

THE

NAT'RAL TRUTH



Dialogue, 1966:

Elsie: Grampie, I'm going to tape your tall tales and type them in a book for your grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Grampie: I don't tell tall tales. Everything I say is

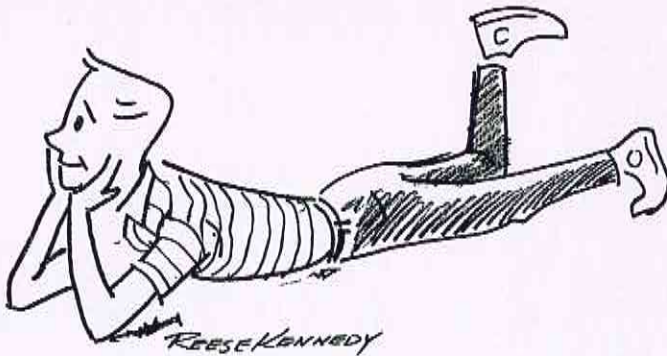
THE NAT'RAL TRUTH

by

William Arch Warnock

as told to

Elsie Kennedy Warnock



El Dorado, Arkansas

1970

This book is dedicated to the
sons
daughters-in-law
grandchildren
and
great-grandchildren
of Sudie and Arch Warnock
who have sat enthralled as Grampie spoke
"The Nat'ral Truth"

CHAPTER ONE: GRAMPIE THE FARMER



THE MACARONI FIELD

Did I ever tell you about the time I raised the crop of macaroni? Well, we lived up in the mountains and we had macaroni planted down in the valley. 'N just about time it got ripe I got a gang in there to harvest it.

I had three different bunches: the bloom pickers, and the snappers, and the stackers. The bloom pickers picked the bloom off, the snappers come along and snapped it off at the ground, and the stackers come along and stacked it and straightened it in rows. Well, the bloom pickers got slowed down and the snappers didn't have much to do so I told the snappers, I said, "Go on up there and go to pickin blooms." Well, when they did, the bloom pickers went on strike and that left me with no bloom pickers and then when the bloom pickers struck why, the snappers struck with them and the stackers struck with them so that shut the whole works down.



Now I had a big field of macaroni, most of it already down and couldn't move it and it come a rain. Now you know how macaroni swells when it gets wet. Well, it swelled up there and I had macaroni two feet deep all over that field, and I thought it was a total loss.

One of my friends says, "Call the Campbell Soup Company." So I called the Campbell Soup Company and told them what I had, so they said, "Well, we'll see what we can do."

The next day they sent a gang down there with these little ole shears like they use in a grocery store, you know. About fifty girls come down there with them little ole snips and they cut that stuff up and made O's out of it and put it in soup.

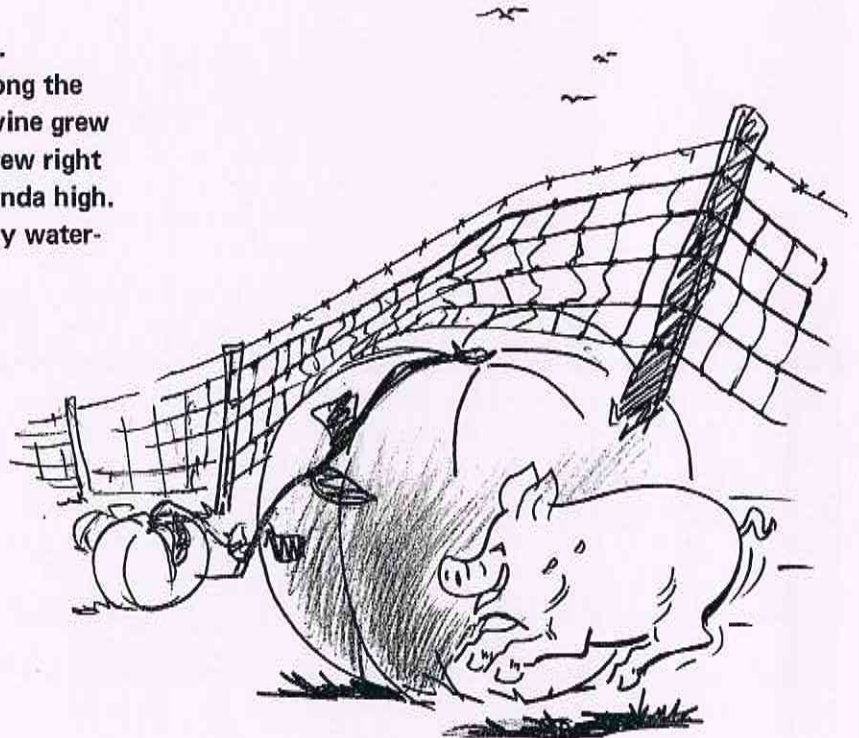
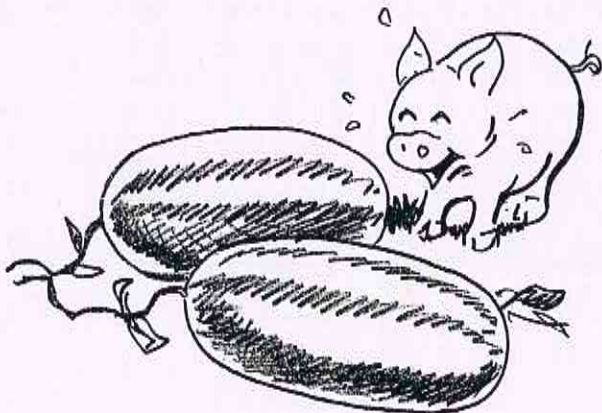
'N till this day you can open a can of soup and find them O's in there. They had O's, I mean they had plenty of O's.



THE WATERMELON CROP

I lost a crop of watermelon one time.

I had a big field of watermelon and along the fence I planted pumpkins, 'n the pumpkin vine grew out from under the fence and a pumpkin grew right under the fence and raised that fence up, kinda high. A bunch of hogs got in there and just eat my watermelon patch up.

