

MORE TALES FROM TURNIPTOWN

Bill Griffin

I was born and raised in Ellijay and had been up and down Turniptown Road many times



The family grave plots at Lanning Family Cemetery
December 2002

growing up but I had never been to the Lanning Graveyard. In fact, I had not been past Turniptown Church in 40 years. I know that when I was growing up there, there was no road to the Graveyard but one has been added and you can now drive right into the Graveyard. This past December, 2002, Cousin Lou took me on the guided tour and I am ever so grateful for her time and the sharing of knowledge of the upper Turniptown area.

We stopped by Glen Morrow's place for a brief visit with him and his wife. Glen is the resident expert on that area of Turniptown now that most of the old folks have moved out. There are a few houses now belonging to a new breed. Some are just summer or week end homes for Atlanta folks who want to retreat to the mountains. I have news for them though - living there on the week end or over a summer does not make them mountain folks just as my standing in my garage does not make me a car.

Glen told us he was still exploring the mountains with the same excitement and expectation a kid has on Christmas morning. He is forever finding something new or some thing he overlooked. He was telling us about noticing for the first time a particular rock ledge. He heard water gushing and after exploring for a few minutes, he found a crack in a rock and a stream of sweet clear mountain water pouring out of the rock like a water hose. He had been in this area many times but this was the first time all his senses came together and the mountain allowed itself to be discovered.

After exploring Turniptown and the cemetery, Lou took me back to Canton where she and some of the other Lanning folks from that area had gathered for a get together. We met at Shoney's and had a wonderful time remembering and meeting for the first time. Junior was there with his wife Dorothy and daughter Janis came in a little later. Polly came with daughters Susan and Lisa. A. L. Allred, Lou Holcombe, Martha Davenport and Mary Anne Johnson completed the gathering. We were able to correct a few typos in the Book and Mary Anne gave us a chart of the Henson Family that extended back to 1730 and filled in many gaps in the Henson line. Al and Junior furnished stories of Uncle Lester that are shared later in this chapter.

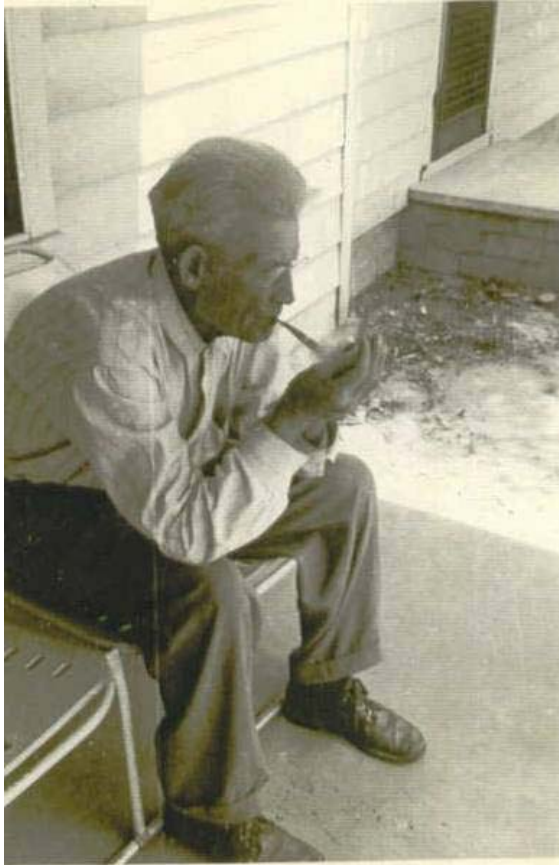
Our Lanning family has been blessed with some folks with talent. Along with Margie and all she put together, I am trying to find and include others. If you know of someone or something, please pass it along. This is not my collection - this is a collection I hope is shared with the Lanning family long after I have departed.

Papa Lanning

When I met A. L. Allred and Vernie M. Lanning Jr. this past week-end in Canton, they gave me some notes and stories about their grandfather, George Lester Lanning. These are the notes they wanted shared with the family to keep remembrances alive.

A.L. is the oldest grandchild of Lester and just recently celebrated his 78th birthday.

According to A.L. and Vernie, all the grandchildren called Lester "Papa Lanning".



Lester was a carpenter by trade and helped to build the motels and hotels on Miami Beach, Florida. He was also employed to help build military facilities. Some he helped build were: Warner Robbins, Georgia; Grand Island, Nebraska; Oak ridge, Tennessee and others.

Source: A.L. Allred

Persons who had always known Papa Lanning said he was the strongest person they had ever known. I learned that to be true the hard way.

Once, when he was returning from a work project, I asked him if he wanted me to carry the trunk he had on his shoulder. He said that would be all right. I did not know that his carpenter tools, among other things, were inside the trunk.

I was unable to lift the trunk higher than one or two feet. I never again asked him if he wanted me to

carry the trunk.

Source: A. L. Allred

Stories told by Papa Lanning were exciting and ANIMATED. I enjoyed hearing him tell about tracking a bear into a mountain laurel thicket where he met it personally face to face. The fun came listening to grandpa telling how he had to retreat from the thicket - inch by inch.

Source: A. L. Allred

I remember when some friends from Canton went to Papa Lanning's cabin in the upper part of Turniptown to squirrel hunt. It was raining cats and dogs and when they arrived about midnight, no one was there. Since they were tired and cold, they decided to climb through an open window in the cabin to get out of the weather.

When they had entered the window in the dark, a wildcat, which was in a cage in the cabin decided to let out a screech. It scared the daylight out of them.

Papa Lanning arrived about one a.m. soaking wet from the rain. He was carrying a live rattlesnake which he threw into the cage with the wildcat. If the wildcat wanted supper, he had to be quicker than the rattlesnake that wanted just as hard not to become supper for anything or anyone. Most of us think the rattlesnake would make short work of the wildcat with one quick strike of venomous poison but the wildcat had something to say about that too. Once the snake strikes, it can not react quick enough to straighten up and strike again in time to beat the cat. The cat won the war and his supper.

