

- **Nell Quesenberg Report**

Claiborne County Progress

November 25, 1982

THE BRIDGE

By Nell Quesenberg

“But a certain Samaritan as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him.” -- Luke 10:23

This Sunday, before Thanksgiving 1974, the bright sun made it seem warm. Still, as I stepped from our older model, dusty gold Camaro car, shivering, I pulled my sweater tighter around myself.

The car’s battery had suddenly spluttered out just as we reached the bridge that crosses the Powell River on the Cedar Fork Road.

I walked in the direction of Tazewell and onto the old bridge. Curled, dry leaves blithely skiffed along the water. To the northeast, together sat two houses, whose large yard led down to the shallow, quickly moving stream.

In 1937, during the Depression, the job of painting this bridge had been given to my grandfather, Horace Yoakum. He had brought a work crew of kinfolks with him from Lone Mountain.

These Lone Mountain workers cooked and slept in Carl and Hessie Brooks’ outbuildings situated in their large backyard next to this Cedar Fork Bridge.

Horace’s crew members were his cousins, Frank Mason and Paul Jennings; his new son-in-law, Denny Marchio, his wife, Bessie Yoakum, and his only child, a daughter, Louise Marchio.

Bessie and Louise were the cooks; the others painted. My father, Denny, claims that he and Paul, being young, and not afraid to climb high, did most of the painting.

My family settled into their quarters gaily enjoying their camp and Carl and Hessie Brooks' fine family. My mother remembers their daughter called Thelma and the two Brooks boys called Joe and Millard.

I walked back to where Jack was still tinkering with the car's battery and cables. We had been here quite a while, but, being strangers, no one had stopped to offer us a boost.

"Jack, it's getting late. I'm cold; no one seems willing to stop. Do you think we'd better start walking to Tazewell?"

Starting to close the car hood, Jack looked at me and grinned, "It's a pretty long walk."

I nodded.

A neat, light blue pickup suddenly swerved to a stop in front of us.

"What's your trouble, Neighbor?" asked the tall, handsome, graying man.

Charging our battery was difficult, but the stranger stubbornly kept trying until our motor finally turned over. He would not accept anything, but our heartfelt thanks.

Pointing, I ask him if he knew the Carl Brooks family?

"Yes, I'm Carl Brooks' son, Millard. I live in that white house next to the old homeplace."
(Carl Brooks is dead, but his wife, Hessie, still lives in the Brooks homeplace.)

Millard remembered my family painting the bridge. He also remembered everyone having a good time, playing cards and laughing late into the night.

I asked him if the river ever flooded his yard and house. He said that once the river had come up to about where we were parked, but had never flooded the buildings or houses.

Three years later in April, 1977, forty years after my family had painted the bridge, the river flooded and the old bridge was washed away.

The flood didn't bother the Brooks' outbuildings or home.

So, my family remembered the Carl Brooks family. And now after this encounter, when I think of Millard Brooks, I remember how Jesus described the good Samaritan in answering the lawyer's question: "And who is my neighbor?"

Gracie (Breeding) Sandefur

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Nov. 15, 1982

Dear Friend,

I sure enjoyed reading your report on your ground huckleberries. It sure does bring back many happy memories to me.

We lived in Horseshoe bend of Clinch River until I was six years old.

I remember Dad going to Clinch Mountain across the river in Grainger County and bringing back buckets full of huckleberries. We sure liked them.

We moved to the edge of Union County Dec. 14, 1914. I remember well passing through Lone Mountain and seeing Paynes back their car out of a garage. It was the first I'd ever seen. I also saw my first telephone line passing through Lone Mountain.

When we got to our new home, we had a telephone hanging on the wall which was run by two large long batteries. (The telephone wire, Gracie saw when she was six going to her new home at the edge of Union County belonged to my great-grandfather, J.W. Hill. Mr. Hill's telephone company supplied service to the people at the edge of Union County. My grandmother, Bessie Hill Yoakum, and her mother, Cordie Jennings Hill, worked the switchboard.)

I moved to Russellville with my husband, Dorsie Sandefur, my sons, Darwin, Arlin and Parlin, and my daughter, Viva, in September 1951.

Now I am left alone. My husband died July 31, 1971; Parlin died April 27, 1972; Darwin died March 15, 1974. My dad, Henry J. Breeding, died Jan. 2, 1974.

I have been receiving the Progress for three years, which I really enjoy. Please send me just a few of the huckleberry seeds. I want to get a start of them.

Your friend,

Gracie (Breeding) Sandefur

Thanksgiving Past . . .

Thanksgiving Future . . .

Thanksgiving Now . . .

Like a giant kaleidoscope, they go around in my head. Some family members are gone. Some are here. Yet, I see them all.

I see Bessie preparing the first Thanksgiving I remember for Preacher Crosson, our Methodist preacher. I'm a very young woman, and I see Bernetta Yoakum preparing a large capon, Thanksgiving 1954, for her brother-in-law, Dick Yoakum, who is coming to Corey Street in Detroit for a visit. I see my own wishbones I have saved. I see turkey in Cleveland, Ohio, with my sister, Ann, and my new brother-in-law, Joe Hill. I see long family Thanksgiving drives.

Jackie's friend, Rhoda, and her children usually eat turkey with us now. This is my favorite holiday.

Happy Thanksgiving, Everyone!