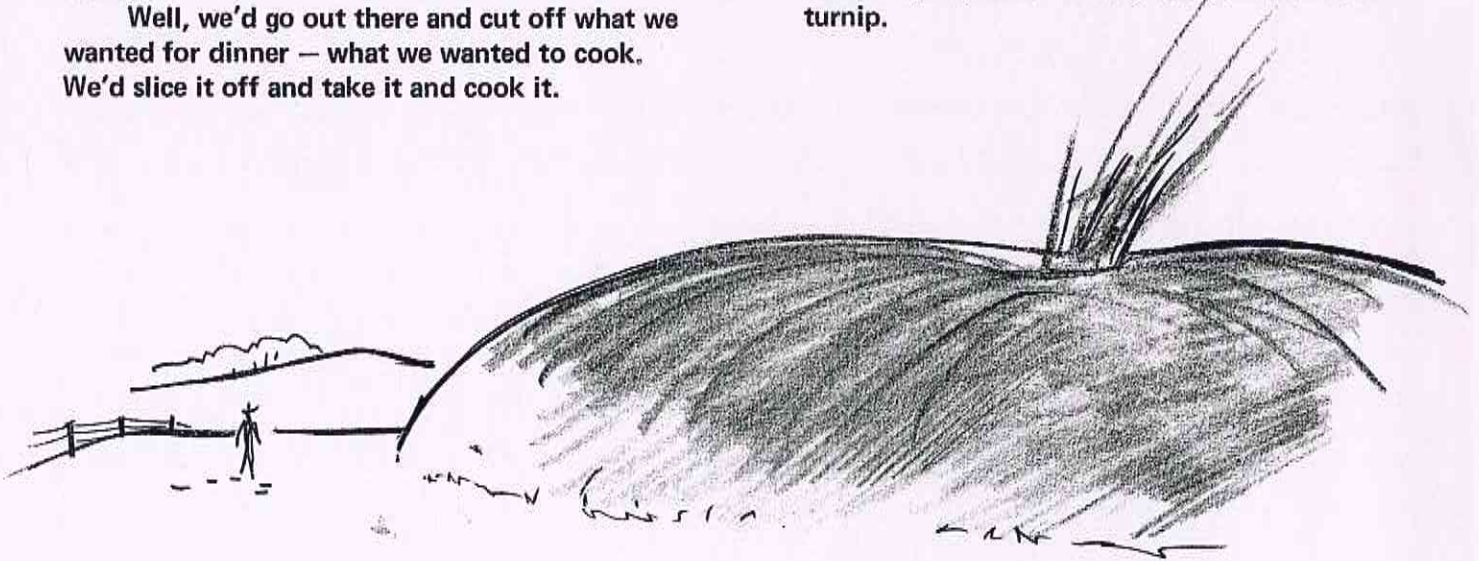


A PATCH OF TURNIPS

I planted a patch of turnips. I had some special turnip seed they said would grow big. So I planted one seed right in the middle of an acre of ground. Well, that turnip grew up there and it just commenced growin and it grew and grew. It was just 'bout to fill that whole acre up, that one turnip.

Well, we'd go out there and cut off what we wanted for dinner — what we wanted to cook. We'd slice it off and take it and cook it.

We had thirty head of sheep come up missin. We hunted for those sheep, and hunted and hunted and we couldn't find them at all. So one day, I went around behind that turnip, on the other side of that turnip. Those sheep had eaten their way down in that turnip and had got down so low they couldn't jump out. 'N they were in there eatin turnip.



THE LOST COW

After I'd grown up and had kids of my own, we had to keep an ole cow cause, otherwise, we couldn't afford enough milk and butter for that bunch. She was a real good ole cow, and when she was fresh you'd get bout four t' four n' a half gallons of milk a day. Course you had to milk her mornin and night, and I didn't have that much time - I had to work. So, I had them boys doin the milkin.

Well, the ole cow was runnin loose cause we didn't have no fenced pasture, and one night she didn't come up. One of the boys had hunted her til dark, and couldn't find her. I knew there wasn't no use lookin any more that night, so I tole em to wait til tomorrow then they should all go out and hunt her. But, next night they still hadn't found her. So, I went out huntin her with a flashlight. When I found her down in a lil branch bottom, she was in bad shape.

At first she'd had her horns caught in rattan vines. She finely got aloose, but by that time her bag had swelled up and jacked her hind legs off the ground and she couldn't come home.



THE FLOATIN' COW

We had one little cow, a milk cow, and she got into an old well about eight t' ten feet wide and ten t' twelve feet deep.

We hunted and hunted for her and finely found her in that ole well. Didn't have no way to get her out so we got the ladder and went down there and milked, milked, milked her and floated her out of there. I mean, I just floated her out of that well.



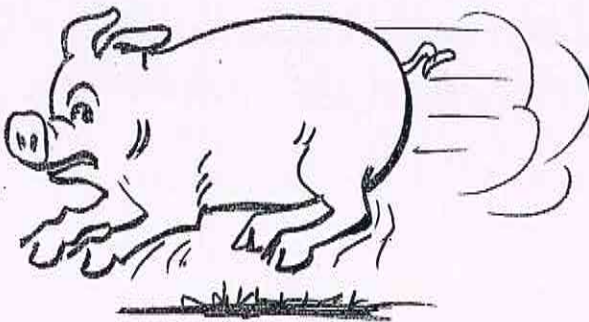
THE POTATO PATCH

We had a potato patch up on the bank of the river, right up on the bank of the river. There was 'n old sow got in there and she was just ruinin that potato patch — she'd just root up the potatoes.

I'd run out there and she'd see me comin and she'd dive under them vines and away she'd go. 'N I couldn't find her. I'd hunt that ole sow and I couldn't find her. Finally, one day, I slipped out there and she didn't see me till I got right close. She got in the middle of that patch and she dived in the ground, and I followed her. I just got right

in after her and follered her, follered her right on through under the river and she come out on the other side.

There was a potato had grown out under the river and had come out up yonder on the other side, and that ole sow had eaten from the other side of the bank and had eaten her way through that potato and come up in the potato patch.



A CROP OF SPAGHETTI

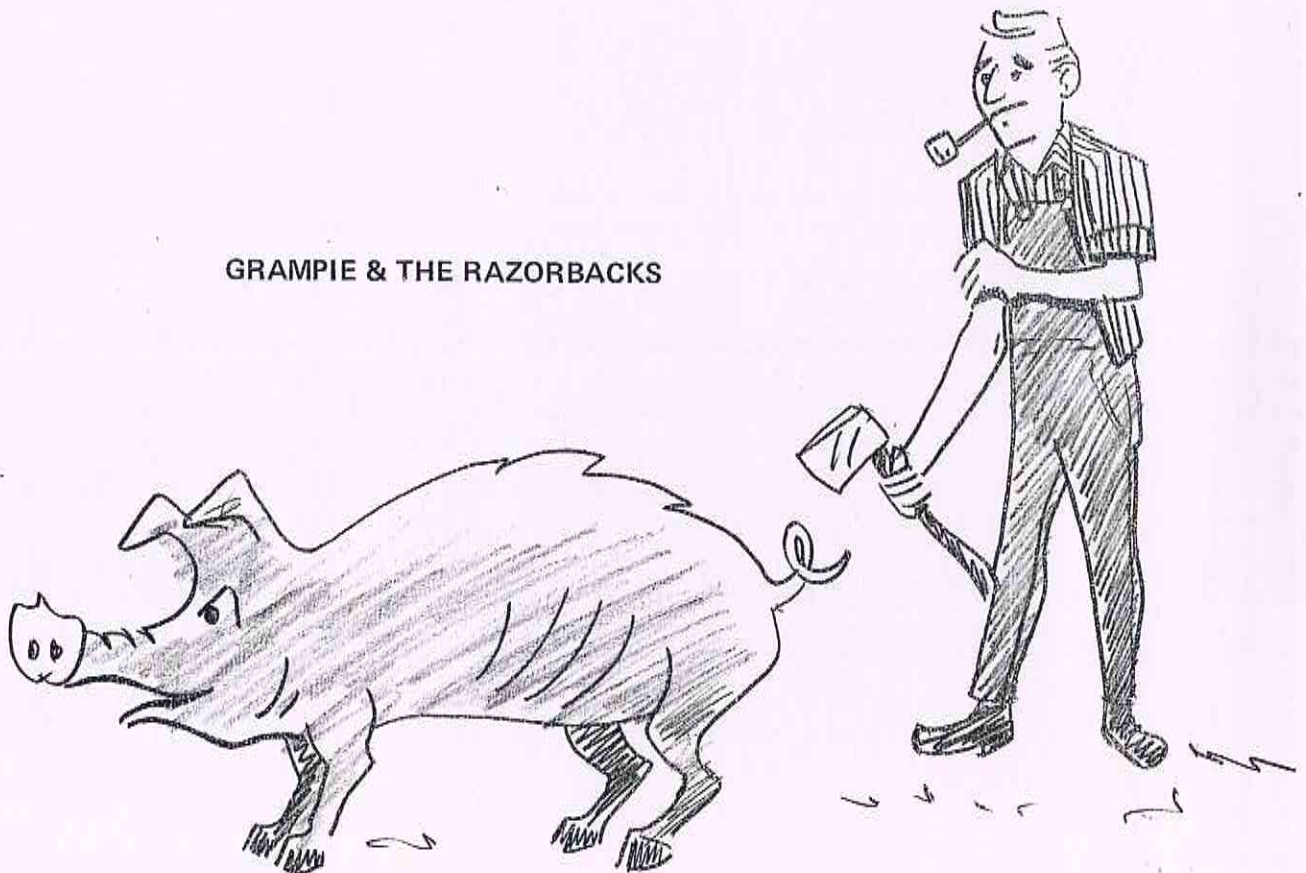
I raised a crop of spaghetti one time. When it got so high it come a wind and blew it all down, you know, how it all crumpled up. I knew there wasn't any chance to gather that. 'N I had a big field of tomatoes on a hill, a big steep hill there. So I didn't see any way to harvest that.

