

Fishing for Hornets

Transcribed by Jackie Layne Partin

(This story was told to me by my husband Grady Ward Partin on Aug. 24, 2004)

It was a hot summer day, the day I went to visit an elderly friend, Mr. Bransford "Mack" McCormick. Mack and his precious wife Molly came to Tracy City from White County around 1940. They finally settled into a little log house down in Pattie's Valley (Hollow) off Lankford Town Rd.

Mack and Molly were God-fearing people who lived simple lives. They raised a big garden each year and put the fruits of their labors up in jars for the winter ahead. They heated their cabin with wood and drew water from a well very near the back door. Fruit trees, grape vines, chickens and cows could be seen all around the hill sides. Further out back was an outdoor toilet. Some folks would say they were "behind times." I figured they were in the right time and the right place of their choosing.

Molly was the first Sunday School teacher I ever had. The class must have been pre-school-age children. Class was held in a tiny room in front of the church building behind the pulpit. We sat in the smallest little chairs with curved backs. They were painted red and yellow. Each Sunday we were given little cards with pictures of some *Bible* scene on one side and a scriptural verse and comments on the other. Mrs. McCormick used the pointers from the card to teach the story for the day.

Right: My little Sunday School chair was so tiny. They were saved from the old Church of Christ building on 14th St. that was torn down and replaced. A friend had two of them and graciously shared with me. It needs repairs, but my wife guards it with her life. It easily stands on a narrow chest top.



Now let's go back to that summer day. Mack was sitting in a big rocking chair on the front porch. I climbed the steps and received a warm, hearty greeting as always and was invited to "drag up a chair and 'sit a spell.'" Immediately my curiosity was aroused by what I saw. There beside Mack lay an old fly swat. It had a wire handle, and the "business end" was a piece of screen wire with a cotton yarn trim. You could see where a hole had been worn in the screen, but Mack had woven it back with a scrap piece of wire pulled from the edge of a window or door screen. He didn't waste anything! I knew what the fly swat was for but was curious about the 3 or 4 foot sourwood stick he held in his hand. It was about ½ inch in diameter and had a 5 or 6 inch broom straw stuck in the pithy spot of one end.

As I settled down in my rocking chair, Mack reached down and picked up the fly swat and swatted a fly, (there were plenty flies because of the farm animals); then to my amazement, he picked up the fly and stuck it on the end of the broom straw that stuck out from the end of the sourwood stick. As I watched, he began to slowly wave the stick around in front of him in the hot sticky air. Low and behold, in just a few seconds, here came a big black and white hornet and latched onto the fly on the end of the broom straw. The hornet couldn't get the fly off the straw, but he would not let go. Mack slowly eased the stick back toward him, hand over hand, slipped the straw, fly and hornet under the toe of his shoe and squashed the hornet! Looking up at me with a little grin, he said, "I call it fishing for hornets!" Then he reached and got his fly swat and swatted another fly.



Mack and Molly McCormick

in 1977 celebrating

their 60th anniversary