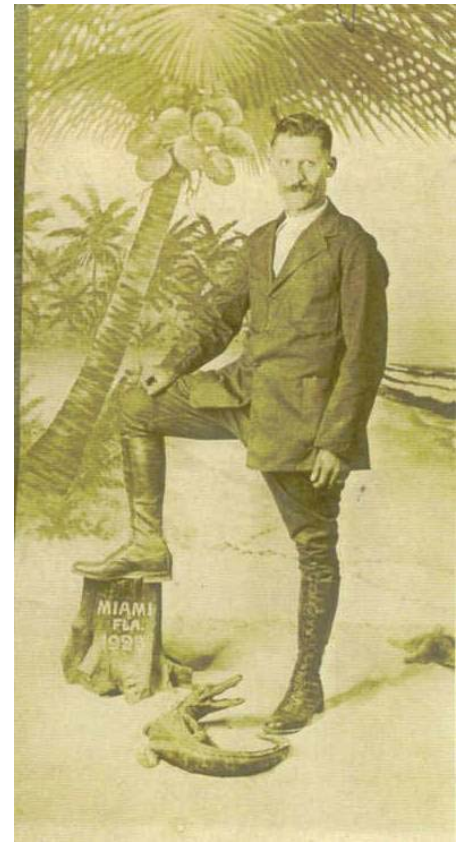
Source: A. L. Allred

I can remember when he trapped a wildcat which tried to escape when he was transferring it from the trap to a toesack. He won the battle, but suffered numerous scratches.

Source: A. L. Allred

Papa Lanning loved the mountains of Turniptown and would still love them if he were alive although the surroundings are not as isolated and wild now. The area where Papa roamed is not a resort for the folks from Atlanta. They call it "Walnut Mountain."

Source: A. L. Allred



Papa Lanning, Lester, used to raise fighting chickens. He even had one hybrid registered brand of his own called "Lanning Blue".

Vernie Junior talks of going to see Papa Lanning when he was a small boy and Lester would place specially prepared gloves over the spurs and let a couple of the chickens fight for the entertainment of the children. Those fights were one of the highlights of Vernie Junior's visits.

The mill hill where Lester used to live and fight the chickens came to be known as "Roosterville".

Source: Vernie M. Lanning Jr.

Vernie Junior tells the tale of the time that Papa Lanning came upon a large snake while walking along Turniptown. He says Papa Lanning cut him a long stick from a branch and stuck the branch through the snake's head and left it. Later he returned by the area and the snake had twisted around the stake so much it had cleaned out an area equal to the length of the snake.

Source: Vernie M. Lanning Jr.



Will Lanning

Uncle Will Lanning used to own a German shepherd that he had specially trained. Uncle Will had a basket tied to the dog's neck similar to what we think of with a St. Bernard. He would send the dog to the store with a note in the basket and when the grocer filled the order and placed it in the basket, the dog would return with everything intact, even meat.

Source: Vernie M. Lanning Jr.

Margie Lanning Dunn

Uncle Noah and Aunt Mattie dipped snuff and at a young age, Margie learned this fine art. Along with dipping, one of the old customs was to keep a blackgum stick in your mouth to chew on - maybe to keep the snuff moved around or possibly just to chew on - I have no idea [this was one art I skipped when growing up]. It seems that Margie decided to keep the stick in her mouth at school one day and the teacher almost pulled her teeth out trying to remove it. [Sounds a little stubborn like the rest of us - huh?] Anyway, Uncle Noah, in an effort to get Margie to quit, offered her money. Margie accepted the money and everyone thought all was well. Lou tells us that some time later, she caught Margie slipping and dipping and Margie tried her best to convince her it was cocoa.



Source: Lou Lanning Holcombe

Lou Lanning Holcombe



Lou tells this story about herself. Children can get into the dangest messes. It appears the cow milking was done in the chicken house; probably a combination of shed and house, just big enough to be a shelter for each. She was milking the cow when somehow she aroused the cow's anger. The cow then began to chase her around the area and guess who should be watching - Margie. Now it is bad enough to be chased by an ornery cow but then to have your sister accuse you of being a 'scardie cat' is the ultimate shame.

Source: Lou Lanning Holcombe

Lanning Talent

MEMORIES IN RHYME

By

Vernie M. Lanning, Jr.

In memory I go back in time
Relive experiences to put in rhyme

And as I write each rhyming line
I relive each experience in heart and mind

Memories come to me so strong, so clear
Some bring a smile, others a tear

As I relive things done in fun
It's as pleasant as when they were done

A memory I recall that made me sad
Will again make me feel bad

A memory I recall late at night
Of fear will again bring fright

Through memory my day is sad or bright
Depending upon the poem I write

I try to keep good memories on my mind
Let the bad ones get lost in time
That's where I get my poems
They're just my memories in rhyme.

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GRANDDAD
By
Vernie M. Lanning Jr.

My granddad was a mountain man
Try to describe him I will if I can

Square of jaw, firm of chin
Broad shoulders, and his waist was thin

Wasn't very tall – about five foot ten
But my granddad was strong as most two men

His eyes were blue grey, sparkled when he
grinned
He had big hands and weather beaten skin

Smoked a pipe made of elder and tin
Made them to hold a pint but, they looked as big
again

He had the peculiar ways of mountain men
You could never make a truer friend

His word was his bond – honest as the day long
He never did any man wrong

He lived in the mountains up Turnip Town Creek
Used to hunt and fish ever day of the week

He caught a wildcat, put it in a cage
That wildcat stayed in a rage

Found a rattlesnake on the trail one day
Caught it with a piece of wire and sapling they
say

Took the snake home it was nice and fat
He put it in the cage with that wildcat

The fight was short, the snake didn't last
It struck twice – the cat was just too fast

We used to go up to his cabin site

We'd set up, talk most of the night

He talked about hunting, fishing, and about the
cock fights
We would listen to him talk, watch shadows
dance from the fire light

He would tell ghost stories that would curl your
hair

As I remember back I can still see him there

His health got bad had to move to town
This seemed to get granddad down

He would set for hours, big pipe in his hand
Tell about his beloved mountain land

Tell of times that could never be again
Make us wish we could have lived back then

Now he is dead and I believe happy again
We buried him in the mountains where his life
began

He lays above Turnip Town Church on a hill
His voice is quite, his body still

He left behind a memory of love
Went to tell his stories to the angels above

I miss this man, I miss him bad
For no one can take the place of GRANDDAD

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GRANDDAD'S CABIN

By

Vernie M. Lanning Jr.