A fella come along and said, "I tell you, say, if you can get them tomatoes and spaghetti together, you'll have something." So I said, "That's right."

I got in there and raked that spaghetti to the middle of the field and cut a ditch down the side of that mountain and got up there and whipped them tomatoes and let em mix with that spaghetti and I had spaghetti mixed with tomatoes and saved that crop.

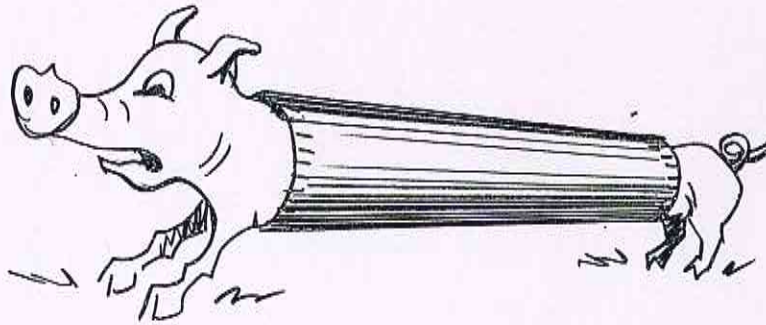


GRAMPIE & THE RAZORBACKS



THE STOVEPIPE SOW

I had a black sow, oh, she was bout ten years old, I gues, and she had a bunch of pigs. She got to runnin round and she ran into a stove pipe. She starved them pigs to where we had to get a can opener and cut holes for them pigs to git their dinner. The ole sow was in that stovepipe years and years. I don't know how old she was when we got that pipe cut off of her.

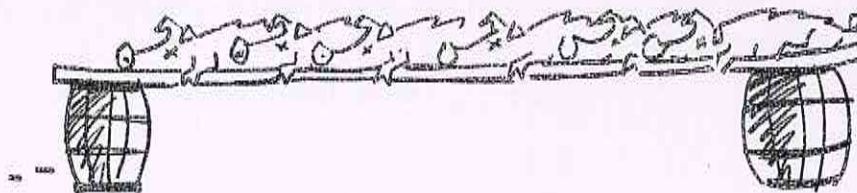


HOG KILLIN TIME

It was hog killin time and Daddy was killin a whole bunch one cool mornin. Mama was scrapin em and gittin the hair off of em.

We had a one-by-twelve board layin across two nail kegs. Oh, that board was ten t' twelve feet long and Mama was dressing each hog out and layin em up on that board and she said, "Well, I got all of em out of that barrel and all the hair's off em."

He said, "Nope, I killed eighteen and you ain't got but seventeen on that board."

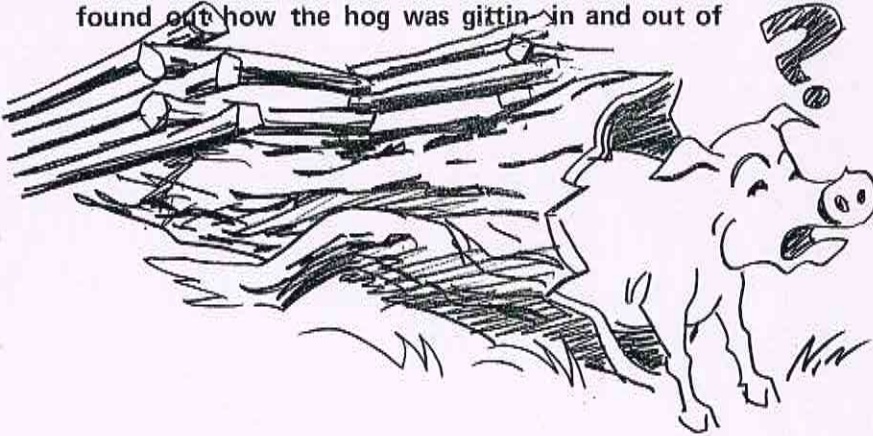


MAMA'S WATERMELON PATCH

That reminds me of when we was young, Mama had a watermelon patch. It wasn't much of a patch, only bout a half acre. But Mama put a lot of store by it. Well, jist imagine her fit when she found out that some ole hog was gittin in and eatin them green watermelons. Course, she sent me out fence fixin. I went clear round that patch two or three times, and that ole rail fence looked jist as good as it did the day we built it. Finely, I noticed that there was an ole holler log under the rails of one section of fence. Then, I had a problem. I'd found out how the hog was gittin in and out of

that patch, but if I took that log out from under the fence, the fence'd fall down. So, I jist swung that log around across under the corner of the fence so both ends of it was outside Mama's watermelon patch.

Well, did I git a s'prise? Our own ole sow starved herself and six lil pigs to death goin back and forth through that log tryin to get in the watermelon patch.



