

# Dru Pippin - a reminiscence

## Part Five

### Reel Purpose

The other day a friend of mine asked "Why are you taking all of this time and effort to record so much about this who, where, and why and you don't even know if anyone will even listen to the tapes after they're completed." It kind of set me back for a minute and I pondered a truthful answer and this is what I came up with. "Listen," I said. "...my friend, these tapes, listen if you want to or forget all about them if you want to. I have hopes that those who follow me will benefit by my having taken the time to understand us as we lived out our life's span.

### Pawpaws

I suppose one's thinking, especially at the time when the foremost topic of conversation is the bicentennial celebration all over the nation, I find myself asking the question, "Is this native American?" Was this brought here from abroad and introduced here? Was this here and then changed to its present form by inbreeding, cross breeding, or seed selection? For a native Missourian, it's a natural trait to ask these questions. And then say, "Show me." Of this I'm sure. The pawpaw is Missouri's most American plant. You name it, we'll raise it, everything except citrus fruits, and pawpaw is a Missouri fruit. The pawpaw is a member of the custard apple tree with a long as your arm name, botanically speaking (*Asimina triloba*), and the only American member of an entire plant family. It is found growing wild in all of Pulaski County river soils, usually in straight-trunk trees, from 20 to 30 feet high, and usually in thickets. The leaves are oblong in shape, from six to ten inches long, and they droop. The bloom is a purplish red and not too attractive and the green leaves turn red in the fall late. The plant does not lend itself to transplanting but the seed of the fruit are more easily grown and started when one wants the tree to grow. The fruit is sometimes called the "Missouri banana," being from two to five inches long of a green color, turning brown when ripe, and black when overripe. The consistency of the pulp when ripe is that of egg custard, extremely sweet to the taste, maybe even used for flavoring desserts, because they can not be easily shipped and not been grown as a commercial food. Just as I have mentioned this unusual fruit, your explorations of the beautiful

scenery within the boundaries of Fort Leonard Wood will acquaint you with the pawpaw. Maybe you will come up with a new way to use the yellow custard meat. Our forefathers prized it as a change of pace in teasing the taste bud, although some people are allergic.



### Haze and Smoke

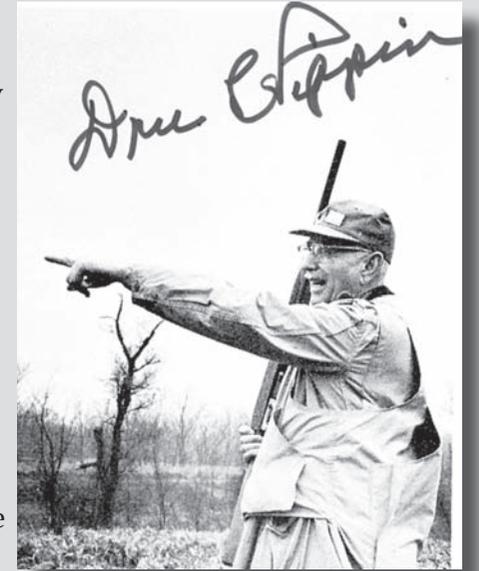
One of these memories that I always think of every time I see the surrounding hills from a vantage point is the misty smoky blue haze that seems to rest in each and every valley, sometimes appearing to be steaming from a boiling pot. Sometimes just seeming to form a blanket to obscure that which is below the hilltop level, while so often it is just the eye catcher that nature's paintbrush has used to soften the glare to a haze. To my knowledge, but one painter in all has ever been able, as I remember him, to have the ability to catch and paint this Ozark phenomena as it appears to the naked eye and that man was Mr. A. T. Winchell, who lived and died in Pulaski County in the thirties. One of his pictures hangs in the art museum in St. Louis. Seven of them hang in my home.

A gaze at the haze brings memories of the days when it was a custom to burn the woods every year. For the people then thought that the leaves had to be burned so that the grass could come through in the spring and the ticks would be unbearable unless they were burned or exposed to the rigors of the winter's weather. The smell of smoke, the sting in the eyes, the sparks, the smoldering sparkler effect of the dead limbs burning and glowing in the dark night, a pool of new cool air carrying new fire to yet unburned timber and the rest of the backfire placed to check the spread of the fire. The slip, the blistered hands, and the smoke filled alarms all come alive in memory. Education tells us that a blanket of leaves would control erosion better than a blanket of smoke. That grass and green growth would always find its way through the leaves and that burning would **not** control ticks; that nature and growing timber was ruined for

## 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*.



The dining room at Pippin Place, 1948, with its large rock fireplace and massive beams and bentwood accents. Courtesy of the Missouri State Archives.

lumber by the fire starters and nature was being hampered on her way to timber renewal and new growth.

Oh, yes, we still have some fires deliberately set. Many carelessly set and not controlled and they often burn out of control. But laws now protect the timber owner and grower and rightfully so. Our feathered and furry friends of the woods suffer most: food destroyed, dens burned out, and destroys the cover that tends to hide them from their enemies.

