

# Dru Pippin

## Reminiscence

### Part Four

*On the following pages are Ozark stories, observations, jokes, and philosophical musings (which Dru called "hilosophy") recorded by Dru Pippin during 1975-1976. The transcription is a collaborative effort by Dru's nephew, William Eckert, and Terry Primas.*

#### Village Blacksmiths

Modern machinery, electrically powered tools, drills, presses, welders, sanders and grinders, have made obsolete a one-time necessity, the village blacksmith. In days gone by, he was just as essential to the community as was the midwife or the family doctor.

I've known several in my lifetime, and when I think of them as individuals, and then as a group, they all seem to have a common denominator, as well as a definite character trait. I'm thinking of four of these God-fearing men: Bill, John, Cliff, and until a few months ago, Fred Manes. The last of the men of the forge. [John and Cliff Doolin were brothers and worked side by side in their blacksmith shop in Waynesville.]

None of these men were big men as far as size was concerned, but inside I doubt if a man could be bigger. All had learned their trade as very young men, even as boys. Each had served as a helper in a shop and in some cases they were but another generation following in the footsteps of their elders.

This business was an art, but an art that required sweat and brawn and a willingness to work.

Work it was. No soft hands. No manicured fingernails, and pink, clean, smooth complexions were impossible. Here was a six day a week job. From seeing to blinking, beset with all sorts of requests.

Fix this, mend this, weld this, patch this, can you make this work until I can order a new part?

This filly never been shod before, and she's skittish, and mean as all get-out. 'Spect you and me will have to hog-tie this here'n afore she gets the best of us. I got to put shoes on her. I'll help you throw her, if you want.

I been a-waiting for this ice to melt so's I can get in some wood. Old woman's about out.

And I got to break this into another hay-rick for my cattle and the ice is so bad the team can't stand up. Better fit my team with ice shoes so's I can get this job done.

Tire went off on this wheel. Put it back on and had it soaking in the pond

to swell up the hub, but it needs re-settin', John.

Cliff, if you got two identical wagon thimbles, wish you'd make me a pair of andirons for my fire place. Three feet deep and five feet long.

Got me one o' them silky plows and it pulls a team down in that heavy crawfish you saw it on the bluff side. Make me a treble tree so's I can use three horses instead of two. It'll plow easier and deeper.

Don't know who tempered this pick before, but picking rock from a road to pay my poll tax sure is hard on a pick. Seems like it's too soft and needs more temper.

Old woman left the iron kettle outside. It filled with water and the heavy freeze t'other night plum cracked it from top to bottom side so shrink an iron band around it, John. Be as good as new then.

So on and on were the challenges thrown at these men. Day in and day out. They all had skill, imagination, understanding, and know-how. Each a self-trained student in human nature and behavior. Each had a willingness to lend a helping hand. Is it any wonder Longfellow wrote that poem? They're never to be forgotten. "Under the spreading chestnut tree, the village smithy stands ... ." Each one I knew had his individual mannerisms. Each had high standards. Each was completely honest. Each could be found in church or lodge at the proper time.

One of these four men was a deeply religious man inwardly but he could out-cuss the champion but it was only when he liked you; meant no harm to anyone. The best I can describe this cussing was that he was cussing for fun. One day my old brown Chevy drove up to the entrance to his shop. John, beating out a stacatto on his anvil, gave a hurried glance at the car then he realized it was my car, so he started giving me a cussing to the tune of the ringing anvil. As the red hot iron cooled, he glanced up at the car, and lo-and-behold, my wife was at the wheel with a smile on her face from ear to ear. This was a time when the sludge or tempering barrel couldn't be used to change the red of his face.