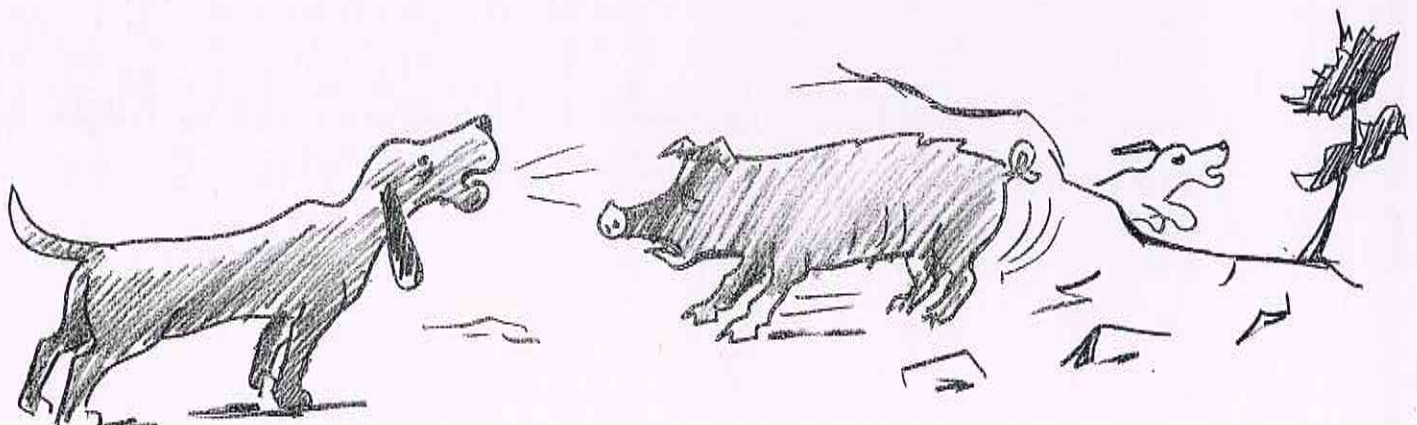
THE CUTTIN DOG

We had them razorback hogs up there and we couldn't do anything with em. They was so fast the dog couldn't catch em and was they wild!

Finely, we got a bunch of Walker hounds to train an ole dog to cut trail. We called him the "Cuttin Dog."

You see, them dogs would run the hog round the mountain and this ole dog would go across and head em off and bay em.

After we got that ole dog trained to cut across there and catch them razorbacks, we didn't have no trouble with em. We had jist all the meat we wanted.



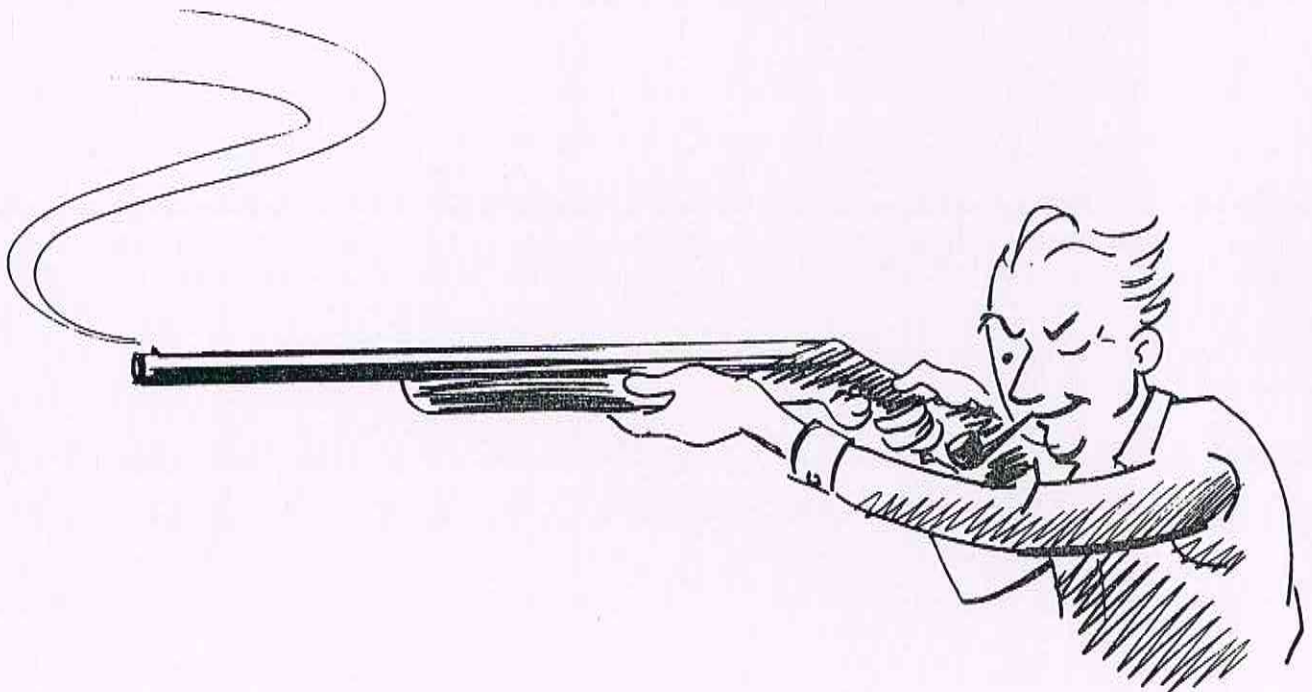
PANNIN THE HOG

At hog killin time, they would take them hogs and pan em one at a time. They had a big ole fire-place and they had a hot fire and they would hang one of them hogs up by a string with a pan beneath him then the grease would drip into that pan. You call that "pannin the hog." That's the way we got our lard.

One time we hung up a big, big ole hog and that was the most lard we ever got. We got a quart of lard - and a pint of turpentine.