So next time you look from your car window 'cross the far off panorama with a variegated haze depending on humidity, pollution, or just nature's Ozark artistic smear of her magic brush, remember this: Smoky Bear pleads with you to hold your fire. Haze is one thing, smoke is another, and both bring back memories, maybe painful ones.

#### Cash

When John Doolin and his brother Cliff operated as a blacksmith shop in Waynesville, they had posted on their front door easily seen by everyone, a sign which read as follows: In God We Trust but We All Pay Cash. I remember that they changed locations of their shop at least three times but the sign was always moved from one door to

the next as they changed their location. Their old book of daily business receipts clearly shows that they didn't always go by their posted rules. Their records reveal hundreds of dollars of unpaid blacksmithing bills.

#### Mussel Shells

Have you ever noticed how Mother Nature puts beauty in the most unusual and unexpected places. Often, it seems, she has deliberately hid it with the hope that someone would find it and then take notice. Next time you float down one of Pulaski County's clear streams, look for a stump or a rock or near the water's edge and maybe you'll find mussel shells of all sizes and shapes. This is all that remains of the banquets that mister and misses raccoon have enjoyed. You say there is nothing of beauty in a pile of shells? Isn't there? Examine the shells. Wash off the dirt and let the rays of the sun hit the inner surface. I can think of nothing more iridescent, more lavish in blending of purples, blues, yellows, silvers, green, and pastels of all colors that nature has hidden inside some of these shells.

Selling mussel shells was a most profitable business years ago. As were made from these shells, beautiful



A relic of the past? Mussels, such as the one above, were once plentiful in the Big Piney River. Historically, the Piney hosted 32 species; in 2004, twenty-three, today even less. The decline is not due to raccoons or muskrats but increased siltation and degraded water quality.

colored buttons that graced the fancy dresses and shirts of the early years. The Indians used the smaller shells for beads and used it as wampum for money for trade, but only after using the meaty mussel as a food. Real pearl buttons are expensive and a luxury item of today. Almost any youngster knows that pearls come from oysters and most of them have heard of the industry that Japan has created by growing pearls inside planted live oysters. Yes, pearls are found in our Ozark oyster, the mussel. And, again, Mother Nature has taken care to hide the tiny pearl with its beauty in a place hard to find and easy to overlook. For some reason, I do not know why, most of the pearls are found in the long narrow type mussel shell, rather than the round, flat-shaped variety.

Oh, yes. If you like clams and know how to properly steam them, you will probably like the meat of the mussel. A little more racy, I think, shall I say, and maybe requires a little more chewing and maybe a little imagination but the red man liked it and it was a part of his daily life. The raccoons and the muskrats love this food, too, [as seen by] the accumulation of shells on a flat rock or a stump. The shells are dried by the heat and from the sun and rekindle the memories as you can remember having watched the coon dip his paw in the water and into the open mussel that was feeding on the bar. The paw went in the mussel and the shell closed on the paw of the raccoon. Out came the coon and with one paw inside the door and the other paw supplied with added leverage, the strength to pry open the shell was readily available. A quick wash, then followed by a feast of a delicacy, the feast of a gourmet's delight. For the coon, that is.

#### Lye Soap

The oldtimer says "I remember when..." The young says, "What's new?" So maybe as I remember when and relate it, the young will say, "That's new." Old to me, new to you. That's what celebrating 200 years as a nation



An unidentified local blacksmith shop that is sparsely furnished to accommodate horses and wagons. The smithy's essential tools of anvil, in front, and hearth, behind, are evident. Dru reminisced at length in last year's edition about blacksmiths he had known. Courtesy of Pulaski Historical Society.



This image was reproduced from a glass negative by the editor. The photograph was taken by Edd Ingram, local photographer in Edgar Springs, ca. 1905. To the right of the girl feeding her colt is the homestead's ash hopper. Courtesy of the Kohensky family.

is all about anyway. Many of the necessities of yesterday are still practiced as a way of life today. Oft times because of tradition, sometimes because of preference, many times because of necessity.

Making homemade soap is one because in the Ozarks, cleanliness is the next thing to godliness and, while today kitchen floors are not scrubbed white, clothes are always clean and boys ears and feet must be washed and

an oldtimer's sweat was the same as today's BO. The Palmolive, Lifebuoys, Camays, Irish Springs, and Dials of today are from vegetable fat and less irritating to the skin. Soap powders and liquefied detergents supplant old lye soap. The purpose of its use is the same: cleanliness.

Not too many years ago, every farm home had an ash hopper. The only source of heat for cooking and warmth

was from wood. Wood burning wood stoves, King heater stoves for warmth, and the old open fire place. The ashes were saved and dumped into a wooden V shaped box, tight on the sides and ends, but open at the point on the V with a trough underneath on a slope that would drain into a crock or a jug. The water was poured on the ashes and filtered through the ashes and drained into the jug, making lye water to be accumulated and saved to break down the animal fat of soap making.