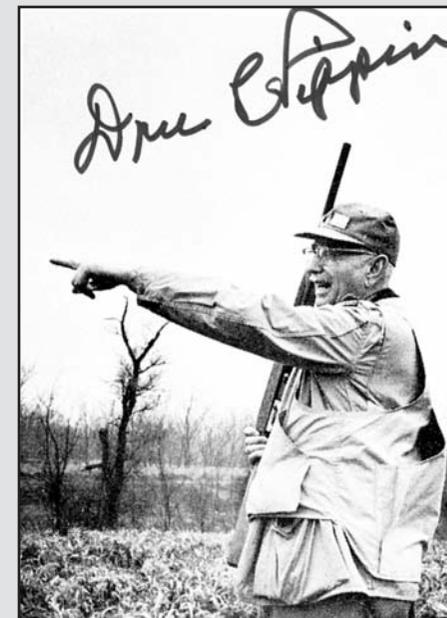
Wait a minute. That's not the end. The very next time I went to his shop, he worked me over doubly hard for sending a woman to his shop when he was busy, for driving the car that I should have been driving myself.

# Dru Pippin

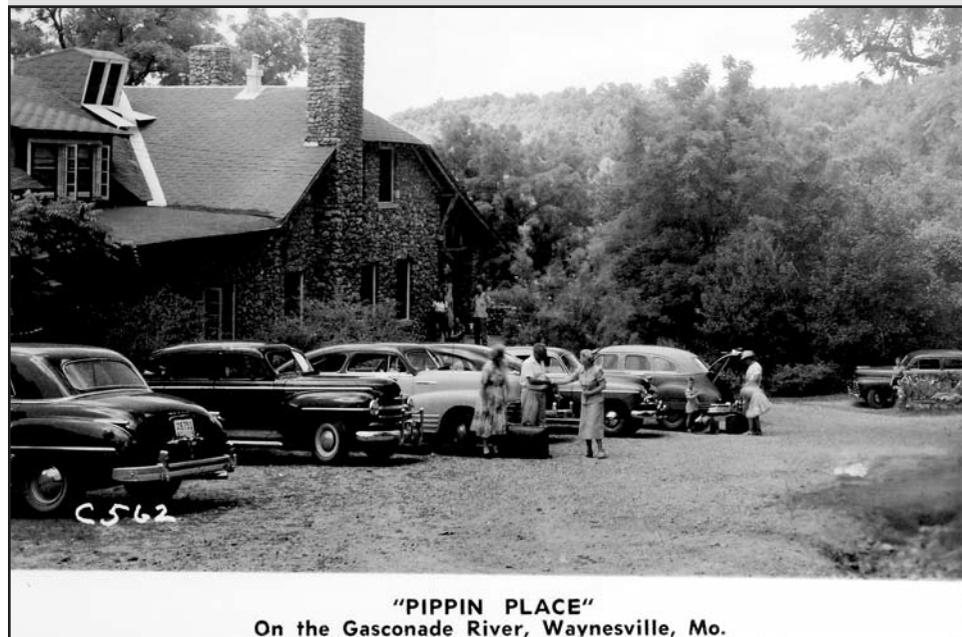
## a profile

by William Eckert

**D**ru L. Pippin was born April 13, 1899 in Pulaski County, Missouri, son of Bland Nixon Pippin and Nancy May Vaughn. The Pippin family had settled in the Pulaski County area in the late 1840s, having come from Tennessee and Alabama. Dru was named after area doctors Drura Claiburn and Lavega Tice. His father was a professor of Dentistry at Washington University in St. Louis and Dru grew up in large part in St Louis. Dru caught the so-called Spanish Flu and moved to Waynesville to recover. He attended the University of Missouri at Columbia and met and married Eva Luther. Dr. Pippin, who had a great love of the Ozarks and the outdoors, purchased property near Bartlett Spring and built a resort there named "Pippin Place". Dru and Eva took over management of Pippin Place and ran it until Dru closed it in the late Sixties. While Eva stayed at Pippin Place, Dru also had an insurance agency in Waynesville. In 1947 Dru was appointed to the Missouri Conservation Commission and served until 1959. He served another term from 1961 to 1964. Dru was very active in the effort to make Fort Leonard Wood a permanent installation. Dru had two children, Dan and Nancy. Dan was captain of the United States Olympic Basketball team in 1952 and won a gold medal. Eva died in 1962 and Dru later married Wilda Miller. After Dru closed Pippin Place, he and Wilda moved to a small house in Waynesville where he died in 1981 and Wilda in 1980. Dru's father was always fascinated with the unique aspects of Ozark culture, such as the stories and the dialect, and Dru followed in his footsteps. In the 1970s he was asked to record some oral history memorializing his own observations of Ozark culture, customs, stories, and dialect and he recorded some 10 hours, most of which are available at Ft. Leonard Wood.