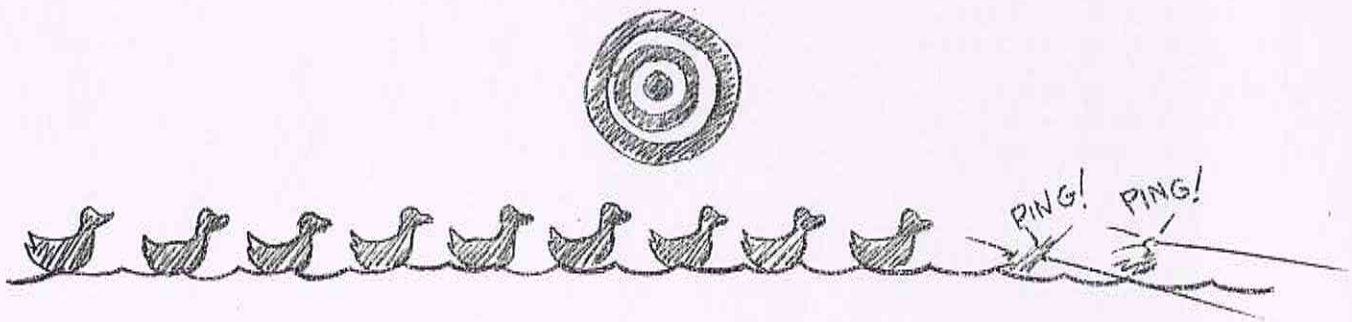


CHAPTER THREE: GRAMPIE THE PERFECT SHOT



THE SHOOTIN GALLERY

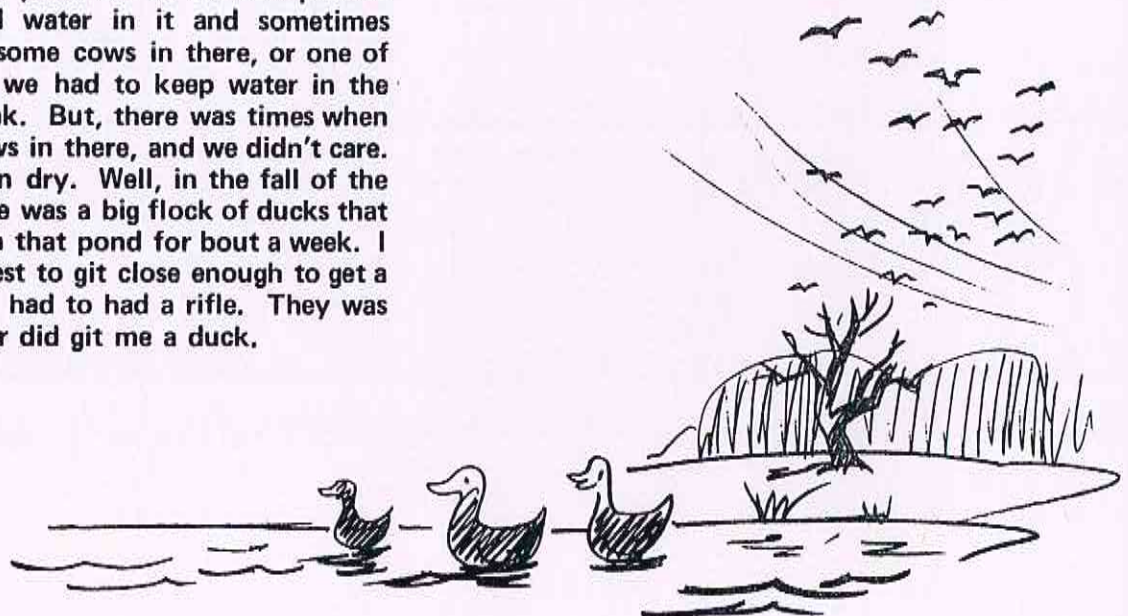
Well, I was down in Overton, Texas, and there was a shootin gallery down there. They had them li'l birds moving' and the boy had a sign up there that said he would give me a dollar if I hit fifteen birds. I'd go from the ice house to the post office every mornin' pick up one of them rifles and knock down them fifteen birds, git my dollar and go on to the post office. I'd shoot fast and by the time that string of birds got by I had 'em knocked down. Got to where there was a gang there so big they blocked the street every mornin' to see me knock them fifteen birds down.



THE DUCK POND

There us'ta be a lot more ducks in Arkansas than there is now. Other game, too, for that matter.

We had a lil ole pond out in the cow pasture that sometime had water in it and sometimes didn't. If we had some cows in there, or one of our neighbors did, we had to keep water in the pond for em to drink. But, there was times when they wasn't any cows in there, and we didn't care. We let the pond run dry. Well, in the fall of the year, one time, there was a big flock of ducks that perty well stayed on that pond for bout a week. I done my dead levelest to git close enough to get a shot at em, but I'd had to had a rifle. They was that shy, and I never did git me a duck.



(continued)

Now, come spring, them ducks was headin back north and they remembered spendin the week on that lil ole pond. I remembered it, too, but there wasn't no water in it this time. I was lookin for em, so I heard em comin. I got my ole shotgun and set down under a ole hickory tree by the pond. Perty soon, here they come, lookin fer the pond. So I fired away. But nothin happen. Man, I hadn't ever seen so many ducks, so I shot again. Still no ducks. Well, they was so scared by then that I couldn't load that ole double barrel and shoot again. But I follered em bout three miles over to ole Clemon Lemonade Elliott's pond. That was his real name. His twin brother was named Luscious Ice Water Elliott.

Anyways, them ole ducks begin to spread out so they could land on that pond, and y'know, I picked up seventeen dead ducks I'd killed back yonder. Them ducks was packed so thick the dead ones couldn't fall.



THE HUNTIN TRIP

I'll tell you just exactly what I did one time. I went huntin. The Logan boy and me. Pink Logan had a boy named Red Logan. Red Logan and me went hunting and there was bout four inches of snow on the ground that mornin and we got out perty early.

Well, we got down on the branch and the first thing we killed was four ducks. That was on Lick Creek where it runs in to the Caddo River.

We went on out across the fields bird huntin. Didn't have any dogs but we could track the birds in the snow. We went on and killed nineteen quails.

Went on around over the fence and out in the woods and killed nine squirrels and by that time we were loaded. So, we cut a pole and slipped it across our shoulders and hung that stuff on there.

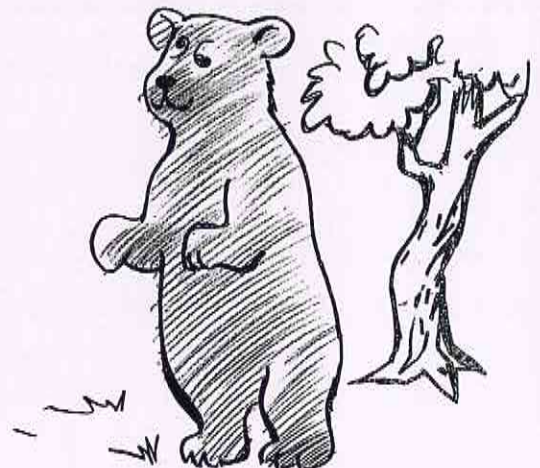
Comin into town we got three or four rabbits and hung them on. Before we got off the mountain we come across a bear cub. We picked the little bear up and carried him on in and when we got in,

some of them wanted to name him. One of the boys said he was cross-eyed.

"Well," I said. "That's what we'll name him."

"Name him what?" they all asked.

"Gladly, the cross-eyed bear. You've heard that song lots of time."



