

# *The Legend of the "Devil's Hoofprints of Bath"*

*Article by Vivian Shackelford*

*Transcription by Vivian Shackelford and  
Teresa Cox*

*It is a legend that reverberates with a certain ring of truth: lusty horsemen; a contested race; demonic influences; sudden, violent, unnatural death; and enduring imprints of a hellish event. These are the ingredients of the legend of Bath known as "The Devil's Hoofprints."*

*Mrs. Hughes, Mr. Armstrong, Teresa Cox*



*Vivian Shackelford, Betty Hughes, and Mrs. Padgett point out three of the hoofprints.*

and I talked with Mrs. Emily Padgett, of Douglas Crossroads, about exactly what happened, according to her recollections and knowledge. Many things are questioned to this day, but some matters seem sure. In 1813 (although some say as late as 1850), a horseman named Elliot was in Bath to participate in a horserace at Bath Commons the next day. Elliot, "in his cups," met another horseman by the name of Buckingame and argued violently with him about the comparative speeds of their horses. Elliot challenged Buckingame to a race on the spot. Elliot's horse crashed into a tree, killing both Elliot and the horse. Buckingham apparently was not heard of again.

The events after this are those in question. Some maintain that the hoofprints of Elliot's ill-fated steed can be seen to this day and that there are all sorts of mysterious properties--demonic influences--associated with them, that they are, indeed, the "Devil's Hoofprints." Also, the number 13 seems to show up in many ways--some disputed--in the story.

Born in 1904 and living most of her life in Bath, Mrs. Padgett grew up in the atmosphere of "The Devil's Hoofprints." She graciously consented to talk to us about the story. She received us in her lovely home. A slim, lovely, decorous lady, Mrs. Padgett spoke with animated certainty about some parts of the story. For some aspects of the story, she referred to Judge Whedbee's account. But most of her statements were from her own personal knowledge as a young girl and from statements from her parents and grandparents. Mrs. Ila Cutler, a friend of Mrs. Padgett, added her insight into the story.

When did you first become aware of the story and what is your understanding of it?

The early teens. I used to visit my grandmother, and my grandmother lived on the Camp Leach road just below where the horse tracks are. I lived just before you get to the Camp Leach road next to Woodard's Pond School House. They've torn the house down, but that's where I lived. We could hear the bell ring and run to school to get there on time. But my grandmother, it was at her father's house, I have always been told, that Elliot stopped.

Elliot is the man who was killed. I've always been told, he stopped at my grandfather's home that morning. I thought it was morning, but I understand later it was in the afternoon. Elliot was "in his cups." And Elliot said he was going to this race. And he'd win that race or go to hell. And so it wasn't many hours after that, I've just learned from Judge Whedbee's story, a lot of people were coming from a protracted meeting and met him and heard him cursing this other gentleman with a horse, a horse that was as good a stallion as his was, they said. They got into an argument, and Elliot started cursing. They were supposed to have the race at Bath Commons, I understood, the next day. And they got into this argument about the race, and this stranger said, "Well, that's where I'm headed. I'm going to race in that race tomorrow."

Was this a regularly scheduled race?

It seems to have been according to Judge Whedbee's story. Seems to have been a scheduled race on the Bath Commons and it was to be held the next day. He was trying out his horse that day, it seemed. The people coming out of the protracted meeting were so shocked when they were going home and heard

this cursing. Elliot said to the stranger, "Let's get this race over right now and see who is the better man with the better horse!" So that's about the time the arguments got underway and they started off with the horses. Right then they hadn't been many feet, it seems, before this horse rared and stopped and hit the pine just a few feet from the road and it killed Elliot.

I remember hearing that he was a red-headed person and I remember having seen the hairs on that tree before it fell/rotted, some of the red hairs. The tree has been down for years. One side of the tree rotted and fell off. The other half stayed there for years and years and years. When I left here, I was gone for 25 years. During that time it went down to just a stump. I don't remember the top of the tree but I know the tall stump was still standing in my recollection. But it later went down to nothing, and finally it all rotted away.

*But you remember seeing the red hairs in the tree?*

Yes, I definitely do remember.

*About when was that?*

It would probably be around 19 and, um, '11 or '12 or something like that, or maybe a little earlier because I was born in 1904 and it was when I was a child that I visited my grandmother; she died in 1915.

*It was at your grandfather's house that he stopped?*

Yes, Caleb Anderson Cutler. They tore that house down.

*There is much speculation about the date of this event. Some say it happened on October 13, 1813. At any rate, the number 13 figures prominently.*

I think in Judge Whedbee's story he said /that it happened/ about 1850. This is unbelievable: my grandfather was born in 1813!

*What about the other man? What was his name? Does anybody know?*

Judge Whedbee says his name was Buckingame. Judge Whedbee says in his story that the stranger's face seemed to disappear and the tracks from his horse also stopped right in front of the pine, right in the road. When they started searching for his tracks, where the stranger went, they were never found, and the person did not show up for the race on Bath Commons the next day. They just don't know whatever became of the stranger.

*Now please tell us about the hoofprints.*

I don't know if they are still there today, but they were at least twenty years ago, the last time I visited.

*Isn't there something about them that things are supposed to disappear in them?*

Absolutely! I've done it many, many times.

*Mrs. Ila Cutler stated that the story is filled with thirteens: "October 13, Sunday morning, October 13, 1813 and it's 13 tracks."*

I was thinking it was four tracks.

*"No, it was 13 of them."*

*I've heard that things will disappear in the prints.*

We'd even put stakes down there. The next day we'd go down there and they were gone. It was in the pine thicket, and the pine straw would fall around just as if it were a bird's nest. At the bottom of the track the center of the thing would be just the sandy bottom. At first you almost could see the hoofprints. But then one person had his hog pen there. They said the hogs would not eat corn over those tracks, but they'd eat all around it, and the birds the same way. You could scatter bird seed around there, and they would not eat it out of those tracks.

*How deep were the tracks?*

Well, they were deeper when I first saw them than they were the last time I saw them, and that was, I reckon, 50 years apart. Fifty years ago, maybe some of them were six to eight inches deep.

*Later when we visited the site to take pictures, we found the prints to be two-three inches deep and not distinct.*

For a long time grass would not grow in them, and they said the grass would try to leap over and go toward the edges.

*What do most people think is the reason for the hoofprints? Is it because of the way Elliot died?*

That's right. These prints were made in



*Some say a stake, when left over night,  
will be consumed by the hoofprints.*



the process of the horse dying. Kicking when he was dying is the way I understand it.

Mrs. Padgett read to us a poem "The Devil's Hoof Prints," written by Washington resident Taylor Koonce. It is a stirring, artistic account of the story:

#### THE DEVIL'S HOOF PRINTS\*

By

Taylor Koonce

*Back in the time of wind and sail  
a coarse man rode a narrow trail  
it was a wooded sandy path  
a few miles west of quiet Bath  
He'd shun'd the church on that Sunday  
he shun'd the church and rode his way*

and curse'd his mount to keep its pace  
 for he was late to a devil's race  
 The day was clear as was the sky  
 but then his mount began to shy  
 he curse'd and twist'd on the rein  
 then curse'd and twist'd once again  
 His mount rear'd as the thunder broke  
 and threw that rider 'gainst an oak  
 then circle'd twice around that tree  
 and left those marks for all to see  
 The devil laugh'd and touch'd this place  
 and no thing grows now in this space  
 except some hair upon a limb  
 and horse's tracks the years can't dim.

