

213 TALES

by the late

Michael Dale Profitt

Memories of the late Michael Dale Profitt who lived much of his life on KY-213 and KY-52, now called Furnace Junction.

In Memory of

Cornelius Clay "Neil" Tipton

"Neil" Tipton was born September 28, 1932 to Clara Bidley Barnes Tipton and Pearl Tipton. Neil was a slim man who married Christine Griggs Tipton. They moved to Ohio and lived for several years.

They moved back in the late 1960's to the Millard Tipton house. They had two girls, Barbara and Teresa; and two sons. Stevie and Jeff was their names.

Neil never had nothing to say to you unless it was nice. He went to work at Parker Seal and worked there for several years. Then, he went to work at Rockwell International in Winchester. He worked there until he

got layed off.

He bought the house at the entrance of Walters Ridge (at the top of Tipton Ridge). It was part of the Hood Tipton farm and had several nice acres of fields and woods.

Neil then started logging and raising cattle on his farm. He logged for several different people over the years. Neil then retired and moved to Cow Creek.

He always liked fooling around with cars. He had a race car once and raced at Richmond Raceway. He had bought the store building that used to be where Alexanders Grocery had been.

There had been several grocery stores there before he bought it. Neil decided to do something new. He run a go-cart track in the rear of the building for a long time. He had a game room in the first floor for a long time. He lived upstairs with his family.

Neil belong to Mt. Carmel Christian Church and wanted a safe place to come and play. He knew the people of Estill County needed a place where they could play pool and other games without worrying about drugs or alcohol. He would tell you if he caught

you trying to sell or buy drugs, you would have to leave and not return.

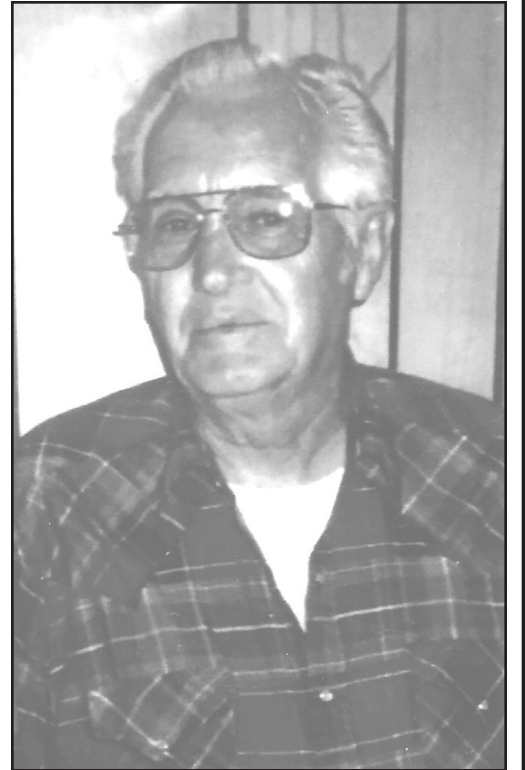
He run the game room several years. When he closed, a lot of people missed him. They liked having a safe place to go, eat and drink pop and play games without someone trying to sell you drugs or people talking foul language you didn't want to hear.

The last years, Neil kept goats in his yard. I guess he kept them to have something to do. If you stopped by, he would come talk to you about things. He wouldn't say bad things about people but would be nice to everyone.

He has gone on to be with the Lord. On February 8, 2009, his suffering ended from illness and pain. Now he can drive a race car in Heaven or play a game. Now, he doesn't have to worry about suffering and pain. He's with his fallen loved ones who have already passed on. He's with other friends he had known. He's with the Lord now and no more pain.

I know his wife, Christine will miss him more than anyone knows. After 50 some years, it has to hurt. His children and grandchildren he loved so dearly, will miss him greatly because he was so dear. Friends have lost a

great friend. He will be missed by the friends he loved so dearly. Now Neil can be up there spreading his kindness and cheer. He was my third cousin and he was a true friend who loved so many. I'm sure he'll be missed, that's for sure.



Cornelius Clay "Neil" Tipton

Sorghum Molasses 'Soggum Making' on Sand Hill

Jerry G. Rose

The Sand Hill area was ideally suited for growing sugar cane for making one of the sweet sugar items highly desired by most all early inhabitants. After the cane matured in the early/mid fall season, the cane stalks were cut, the leaves were stripped from the stalks, the stalks were topped, and the remaining shank of the stalk was used. The juice was literally squeezed out of the cane stalks and boiled down in an evaporator to make the concentrated brown sweet syrup. The output as molasses was a small percentage of the input of juice as the sweet juice was reduced to fairly thick syrup during the boiling or cooking. The extra water evaporated, somewhat similar to making maple sugar syrup.

Although the process seems rather simplistic, a good bit of know-how was necessary to consistently produce good quality 'soggum', as some folks referred to the molasses. The cane did not require the highest quality soil. It grew well on sandy soils that drained well. It only required a reasonable amount of soil moisture to properly mature, so the upland sand land was ideal. Some years, depending on the rainfall, temperatures, and other weather related factors, the sorghum's taste was not as sweet as desirable and the sorghum would tend to 'go back to sugar' fairly quickly requiring re-heating the glass jar in hot water on the stove to melt the sugar grains.

