

Art of raising burley tobacco is revived

Estill County teenagers are raising half-acre crop of burley tobacco at Harris Ferry Road community

Burley tobacco was once a highly-valued cash crop in Kentucky and was even called "King of the Bluegrass." Large and small plots dotted the landscape from the flat lands of the Bluegrass and even extended to the mountain slopes of the eastern part of Kentucky. However, because of the dangers of smoking, increases in taxes on tobacco, and changes in regulation, tobacco as a cash crop has nearly disappeared from the state. You had to travel out of this county to even see a patch of tobacco in recent years. Estill UK Extension agent Eric L. Baker indicated he was not previously aware of any being grown in Estill County.

However, this year, tobacco is being grown in Estill County and as a cash crop. Two local fathers who grew up working in tobacco themselves, decided to teach their kids how it was grown. Brad Goolman and Ralph Townsend have helped their teenage kids start a half-acre of tobacco on Harris Ferry Road in northeastern Estill County and have even gotten other teenagers involved in the project.

Among those involved in raising the tobacco are Townsend's two sons, Andrew and Josh, and Goolman's daughter and son, Hannah and Dalton. Also helping are Marijane Weishuhn, Brandon Vanderpool and Parker Mullen. Others have expressed interest in getting their children involved as well.

Originally, tobacco was started in seed beds under canvas and then transplanted to the fields. Most tobacco today is raised in float beds in a greenhouse but the plants are still set the same way, using a tobacco setter which puts the plants into the ground after being alternately fed into the setter by two workers per row who ride on the setter as it is pulled behind a tractor.

The single row setter used for this crop hadn't been moved in quite a while. Ralph Townsend said a sizeable tree had to be cut that was growing through the middle of it.

This tobacco was set late in May and by July 1st was ready to have the weeds chopped out by several eager hands. The Harris Ferry crop is a healthy field of tobacco which Townsend indicated will bring a good price.

Tobacco was once allotted by the acre; then later by pound. Those remaining in the business must contract with tobacco companies to sell their crop. Townsend said they had made arrangements with a friend to sell this crop on his contract once it is cut, housed and dried and then stripped.

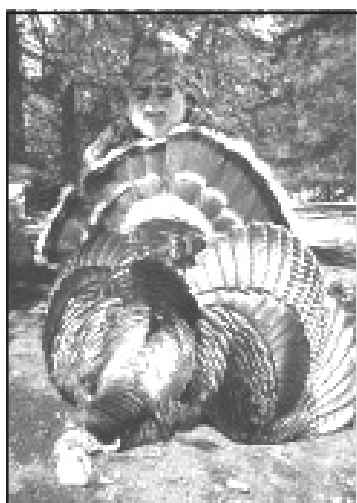


ABOVE: Left to right, front, Hannah Goolman, Marijane Weishuhn. Back, Andrew Townsend, Josh Townsend, Ralph Edward Townsend, Brad Goolman and Dalton Goolman.



AT RIGHT: Andrew Townsend and Hannah Goolman take their turn on the tobacco setter. The two alternate placing plants in the one-row setter.

BELOW: Estill County youth are introduced to tobacco setting, including Brandon Vanderpool and Parker Mullen.



Just Hunting by Steve Brewer

Me, being a newcomer to this county, I haven't taken the time to get out and make many new friends. My lovely wife, Sharon and myself moved here 8 years ago, come July 5th, to be closer to our youngest daughter, Nema, and her daughter, our only granddaughter, Camden. This has been a lesson in life, I never thought existed. We were broke into twice with a total of \$12,000 worth of items stolen. We had called Letcher County home for 65 plus years and never had anything stole. We had a two-hundred thousand dollar home, and no alarm system; the first thing we needed to do here was install an eight-thousand dollar alarm system. What a difference a couple hundred miles makes. But we have hung on and plan to keep doing so, even with the trash beside the road, the cars and trucks racing in front of our house, and the people selling their drugs night and day. This is after a three-year search, we lit and hopefully will stay grounded. All that said and not knowing the people of this county, I often wonder, just how different are all of you?

My daughter, Nema Brewer-Candy, that works for the Lexington school system, and myself have always loved spending time together; we hunt, fish, go to baseball games, and just do daughter, daddy things. I wrote last week, that we were going fishing on June 30th on Lake Cumberland, and that we did. We stayed



Steve Brewer and his daughter, Nema, show off the fish they caught at Lake Cumberland

the night of June 30th at the Lake Cumberland State Resort Park, about a thirty-minute drive from where our fishing outfitter, Morgan's Guide Service, runs their fleet of boats. I have used them probably 15 years, and Nema and myself try to get there twice a year; and I go a few more trips with some old friends. If I was recommending a place to stay that is quiet, no dogs barking, no loud vehicles, clean and priced right, Lake Cumberland Resort is the place and Morgan's Guide Service my guides.

Nema and myself arrived at the lodge right on time as planned; we always love this trip, and this time was no exception. We had a wake-up call for three-thirty, they are on Central Standard Time, the boats leave the docks at four-thirty. We shoved off right on time, and what a beautiful morning it was; the lake calm and the sun breaking just right. Nema was first up, and as usual, she was super-excited, except her fish was only a tidbit on the short size. So, we

returned it back to grow. Within ten minutes, she was on again; this time the line broke, although we saw the fish and knew it was in the thirty-inch range. We were still fish 2, us zero. I have never fished with Morgan's Guide Service and not tagged out; this trip was spot on. By seven-thirty, their time, we were back in dock, Nema with one thirty-four inch and a twenty-nine inch Striper. I had two, both twenty-nine inches. Yep, like on our wild boar hunt last year to Florida, she once again outdid me.

Back at the dock, as the boats came back to port, she had the big fish of the day.

Just how much difference is there between Letcher County and Estill County people?? Do you spend time with your daughters? Do you hunt and fish with them?? Please drop me a line, share your adventures with them, I will try my best to do you a great story.

You can email Steve Brewer at <Steve@EstillTribune.com> and message is forwarded.