*\*Reprinted with author's permission.*

*Getting back to the hairs that you saw  
 embedded in the tree, were they horse hairs  
 or human hairs?*

They were Elliot's; he had red hair.

*Did you ever pull any of it out?*

No, I didn't pull any out, but I certainly  
 saw them. I was a little thing, but I certainly  
 remember hearing them talk about it and saw  
 it. I am sure that I saw red hair in the bark.

*Were you afraid to pull any of them out?*

I reckon I was!

*When you were growing up as a young  
 girl, did this place have the reputation of  
 being haunted?*

Yes!

*After giving us her fascinating recollec-  
 tions of the Devil's Hoofprints, Mrs. Padgett  
 reflected on some of her memories of her  
 days as a young girl. Of special interest  
 was her recollection of boat rides to and  
 from Ocracoke Island.*

The captain of the ship went twice a  
 week, I think, went down on Saturday and came  
 back on Wednesday. It picked up the mail and  
 all the groceries for the little grocery  
 stores in Ocracoke and Hatteras. One year I  
 know it snowed and iced over and the Hatteras  
 folks were very late getting back to school.

We would get on that sailboat just about  
 dusk, and sail into Ocracoke at dawn the next  
 morning. And if you just did it one time,  
 you would croak because everybody in Ocracoke  
 was out there to meet you--and barefooted!

We went to the squaredances barefoot at the  
 old hotel down there.

*How long would the voyage take?*

Take from dusk to dawn.

*Would you stay up all night?*

Well, we did most of the time, but you  
 could take your pillow and your Blanket, if  
 you wanted to, and sleep on deck. And so  
 that's what a bunch of us did one night and  
 it started raining and we tried to make it  
 to the hold but we couldn't get in it. I  
 remember that time very well!

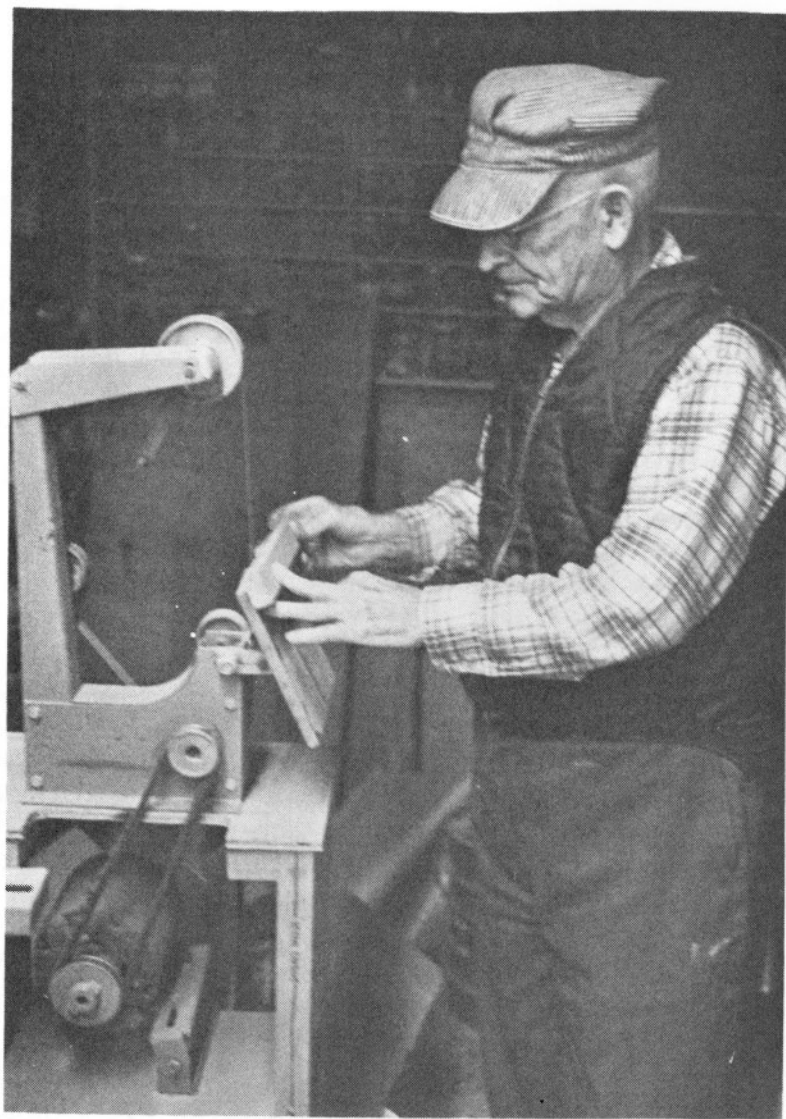
*About how long was the boat? Was it  
 pretty good size?*

Gee, I know it had to be pretty good

size. It looked big to me. Oh, he would take, I reckon, 20 people. He'd take passengers and freight and things for the stores and the mail. That particular boat, I know I came back on it one Wednesday, and that's the only time I ever got blistered--sun blistered. When I got back the next day, I had little blisters all over me. I was trying to stay in the shade of the sail and didn't quite do it.

*After we talked with Mrs. Padgett, she served us coffee and cake. We were left with the impression that there must be something to the story, for Mrs. Padgett is a stable, sophisticated lady, not the type to be taken in by superstitious nonsense.*

*These feelings were intensified when we visited the site of the story some weeks later to take pictures. Something is there. Whether they are the "Devil's Hoofprints" or something else is up to each one of us to decide for himself. But you can't help but get an eerie feeling when you see them.*



*Bob Pearce,  
Woodworker*

Article by Rusty Woolard

Technical Advisors: Jeff Hilberg, Barbara Dunn,  
and Tony Blanton

Drawings: Barbara Dunn

An article that appeared in the December, 1981 issue of Life on the Pamlico about woodworker Charlie Hammond attracted the interest of Mr. Jeff Hilberg, carpentry instructor at Beaufort County Community College. Jeff asked us to interview Bob Pearce, an 82-year-old woodworker and close friend. We sensed that it might be interesting to gain insights on any similarities or differences in the techniques of these two craftsmen. So Jeff and two of his students, Barbara Dunn and Tony Blanton, took Mr. Armstrong and me to talk to Mr. Pearce.

During our time together, Mr. Pearce sharpened knives on a sanding belt, assembled joints with dowels rather than mortice and tenon, worked with grains of wood, and demonstrated other techniques of his craft. He frequently punctuated his conversation with wryly humorous observations about commercial furniture and about his own experiences as a woodworker.

How long have you been doing woodwork?

Well, let's see. I started woodworking when I was 20 years old [62 years ago]. I went into business for myself, built my own shelves and such stuff as that. In other words, I started messing with wood. I always did my own building and stuff like that. Built my own cabinets, built my own furniture in my house and such stuff as that. Built my own house. But I just got into it as I got older and couldn't do anything else.

How did you learn the trade, the craft?

Hard work.

Was your father a woodworker?