I remember Granddad's cabin
Made of logs and chinked with mud
With a roof of wooden shingles,
It had a floor of hewed out wood

In the fire place lay the backstick
On the hearth the old black pot
In the kitchen was the split log table
In the corner Granddad's homemade cot

In the loft the feather tic mattress
That I slept on as a boy
Out behind the cabin was the spring house
Water ,cool, so clear and good

And over there the out house
Where at night I feared to go
After spooked by Granddad's stories
Of ghost that I believed was so

Out in front the foot log
That lay across Turniptown Creek
How I loved to wade it
Feel the water smoothed stones with my feet

"O" yes I loved it,
The cabin Granddad built
And through eyes of memory
I can see it yet.

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GREAT UNCLE
A Tribute to Noah R. Lanning
By
Vernie M. Lanning Jr.

His voice was deep, in his eye a twinkle
He smiled so much his face was wrinkled

He loved to sing, sang bass with ease
He told funny stories joked and teased

There hasn't been many days of late
That my dad hasn't had a story of him to relate

He tells of their hunting their fishing and fun
How they walked the mountains with dog and gun

How they grew up hard no money to spend
Though he was older they were best friends

He was such fun yet with sincerity deep
Dad says he never made promises he couldn't keep

They were mountain men - my dad and him
And my desire is to be like them

I loved this man, this great uncle of mine
I think of him a lot of time

He's not dead, just gone home
He lives today in story and song

And like his words recorded I've saved
In memory he lives beyond the grave

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STORY OF GRANDDAD

By

Vernie M. Lanning Jr.

My Granddad was quite a man
Lived in the mountains and tilled the land

Plowed a steer, big and mean
Him and that steer made quite a team

The steer got him down on the ground one day
It was some fight they all say

His ribs broken, he was almost dead
He got that steer by the horns on his head

Gave a twist with all his might
Threw the steer, Granddad had won the fight

He had a steer wagon, drove nine miles to town
Went for tobacco and to get the meal ground

To see him, his steer wagon and big
homemade pipe
To the town's people was quite a sight

He wore boat pants, a belt with stones
He wasn't fat, just muscle and bone

Granddad loved his fun, loved to pull a joke
And if you weren't careful, he would get your goat

He would tell me of a time when my dad was a boy
My dad had rather hunt than play with a toy

He and a friend took the dog out one night
Granddad sent them running home in fright

It seems he slipped out close to where they were at
Scratched on a tree and screamed like a cat

The thought of them running home in fear
Granddad would laugh until it brought the tears

When I'm old, have my grandkids on my knee
I hope I can mean to them what my Granddad meant to me.

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ANGER OR HATRED?

Bill Griffin

10-06-2001

The events of September 11, 2001 have caused most of us to have mixed feelings. What was our first reaction? Anger? Hated? We were definitely angered because we were personally involved in the United States. Terrorism had been brought to our doorstep. We could tolerate it as long as it was in a foreign country, even when it was against our Embassies and Americans. The more we sat and stewed with the pictures being shown in the news media, a lot of our anger began to turn to hatred. I hope you have been able to tender your hatred and keep it to anger only.

We have seen the news media try to explain "Why do they hate us?" They have been quick to explain the 'Islam religion against the rest of the world' theory. It is not Islam but the radicals who hate Americans and call us the 'Great Satan'.

We need to be careful that we are not consumed with the same hatred toward them that is being exhibited toward us. We have had some instances already where people of the Muslim faith in our country have been attacked by some displaying the same type hatred. We are quick to stereotype people when we want to - all Muslims are terrorists - when they are peace loving people for the most part. The rest of the world did not say we were all red necks like Timothy McVey when he bombed the buildings in Oklahoma City.

I don't think it has a thing to do with religion. President Bush described it well when he said we were attacked by 'evil'. Was it just us? No! Evil has been attacking around the world since the beginning of time and terrorism is still very active in Northern Ireland and the Arabic states around Israel. Evil knows no boundaries; if it did, all evil would come from one country or area or group and

it could be dealt with.

Good vs Evil: God vs Satan, a hatred born in the beginning of time (when Satan was thrown out of heaven) that will only be resolved permanently when Christ returns after the millennium and casts Satan into the Lake of Fire forever. Until then, we need to look at the words of Christ and the way He handled what could have been hatred for Him.

John 15:18-19... [18] If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. [19] If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

1 Pet 2:21-23 ... [21] For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: [22] Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: [23] Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

No retaliation

No Threats

Entrusted Himself to the Father that judges righteously.

Healed us by His wounds

He received a robe of purple that we may receive a robe of white.

FOUGHT A GOOD FIGHT

By

Vernie M. Lanning Jr.

Back yonder when I was at home
Dad would say "Son you'll pay for your raising, when you raise one of your own"

Now I am married, have two girls
Love them more than anything in this world

But I find that Dad sure was right
For trying to raise kids is truly a fight

You fight at first for a few winks of sleep
As they grow bigger you fight for them something to eat

Fight for schools, your taxes you pay
Then you have to fight for the PTA

Fight for clothes they wear every day
Fight for money the doctor bills to pay

Fight for money to buy toys
So they can have things like other girls and boys

Fight hard to keep them a nice home
Work your finger to the bone
To keep payments up at
Federal Savings and Loan

Fight hard for the money to earn
To send them off to college to learn

So they can do better from day to day
Get a better job, to earn better pay

I don't regret the fight no matter how bad
I remember the good times we've had

And I'm paid in full when I hear them say
"Dad raised us right He fought a good fight"

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By V. M. Lanning Jr.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

Bill Griffin
01-20-2001

Today is the day we say farewell to our present President and say hello to the new one. The changing of the guard as we used to say in military lingo. The old guard has had control for eight years. Good years economically. With the exception of peace keeping forces sent to Somalia and Bosnia, peaceful years too. We can only hope the new regime can continue to be as economically successful. We also pray that our new leadership can make decisions and relate peace to the entire world.

Just as there is a changing of the guard for the United States every few years, there is soon coming a changing of the guard for the world. Christ Himself called Satan the 'Prince' of this world. With possession, Satan was able to offer Christ all the kingdoms of the world when tempting Him in the desert.

Matt 4:8-9 -- Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith to him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

At that time, Christ did not dispute his ownership and Satan's right to offer them. How could Satan know that Christ would redeem the world with one cross and three rusty nails?

