

*Addendum To My Treatise Of June 22, 2000**Jack Oates - Nov. 20, 2000*

During the months of summer, several of us from two families secretly, we pretended, planned an ice cream social to be held on a Saturday night, announced by the grapevine. Of course we didn't fool mama and Aunt Laura but they let us think we did.

It was held in daddy's vacant "tenant" house located across the farm lane from the family cemetery. This house was just south of one on Uncle Edwin's farm and occupied by Luby and Carrie Herring and their several children.

On the appointed date, just after dark, Bunk milked one of mammy's cows. Someone brought the eggs, which had been collected over a period of days. The other ingredients, freezer and ice appeared along with a kerosene lantern which was lit after everyone was inside. Occasionally when chicken eggs were not plentiful John Edwin brought some of his guinea eggs. The entire party was held under hushed tones.

The party usually consisted of John E., Jim (Laura), Pete (Margaret), Bunk, Biddy (Hilda), Jack and Jean. The other children were either too old or young to hang around with us.

After one such gathering Luby came to daddy and told him that he and his family were afraid. He said daddy's house was "haunted". He thought they had come from the graveyard. Luby and his family had seen the light flickering through the cracks and egg shells by the back door. To reassure Luby, our "secret" had to be revealed. Luby uttered his often used phrase, "well, my master."

John's guinea fowl were semi-wild, foraged for most of their food and roosted in trees near the dwelling house. Once on the wing they could sail long distances. They "found" their nests in field growth, along the ditch banks and in Uncle Edwin's "mash" just below the

barn. When the guinea hen laid an egg, usually in late morning, she emitted one short shrill cackle. John's keen ear pin-pointed the area and after the secretive hen had left located the nest. John said three eggs must always remain when removing some to avoid having the guinea abandon her nest. He said, and I believed him, that she could count to three. He said chicken hens were not as smart, they only count to one, now "that's rich".

Mammy's chickens, and at the time, about four turkeys, mingled. Some of the chickens became infected with sorehead, a hideous sign to behold. It was usually not fatal to chicken when treated but killed turkeys. Daddy built a pen in a back field under the only perimmon tree on the place. Mammy gave me the turkeys, which I cared for until after her death. Once was kept for Thanksgiving dinner and without saying "pea turkey" to me, John Martin, Sr. took the others to a shooting match held behind a service station, also believed to be a bootleg liquor joint, in Mount Olive.

Fully ripe persimmons are very tasty. Care should be taken to avoid the bitter skin. It will "turn your mouth inside out." The large cluster of seeds are about the size and shape of almonds, and comprise about one half of the entire fruit. The hunting dogs and opossums loved persimmons.

Second cousin, John Hicks King, Sr. lived one mile northwest of us. He had a fishpond on his farm near the south side of Goshen Swamp. The one mile road through the woods with fields and pond at its end began almost directly in front of his house on the public road. He allowed a goodly number of local boys to swim, usually, on weekends. There was a corn field beside the road near the pond. Someone noticed that weeds were about as tall as the corn. They decided on a well known practical joke, "snicker material," course of action. They "flagged" the corn field. This consisted of putting a tall pole with a piece of cloth tied to it, beside the first row, and snickering all the way home.

John was not amused. The next time the boys came to swim they found a "posted" sign at the end of the pond road and cousin Bet, John's wife, sitting on the front porch. They

sheepishly asked permission to swim and were refused. For a long time afterwards a family member sat on the porch during weekends and sometimes allowed entry and just as often turned them away.

During the depression, one afternoon mama became concerned that they Herring family especially the children, might go to bed hungry. She killed a chicken and made a large pot of chicken and pasty, which was delivered by the older boys at dusk.

Charlie Herring, a son of Luby and Carrie, was about my age, thirteen or fourteen at the time. Several of us neighborhood white boys had for a long time included Charlie in our games, usually cowboys and Indians and in general just hung out on the farm. After the games we all went our separate ways. To my knowledge none of the parents ever objected.

We usually gathered in the pasture and woods behind Mr. Jim Kelly's barn, on the west edge of young Swamp. Mr. Kelly's home was the former Fisher house.

A middle aged male relative of Mr. Kelly was released from the "pen" after serving a sentence for murder. Mr. Jim Kelly, a good and kind person, took the man into his home.

It did not take a long period of time for his low life to convince impressionable young minds that we should not have Charlie in our group. Later when he came to the pasture to join us he was told to go home, he could not play with us anymore. Charlie was bewildered and went home crying. I followed him along the public road to the farm lane that led to the Herring home. Carrie had heard him crying and met us at the end of the lane. She didn't say one word, just took her boy by the hand and headed home. The look she gave me was forever imprinted on my memory. It was a combination of condemnation, rage and fear for the safety of her son.

After a brief period Charlie was on good terms with me and my brothers, George and Hugh. None of Uncle Edwin's boys had ever joined the group.

I never saw Charlie after leaving for the army in 1942. I did not know that he had died of cancer several years ago in Mount Olive, until Hugh told me that he had paid respects during the visitation.

Today is Nov. 23, 2000, Thanksgiving. After enjoying a bountiful feast I am somewhat annoyed that the memory of "Hoover Carts" entered my mind. I am sure it is due to the unsettled and unsettling recent election for president.

This is, in the main, for the young male descendants of depression era farmers, some of who became desperate for a mode of personal transportation. I do not know who originated the idea of constructing a mule drawn cart made from the rear end of an otherwise worn out car. The finishing touch was two bald tires.

As they drive their fancy, souped-up cars and trucks, and for their apparent affluence I am also thankful, I can imagine that if asked for whom the cart was named, most would roll their eyes and sigh. They would then say "Herbert who".

The merchants in Faison attempted to "drum up" a little trade by sponsoring a Hoover Cart parade, with a token prize for the cart having the best placard slogan attached, in most cases on the rear. The farmers came from far and wide. Both they and the spectators momentarily forgot their troubles and woes and had a grand old time.

I do not recall which slogan won the prize but one I have always remembered the car was pulled by a large billy goat. The sign read, "Neither Beef Or Mutton, Lift His Tail and See a Hoover Button."

It might interest someone to know that in the olden days the size of area farms was gauged by the number of horses, or mules, required to cultivate the acres to be planted.

I.E., Farmer Oates has a three horse farm.

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