No, my father died [when] he was 51 years old. I've already outlived him 30 years [laughs]. No, I picked it up, I studied books, same way you fellows study in school. Of course, when you have some way you fellows study in school. Of course, when you have somebody to help you, working along with you, that makes a lot of difference. But, actually, anybody with any intelligence, that can read a book, can do things like that. 'Course, now, if you're dumb [laughs] can't read and apply what you read. . .

[Jeff Hilberg] I was going to say you were starting to sound like me lecturing to my class!

Well, Jeff, I tell you, like both of us got tied up in this fine woodworking 'cause it's got things in it that, well, Jeff learned something that'd be of interest to other woodworkers, and so he tells them what it is, they publish it and we get it; we get in things and we send in things. It's just like anything else; you've just got to work at it.

Can you tell us about some of the techniques and methods in woodworking that you have developed?

I haven't developed anything different from any other woodworker that I know of. I do a lot of things different from somebody else, but all woodworkers do that.

Jeff commented that he and Bob sharpen knives differently: Bob and I were talking about sharpening jointer knives, and Bob came up with a system slightly different from the one I've always used.

I sharpen my chisel and anything else free

hand [without using a jig fixed on a machine set up]. Most of the time, sort of semi-free hand. That's a sanding belt. The knife sits in a clamp. That's your belt on it, see. That gives you your correct angle. Your knife fits in the jig.

*What is this sander normally used for?*

Oh, you can sharpen tools on it, sharpen blades; it's excellent for sharpening an ax. This is primarily made for saw-sharpening. You take the saws like that, and you set that at the correct angle and you sharpen your teeth instead of filing them. It doesn't burn, and it's faster than a file. And cheaper. Files cost you. But that's a technique. I mean, you've got to acquire that [by] practice. You'll ruin some stuff while you're learning.

*What would be the most common method of sharpening a jointer knife?*

Sharpening a jointer knife? Send it off to a sharpening shop [laughs]. Ten or 12 dollars for sharpening!

*While telling us his method of sharpening a jointer knife. Bob Pearce closely inspected the finish of a hutch he was making.*

These are joined, the endings here. There's a joint there, and there's one here, one right here. That's what I was kidding Jeff about. I don't care how good you are, you still got little high places, but you can run it through like that. That's not too bad.

*There's a place.*

Yeah, a little place right there; that's where you sand it. You can belt sand this. I usually use a belt sander, like this, and then

I got to use the finish. Oh, now, there's some flaws in this. Any handmade stuff has got a lot of flaws in it. I say [to a customer], "Now, look, it's got flaws in it. Want me to show 'em to you?" Fellow says, "No, that's all right; that's fine." But they won't [see the flaws]; the average person doesn't know it. Jeff will see it; woodworkers will see flaws and stuff like that. But there's a mistake.

*What's wrong with that?*

That's got sap in it. Sap, right here at the end. I don't know whether I'm going to stain it or what.

*Do you make these things for orders?*

Oh, orders? Yeah, man, yeah! We get orders, \$500 worth of pine and stuff like that.

*What kind of wood do you use mainly on this furniture?*

Well, she [lady customer] had the wood [walnut]. Woman already had the wood. That's where all this stuff comes from. The wood has cost her, what, \$300? She'll get out with, probably about, with the top of it and two glass doors, she'll have, oh, maybe \$750, \$800. She couldn't buy, even one for less than around \$900. 'Course, now, you've got to add the value of walnut. The thing is, I've got to go over there and haul three times what [wood] you need, and I've burned up several dollars worth of cabinets.

*About how long does it take you to do this whole piece?*

I did these two pieces there in, seems somewhere, a little less than a hundred hours.

*A hundred hours of actual working time?*

Actual working time.

*Bob discusses assembling joints with dowels.*

Normally, factory work and most mechanics will use a mortice and tenon but I use dowels. See, that's where the dowels are cut, and there's another dowel there. I use dowels [because] they're quicker; they're faster. Any of you know what a mortice and tenon is? You [Jeff] know. It would be a tenon; right at the end of this piece would go up into a hole in here. This [dowel] is identically the same thing, except this doesn't cover as much surface. Theoretically, this is not as strong. The dowel is not as strong as the tenon because you got more glue to hold this [tenon] together. But with the glue they got today, if you glue that down in there, it'll last. You don't have to worry about it coming apart. And it's faster!

*Bob explains that the panel top to the hutch is fitted into grooves to keep it from splitting.*

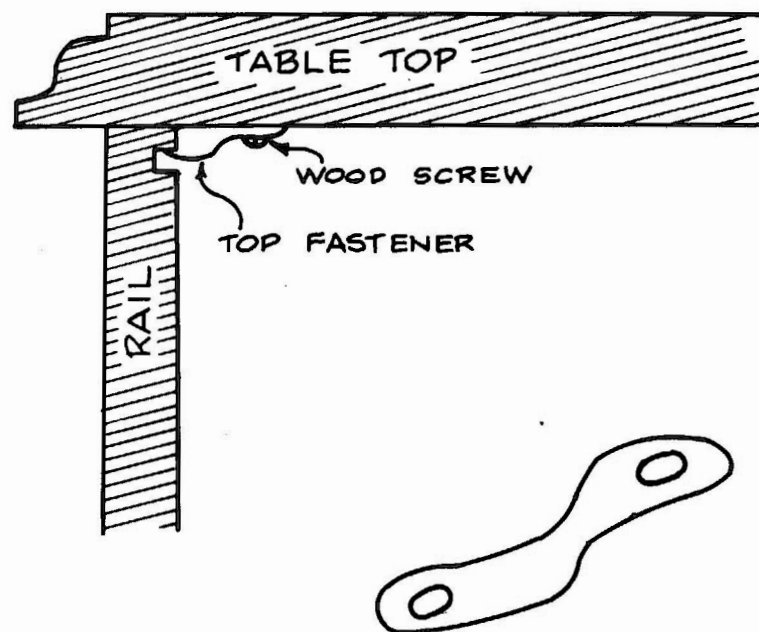
Now this panel fits into a groove in here. That slides. You put it in a dry place or a damp place, it'll expand and contract. That top can move. If it couldn't, that top would have a split down the middle. You put it in a heated house, dries it out, you see, and if there's any moisture in it, which there is, 'cause in the summertime it's going to pick up moisture. The humidity then goes down in the winter; that's going to contract, and when it does, the wood goes all the way down and can't move.

It fastened from underneath. Yeah, see this, that's right here. See that fastener

there? Well, it's in a slot. See that slot in this? In the frame, in that slot in there. Well, that fits in a slot, and that one screw bolts it into the top. But this goes and comes, goes and comes; I'm talking about a 32<sup>nd</sup> of an inch or a 64<sup>th</sup>. But this can slide in that slot.