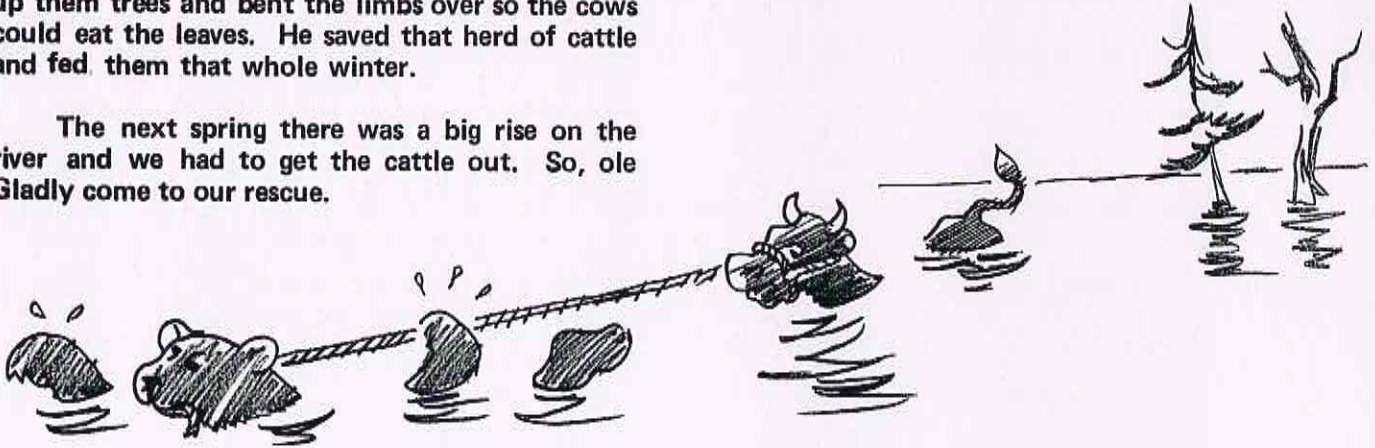
GLADLY, THE CROSS-EYED BEAR

Well, when Gladly grew up, he was the biggest thing, oh, seven or eight hundred pounds. We had a bunch of cattle out there and it come a big snow and it got about eight feet deep and the cattle didn't have anything to eat.

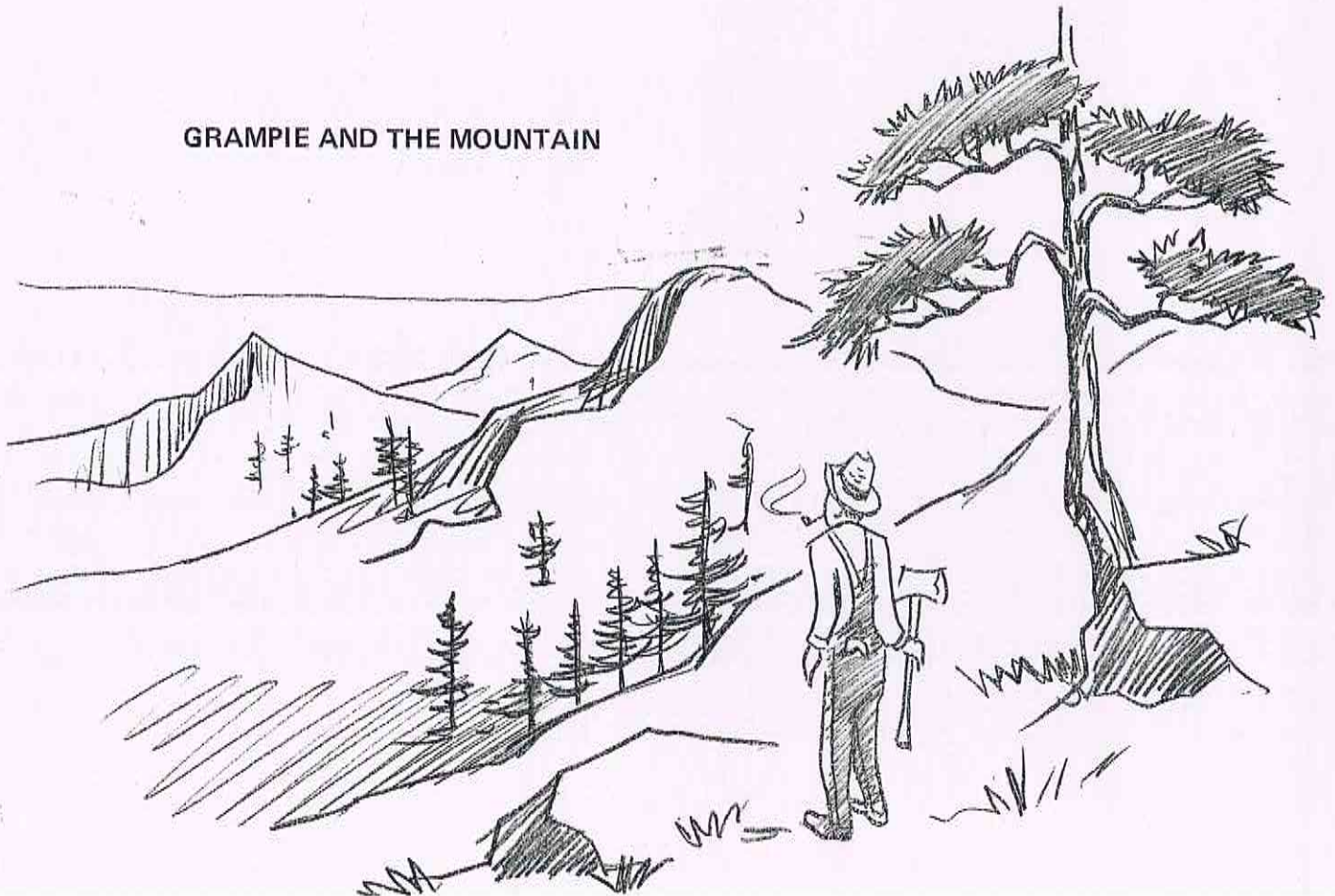
So, Gladly got a bright idea. Down by the branch there was a bunch of sycamore trees with leaves on em so he went down there and climbed up them trees and bent the limbs over so the cows could eat the leaves. He saved that herd of cattle and fed them that whole winter.

The next spring there was a big rise on the river and we had to get the cattle out. So, ole Gladly come to our rescue.

We couldn't drive across mud flats and high water, so ole Gladly come across and we would tie a cow to his tail and he would swim right on across the river taking her out of the mud to dry land. We put that whole herd across like that. Ole Gladly put 'em across.'



GRAMPIE AND THE MOUNTAIN



CRYSTAL MOUNTAIN

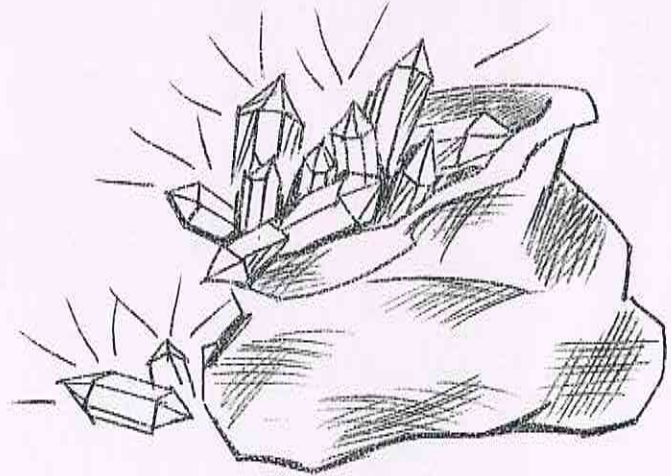
Let me tell you bout Crystal Mountain. They mined them crystals back in there. They'd dig em out and sell em.

An old fella on top of the mountain had a lil peach orchard, and a lil cabin and a lil mule and he mined them crystals. He went barefoot over those rocks and his feet was tough as leather.

He would go down and git them crystals and bring em up and take em down the highways peddlin em. Went down to Dallas sometimes fore he sold out.

That man tole me, "Bring me some jarnex and I'll get you some crystal."

