

Repeating the History

By Barbara Mooney Myers

It always delights me writing and telling about the golden history years that have passed on. Memories can fade in people's minds if they don't try to keep track of some of the happenings. As I pass my history on to my children and grandchildren and others, I hear the comments over and over. "Mom, or Granny, don't give up on keeping us informed".

My father, James W. "Bill" Mooney, was always a big story teller in our family. He'd never forget anything, seems like, for he'd always come up with a wonderful story to tell about his younger years in Sewanee, TN. His father William, "Will" as everyone called him, was gifted at making porch furniture from grape vines and twisted wood. He also made cedar tables and rockers. There were so many ways he could use the bark stripped from hickory trees to bottom chairs. My dad bottomed many of our chairs as we wore them out throughout the years. He always said there's a way for using everything if we just know how and when to use it.

Dad recalled many times his twenty-five cent train rides to Nashville on the Dixie Flyer. First, it was catch the Mountain Goat at the switch station there in Sewanee down to Cowan, TN, then on to Nashville, TN. He and his parents would take the trip to visit Grandma Martha Mooney's sisters there. Ellen (Cook) Bradford was married to Albert Bradford, Sr. They had two sons, Lawrence and Albert, Jr.

Dad described a job he once had with his father. His brother, Joseph, was tapping cross ties for the railroad. The wages paid, \$1.45 a day a piece and \$8.50 per week. Often the workers were given a free pass to Nashville by the boss. Dad called this a treat of his life for he said money was so hard to get and this saved Grandpa seventy-five cents.

Later my dad recalled their many years working for the Sewanee Fuel and Iron Company in the 1920's. There was so much work there at the time around the coke ovens. So the two of them, Dad and Joe, his brother, would wash coal to make coke, and then they'd burn it in a coke oven for 72 hours. Some ovens required burning it 90 hours. Many people worked there. Dad recalled names like Burkes, Garner, Northcutt, Griss, Hargis, Parsons, Morgan, and many others.

Dad always said in later years those men were the type who worked and stood by a job. So coal mining became a daily routine work chosen for my dad throughout his lifetime. Most of the years he remained on the mountain where he worked at many

odd jobs as well as he got older. But he always recalled those horse and buggy days at Gruetli with his friends and his mom. He told stories of the silent theater and movies they'd go see, stories of the many dog holes he'd go into to dig for coal, never knowing if he'd make it out or not, the long miles he'd walk back to make a dollar to support his family.

Our memories are stored inside to remind us of the good and bad days at home in an earlier time. And all those many years, we keep trying to go back and regain how they made it through such hard times back in the 1920's and 30's.



James & Josephine Dove Mooney