Now there's all kinds of ways that the old cabinetmakers a long time ago, a hundred years ago, made them [joints] out of wood. You'd cut

## TABLE TOP FASTENED TO PREVENT SPLITTING



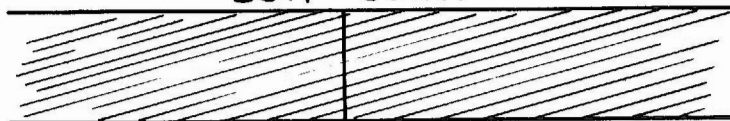
BARBARA DUNN



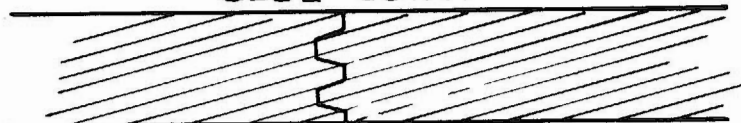
a great big groove in here about that long, you'd take a little piece of hardwood [used the hardwood in place of the metal in old times to fasten the top of a table] and it'd come up like, set up high like that into a notch. You'd put a screw in here, you'd still get the same thing. But these are quicker. I mean, I'm talking about way back yonder, they used to use all kinds of stuff rather than just one kind all the way.

## JOINTS

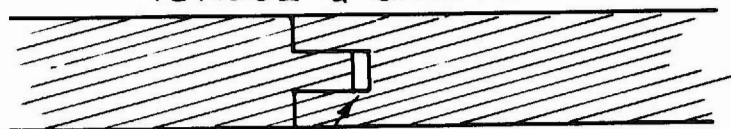
BUTT JOINT



GLUE JOINT



TONGUE & GROOVE



LOOSE FIT  
FOR EXPANSION

BARBARA DUNN

Bob showed us four table legs which he had hand-crafted.

All of these that have been made here, every one of them [table legs] is different. Do they look different to you? The legs are different. There's no two of them alike. The average person would look at them and never see the difference. There's no machine that's going to be able to make that. That's the difference in hand-crafters.

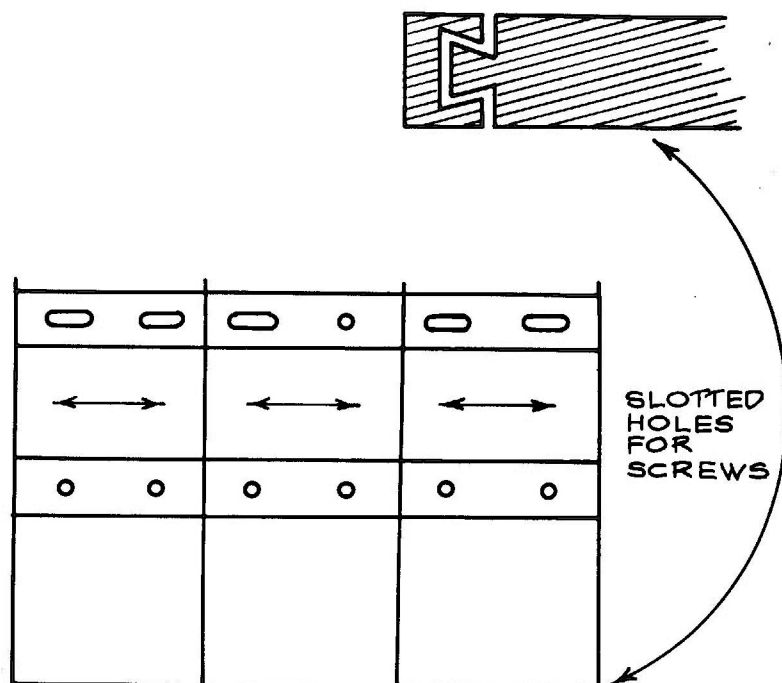
Bob explained to us that the woodworker had to be very careful in placing pieces of wood together so that the natural run of the grain will compensate for the contraction and expansion of the wood due to moisture absorption. Also, for the same reason, screws used to secure table tops have to be placed in slotted grooves. Only the individual craftsman can select compatible pieces of wood for a table top; a machine can't do this.

You take, for instance, a wide piece of stuff with the grain running that way; then another man comes along and turns the other piece the other way, so that one offsets the other. That's why we take these and cut them up and put them back together again. Now pine is worse than this. Pine just absorbs moisture a whole lot faster, and then when it dries out, it can give you some trouble.

I can't fasten this piece to that top because the grain of the wood runs that way. So how am I going to do it?

*Fasten it on the sides?*

Well, it's the only thing to do; you fasten it over the sides and in the back. [It must have slotted holes for screws to allow for expansion of wood.] It don't have to move much, 1/64 of an inch, 1/32 of an inch, just so it can move.



BARBARA DUNN

*This older fellow [Charlie Hammond, 12/81 issue] we talked to, uses the dovetail, a great deal.*

Well, I'll tell you a little dovetail lore. I went into an old craftsman up in western North Carolina, up in the mountains. . . I went in there and the old gentleman was out. Had some beautiful stuff sitting in the front of his store. He made stuff. . . Now of course the average craftsman, the first thing he does, he pulls the drawers out to see if there's dovetails. But this old gentleman, he had [joints joined with screws, not the dovetails].

I stopped, several, 8 or 10 years in Elizabeth City, fellow I know runs a store [featuring] old-time furniture and custom-made stuff. And I talked to the cabinetmaker up there, and at the time I was having trouble jointing. I'd used masonite and firewood and different things to put them together. They . . . make a glue joint. The more glue, the tighter your joint, the longer it stands up, which gives you more service. After talking to this gentleman up there, he said "Man, I quit using anything [like the dovetail] a long time ago." Said with the glue you got today, you don't have to worry about it. And that's true!

*Many people still look for the dovetail, though, don't they?*

I tell you, the average person, the first thing they do is pull out a drawer to see if it's a dovetail. It's the sign of a good mechanic; there's no arguing about that. But why should I tell this woman she's going to have to pay me - there's four drawers in these two cabinets - should she pay me 35 or 40 dollars to dovetail it, when I can put it together for eight dollars or less like this [built and dowel joint].

*Bob says this is faster than a dovetail and just as good because of modern glue.*

*But historically the dovetail is very important?*

Oh, yeah. Very important.

*But it never did really take a whole lot of skill?*

Oh, it takes a certain amount of skill, like if you're never made a dovetail.

But you don't have to be a master craftsman?

That's right.

Bob Pearce was anxious to finish the piece he was working on because he was anxious to start on something new. His eyes twinkled with anticipation.

Jeff, I've decided what I'm going to do next.

What's that?

Build a grandfather clock!

How does one compare men like Charlie Hammond and Bob Pearce? Jeff Hilberg said it best: "It's like comparing Rembrandt with Picasso." There really is no comparison. Both are master craftsmen, each with his own special style.