1 CROSS + 3 NAILS = 4 GIVEN.

Like the election determined who the new guard would be before the change took place, the coming change has been determined -- from the foundation of the world.

The inauguration gala will usher in our new president.
Christ's gala will be His return, robed in Glory on a white horse with all His saints.

Rev 19:11-14 -- And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies, which were in heaven, followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

Will you be part of the old guard or the new one to come? There is still time for changing now but we are not promised a tomorrow.

CLEAN UP AFTER THE STORM

Bill Griffin

11-11-2000

When I arrived in Denver last Monday, I was given a bright red Chevrolet Impala as a rental car. The beauty was temporary because Monday night and Tuesday, we had one of those dirty rain/snow storms. You know the kind. The mixture of moisture streaks the windshield in spite of the wipers going full speed. The side and rear windows became dirty due to the road moisture thrown up by other vehicles. By the time I returned to the motel Tuesday, the car was filthy on the outside. Even the snow on the ground was dirty instead of the usual fluffy white blanket.

Last Thursday when I filled up with gas, I ran the car through the car wash and washed the dirt away. Once again I had a shiny beautiful car.

The car wash did not last long though. Friday night, we once again had snow. When I went out Saturday, the road grime once again took over. The car now looks like it has never been cleaned.

Life and sin is comparable to this situation. We start out beautiful and then we seem to be in the middle of a sin storm. We only have to look at the scriptures, especially the book of Judges to see this same situation over and over. The people of Israel would be on a high when a judge was

appointed and they turned back to God [went through the car wash]. It was only a few years later though when they would return to their old ways [dirty storms]. This cycle was repeated many times just in this book. Today we are no better or worse than these people. We do the very same thing. We run clean for a while and then run smack into Satan's temptations [storms].

There is something about the storm though. We ALL were in the storm. In other words, the temptations or sins are there all around each of us. Like the car, it is up to me to determine when I will wash it. Do I linger in sin or clean up as soon as I determine I have been in the storm. God tells us not to wait. There are many reasons to clean up quickly.

If I regard iniquity in my heart,
the LORD will not hear me. [Ps.
66:18]

If we confess our sins, he is
faithful and just to forgive us our
sins, and to cleanse us from all
unrighteousness.

[1 John 1:9]

I don't know about you but I want
God to hear me at all times. Like
the car, I need to be cleansed
often. How about you?

GOD'S WARNING
By
Vernie M. Lanning Jr.

Lightning, a jagged light across the sky
Thunder, God's voice angered from on high
Winds, that rage at tornado force
God's warning to his people, change course
Rain, until the river's reach flood stage
God in anger pours out His rage
In California the ground trembles, the earth quakes
Let man again fear God before it's too late.

CHURCH AT THE FOOT OF A MOUNTAIN
By
Vernie M. Lanning Jr.

As I journeyed back in my dad's tracks
To a little church at the foot of a mountain
God's spirit I could feel
And I know that He's real
In the little church at the foot of a mountain
My hope soared high as I gazed toward the sky
At the little church at the foot of a mountain
I knew when I died he would be by my side
At the little church at the foot of a mountain
I don't know about you,
But it helps me to renew
What I felt at the little church at the foot of a mountain

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MOUNTAIN ROADS

By

Margie Lanning Dunn

These old mountain roads ain't built fer high flying machines. They were built fer wagons, and sleds, and mules. The road has tore up many a car. Ust to be safe to walk this road. Ain't anymore. Too many ortamobiles whipping around the curves trying to get someplace fast.

My boy Billy bought him a car. He had to be like everybody else, and that's important nowadays. Billy, he couldn't walk like I do. Too good, I reckon. No, I reckon they got to travel in style. Ain't seen much of Billy since he got that car. What time he ain't in it riding he's under the hood. He's had the car about two months now. Look at it. Pretty nigh shot to junk. Course what the washboard road don't tear up I reckon Billy's gonna if he don't stop trying to be a mechanic. The car rattles like dried peas in a pod. It's shook all to pieces. You can hear it knocking a mile away. Everybody else is the same ... tore up too.

They gonna pave this stretch of road up as far as Major Blair's place. That's adjoining mine. I ain't gonna pay fer it myself. Guess all the neighbors will be hot under the collar. But I don't care. Be like buying my land twice. I ain't gonna do that. Dirt road suits me fine. I can't drive so I ain't gonna buy one of them machines.

I hope they all don't go silly as Myrt Johnson did when they paved the road in front of her house last month. Know what she does? Every morning sure as sun, Myrt sweeps the pavement clean as a pen. She claims it ... calls it her road. Now don't that beat the bugs biting?

I'd up and move further back in the hills if it was left up to me. Billy, he won't go. There ain't much use tho. Progress is on the move. It'd find me. So I'm not gonna move outta its way til I haft to. Anyway I may prolong it a little while ... But it's coming ... whether I like it or not...

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From the Margie L. Lanning family

MOVING THE LIGHTHOUSE

Bill Griffin
6/15/1999

One of the items making the news today is the massive undertaking to move the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse 1600 feet inland. So far it has been quite an engineering feat to raise the lighthouse intact and get it on rails and wheels for the journey. Now, comes the rest of the story. At a snail's pace, the house must be ever so carefully moved over the sandy terrain to its next resting place.

Due to the eroding coastline, the lighthouse is being moved to preserve its historic value. Once, it had more than just history. It was a beacon on the North Carolina coast to warn sailing ships of impending danger due to the ragged coastline. Before all the modern technology with radar and sonar, this light shining in the darkness was the calming salve to the fearful hearts sailing the coast. It brought comfort to know where they were in relation to the land and the inlets. It calmed the fears of dashing upon the rocks or running aground on some sandbar.

Today, though, the lighthouse is just a shadow of its former self. No light shining out into the darkness, no foghorn to be heard to warn the ships. Now it is just a structure to be visited to bring remembrance of the things of the past - Our history.

There is another beacon shining out through the darkness that

should be our guide. This beacon was planted in stone and cemented with blood. True, the wooden structure has long since been destroyed but the history cries on - The Cross of Calvary. It still brings light to darkened souls. It has been the source of comfort for two thousand years to more souls than can be counted. We still sing songs about it that brings remembrance to our hearts: 'Rock of Ages', 'Old Rugged Cross', and 'The Sheltering Rock' to name a few. More fears have been relieved, more burdens lifted, more comfort given, and more peace received from the LIGHT and VOICE from the Cross than all the lighthouses in the world.

