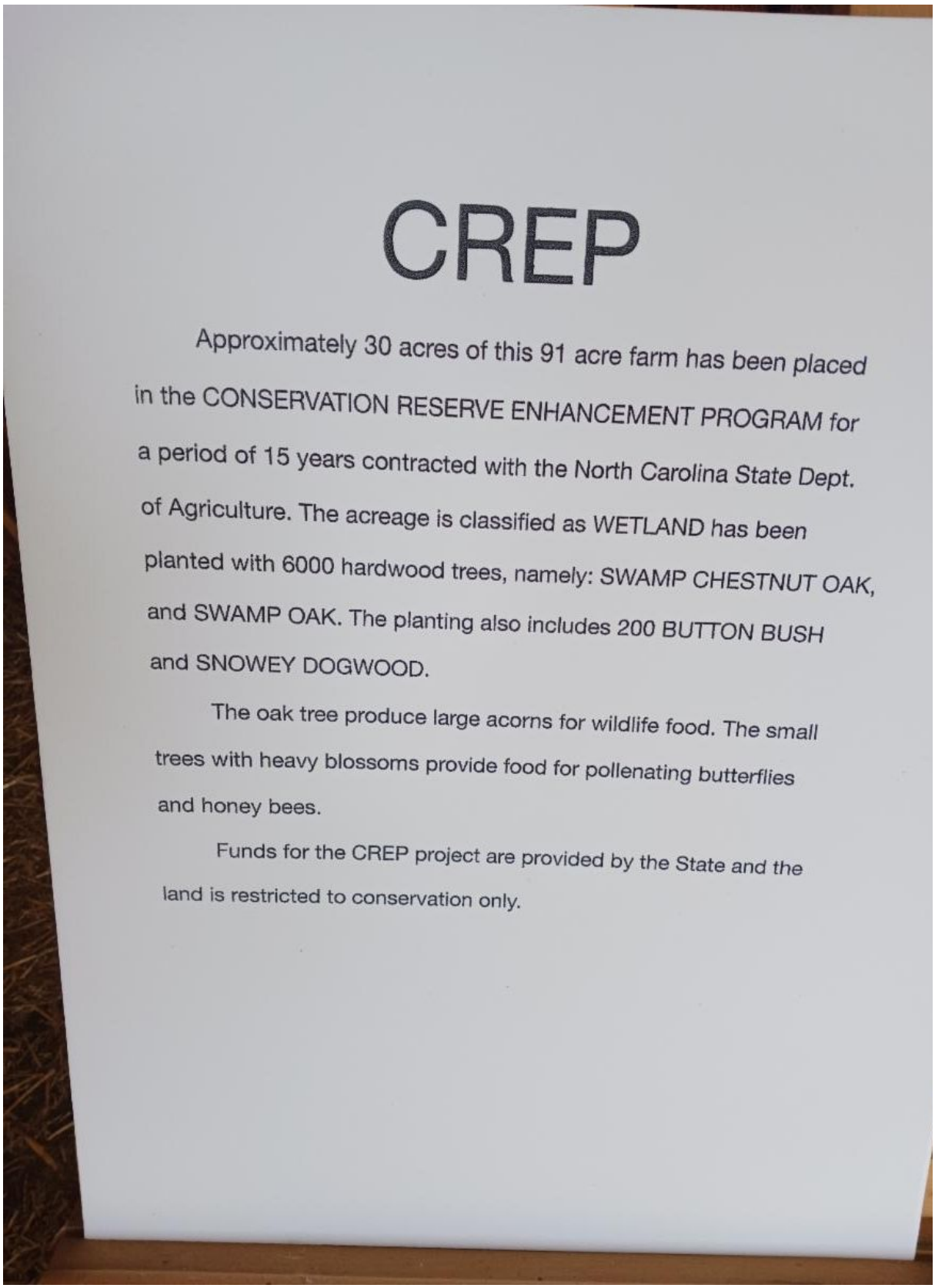
We live in a world spinning with paradigm-changing technological developments occurring at dizzying exponential rates, developments that hold the potential of solving many of our intractable problems or destroying the species, and planet along with it. The pace of change, along with heightened political and social tensions of all sorts, here at home and all around the globe, yield an uneasiness in the soul.

The "Earl Stories," I think, do more than provide interesting, and often humorous, glimpses into the past. They can provide a soulful grounding in the midst of uncertainty and anxiety. By no means were they always and in every way "good ol' days." There's plenty that's better, and there's plenty to learn from and be inspired by the "Earl Stories."

Happy birthday, Earl, and thanks for your inspiring testimony to decency, rationality, kindness, generosity, and service.

--*Calvin*

Earl's recent birthday party was held at his idyllic farm.