# **Cookin' Deer and Rabbit**



*Mrs. Watters seasons deer steaks just right!*

*Article by Jackie Watters*

*Last winter, Roy Armstrong and I went to my parents' house for lunch. The main course was deer steak, country style, and fried rabbit, all cooked by my mother. Part of our conversation and a few recipes follow.*

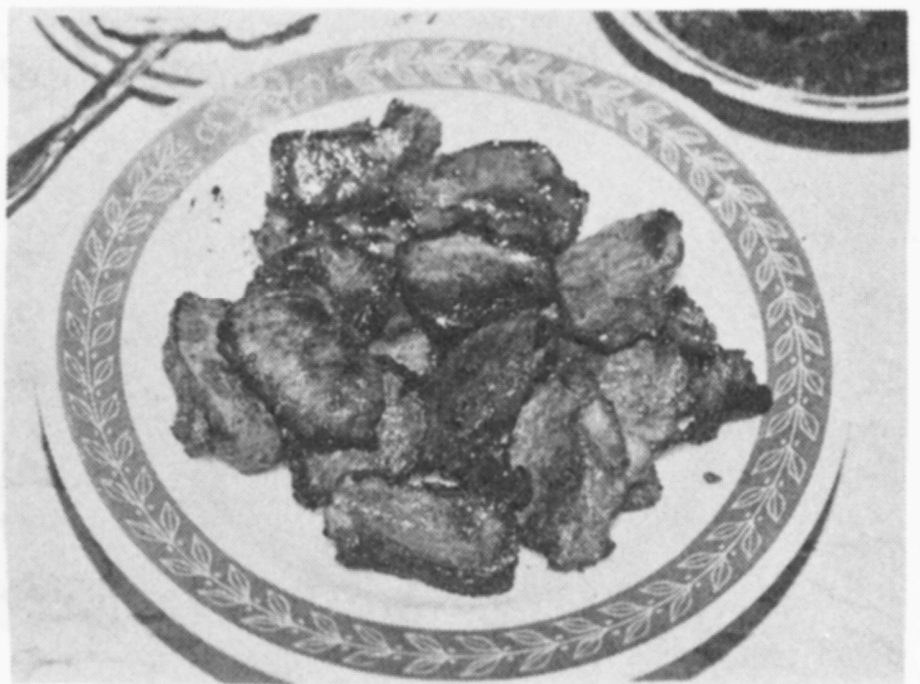
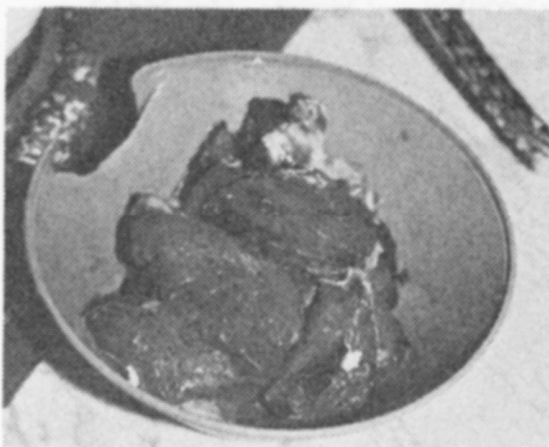
Mom: Most people just don't know how to prepare wild meat.

Roy: How did you learn how to cook venison? From your mother?

Mom: My mother never cooked venison. Daddy didn't do any deer hunting. My husband taught me how to cook it.

Jackie: To cook a tough venison steak - sirloin - cut it across the grain of the meat about 3/8" thick.

Mom: Fry it on both sides until it's brown. Then add water, cover, reduce your heat and let it steam until tender. Remove the lid and let the water cook out. If you want onions with the gravy, add them now. To make the gravy, add one tablespoon of cornstarch to one cup of cool water and stir. Slowly pour this into the frying pan while slowly stirring to avoid burning the gravy.



*Deer steaks, before and after.*



Roy: Has the meat been marinated?

Mom: No.

Roy: Is it necessary to "treat" it in any way?

Jackie: We don't. Some do. It really depends upon how the deer is taken.

Mom: They "still hunt." If a deer is run by dogs, the meat has a stronger odor and taste than one which is not run.

I have been a widow for about thirty-some years from the time deer hunting season starts until it is over. I might as well hang it up as far as a normal family life 'cause they're in the woods a hunting.

Jackie: Venison has only about half the calorie content, pound for pound as beef.

Roy: Really?

Mom: That's because they have so little fat on 'em. A lot of people are raising rabbits to eat because they have so few calories per pound. Less cholesterol, too.

Jackie: The French have been eating rabbit for years and years.

Roy: How do you prepare rabbit?

Jackie: Wild or domesticated?

Mom: I prefer wild rabbit. That's what we ate when I was a young'un. Daddy farmed and would set rabbit boxes around the farm.

I prefer wild rabbit above any other meat.

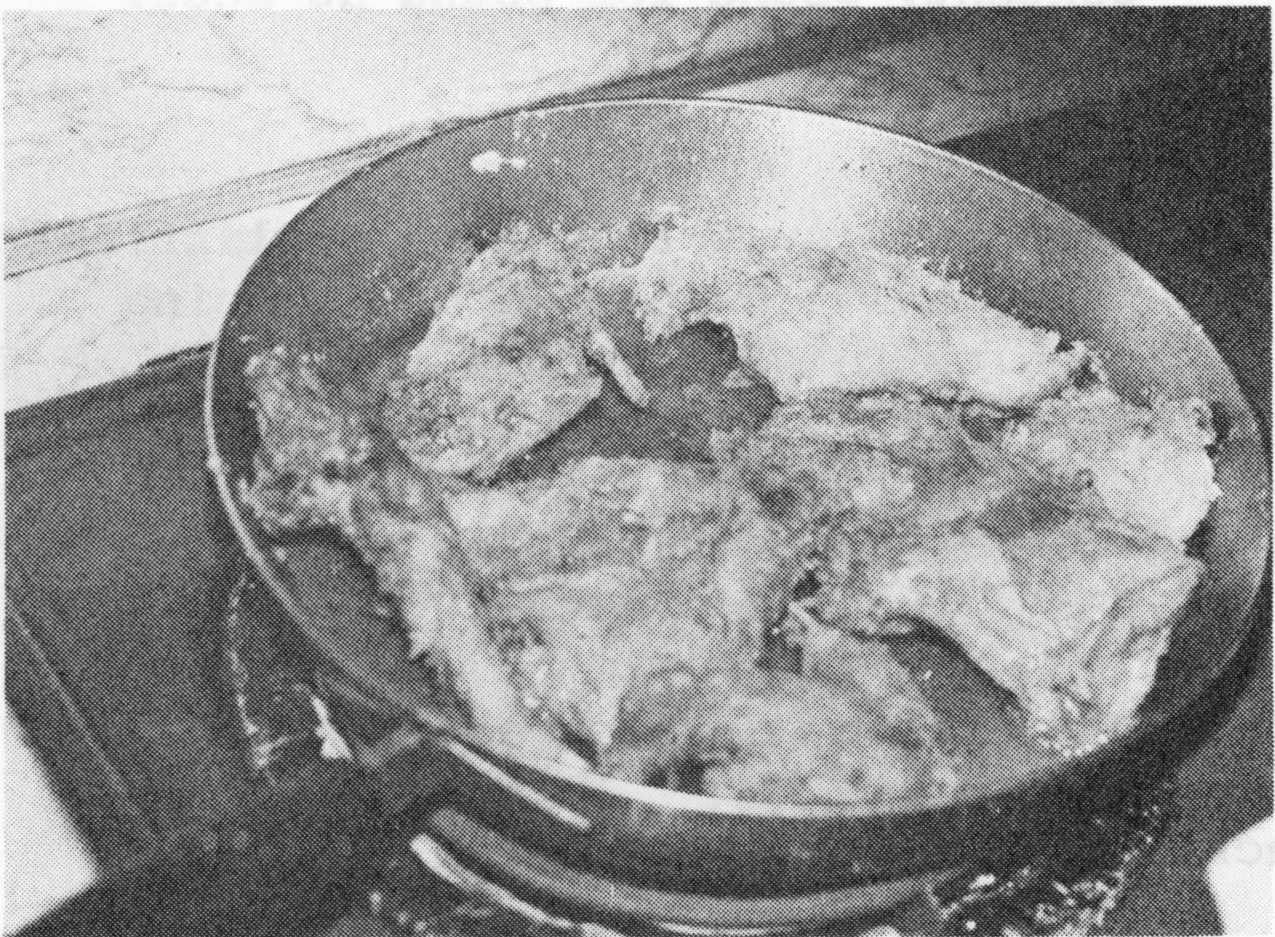
Roy: Tell me how you prepared this rabbit here.