I didn't know what it was, but what he wanted was dynamite. So I got him some and carried it out there. I got a toe sack of crystals. I had em big as a washpan and as lil as a pin head.

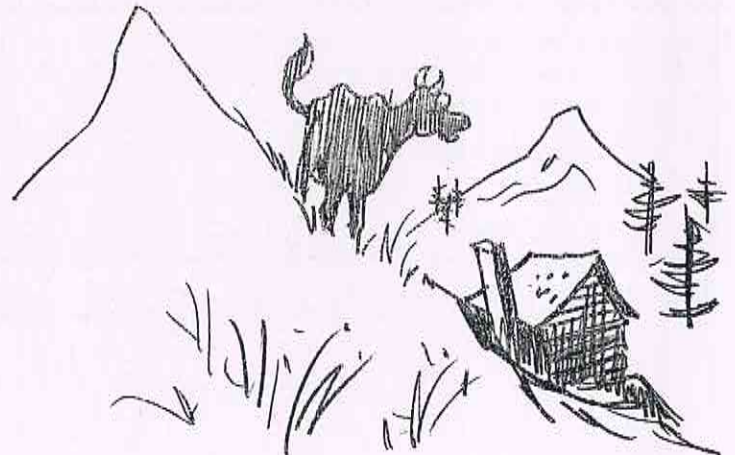


THE MOUNTAIN COW

Me and Reuben Reed went up to Mena one time for about six months to git some timber out. There wasn't anywhere to live up there, so we built us a log cabin. It was a perty good cabin. We chinked all the cracks nice and tight, and even built a fireplace with a chimney on it. Only thing, we had to build it right on the side of one of them steep hills.

We also made the acquaintance of a farmer nearby, and he loaned us a cow for the time we was gonna be there. Y'know, we didn't have to bell that ole cow to know when she was comin up. We could just look at the chimney and see her comin.

We always had to get out there in a hurry to prop her up and milk her, though. Y'see, she'd been grazin round and round them hills so long til the two legs on the up-hill side was a foot and a half shorter'n the other two.



THE MOONSHINER

There was a whisky maker back in them hills. He was an ole doctor bout half retired, but still practiced some, though.

He started makin whisky and they caught him. His sentence was 420 days in jail.

Well, ever night you could see him walkin the streets peddlin his moonshine. Someone asked him, "Doc, I thought you had 420 days in jail?"

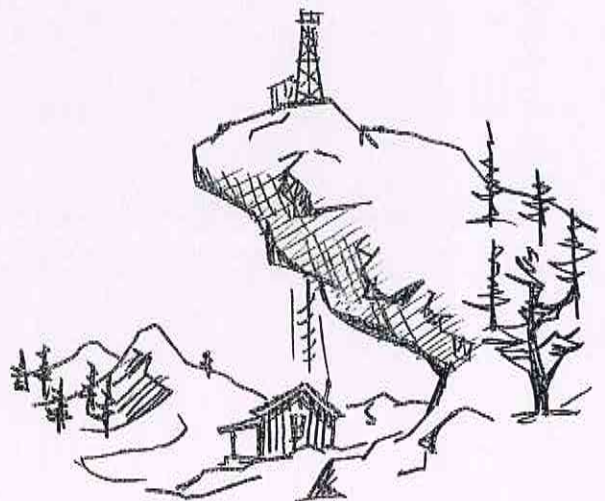
"I have, but they didn't say nothing about nights!"



THE COONSKIN MINE

There was another prospector's cabin down the hill but he was really a trapper. He'd catch coon, mink, beaver, and all and he would stretch them hides and put em on his cabin to dry.

Some fella wanted to dig a wildcat well up there on the mountain. He got up there, began drilling and he lost circulation. Didn't know what was wrong so he brought it back up and it had a coonskin on the bit. They had run out the mountain and hit that trapper's cabin. Brought that coonskin up on the bit. They thought for sure they had hit a coonskin mine.

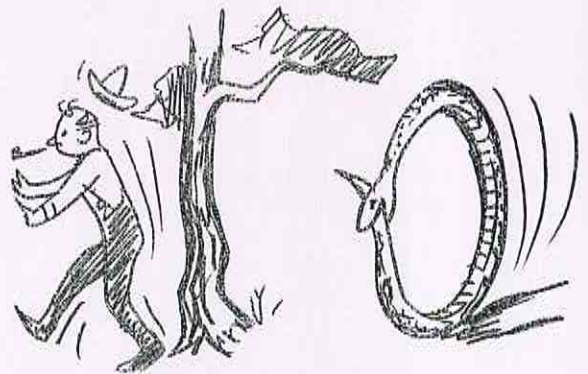


THE SNAKE BIT SAPLING

When I was up to Mena scalin timber, I had just checked out a lil ole pine saplin when I heard an awful noise in the leaves up the side of the hill. There wasn't much underbrush on that hill, and when I turned around, I could see a hoopsnake comin down the hill at me. He had his tail in his mouth, and made a hoop about four feet across. He was a big one. Well, sir, I jist stepped behind that ole sapling to let him go by, but he didn't. He hit that lil ole pine tree and stung it, just like he'd a done me if I'd a been there.

Then the ole tree swelled up. It swelled til I had to change my scaling report. It was big enough to cut. When we got it to the mill, it was still swellin. The more we cut off of that tree, the more there was of it. When we finely got it all cut up, we had a whole pile of lumber, so I took it and built me a four-room house. Perty nice, too.

Well, we got that house built on a nice stout foundation, and then we painted it white. Well, the turpentine in that paint took all the swellin out of that lumber, and I need somebody young and limber to help me put up my white, four-room bird house.



THE CROOKED MISSISSIPPI



One day one of my friends asked me if I'd like to go fishin with him. I asked him where he was goin and he said he thought he'd go over to Chicot Lake. He'd heard fishin was right good over there.

So I told him, "Well, you know that ain't rightly a lake. It's a part of the old, original Mississippi River diggin's. We dug it crooked that way, goin around by everybody's house."

THE MISSING THUMB

Lots of people think I cut my thumb off at the saw mill. I just let most of em go right on thinkin what they want to bout it.

But, sometimes I just have to tell the nat'ral truth bout what really happened to my thumb. Anytime I see a lil boy or girl who is suckin a thumb, I figger it's time to show em what could happen to them. I jist show em my hand with the missin thumb and tell em if they don't quit suckin on that thumb perty soon, why they'll suck theirs clean off jist the way I did. Jist to show em, I hold their thumbs up so one is shorter to prove that one is already shrinkin.

Most times, they listen real careful and so far as I know, none of them has lost a thurr-b yet.



THE TEXAS CATFISH

Some of us fellas was on a train and us Arkansas boys said somethin about catchin catfish. One of them said, "I caught a catfish eighteen inches."