A primary use for the sorghum was as a topping for hot biscuits, similar to adding honey or fruit jelly. The mixture of melted butter and sorghum was considered the best of all toppings for hot biscuits. And the sorghum provided its own unique taste. It was also similarly used on pancakes and waffles. It was also added as the sweet ingredient for gingerbread and various breakfast muffins being typical of the numerous uses. It stored well without refrigeration, although at times requiring re-melting to convert the granulated product back to liquid syrup. The granular sorghum could be used in place of regular cane sugar which had to be purchased. It was a staple food source used most all of the year by early Sand Hill people.

Assuming a good quality cane was available, the primary key to producing high-quality sorghum molasses was the manner by which the operation of the evaporator was handled. This required an experienced operator. The operator added wood to the fire and controlled the temperature of the wood fire under the evaporator. If the fire was too hot and the juice remained in the evaporator too long, the sorghum would burn or 'scorch' and the resulting taste was compromised. Similarly, if the cane juice did not completely 'cook-off' the resulting sorghum tasted somewhat sour like raw cane juice that had not been properly converted to sorghum.

Also the operator adjusted the rate at which the cane juice was fed into the slightly elevated cold end of the evaporator and opened the exit hole so the finished hot sorghum would spill out into a large empty lard bucket. In addition, a scum would form on top of the



Farris has the primary activity of operating the evaporator. Local resident Jack Brown (at left) watches the operation.

juice as it made its way along the evaporator. This had to be removed with a long handled scoop and discarded to the side. The scoop was used to advance the juice as it cooked along the evaporator based on the judgement of the evaporator operator.

Visitors enjoyed taking a short piece of cane stalk and dipping it into the hot sorghum foam in the 5-gallon lard bucket and sucking the sweet brown syrup off of the stalk. The yellowjackets enjoyed the smell and taste of the hot sorghum and generally a swarm of the bees would congregate around the lard bucket as competition to those wishing to dip their cane stalk. The bees were never known to sting anyone as their interest was much more directed at tasting the sweet sorghum than stinging someone. Yellowjackets were just part of the overall 'soggum making' activity during the fall.

The two accompanying pictures, taken in October, 1968, show the main two operations. The sorghum is being made on Clarence Rose's Sand Hill farm. Clarence and his two brothers, in their 60's, are performing the work they have done so many times. The three brothers grew up on neighboring Opossum Run which had similar landform and soils as Sand Hill. Appreciable amounts of sorghum molasses were made on Sand Hill and close by on Opossum Run and Trotting Ridge. Typically making sorghum was a three-person operation. All three brothers married Sand Hill women - Clarence married Lucy Frances Blackwell, daughter of William Thomas and Armina (Horn) Blackwell, and Edgar and Farris married sisters Myrtle Lee Richardson and Rebecca Jane Richardson, daughters of Beechum and Sibba Francis (Alcorn) Richardson.

Clarence is sitting by the sorghum mill that squeezes the juice. He is feeding the mill with the stripped cane stalks at the proper rate. The juice runs by gravity through a hose to a raw juice

holding container above the evaporator. When the holding container fills the mill is temporarily stopped until more raw juice is needed. The mule walking in the circle provides the power to operate the mill. During the breaks the mule is fed, watered and rested. In later years it became more common to use the power takeoff on a tractor to power the mill—a more modern approach.

Edgar's primary jobs that day are to gather the cane stalks from the wagon and position them so that Clarence can continuously feed the mill and to gather the pith left over from the squeezed stalks and reload it to haul away.

And Farris has the primary activity of operating the evaporator. Certain individuals, Farris being one of them, seemed to have a natural knack or inclination for being able to consistently produce very good quality sorghum molasses. He normally made sorghum from his own cane and then 'hired out' to run the evaporator for other cane growers. He was paid either in sorghum as a percentage of the amount of sorghum produced or some type of fee

structure based on a day's work.

Standing beside the evaporator is a local resident Jack Brown. Mr. Brown has undoubtedly stopped by to visit this afternoon on his way home and to pick up a gallon pail or two of freshly made warm molasses. Perhaps in his imagination, he can already taste and smell the aroma of the hot biscuits his wife has in the oven baking in advance of his arrival and then adding the home-churned butter and still warm sorghum molasses for a feast on Brown Ridge as fine as anyone will enjoy on Sand Hill that 1968 fall evening.

Jerry Eltzroth relates the story that is told about some devious boys one Halloween night decided to set fire to the pile of spent sorghum cane at Clarence Rose's sorghum making site as a prank. They soon had a roaring fire going which really illuminated the whole surrounding area. Clarence started out to investigate. They were not worried about Clarence since he was an easy going man. However, when they saw Gus Smithers coming from his house, they broke for the woods behind them.



Clarence is sitting by the sorghum mill that squeezes the juice