Mom: Parboil the rabbit for about twenty to thirty minutes. This will tenderize the meat and reduce the taste. Tame rabbits don't taste like wild ones do. Then let the meat cool. Dip the rabbit in a raw scrambled egg and turn it in a combination of flour, salt, pepper and a little poultry seasoning. Then put it in the frying pan until golden brown, like chicken.

Roy: Like chicken?

Jackie: Sure! You can even take the boiled rabbit and make "chicken salad" out of it.

Roy: If you say so.



Rabbit being fried.



Jackie: Wait 'til spring. Then I'll invite you over for some frog legs.

Mom: We love frog legs here! I used to couldn't eat them, though.

Jackie: We freeze ours, overnight anyway. That way they're not so tough and they don't jump out of the pan either.

Roy: Do they really jump out of the pan?!

Mom: Yes, they will! It's amazing!

Roy: Yeah. If you say so.

Needless to say, Roy thought we were pulling his leg just a little bit. Oh, well. The days are getting warmer and longer now. Maybe I can convince Roy to come and go with me and Dad one night and show him how we go frog gigging. I'm looking forward to that! Maybe I'll tell ya'll about it later on.

# ***A Conversation with Their Grandfather***



*Ricks (left) and Wells Armstrong with their  
Grandfather Roy Armstrong--and friend--on  
Grandfather Mountain, 1973.*

Article by Wells Armstrong, age 13, and Ricks Armstrong, age 11, of Bath, North Carolina

Last Christmas (1981) we talked to our Grandfather Roy Armstrong. He lives in Chapel Hill now, but he grew up in Spencer, North Carolina. We talked to him about Christmas in 1915, when he was 11. We also learned about how important trains were in the early 1900s. He told us about the awful defeat when Carolina lost in football to Duke in 1935.

Christmas was quite different back then than it is today. For one thing, Christmas was more of a surprise back then than it is today. This was because the stores back then only put toys out at Christmas. Back then all the mothers and maids made all the cakes, and today people buy a lot of cakes. Christmas seemed more exciting back then because everybody got up real early. One Christmas morning Roy even shot a Roman candle up the chimney.

When Carolina lost to Duke in 1935, that was a very bad loss. It was like the Oklahoma loss in football a few years (1980) ago or the Indiana loss in basketball last year (1981) in the National Championship. But the loss in 1935 was much worse.

How was Christmas different when you were my age?

Well, it was quite different. You got up this morning [Christmas, 1981] at about nine o'clock. I would get up about 1:30 in the morning. Mostly Cora and I would be the only ones that would get up.

This was in Spencer?

In Spencer, North Carolina, Rowan County.



that would be along about 1915 or '16 or '17.

*Who was Cora?*

Cora was the one who raised all of us; we had seven children in our family and Cora lived with us, well, lived with my mother as soon as she was married. My mother's mother sent Cora, who was just a little bit younger than my mother, to take care of her when my mother was married.

*You had seven brothers and sisters?*

Yes.



*Cora Lee Phelps, who worked for the Armstrong family in Spencer for 55 years--died 1953.*

*What would you ask for for Christmas?*

Well, we asked, of course, for toys, but we didn't have the large supply of toys that you have now; our toys were more simple. I remember that it was almost unheard of to have an electric train. We had trains but they were not electrified and toys were more simple. Now for instance, I remember one thing I treasured very much that my grandfather gave me as a Christmas present. It was two iron horses hitched to an iron carriage about twelve inches long. And the wheels, of course, would turn, and right in between the two horses, who were hitched to his carriage, was a tiny little wheel kind of like the front wheel of an airplane today. That was considered quite a gift.

I remember also getting a red engine, which did not have the coal car to it. It was about five inches tall, and, I guess, about twelve inches long. The way you made it run, there was a heavy flywheel in the engine and you would take the engine and spin the wheels on the rug and that would make the flywheel start running and then you would turn the engine loose and it would run under the power of the flywheel.

*Did you and Cora get up very early one Christmas?*

It was very early. We had to slip up, to get up. I remember the most frightful night Christmas Eve that I ever spent. I was sleeping with my daddy, and I don't know how many times I got up before I finally slipped out of the bed without his saying anything to me. I think really that he was awake but he just gave up on me. He had called me back three or four times; but when I went down to shake Cora and get her up, I think it was 1:30 and we went into the parlor where Santa Claus had brought all the things.

Nobody else was up, but Cora and me. We



played a game of checkers and that was a Christmas present. It was a cardboard box, which when you unfolded it, it made a good checker board, and we had the checkers in there. Cora was a good checker player; as a matter of fact, she was better at anything than we were. She could play all the games better than we could. Well, we played checkers and then we got into the fireworks; we always got fireworks for Christmas.

*Was anybody else up?*

Nobody up. We were in the parlor, and I got out a Roman candle. And I told Cora, "Now, as soon as I light it, you go raise the window, and I'm going to shoot this Roman candle out the window." Well, I lit it; it was raining and Cora couldn't get the window open, so the thing was going off in the parlor, and I had to stick it up the chimney and let it go out the chimney. And I think that woke everybody else up!

*Did everybody get up then?*

They got up then and came on down and we would have gifts and so on and see what Santa Claus had brought us. Of course, the thing that you can't appreciate today is an orange. An orange doesn't mean anything to you today. But we never saw an orange except at Christmas, and each one of us would get an orange in his stocking, and he would get an apple in his stocking, and we always had bunched raisins. We would get a big bunch of raisins in our stockings, and then we had this hard Christmas candy, which was so delicious.

*Would you get clothes for Christmas?*

We didn't get so many clothes because, see, most of the mothers then made the clothes, and so it wasn't anything special to have a new shirt because she would be making a shirt. Of course,

sometime we would get a pair of knickerbockers, which you had to buy at the store. They came to your knees and they had a little fastener around at the bottom so you could fasten them around your legs just below your knee, but clothing was not particularly a good Christmas present.

We got fireworks. We had one firecracker I remember was about four inches long and, I guess, three quarters of an inch in diameter, and we would set those off in a tin can. We would put them in the tin can, and it would blow the tin can up about 50 feet. That was the first rocket I knew anything about.

*Weren't firecrackers against the law then?*

People didn't have as many regulations as you have today. Of course, some people would get their hands burned a little bit; sometimes they would get them more seriously injured from a firecracker, but they just thought that was part of the game. Now, we had it at Christmas time; a lot of boys in the North had firecrackers only on the 4th of July. But we had them at Christmas time rather than the 4th of July.