Fat scraps, fat taken from the skins and bodies of fur bearing animals caught in the winter, trimmings from butchering, grease too rancid to use again was saved. Nothing was wasted that could be converted or recycled into something useful. The lye from the hopper would be about the color of coffee and hickory wood was thought to make the best ashes for soap making. For each quart of lye water from the hopper, six pounds of fat was added in an iron kettle on an open fire and it was constantly stirred with a wooden spoon. The lye water was allowed to come to a boil before the fat was added. Care should be taken as not to allow the skin to come in contact with the

lye water, as well as extreme care was taken not to inhale the fumes. Slow boiling is done until the fat is completely broken down. When the mixture was stringy or bead as in jelly making when dripped from the end of a spoon, the soap is done. Pour into a container and cut into squares as one does when making chocolate fudge. Just before it's hard is the time to cut.

The soap was claimed by the makers as being excellent for clothes, pimples, chiggers, ticks, bathes, poison ivy, and dish washing. The whiter the grease, plus a little Borax for bleaching, added to the mixture, plus vegetable coloring and maybe some perfume, always added to the attractiveness of the mixture. This is the voice of experience. Now, that soothing refreshing feeling may be lacking. It may be irritating to the skin so just say out loud, "I needed that" and go back to using your blue, pink, white, or green modern brand and chalk up its use as a once in a lifetime experience. Just for old time's sake.

#### The Kitchen

Probably the only thing that survives today of the early caveman kitchen is the fire itself. But it is easy to assume

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that where that fire was ignited was the center of attraction for those who called it home. As it must have been then, so is it now, in spite of the long and slow process from open fire to modern range and infrared instant cooking. Our many caves with layers upon layers of ashes, bones, and artifacts tell us of their lives while memories and preserved utensils and equipment from the kitchen show us of our grandfather's and grandmother's mode of operation and living. The early settlers of Pulaski County, as an older section of the New World 200 years ago, had open fireplaces to serve their heating and cooking needs. It was the kitchen that changed the least in home construction until the third quarter of the 18th century. The kitchen fireplace was large. It was from eight to ten feet wide, six feet high, and maybe six feet deep. A big fat log was placed in the rear and the smaller logs in front. Cooking was done in or over the fire in iron pots or brass kettles. A swinging crane, fastened to the side of the fireplace, could be swung in or out of the heat as was desired and on this was hung the various pots or utensils used for cooking.

About the year 1700, a baking oven was built into the fireplace with the opening flush with that of the fireplace and about three feet above the base of the fireplace. Most equipment was heavy, cumbersome, and big. The kettle had sloping sides and no cover. Baking was done then in what was known as a Dutch oven, made of cast iron, and a footed pan that had a flat, very tight fitted lid so that red hot coals could be heaped over the lid as they often rested in heated ashes or coals as was deemed necessary for even baking. Skewers and racks were items of necessity, while a salamander was available to pass old food that was to be browned. It was simply a flat metal disk on a long handle properly heated to brown that over which it was passed. The first cast iron tea kettle came into use about 1760. Early eating utensils were made from wood. Two people used one such plate which was called a trencher and resembles small, scooped out trays. Not until the early part of the 18th century did "king ware" pewter come into common use, being light in weight, shiny and bright,



and inexpensive and was often called "a poor man's silver."

About the same period of time, the kitchen was styled as to be in a separate room, maybe another building away from the living quarters. Along with this innovation came the kitchen range and its many inventions: side compartments for heating water, damper controlled heat, items for baking, and grates for cleaning out ashes and were designed for the burning of wood, coal, or coke.

Then, in about 1870, a gas was designed for cooking to be followed in 1880 by burners that would use oil. Graniteware was patented in St. Louis, Missouri in 1876 and supplemented by ironware, porcelain lined cast iron, and tin. About 1880 the first practical storage refrigerator was marketed. In 1893, at the World's Fair in Chicago, an electric frying pan, flat iron, was put on exhibit and when the plug was attached, the whole thing blew up. By 1920, the use of electricity was common in cities but only in 1.6% of the farms in America had available electricity.

So the modernization of rural liv-

ing, especially the development of the kitchen and appliances, lagged far behind that of the town dweller. The electric range came into being about 1909 and really became popular when General Electric introduced a range called Black -- in 1913. One after another the various pieces of electrical appliances came into use.

As the years went by with improvements: automatic controls, timers, speeds, colors, sizes, and shapes, all designed to suit the individual taste and then the frost free concept for the freezer.

Luxuries of the past are necessities of the present. Conveniences seem to be the watchword and the innovations in kitchen equipment have been based on newly developed materials. New cooking methods, new ways of processing and packaging foods, fashions, and finally health and nutrition studies based on scientific research.

And that's how it was, and that's how it is, from way back when 'til now.

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