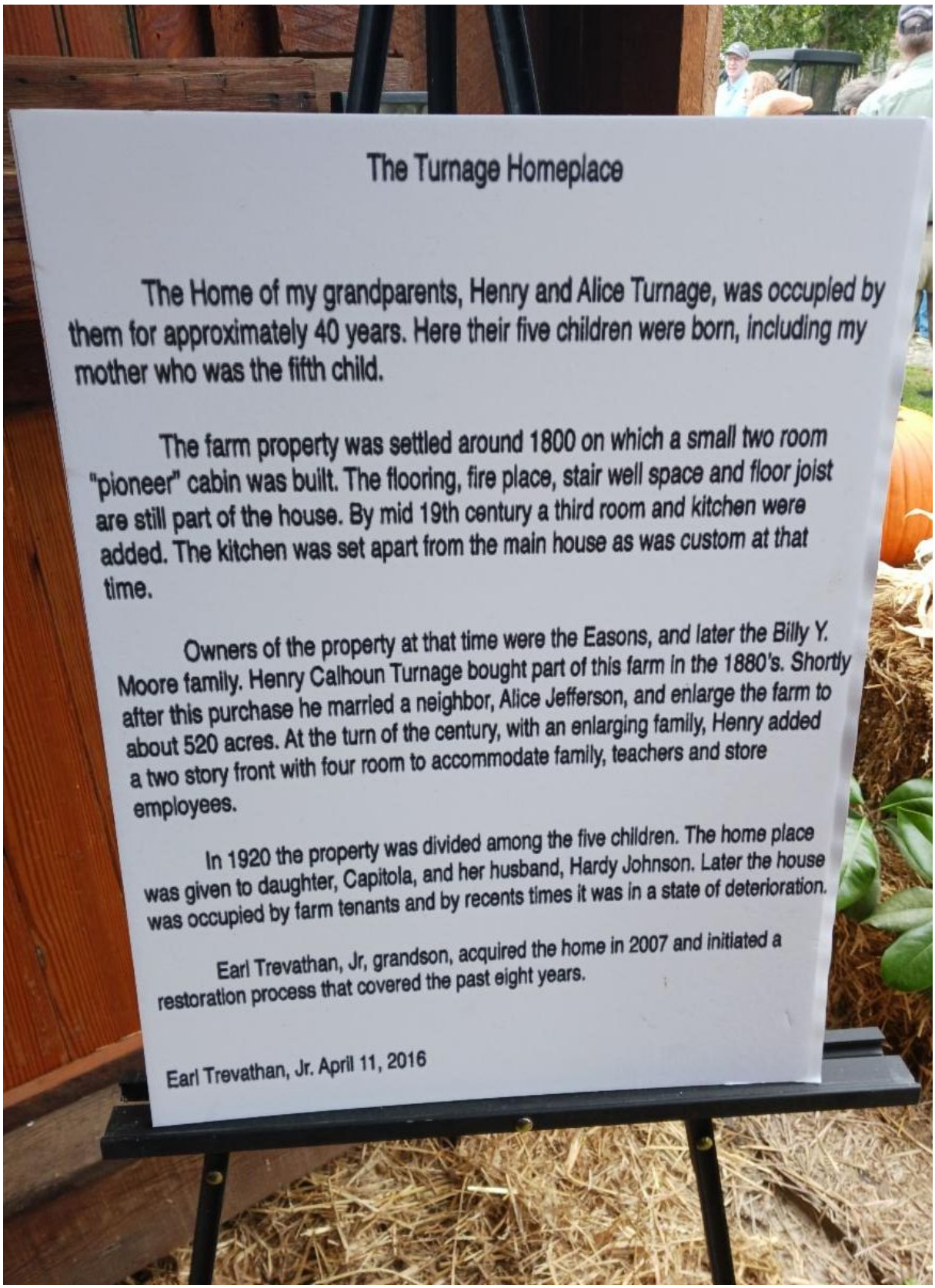


CREP

Approximately 30 acres of this 91 acre farm has been placed in the CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM for a period of 15 years contracted with the North Carolina State Dept. of Agriculture. The acreage is classified as WETLAND has been planted with 6000 hardwood trees, namely: SWAMP CHESTNUT OAK, and SWAMP OAK. The planting also includes 200 BUTTON BUSH and SNOWEY DOGWOOD.

The oak tree produce large acorns for wildlife food. The small trees with heavy blossoms provide food for pollenating butterflies and honey bees.

Funds for the CREP project are provided by the State and the land is restricted to conservation only.


The Turnage Homeplace
The Home of my grandparents, Henry and Alice Turnage, was occupied by them for approximately 40 years. Here their five children were born, including my mother who was the fifth child.
The farm property was settled around 1800 on which a small two room "pioneer" cabin was built. The flooring, fire place, stair well space and floor joist are still part of the house. By mid 19th century a third room and kitchen were added. The kitchen was set apart from the main house as was custom at that time.
Owners of the property at that time were the Easons, and later the Billy Y. Moore family. Henry Calhoun Turnage bought part of this farm in the 1880's. Shortly after this purchase he married a neighbor, Alice Jefferson, and enlarge the farm to about 520 acres. At the turn of the century, with an enlarging family, Henry added a two story front with four room to accommodate family, teachers and store employees.
In 1920 the property was divided among the five children. The home place was given to daughter, Capitola, and her husband, Hardy Johnson. Later the house was occupied by farm tenants and by recents times it was in a state of deterioration.
Earl Trevathan, Jr, grandson, acquired the home in 2007 and initiated a restoration process that covered the past eight years.
Earl Trevathan, Jr. April 11, 2016