*Did you sing carols?*

Yes, we would sing. Of course, we had a piano and someone would play the piano, and we would sing and have a big time. Of course, another thing, you know today you go down to the store and buy a cake, but my mother and Cora would be cooking cakes for two weeks before Christmas. And they had to buy all the ingredients of the fruit cake, cut them up, and make the fruit cake, and then they would wrap them in good clean white cloth and maybe soak the cloth with a little blackberry wine to keep them moist. We always had chocolate cakes, and we had coconut cakes and my favorite cake of all was the Lady Baltimore.

It was delicious! It was a layer cake and in between each layer you would have raisins and all kinds of fruits and orange that had been worked into the filling of the cake. The top would be covered with white icing sprinkled with nuts and coconut.

*Did you have big dinners at Christmas?*

Yes, we had the biggest dinners. We would have turkey, and we would have roast pork, and we would have baked ham, and we would have sweet potatoes and have dressing in the turkey and have all kinds of vegetables, and we didn't have light bread or the kind of bread you buy. We always had biscuits and we had a lot of giblet gravy that was so good on the rice or the grits or the biscuits. Then we would have about every kind of cake you could imagine on the sideboard, and you would go and pick out the cake that you wanted. One of the things that was so delightful, neighbors would exchange cakes. Now my mother would go over to Mrs. Kritzer's and Mrs. Kritzer would have some of all her cake out and they would eat cake and talk and have a good time.

Mrs. Kritzer was my mother's best friend then. Mrs. Kritzer would come down to our house, and we would go into the parlor and we would have all the cakes Mama had cooked, and Cora had helped her, of course. They always said the host's cake was the best.

*What would you say is the biggest difference with the way Christmas is now and the way it was then?*

Well, I think the most delightful thing about our Christmases was that anything we got was a surprise to us. We never saw toys except about two weeks before Christmas in the stores. As soon as the stores closed on Christmas Eve, the

merchant put up any toys that were left over, and they never brought them out until the next Christmas. And so everything to us was a big surprise. And children were able to appreciate better the little things that they got more than today because it's awfully difficult to surprise anybody on Christmas morning today because the children have seen all during the year about everything you could imagine.

I think that's one of the biggest differences, and, I don't know there might have been more of a religious meaning to Christmas than today because Christmas today is on the verge of being commercial. It's the time of making the big sales. The merchants look forward to the sales that they are going to make during the Christmas season.

*Was the reason oranges were special that they had to be imported all the way from Florida?*

Well, I never really thought about where they came from. Lord, I don't think that they were very expensive, and I know they didn't cost five cents a piece. But of course five cents was a lot of money then and we didn't have refrigeration to take care of things because the only refrigeration that we had in the homes was an icebox in which you put 10-20 pounds of ice. And as it melted, it cooled off the food that you stored in the icebox.

I remember once I was working on an icewagon, and I would carry the ice into the homes. Mrs. Kritzer about twice a week would get a ten pound cake of ice, and I had to take it into her house and wrap it up good in newspaper and put it in the refrigerator. And she said that made it last longer, but she never realized that she never got any chill from it to protect her food because only through the melting of the ice would your food stuff be protected.

*What did your mother do when you shot the*



*firecracker up the chimney?*

I think she enjoyed it, but she didn't whip me or anything like that. She said you shouldn't do that. Of course, Cora would always take up for us, anything that we did.

*Why were toy trains considered such a good present?*

Well, a train was the absolute acme of transportation. There's never been romance to any transportation that could equal the romance that was in the train itself. The noise that the train made! It sounded like it was human when the train's engines would be stopped at a station. It was breathing. Steam was coming out of it, and the injector that put water into the boiler was working and it was just like its heartbeat. And there was great romance to railroading, and even today, I guess, one of the most dear heirlooms is a well-preserved electric train that looked like the steam locomotive of the earlier days. There has never been the romance attached to a diesel engine that went along with the steam locomotive.

*What were good presents for parents?*

Well, we might get a pretty vase or a cut-glass saucer, and, of course, a cut-glass pitcher would be a very fine present. And you might get a pin or a birthstone of some kind. I remember I gave my daddy a pair of suspenders because the men wore suspenders then. Oh, I remember one special present was a safety razor because I remember when the Gem Razor came out because my daddy had used a straight razor all the time to shave, and then the Gem Razor came out so you couldn't cut yourself with it. And, of course, the safety razor replaced the straight razor. You might get him a pipe or some cigars. They would like things like that and a pair of gloves or handkerchiefs or neckties.

Well, of course, the great thing about life is that every person that is living thinks that his period of life is the best of all. Of course, I think to grow up when I grew up was the best time. We did not have such bountiful supplies of things, but there seemed to be a deeper appreciation of what you did have. Nobody seemed to be rich, and we didn't have to worry about getting a new automobile and the latest model car and the exact color you wanted. And, of course, the self-starter on the automobile was a revelation. Up until that came in, it was so usual to see somebody who had broken his arm trying to start a Ford when it would backfire on him.

*When he turned the crank?*

Yes

*Was a lot of the traveling done by trains or was it mainly for transporting goods?*

No, most travel was done by train. The great Seaboard Line had those great trains running from New York down to Florida straight through, regular express trains. The Southern Railroad, of course, had the Crescent Limited and their fast special trains. I don't believe there has ever been any luxury that could surpass the luxury of eating on a Pullman diner. When you got on a Pullman and took a trip, you got up for breakfast and the beautiful white tablecloths, the shiny white uniforms that the waiters wore, and to see how they could balance a tray while the train was speeding along, and the beautiful silverware that they had on every table! And the food was just absolutely delicious.

There's no telling how fast a train could run, but it wasn't unusual at all for a train to run 60-65 miles per hour, maybe faster. I don't know if you remember the Stanley Steamer, one of

the first automobiles. They had out a challenge with about a \$10,000 prize if anybody could drive a Stanley Steamer and keep it wide open for just a few minutes because the speed would increase as the steam increased and the thing would get faster and faster and faster. But it was a beautiful car and it was really a thrill to watch one of them in operation--when it was parked at the curb and the driver would get into the Stanley Steamer or White Steamer and he would put it into reverse and you would just hear a little pssst! And that car would just glide out. And then when they would put it forward--psst! Off it would glide! It just seemed to glide forth and I still think today that, with the increase in knowledge and mechanical knowledge, that we could have today very satisfactory steam-driven cars.

*Tell us about the Carolina game against Duke in football in 1935. What was the situation leading up to the game?*

Well, that was the year of blackest day, I guess, in the University of North Carolina athletic history. You see, today the Big Ten will play the Western Coast champion in the Rose Bowl. But then the Rose Bowl was open to the two best teams that could be found anywhere in the United States and the University of North Carolina was undefeated, and everybody knew that we were going to the Rose Bowl. Mae and I had just been married one year; everybody was talking about going to California to the Rose Bowl. Coach Bob Fetzner was Director of Athletics here, and he would get awfully nervous before a big game, a track meet especially. But on the Friday before we were to play Duke over in Durham, they had all the Pathe News people here, all of the photographers from everywhere. They had just filled up Kenan Stadium taking pictures of this great Carolina team that was going to the Rose Bowl. And it

was a great team.

*Who were some of the players?*

Oh, let me see. Harry Montgomery was there, Crowell Little was there, Tom Evans was there.

