

- December 24, 1981

## BALL CREEK HOMECOMING

*Looking back upon life's passing: Saying not goodbye; just remembering.*

-- Nell Q., Christmas, 1981

Jefferson Avenue runs parallel to the broad Detroit River that separates Canada from the United States. Today, late December, 1951, the west wind whistled frigidly down the wide street. In the deep channel of the river, heavy, long ore boats pushed huge blocks of frozen water to the ice-clad shores.

The part of Jefferson Avenue that I was walking along curved several blocks inland from the river. Moving quickly from where the huge, blue Chrysler sign and Corey Street interwove with Jefferson, I rapidly left behind the tall fenced factories.

Soon I came to a better neighborhood of little shops, decorated in gilded Christmas colors. From these stores came the sound of Christmas bells and recorded carols. It was past noon, the wind had abated. Thick, swirling snow, mingling in the reflections of bright neon-lighted windows created a lovely northern paradise.

Excitedly, approaching the amber lighted window of the Cinderella Theatre, I purchased my ticket from the smiling platinum-blonde cashier.

“A Streetcar Named Desire” was the motion picture playing today. This movie would produce a new idol, Marlon Brando. The production had a strong sensualization that I had never seen on film. In 1951, records, novels and films were by law quite austere.

The movie made me feel strangely unsettled. Walking back through the darkening day, my mind became fixed on Marlon Brando. Turning on Corey, I walked down the street to my grandparents' house.

As usual on Sundays, my grandparents had many visitors. Jack Quesenbery was sitting near my granny Dora, who had formed a strong attachment for him. Since a child, I had been playing five hundred rummy with Jack, finding him an easy and friendly man. This afternoon, still preoccupied with the movie, through my fixed mind, I felt a gaze. Looking up, I, nonplused, read a strange new look in Jack's eyes.

Under Jack's sudden, black revealing stare, I lost all thought of Marlon Brando. Awkwardly, I felt him force a tiny wrapped Christmas gift into my hands. Impulsively, I quickly concealed his gift into my pocket.

In a few days, I turned sixteen. The winter days lengthened into spring, then into full ripe summer. In the middle of summer we were married.

The corner streetlights, now shining like cut diamonds, heralded in our first winter together. This Christmas, Jack plans to take me to meet his family that live on Ball Creek.

#### **BALL CREEK COMMUNITY:**

Witt Lakins was the fiddler boy! Can you still hear him play?

Ball Creek Road, running along both the creek and railroad through the rugged natural gap of Wallen's Ridge, is now impossible except for the old road's eastern and western fork.

Joe Love's farm (the old Hughes place), the Tazewells' Waterworks, Fred Blevins, Raymond Leedy and Joe Gray's family live along the East Fork that runs into Straight Creek Road.

Widow Hollow Trestle, the one-room Ball Creek School, Dan Keller's family and Raleigh Love live on the Western Fork that meets Straight Creek Road near the Lone Holly Church.

The road running along the creek, once the shortest route to Knoxville, connected Lone Mountain to the Ball Creek Community and Tazewell. The railroad is still used daily by Southern Railways.

Families once living along the creek were: Hughes, Love, Greer, Keller, Welch, Williams, Cheatham, West, Mintons, Grays, Jordans, Loops, Franciscos, Bullards, Harrells, Jennings, Corbins, Leedys, Johns, Saunders, Lakins, Irvings and Leabows.

Others living in the Ball Creek Community whose land did not border the creek were: Quesenberys, Blevins, Eppersons, Wolfenbargers, Bradens, Smiths, Goldens, Shipleys, Pates, Janeways, Carters, Whitakers, Buchanans, Coffeys, Hills, Cadles and the Butlers that owned farm land in that area.

Near 1890, the KLCG railroad was built. Plans were made for a town called New Tazewell, to be located near the A.J. Quesenberry farm and the Saunders farm that now belonged to the attorney Isom Leabow. Tobe Chittum, married to A.J. Quesenberry's niece, Jenny Stewart, was already operating a brick kiln across from the A.J. Quesenberry farm.