Dru was an avid outdoorsman and particularly enjoyed quail hunting and fly fishing. This photo appeared in the July, 1961 *Conservationist*.



"PIPPIN PLACE"  
On the Gasconade River, Waynesville, Mo.

He was always my friend. A good man. Raised a good family, and his daughter was my Sunday School teacher and a better student of the Good Book I never knew.

Then there was one that could trim a horse's hoofs, fit a nail on four shoes quicker than anyone I ever saw. In his younger days he took on all comers—horses, mules, broncos, studs, jacks, and saddle mares. He had a way to overcome any disposition that the animal might have. He might throw one, stretch another one out on stobs in the ground, pet and gentle and sweet talk another, or put a twitch on his upper lip. A twitch was a stick with a looped rope on one end. The loop was put around the upper lip and twisted tight until the critter forgot about his feet entirely.

Fish spearing or gigging was a popular winter sport and Cliff was an expert in sharpening either a three or a four-tined spear or for making one from an old horse shoe rasp. Sharpening one of these, Cliff cut his hand, paid no attention to it, got an infection, then blood poison, and finally the loss of the arm above the elbow. No miracle drugs in those days.

The grandfather of Fred Manes started the shop about the time of the Civil War in Richland and on this same spot his son and then Fred carried on for over sixty more years. Six days a week, rain or shine, snow or sleet, heat or cold, wind or fog, found Fred happiest when his regular tall-tale telling cronies visited while he worked.

He had a hobby and a most unusual



Fred Manes at his forge in Richland at the age of 81 years in 1974. Manes' father and grandfather were both blacksmiths. Fred worked at this shop for 60 years. Courtesy of Jan and Terry Primas.

one. He raised mice. Even had a mouse castle for them and gathered black walnuts each fall, cracked 'em in a machine of his own design and make, and saw to it they had plenty to eat. Feed stores sent him samples of mouse and rat killer, D-Con and the like, just as a hint, but it was never used. Cat couldn't read the sign to stay out, so when traveling cats failed to come home, it might be hinted that Fred was the best sling shot in the Ozarks.

He once said he would retire when he got to be a hundred years old, farm a year, and then go back to the shop, but

he died in 1975, the last of the old time blacksmiths. I said he died. Well, really, neither he, Bill, John, or Cliff died. They are all very much alive today in our memory and respect. Such men of character, industry, skill and courage, and empire builders who reinforce the backbone in our Ozark heritage.

They welded freedom firmly on solid rock so that we can forge ahead to the tune of the anvil chorus of old. Its tempo is tempered. Not too hard, not too soft, always ready to help, aid and assist, and never too busy to be of service. Thanks to that great architect of the

universe, their heritage founded on calloused hands, sweaty brows, and God-fearing men.

So as I bring this [recording session] to a close, I offer you a little verse of tribute that sums up my thoughts on Washington's Birthday, February 22nd, 1976, and I call it "Me To Thee for Liberty."

Under the drafty rough oak shed,  
the village smithy stood,  
small in stature but powerful of arm,  
possessed of skill, red hot iron to bend,  
artistic for he was, good neighbor indeed,  
no enemies to fear,  
and friends everywhere.

Your plow he'd sharpen,  
your wagon he'd mend,  
there's John, Bill, Cliff and Fred.  
Benefactors all four,  
but now they're dead.

The flying sparks from red hot iron,  
the murky water in the tempering barrel,  
where sizzling steam changed red to gray,  
reminds me of another day.

All this went with a way of life,  
as if today from newborn red to aged gray,  
they bonded me to thee,  
in love of Liberty.