The Cape Hatteras Lighthouse has lost its footing and to remain standing must be moved. The cross will never lose its footing. From ages past to eternity future, it has forever been planted in and by the SOLID ROCK. Look at the fourth stanza of 'The Sheltering Rock' by W. E. Penn:

**There is a Cross where the
Savior died,
His blood flowed out in a
crimson tide,
A sacrifice for sins of men,
And free to all who will enter
in.
Then why will ye die?
O why will ye die?
When the crimson cross is so
near by,
O why will ye die**

POKE SALLET TIME

By

Margie Lanning Dunn

Soon, here in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, comes the time of year you are most likely to hear an old timer say, "It's time to pick a mess o' poke sallet!" Although the tall, dark green stalk with broad leaves is often unrecognized by some of our modern-day cooks, poke is a familiar word to all native Georgians.

Although the leaves of the poke plant are never allowed to reach maturity before they are gathered to be eaten. Usually the tiny green shoots begin to appear in early March and the hunt is on. Usually by the time a tender plant is a week or so old it is "boiling away" in a hot water bath, filling cracks and crevices with a not-so-aromatic smell.

To some oldsters, Poke is a spring tonic, and eaten entirely as a medicinal plant; to others, despite the smell, it is a gourmet's delight. But, no matter what it is, its appearance in springtime is looked forward to with much anticipation.

The plant is highly prolific and unlimited to rich, loamy mountain soil. It is found in open fields, and can be seen growing, tall and stately alongside busy expressways.

Along with the poke plants appearing in the spring, are other delicious and edible greens. Low-growing plants of dock, cress (or creases), and dandelion, are rich in vitamins and minerals. Cooked and served in a method a-kin to the turnip green, the juices of these, with the exception of poke, is called "potlikker", and besides being flavorful it is virtually a nutritional gold mine.

These wild greens, and the customs of using them for food were handed down to our forebears from the Indians. The Indian cooked the starchy bulbs of the March flower, and the tubers of the arrowhead (a swamp grower) were roasted like potatoes.

Plantain, a broad, bright leaf plant (boiled), wild lettuce (delicious in salads), and wild mustard (cooked or raw), were also gifts to us from our North American Indians.

There are other wild plants, perhaps lesser known and harder to identify, that are served as compliments. Sorrel, a plant with sour leaves, is good to liven up a pot of greens; so are mouse ears. A pungent flavored green known as the pepper plant may be used in a tossed salad. According to a few old-timers, ramp, a strong smelling, onion-like weed, is good "raw, or chopped and fried with bacon."

To know how much of these can be added for flavor, your own taste buds will have to be your guide.

Today knowledge of many of these edible wild plants is rare, and only relatively few of us can identify even one or two. Still, it is hard to find someone who has never heard of the old spring standby, poke. Occasionally you will hear someone say they have never tasted this spring favorite, but, there is an old adage here in the mountains, entirely mountain borne, that "you jest ain't never lived till you've et a mess o' poke!"

A good recipe for those who have never "et" that first mess o' poke and would like to come spring, the following commonly known recipe was given me by an old mountain granny.

- ❖ Gather ye a mess o' greens while they're young and tender. Mind you don't git the old leaves ... they're pizen!
 - ❖ Warsh the leaves and put 'em in a pot and bile 'em. Not long ... they cook up fast.
 - ❖ Take the cooked greens outta the pot, and warsh 'em good, till all the green is gone and the worters cler ...
 - ❖ Take six thick slices o' middlin meat and fry hit til all the grease is out and the meat is brickly. Be shore there's plenty grease ... iffin you don't the green are still libel to pizen ye!
 - ❖ Fry the greens in this meat grease, then sarve them with a pone of corn bread, some biled aigs, and a jug o' buttermilk!
- ❖ And according to one who knows, "this makes fer mighty fine eatin!"
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Margie L. Lanning

ROADS THAT GO NOWHERE

Bill Griffin

11/11/1999

My partner for the past few weeks has been Mr. Barry Beall, retired BellSouth, working here with me doing a buried drop study for USWest. We have scooted from Denver to Minneapolis to Seattle to Colorado Springs by way of Salt Lake City in the past three weeks. We still have not left the Salt Lake air terminal.

Last week we were in Burien, a suburb of Seattle. Since neither of us had been to Seattle before, we wanted to drive downtown after work to see some of the sites. Well... we got out our trusty map and found the best looking route to go downtown. Hwy 99, straight shot, freeway, no traffic. Here we go, and as we approached downtown Seattle, we were ga ga looking at the skyline, not paying too much attention to exits. We passed one on the south side of town but we were not ready to exit yet. Oh boy, did we mess up. This freeway became an elevated highway that was like a slingshot by downtown Seattle. I think there was one more exit but we missed it too and found ourselves on the north side wondering what happened.

A road going somewhere with no way to get off but not going where I wanted to go. By the time we had circled around, crossed over Lake Washington and back, all we could see were lights. (Thought about stopping in at Bill Gates and saying howdy but could not find his place in the night.)

Have you ever been on a road taking you somewhere you did not intend or want to go? No relief in sight? How can I make it through this crisis? We all have. Satan has a way of getting us on those roads sometimes in our personal lives and before we know it, he has us where we can not see an exit. We see all that we really want over on the other road but we see no way to get there. Satan blinds us. The Lord tells us in Matt 7:14 how Satan makes the broad road look so enticing to us. Just like the super highway looked good to us in Seattle.

For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.

But remember; God has an exit to every road Satan can place before us. We just have to recognize we are on the wrong road and look for the exit God has prepared for His people.

"But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

God has no desire to see us on the wrong road. Look how He describes His intentions to Jeremiah.

Jer 29:11... "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

You can get off. Look now for the exit God has provided for you.

SINGING HILLS

By

Vernie M. Lanning Jr.

The prettiest song that I've ever heard
Not a person was near, never heard a word

It was the song of the hills that gave me this thrill
And "O" when I'm alone I can hear it still

The birds, the insects, the wind in the trees
The bubbling brook, the humming bees
The tree frogs croak, the rustling leaves

"O" I love these sounds, so peaceful and still
How I love the country and the singing hills.