In anticipation of this brand new town, Isom Leabow built a large, gabled tin-roofed house. He ordered poplar lumber, without a single blemish, from Bob Gray. The pattern for the grand new house came from France.

Inside the three-storied house, the ceilings were eleven feet high. He had an office suite built for himself of rounded, beautifully papered rooms. Throughout the house, the wainscoting was of dark cherry and walnut, blended with lighter chestnut panels.

Upon failure of the hoped-for town to materialize at its originally proposed site, Isom Leabow sold his land and house to Rial Johns. In 1902, L.A. Hughes bought the farm where, at present, six generations of his family have lived. The farm is now owned by his great grandson, Joe Love.

J.R. Butler, sheriff at Claiborne County, also owned several acres of farmland near the new town site. J.R. Butler had married Mary Glen Snodgrass, whose brother, John Snodgrass, taught at the Kneedmore School, located across the road from Jack's family farm.

Jack's father, Elic L. (Pete), and his aunts Ida and Hallie attended this school. Later, this would be one of the schools from where Ida Quesenberry taught.

There was a persimmon tree in the schoolyard. "Pete," now an old man, told Gilbert Butler once that the tree had not grown a bit. The school has long been torn down, but I picked persimmons off the tree just last fall.

A tale told to Imogene Love by her mother. Mae Bullard Walker (Mrs. Ott Walker):

Jim and Margaret West had a son named Ebb who was drafted into World War I. A telegram arrived stating that their son had been killed in war.

“No, Jim! Ebb’s not dead.”

“Yes, he’s dead. We’ve got a telegram.”

“No, Jim, Ebb’s not dead. My Lord’s showed me that Ebb’s not dead. He’ll be home.”

Mrs. West collected Ebb’s army insurance, but would not spend it. When he came home, she planned to return it.

One day, near Christmas, Ebb just walked into the house. Upon seeing him, his mother jumped up and down all over the house, shouting, “I told you he’d be home. I told you he’d be home.”

Merry Christmas, Everyone!

Happy New Year!

**January 7, 1982**

**STAINED GLASS MADE HOUSE DISTINCTIVE**

**BY IMOGENE LOVE**

**Submitted to the Claiborne County Progress by Nell Quesenbery**

This is a picture of the house that Isom Leabow built to serve as both home and office shortly before 1890. There were great anticipations that a new town, later to be called New Tazewell, would be located near this lovely house built from an imported French pattern upon plans for the new town falling through.

Attorney Leabow sold the house to Rial Johns. Nell Quesenbery, in the story she wrote last week called "Ball Creek Homecoming," described this house. She, however, left out one structural detail, which was the beautiful blue, red and amber stained-glass windows. She has long considered these stained-glass windows to be very beautiful.

In 1902, Rial Johns sold the house to L.A. (Lydle) Hughes. The following is a description of the sixth generation of L.A. and Martha Rosenbalm Hughes that have lived in this house.

The description is being given by Imogene Walker Love, wife of Joe Love, the present owner and great grandson of L.A. and Martha Hughes.

The children of L.A. and Martha Rosenbalm Hughes: Tobe, Mary and Elizabeth. Tobe married Della Jennings. Their children were Lydle Albert, Glenn (Big Foot) Horace, Betty Hughes Golden and Martha Hughes Winstead.

Mary married Wesley Dozey Hurst and had two children, James Dozey Hurst and Katy Hughes Love.

Elizabeth married Bill Welch and her children were Isham and Lydia. Katy married Samuel D. Love and they had two sons, James Ray and Joe Love. Ray married Jennette Ward. Their children are Dean and Churchill Love and Kay (stillborn). Joe married Imogene Walker. Their children are

Steven, Christopher Love and Carlene Love Keck. The grandchildren of Ray and Joe Love makes the sixth generation of L.A. and Martha Rosenbalm Hughes that live in this house.