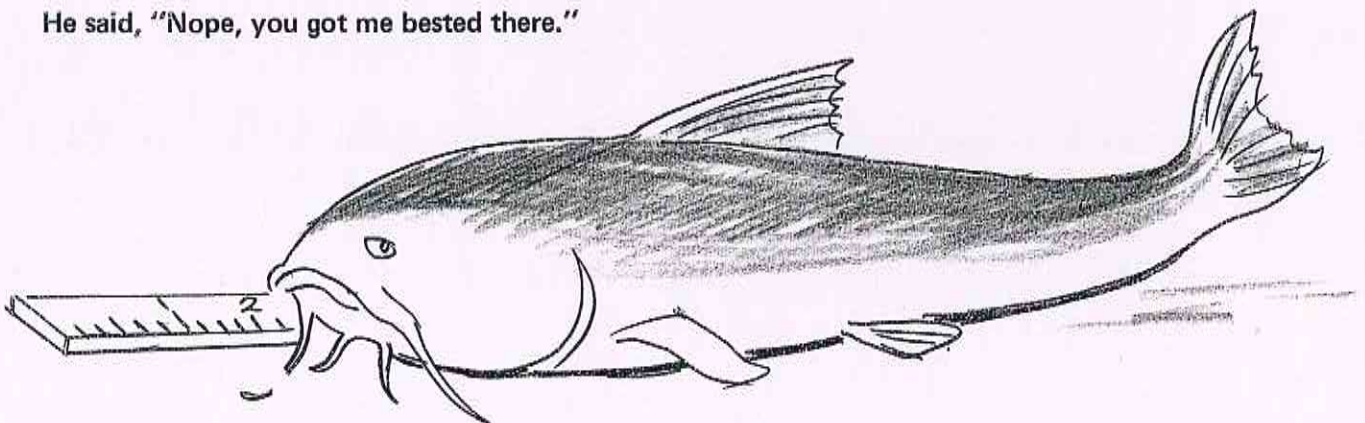
I said, "I never caught one that big. I caught one sixteen inches before."

An ole boy across the aisle was from Texas and he had been telling about some big things in Texas. One of the Arkansas boys said, "Hey, Tex. Ever catch an eighteen inch catfish?"

He said, "Nope, you got me bested there."

"I jist thought everything in Texas was bigger than here in Arkansas. Animals, fish, and everything. Didn't you ever catch a catfish that was over eighteen inches long?"

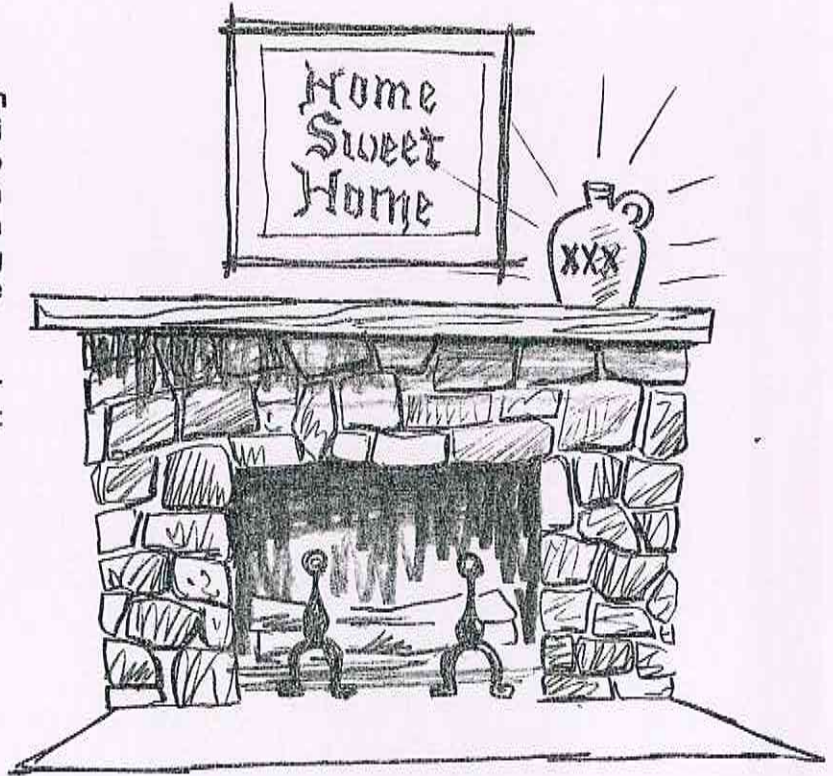
"Long?" he said. "That ain't the way we measure them. We measure em between the eyes."



CORN LIQUOR

Grandpa Ross' first wife was the first cousin of Daniel Boone. Grandpa crossed the Mississippi River at Memphis way over a hundred years ago when he was a young man. And he drank corn whisky. He'd keep a gallon jug of corn liquor on the mantle piece and he'd jist take that ole jug and take a shot and set it back on the mantle piece and go on.

That ole Kentucky corn, that corn liquor finely got him. I thought it'd get him...and it finely did. He was ninety-seven when he died.

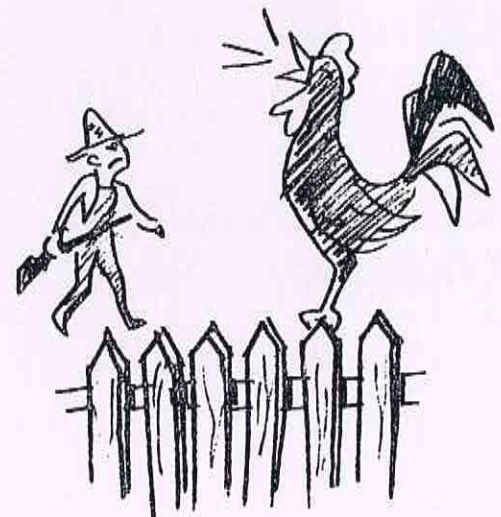


GRANDPA'S SHOOTIN

One time there was an ole rooster in the turnip patch and a picket fence was around it. Grandpa Ross was about seventy-four years old at that time. The ole rooster was in the turnip patch and he would shoot at him and he would jump up on the fence and rare back and crow at him.

He tole me to go git his rifle and I went and got nis 22 rifle and took it to him. Why, Grandpa couldn't hold a cup and saucer without it rattlin like everything, but he took that 22 rifle and shot right through that picket fence — and shot that rooster's head clean off.

Grandpa was the only man you ever saw that killed two deer on the same stand. He shot one and then the other at the same time.



GRANDPA ROSS

Grandpa Ross never did git a stick or anything to kill a snake with. He jumped on it and stomped it. I seen him stomp a good many snakes.

When he was eighty-five years old he learned that the boll weevil would lay eggs in the cotton stalks, y' know. They would winter in them and come out the next year and git to be boll weevils. He had a cotton field there...great big cotton stalks. That ole man went out there and pulled up every one of them cotton stalks and burned em. He wasn't but eighty-five years old.

The year he was eighty he cleared the new ground in Branch Bottom thicket.

He wasn't but ninety-two when his next to the last wife died. The ole man got tired of livin by hisself after his wife had been dead bout a year.

There was a young widow down the road at the 'joinin farm that had five boys. So they went to town and got married. He wasn't but ninety-three and she was thirty-seven. Course, he didn't live but four or five years after he married her. That corn liquor finely got him.



the Real "Grampie"