**DeLaval**

On my back porch is a converted machine, a bowl on top and a small one below, both growing hen and chick plants and all the more curious because of a crank on one side. You would be



Pictured is a gigging trip on Big Sugar Creek near Pineville, MO in 1929. Courtesy of Vance Randolph Collection, School of the Ozarks.

Local blacksmiths made the gigs used to spear suckers, such as the one below made by Webb Reagan in the 1940s on Democrat Ridge near the Big Piney River.



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surprised to learn that ninety percent of the generations born since the great depression of the thirties do not know what this machine once was used for.

My late son used to say that this was his French tutor, that he took lessons twice a day, and never learned to say but one word of French, DeLaval. In depression days on the farm, this word indicated bread and butter, cash income, the thing that separated the yellow cream from the white milk and left the blue john [skim milk] that all came from the brindle cow that ate green grass or brown hay and never drank anything stronger than water.

DeLaval was a popular cream separator of the day that would prolong muscular exertion of the arm and the crank produced centrifugal force sufficient to throw off the lighter cream in one spout and the skim milk through another. The cream was ready cash, while the blue john had as yet a conversion from chicken to eggs and meat or from hog to meat be-



Cream separator, 1908.

fore being expendable.

DeLaval is almost a hallowed name to so many Ozark families of the thirties. What would have happened had there been no such thing as the cow, the sow, the hen, and the separator would have been a tragedy. It was the one straw that kept us afloat when financial disaster hit the hardest.

Every time I look at plants now growing in the bowls that once held liquid gold and spinning disks, I am reminded of the present day expression "everyone has to do his thing." Some sold apples and pencils, many stood in bread lines, others kept alive at charitable soup kitchens, and many went hungry, while those of us who lived close to the soil survived with a keen understanding of the old saying, "Where there is a will, there is a way." And my way was a close partnership with DeLaval. I give thanks to the Almighty for it. It saved me, and now I'm saving it.

**Silos**

I dare say that many of the younger generation wonder what and why these forty to sixty foot high concrete tanks stand on so many farms. Seemingly they're not being put to any use. A young man from the East the other day asked me what these things were used for. They couldn't be water tanks, he said, because there was a row of windows about every four feet from top to bottom. And then he remarked, that without a roof, they would be useless for storage. Well, that's where he was wrong, because that's just what they were used for.

Listen ... These were empty silos into which was blown from a cutter the ground stalk leaves and ears of corn freshly cut in the field when the juices in the plant were at their best and the food value at its highest and the grain matured sufficiently to retain its food value. Properly chopped and blown into the silo, tromped and packed by an ever walking bunch of men in the silo. As the blowing continued, the packing continued as the filling went up, and a 40 by 10 or 12 foot silo could be filled in a day if everything went well.

This was a busy day. Eight, ten, or twelve flat-bed wagons with teams, a driver for each team, enough loaders to

pick up the cut corn and load the wagon, while cutters with corn knives cut the stalks down, caught them in a free arm, and then laid them on the ground in the same direction for easy loading. Truly, it was a production line with each individual doing his thing in a smooth, methodical rhythm, some singing, some whistling, others talking, and all working up an appetite for a filling meal at noon.



Twin concrete silos stand at the edge of a field along the Big Piney River as a reminder of past Pulaski farming practices. Photo by Terry Primas.

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A steady stream of wagons to and from the silo, where a tractor-powered cutter with an operator regulating the feed of the corn to the revolving knives, kept an ever flow of ensilage going into the bore and the silo. As a window was reached, it was closed, the area sealed by using tight, red clay around the edges. This process was continued foot by foot, window by window, until the top was reached, well-rounded to allow for the settling that would occur. Two days later a refill was necessary to replace the empty space caused by settling. Again it was well-rounded and, when again settled, sometimes a little wheat or rye was thrown on top to prevent as much decay as possible. Sometimes a canvas was put on as a covering, but most often, nothing was done at all. The product when used produced a most nutritious, succulent, green, and powerful feed for cattle.