But Duke had a good team, but we were supposed to beat them without any trouble at all. And we went over to the game in Durham and Coach Snavelly was our coach. And I remember our boys came out on the field, and they had on white football pants and they had on white jerseys. It was raining; the field was wet. Coach Snavelly was one of the greatest coaches that ever lived. Harry Montgomery, who was the brother of the Cliff Montgomery who played for Columbia in the Rose Bowl just a couple of years before that, was a quarterback and we were all set, really, to go to California.

The first time that Carolina punted to Duke, Honey Hackney received the ball and Coach Snavelly, who had coached Tom Evans from Oxford, said you hit Honey good and hard because Honey did not like to be hit. Evans was playing tackle for us, and he went down the field as soon as we punted and just as Honey Hackney caught the punt, Tom Evans hit him and he knocked him back about five yards and the ball went about 15 yards down toward our goal the way we were going to score, and we dashed down and recovered the ball and everybody for Carolina went wild because that was the very first break of the game; that was at the very first of the game. But to our dismay here is the referee calling the play back and said Tom Evans hit Honey Hackney before he caught the ball. Of course, I didn't agree with him at all, but that's the way he ruled. Instead of our having the ball right in scoring position about on the 20 yard line, we were penalized 15 yards for hitting too early, and that was the end of Carolina for



that day.

Every play that we tried to run, Duke just slaughtered us. The game ended up 25 to nothing, and that ended the trip to the Rose Bowl. But the worst part of the game for me--while I was sitting up in the stands with Mae, Spike Saunders, and Susan, a lady sitting right in back of me had on a hat with a rooster tail sticking up over the hat, and in the rain that rooster tail had drooped over and was running rain right down the back of my neck. And I think that was worse than losing the game.

But I've learned a lesson from that 1935 game: a loss used to be unbearable to me, but now I hate like the deuce to lose a game; but as soon as we lose it, I'm through with it and ready for the next victory. So I don't have to kill myself with remorse about losing a game anymore.

*Didn't Carolina beat Virginia 60 something to nothing the next week?*

Yes, and at that game the maddest fellow I every saw in my life was Roy Homewood. He was sitting right in front of me in Kenan Stadium. Roy Homewood was on the team when Virginia beat us 66 to nothing. Well, when he had scored about 50 points, Coach Snavelly took his whole regular team out from the field and went over into the practice field to practice the boys and and left the substitutes there to finish the game. And Roy Homewood was up there, and he never did forgive Snavelly because he wanted us to score one more touchdown and beat Virginia 67 to nothing.

*Wasn't there some party scheduled after the Duke game?*

Oh, yes, we had company after that Duke game and Mae had cooked up a big dinner, the victory dinner, to celebrate our victory over Duke. And when we got back from the game, nobody would eat a thing. All of the lights were out in Chapel Hill. It was just like the passover. But we did finally go over across the street, where Doug Fambrough, Arthur Branch, who was the brother of Johnny Branch [great running back of the early thirties], Paul Eubanks, they were there moaning and groaning. And after we got over there, though, we got things livened up a bit. And Paul Eubanks went downtown and got a bunch of fried chicken and came back and we finally had a very big celebration over the loss of the game.

*Didn't they have a big party scheduled for the Carolina Inn that kind of fell apart?*

Oh yes, everything was called off after that game. You cannot imagine the sorrow that had permeated Chapel Hill. Of course, we still feel a loss pretty strongly.

*Nothing like that?*

Nothing like that, no.

*Would you say that's the worst loss in the history of Carolina?*

Well, it's the worst loss that I ever experienced. In the earlier time, we didn't have the great reputation in athletics that we have built up since the '30s. And so it really was a great, great loss. But it did bring

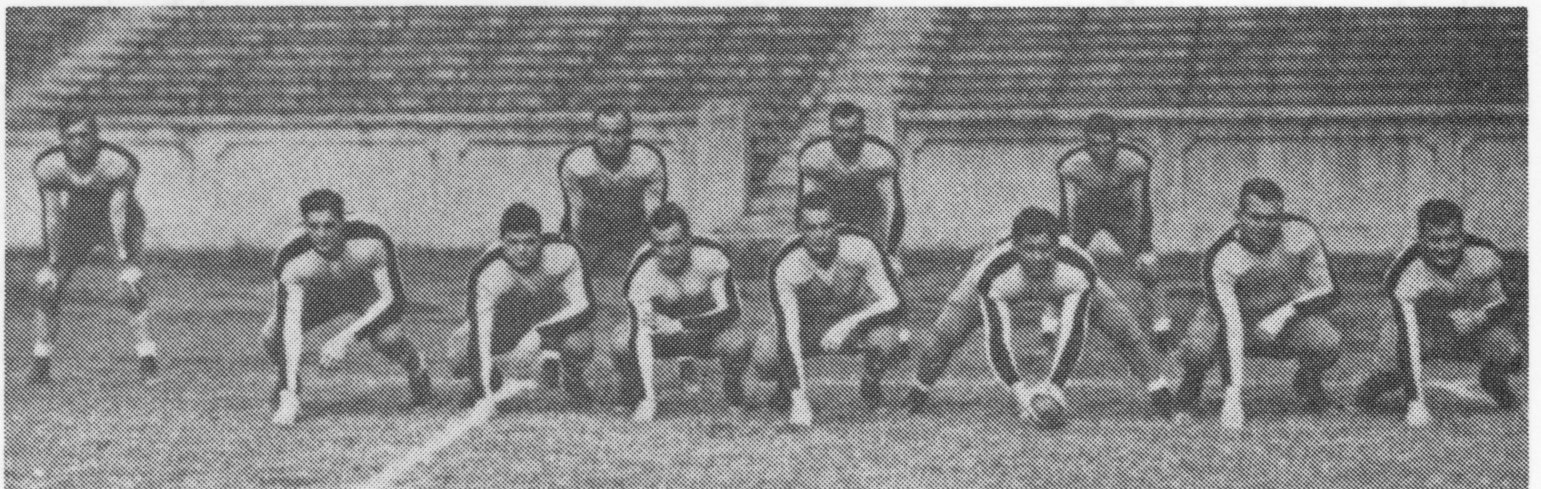
sanity. Coach Wallace Wade was the Duke coach. You would think he and Bob Fetzner would be great enemies. But they were



the closest, closest of friends. And even today I believe that Coach Wallace Wade would say Bob, as he called him, was one of the greatest men that he ever knew.

Coach Bob was the Director of Athletics. He never did like publicity at all, and he said he knew as soon as those Pathe newspeople came down there on Kenan Stadium and started taking pictures of the boys, that we were going to lose the game to Duke. When he was coach, he just didn't want a photographer anywhere around his activities.

We enjoyed talking to Roy very much. Our Grandfather has a way of telling stories that makes you feel like you are there. We could almost taste that cake when he told us about it. When he told us about the firecrackers, we could almost see them going up the chimney.



Coach Snavely's first team of 1935 which rated No. 8 in the nation by an Associated Press poll. In the backfield: left to right, Harry Montgomery, Herman Snyder, Jim Hutchins and Don Jackson. In the line, on an unbalanced offensive shift: left to right, Dick Buck, end, Van Webb, guard, Emmett Joyce, guard, Tom Evins, tackle, Babe Daniel, center, John Trimpey, tackle, and Andy Bershak, end.