EYES OF A BOY

By

Vernie M. Lanning, Jr.

I wish I could go back to that time in life
When there was no trouble, no toil, no strife

When the future to me was the next day ahead
I had no worry, no trouble, no dread

When the greatest thing in life was to get a new toy
When I saw the world through the eyes of a boy

Life was fun my boyhood years
I fished and hunted, never had worries or cares

"Oh" I had to work some, do my chores
Dad used to say was to pay my board

But those good times will never be again
For now I see through the eyes of a man.

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SINKING SHIPS

Bill Griffin

5/29/1999

I heard a T.V. preacher make the statement: 'ALL THE WATER IN THE WORLD CAN NOT SINK A SHIP UNLESS IT GETS INSIDE'. Now being a former boat owner and fisherman, I could relate to this statement. Growing up in the mountains with some of the wooden boats we crawled into, it is a wonder we ever made it back to the bank. We even had to pull one half full of water now and then. It does not matter how the water got in. It was in. When it got in, the boat started going down and the speed of 'sink' was in relation to the hole and the amount of water. A strange thing though; have you ever seen or been in a boat that capsized? It floats. Why; Because no water is inside it. When you try to flip it back over though, the water goes over the sides and down it goes. From the smallest of pond row boats to the largest ocean vessel [Titanic], a hole allows water in and the boat sinks.

Our lives are that way too. All the sin in the world can not get inside us unless there is an entry-way. A hole. The God given senses of our bodies fail us if we are not at a state of constant readiness to do battle with the world around us. SIGHT, SMELL, TASTE, FEELING, HEARING. If we leave either sense unguarded, we leave a hole. Pornography can not get in unless I choose to see it. Drugs and alcohol have no entry unless I decide to taste or smell them. Gossip has an effect only if I choose to hear it. God gave us the senses to communicate with the world but we need to guard against them becoming a passageway to our soul with all the sin the world puts out now.

We also find Satan's greatest tools against the church are from the

inside. All the fiery darts he can hurl against the church can not destroy the church from outside. One small tongue inside though can be a destructive weapon. Satan looks for these small holes to sink a church. This is never more evident than in the very life and times of Christ. He could not destroy the small band of Christ and His disciples from without. He stirred up people to kill Christ. He tried to discredit Him with the temptations. He even turned His own Jewish religious leaders against Him. None of these worked. There was no hole in the life of Christ. But there was a hole in the life of one who traveled with Him. Inside HIS own personal close knit group.

Luke 22:3... Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. John 13:26-27... Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.

Judas had been with Jesus. Judas knew the man Jesus. But Judas did not have a relationship with the LORD JESUS. Judas provided the hole for Satan to destroy; to sink the ship.

Are there holes that you have left open? They can be patched or plugged with the Gospel of Christ if you will allow Him.

SMALL CRACKS

Bill Griffin

09-21-2000

Have you ever had a mouse to get into the house and watched it disappear through a crack when you were chasing it? I ran one into the bathroom one night and it went into the toe area of the vanity and disappeared. When I got down to look, it had entered a crack that I could not slide a credit card into.

When the boys were young, we came in one day and a large blacksnake was in our kitchen. When I reached down to pick it up to take it outside, it disappeared under the cabinet. How, I will never understand. I would have had a tough time sliding a piece of paper through the joint where it disappeared.

I understand that mice and snakes can flatten themselves to almost nothing. It is part of their makeup. Snakes will chase mice and if the mouse goes through a crack, the snake will follow. Nature, the way God set it up.

There is another that can and will slip into the smallest of cracks.

His name is Satan. Look at how Peter describes him.

1 Pet 5:8 - Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

He looks for the smallest crack in our spiritual armor to infiltrate our lives. Satan's worst fear is a Christian kneeling and praying. He may not be able to devour our lives, but he can reek havoc. He knows he can not have us but if he can get us disoriented and out of the will of God, he has an ineffective Christian and he will settle for that.

The only way to totally seal a physical crack is to caulk with a sealant. The way to seal a spiritual crack is to allow the Holy Spirit to caulk with the Word of God. Jesus defeated the devil with the Word in the desert and it has worked well ever since. Are you sealing the cracks in your life? The labor and materials to do so are free of charge.

I, TOO, AM OF THE SOUTH

By

Margie L. Dunn

I, too, am of the south.
And, like my black brother
I, cry for freedom.

 But, I am the little man:
The aged face behind a machine:
The sweaty hands gripped to a plow:
The blood stained figure in a poultry plant:
Whose roots are in the poorest soil,
Hidden by tarpaper shacks slung onto a
mountainside.

 I plow rocky lands next to fertile
 valleys;
Walk in mud while hunger gnaws in a core of
emptiness.
I drink polluted waters and walk Tobacco
Road
With men that live with ghosts of a hundred
years.

 I have felt a rough-hewn cross;
Weighed by screaming vultures picking bones
of sleeping carcasses.

 And I know Golgotha;
 Of blood shed,
 And
 Being denied.

Still,

 I sing of the south.
Songs that are lost against the grinding of
political machines,
And cries of angry mobs remembering;
The auction-block: The whip: The heated
smell of tar.
Songs that are drowned by a stream of
curses
Against earthy loins where once sprang Hope
... Freedom ... Peace ... Love ...

 I, too, wait
 For the morrow
 When
Tradition unbars her doors to my people.
When laughter no longer mingles with the
smell of poverty;
And the power of wailing gods is no longer the
face of the South
In the eyes of the North.
 But, I am the little man.
 And I wait,
 Wait, and
 Wait ...

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Lanning Dunn

TREASURE OF THE BIG OAK TREE

By

Margie Lanning Dunn

Breakfast was on the table when nine-year-old Willie went into the kitchen. An aroma of hot biscuits and side bacon that was coming from a big black woodstove in the corner of the little log house filled the room. The house was nestled against a big mountain. The giant spruce pines which spread their arms over the two room house helped protect it against the strong winter winds. Willie lived here with his mother and father, Candace and Abram Simpson. He was their only child.

"Sit down, Willie. Let's eat quickly," his father said. "We've got a big job ahead of us today."

The smell of the food had given Willie a man-sized appetite. He pulled his chair up closer to the table. "We gonna rob that bee tree you found yesterday?" He asked excited.

"That we are, my boy," his father replied.