As time went on, machines replaced manpower. A tractor pulled a cutter in the field that cut, chopped, and blew the silage into an ensilage wagon pulled from behind, and as it filled another wagon was attached while the first one was emptied at a pit that was dug in the ground. Settling was done with a tractor; unloading was done by dumping the truck; and efficiency, manpower, the necessity for building

an upright structure, was eliminated. The equipment cost was much greater but time and manpower were lessened. The quality of feed was the same.

Silo filling time in the early days was a busy time. Very few chiefs were needed, but a lot of Indians were necessary. It was a busy time for Mom, too. The men were empty to the toes, hungry as wolves, and had unbelievable appetites. Nothing fancy, just plain ordinary country filling grub. Beans, dried and green, mashed potatoes, tomatoes, cornbread, light bread, ham, fried jowl meat (and that's the fat cheeks of the hog), hominy, cabbage, buttermilk, sweet milk, and plenty of coffee, and anything else the women-



A farmer discing the field after cutting the corn. Photograph by G. E. Ingram, Edgar Springs, ca. 1910. Courtesy of the Kohenskey Family.

folks had lots of. Then there was huckleberry pie or blackberry cobbler, apple pie, and always Ozark sorghum, and home-churned butter to satisfy the sweet tooth. Then came the shade tree, the chew, the pipe, and the belching from those who were over-stuffed. A few tall tales, some bragging, some kidding, and, with fresh water jugs, off to the field again they went.

The womenfolks had their job to do, with all those dirty dishes, pots, and pans. The dogs and cats got their bellies full with scraps and the garbage went to the hogs and when night came, everything was full except the bank account. Nothing had been wasted. The field where the corn came from was

now ready to disc and prepare for fall wheat, and winter and early spring pasture. The succulent feed for the cold winter months ahead was in readiness.

Now that the family farm is a thing of the past, and farms are mechanized and have large acreage, silos as we knew them, both above and in the ground, are fast disappearing and in their place are expensive metal storage tanks with a complete balanced ration concocted, formed, and fed up by mechanical conveyors.

It took a little time to give you a thumbnail history of the silo, but now you know the story. Next time you drive to Waynesville, and turn left off of Fort Wood Spur onto City Route I-44 after you pass the Ramada on the right, you will see the remains of a concrete silo built by the Scott boys. Take a look at it, because time will doom it, and another landmark will pass on to memory alone, except that maybe someone might listen to this tape and get a mental picture of the past.

**William Eckert**, son of Lauramae Pippin Eckert and Dru's nephew, is an attorney in private practice in Arcadia, California. **Terry Primas** is the editor of the *Old Settlers Gazette*.

Dru Pippin's audio tapes were made available by the Post Museum at Fort Leonard Wood and the Missouri State Archives.

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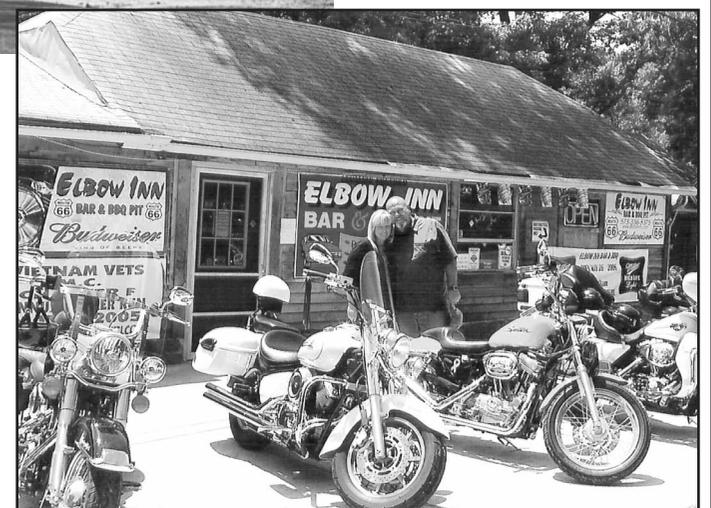
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