Willie broke open a hot biscuit, filled it with fresh yellow butter and then closed it so the butter would melt faster. He did this to another biscuit, then another until he had four buttered biscuits on his plate. He would have to eat a big breakfast if he was going to work hard today.

"What if the honey's gone?" Candace Simpson asked her husband. "What if somebody marked the tree before you got the chance?" She poured hot steaming coffee into thick white mugs, then sat down at the table.

"Anybody sees my cleared path will know the tree is spoken for." He took a sip of the hot coffee.

"But, Pa," Willie chimed in, "Everybody knows you're supposed to mark the tree. It's the law."

"I know, son, but if there were cut brush and briars I'd know someone had tried to get to the tree to mark it and I'd leave it alone."

Willie's mother spoke, "Yes, you would, but if Mac Hinson finds it he won't pay any mind to your cleared brush."

"That's the reason I was trying to hurry this morning," Abram Simpson said, pushing away from the breakfast table.

Willie swallowed the last of the four buttered biscuits and took a big drink of sweet milk to wash it down. Then he pushed back his chair and followed his father out the door of the house into the yard.

The sun was an hour high when Willie and his father left the house. Willie's mother had given them a gallon bucket for the honey they would get from the bee tree. Into the bucket, his mother had put some old wool rags. Willie's father would use these to smoke the bees so they would not sting him. Around the side of the barn, across the cattle trail, they followed a path that led to the mountain. Willie, trying hard to keep up, had to run after his dad. When the trail became steeper his father slowed down. They were climbing into the sky, Willie thought. Every now and then his father would unshoulder the big double-bit ax and chop down a laurel sprout or a thorny bush to keep the trail from growing up and then Willie got a chance to catch up.

He could look up at the tall trees that covered the mountainside. Their leaves were all colors – yellows, reds, browns, and some even looked blue. Only a few of them were still green. Soon the winter wind would shake them all to the ground and then there would be a thick leaf carpet. It was nice to walk on the leaves, especially when they were wet. He could walk quietly, without scaring the animals. Even the squirrels couldn't hear him coming. When the leaves were dry they made a crunching sound like paper. Then the animals would hear him coming and go scampering away.

It wasn't long before they were on top of the mountain. Willie looked down the trail he had just come over. It was almost hidden by velvety smooth leaves of the laurel bushes. He was glad the long climb was over. It wouldn't be near so hard to go back down.

"Not much farther now, is it?" he asked.

"No," his father said, "Just yonder, on that ridge." He pointed. They walked faster and faster until they were where Abram Simpson had started clearing a path up to the bee tree the day before.

"I won't have to cut but a few more bushes and briars this morning," he told Willie, "then I can chop down the tree and we'll rob it of its honey."

Where his father had chopped the day before, the wilted underbrush was piled in up in little bunches.

"There's the tree, Willie!" His father was pointing to a big oak tree in front of them.

Willie couldn't see through its leaves they were so thick. The tree trunk was gigantic. No wonder his father said it was a big job. A big hole in the trunk was damp. Some of the honey spilled over the hole and ran down the ragged bark. Five or six bees were crawling lazily over it.

Then he saw something else and his heart fluttered. Just above the hole was a big letter "H". Mac Hinson had found the tree!

"Look, Pa!" Willie cried, "There's an initial on the tree!"

Abram Simpson stood with his hands on his hips and stared. His eyes grew bigger and bigger. "Mac Hinson has marked my tree, but he's not taken the honey."

"Maybe Hinson's coming back for it," Willie said, looking down over the ridge toward Mac's place.

"Then he'd better hurry!" Abram answered quickly, "'cause I'm fixing to cut that tree. I found it, I cut the brush away so he could get to it easy. That honey's rightfully ours, son!" Mac Hinson had finished the job of clearing the brush that Abram had left the day before. The tree was all ready to be cut and robbed.

Willie watched his father walk up to the giant oak tree that was all twisted and gnarled like an old man. Willie looked up. The tree's branches were so close that he could see only patches of blue sky. He looked over the ridge. Out there was a land of mountain laurel, pawpaws and wild animals – a land of whispering leaves. It was beautiful!

"Hand me the rags, son." Willie handed the rags to his father and watched as, with a stick, Abram poked one end of a rag into the hole. Then he lit a match, cupped it in his hands and held it under the rag until it caught on fire. He snuffed out the flame when the rag was smoking.

Soon the wind was curling the smoke up into the hole and it wasn't long before bees began to crawl out. They were moving slowly. They wouldn't sting now.

Just above the hole Abram Simpson started notching a half circle with his ax, making an outline where he would cut.

Willie stood far away from the swinging ax. "Where are you gonna make it fall, Pa?"

"There's only one way, Willie. Look down there!"

Willie looked. What had seemed to be part of the mountain was a steep bluff that was almost straight down. Far below, the big roaring creek looked like a silver ribbon in the sunlight.

"If it falls that way, Pa, we'll lose the honey. It won't stop until it's reached the bottom."

"I'll just have to cut it to fall the way we came in."

Willie found a safe place to sit near the top of the bluff where he could watch without being in danger.

Abram chopped and chopped, first on one side, then on the other, always a little deeper on the front side. After a while he had to stop and rest. The branches of the tree were moving. The wind was getting stronger and it kept rising. Abram chopped faster and faster. Chips flew.

"C-crack!" The sound wasn't too loud.

"C-c-crack!" This time it was louder.

Abram stopped chopping and looked up into the wind tossed tree. Then he looked for Willie who was still sitting in the same place, watching the tree.

The big tree began to sway. "C-c-c-c-crack!"

"Get up, son! She's gonna fall!" Abram looked around. "Hurry, into the big trees!"

They ran through the brush into the woods and hid behind a big spruce. The oak was groaning and straining, trying to fall. With a thundering swoosh it crashed to the ground, its limbs breaking as it fell. Then it was quiet.

Willie peered out from behind the spruce. "It's down now, Pa. Let's go get the honey!"

The tree had fallen on the wrong side. A thin strip was holding the tree to the stump now, but it couldn't hold long. Abram grabbed the ax and quickly made a deep cut in the side of the downed tree.

"Get the bucket! Perhaps we can save some of the honey before the tree goes over the side!"

Willie ran for the bucket as Abram lifted big chunks of yellow honeycomb out of the opening. The tree moved, just a little.

"Hurry, Pa! You're not gonna get the bucket filled!"

Willie's father was hurrying. The honey was dripping out of the comb and the bucket was almost full.

Suddenly the tree started sliding. It began slowly, and then it moved faster and faster. It was sliding out of sight down into the valley far below. Thundering and roaring, it knocked down small trees and bushes, and tore rocks out of the ground. It stopped at the big roaring creek far below.

It's not so big now, Willie thought. It's just a big dark mass of broken limbs and quivering leaves. Just a dark splotch lying near the creek with some of its branches spread over into Mac Hinson's pasture!

"I'll bet Mac heard that noise!" Abram said.

"Reckon he'll come to see what happened?" Willie asked.

"Yep, he'll come and pretty soon."

"We'd better go. He might be mad – especially since he marked his initial on the tree."

His father spoke sternly. "We're not gonna run from Mac, son. He had no right to mark that tree in the first place. I worked hard to clear out the

brush and briars. I just didn't have time to finish. If I had, I would have marked the tree. We did no wrong, son. If anybody did it was Mac. He was probably waiting for someone to start a path to that tree. Come on. Let's get our honey and go home."

Willie walked over by the broken tree stump and picked up the bucket. It wasn't quite full, but he was proud of what there was. They could have lost it all!

This time, as they started down the mountain toward home, Willie was leading the way.

That evening for supper, Willie's mother made a pan of golden brown biscuits. With the biscuits, there was a tall glass of crystal-clear honey and a bowl of yellow butter. Willie's mouth began to water. He broke open four biscuits and on each one he put a big dab of yellow butter. When the butter was melted he reached for the tall glass of honey.

"Hello there," a voice called. "Anybody home?" It was Mac Hinson.

Willie looked across the table at his father. Abram looked at Willie.

"Reckon he's found the tree, Pa?"

Abram pushed back his chair, got up from the table and opened the door. Mac was standing on the top step chewing on a black cigar. Mac was short and stumpy, and the cigar was nearly as big as he was.

"Howdy, Mac."

"Howdy, Abram. Thought I'd drop by and say hello." He removed the cigar from his mouth.

"Been hunting?" Willie heard his father ask. He could see the big double barreled shotgun in the crook of Mac's arm.

"Yep." Mac said, "Thought I might kill me a squirrel or two."

"I see you don't have any hanging on your belt ... must not have had any luck." Abram looked at him suspiciously.

"Nope," he said. "Didn't even see one ... but, I saw something else!"

"And what was that?" Abram asked.

"Saw where somebody tried to rob a bee tree."

"You don't say?" Abram tried to act surprised.

"Yep, too bad they didn't get any of the honey."

Now Abram was really surprised. "Are you sure they didn't?"

"Mighty right! That tree didn't have an ounce of honey left in it when it landed in my creek pasture, but I never saw so much honey in all my life!"

"Mac Hinson, you're talking in riddles! First you say there was no honey in the tree, then you say you never saw so much honey in all your life, I don't ..."

"If you'd been there you would have seen it too! This morning I heard the most awful racket coming down the big bluff. Couldn't imagine what was happening. The noise lasted only a few minutes, then it stopped."

"Then what happened," Abram prompted.

"Well, when it stopped I knew something had fallen off the bluff. At first I thought it might be one of my prized steers ..."

"Was it?" asked Willie.

"I'm coming to that, son. That's the funny part. It wasn't a steer at all, but a big oak tree. I thought at first the wind had blown it over, but when I saw where someone had cut open the side I knew the tree had been cut down."

"Where was all the honey you saw?" Willie wanted to know.

"Son, it was strewn all up and down the mountain, on every rock and twig!"

"Then whoever cut the tree lost the honey," Abram said.

"That's what I figured," he said. "It's on every sprout and rock up and down the bluff, shining like pure gold! But, you couldn't pick up a spoonful!" His voice was sad.

"Sure is a shame, all that good honey gone to waste, left there for the wild animals and insects. Sure is a shame." He turned to leave, "Nobody will ever know how good that honey really was!"

Abram looked at Willie and they both smiled.

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WHO HAS TAKEN CHRIST OUT OF CHRISTMAS

By
Margie Lanning Dunn

Every year more and more people ease into their conversations the now-proverbial cliché, "Christ has been taken out of Christmas."

As homes are overly displayed with hundreds of bright, twinkling lights, life size Santas, and huge balls of artificial snow, there are the never ending complaints, "Christmas has become too commercialized." And as neighbor pits himself against neighbor, we are in compliance with a tuneful, older cliché, "keeping up with the Joneses."

Has it ever occurred to us: What type person is he, or she, that feels Christ is no longer existent in the magical word "Christmas?" Are their feelings actual? Or do they merely say this in order to receive some sort of consolation for their lack of interest in spreading peace, joy, and good will?

Are we, ourselves, guilty of being placed in immediate danger of losing the original anonymity of Christmas? If so, maybe we should stop now, and ask ourselves these simple questions. Perhaps in the answers we can find where the true meaning of Christmas lies.

At Christmas time, do you feel that your neighbors brightly, decorated home has been done just for you? Not an impression? That the colored lights, holly wreaths, and tinsel trees are a revelation of a home filled with happiness, warmth, and love ... not a measure of wealth?

Can you get the same breathless emotion from a lone candle, burning dimly and grotesque, through a cracked window pane that you get from a dozen glowing candles, artistically arranged behind stained glass?

Can you bow as reverently and humbly before a manger exhibited on a grassy lawn, as you can before the same scene in a church sanctuary?

Do the strains of Silent Night, Holy Night, sound as sacred and sweet over a loud speaker in a department store, as it would if it were coming from a magnificent organ in a domed cathedral?

Can you give, and receive, an expensive gift with the same attitude as you would a dime store bauble?

Do you feel the Holy Season is a time to share with friends and loved ones, the age old Story begun long ago when a baby was born in Bethlehem?

Can you find new strength and inspiration in the old, old words that somehow grow brighter with each reading, and in the old songs of Yule that are reborn anew each Christmas?

Have we let ourselves become so conformed to society that we never have time to "rest beside the weary road and hear the angels sing?"

If so, then despite the way it seems, Christ, has not been taken out of Christmas ... **only out of our own hearts!**

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Margie L. Dunn

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