

JOHN BAKER IS VERY ODD MAN; GOOD NEIGHBOR

Has Kept Two Coffins Stored in His Parlor for Himself and His Wife

MAN OF MANY TRADES

John W. Cannon, roving reporter of the Greensboro Daily News, has been to East Bend, and there picked up the trail of one of Yadkin's oldest and most versatile citizens. But let Mr. Cannon tell the story. Here it is:

East Bend. — John William Pledge Baker, 87, beekeeper,

farmer, dentist, brickmason, carpenter and medical student, is an ideal man to interview in these troublous times. No matter how loud you shout questions at him he will not hear a single one of them on account of being stone deaf. He selects his own subject and says what he pleases, a freedom of speech rarely witnessed in this day of dictatorships.

If there are any questions to be answered—and they do sometimes crop up even in such an out-of-the-way nook as the Baker farm in Yadkin county—he depends on his 83-year-old wife, Mrs. Mary Anne Scales Baker, to whom he has been married for 67 years, to hear them. Almost seven decades of living together has resulted in perfect cooperation between the aging pair.

Fashions Own Coffins
The way we heard about Uncle John, as he is affectionately known around East Bend, was through the word that was being passed around the neighborhood that he had fashioned his own coffin and was holding it, awaiting its solemn time of use. Such a step would even beat a defense program for being prepared, it seemed to us, and we went to investigate. The neighbors were not quite adequate in their information. Not only had Uncle John built his own coffin but had also made one for his wife. Both of the caskets, fashioned from the best walnut timber that he could find, occupy a corner in the front room where they were placed three years ago.

You are going to expect us to tell you that Uncle John is a morbid sort of individual with his mind always on death. Who wouldn't think of the grim reaper occasionally with a pair of reminders like this among the household furniture? But you ponder without knowing the real Uncle John, who is just as normal as any father of 14 children would be. He considers the two coffins furniture just as essential as you would your radio. He told us so himself as he nonchalantly sat on top of one of them which he brought out into the yard that we might see its fine points all the better.

Made Caskets For Eight Children
Of course not so much leeway has been given the designers of crypts. This architecture is necessarily limited. But Uncle John made the most of a narrow field of learning. He pointed to various improvements he had incorporated in his cabinet making. Coffin manufacture is nothing strange to him. He had a car-

enter's shop in days gone by and used to make a great many of them for his neighbors. He and his wife have outlived eight of their 14 children and it was his own hands that made a casket for each of them. He also made coffins for his father, who taught him how to tend to bees, and his mother. Why shouldn't he make his own?

Uncle John has not always been deaf. He could hear just a little bit a short while before last Christmas. But the perfect silence which now envelops him has not put an end to his work. Last summer he raised more than 600 chickens. The cold weather of this year hasn't been so good on poultry and he is cutting his production, but there always are his bees. He has many stands of them in his front yard. He handles them as if they were pets and no more minds a sting than he does a briar scratch. His father before him was a beekeeper and he says he was almost reared on honey, a sweet that he is giving up now because he thinks it might be damaging to his health.

Quit Dentistry Long Ago
He quit dentistry a long time ago. His old footpower drill and forceps have long since rusted with non-use. But he still remembers and relates of the time he pulled one of his patients across a log while extracting a tooth, which was in the days before anaesthesia and modern offices. He made his rounds among the surrounding communities doing such work as they required.

Liked Irish Peddlers
Uncle John in his prime could build just as good a chimney as he could a set of false teeth. He was always in demand for his ability with hammer, saw and trowel. In his spare time he studied medicine, a course which he never completed, to his sorrow.

No one has ever come to John Baker's house asking for something to eat but what it was given him. That is the reputation he has in his own neighborhood and he mentioned something about there being in the book he was reading an admonition running like this, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these . . ."

"Profit? Reward? He hasn't asked for any. He does count on the promise of an eternal home as he has heard outlined many times in the Union Hill Methodist church, of which he is the oldest member. But most of all he has been busy in this life because he liked just to be busy. That is one of the reasons why he took time after he was 80 years old to make for himself and his life partner the beds in which the two will take their last sleep. They will sleep just as well, we imagine, because good heart walnut and honest workmanship went into their final couches.

(What Mr. Cannon failed to learn about his subject is that he is the oldest member of the Masonic order in Yadkin county, both in point of years and years of membership.)

BENHAM

We extend a hearty invitation to everybody to come and be with us each Sunday night for prayer service. Mrs. Carrie West will conduct the service next Sunday night.

Several people from this community attended the funeral of Mr. Houston Tucker last Saturday at Cool Springs. He will be greatly missed by all.

Mr. Sanford Byrd from Iowa, has been spending a few days with his brother, Mr. Hilary Byrd and Mrs. Byrd.

Mr. and Mrs. Marcus Tucker announce the birth of a son, on June 4th.

Friends of Mrs. Ruff Blackburn will regret to learn that she is ill. Her friends hope for her a speedy recovery.

Little Misses Betty Jean and Angeline Holbrook of Traphill, have been spending a few days with friends and relatives here.

Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Darnell and family were the Sunday guests of their daughter, Mrs. Marvin Lewis, and Mr. Lewis.

Mrs. James Ross of Fieldale, Va., has been spending a few days with relatives here.

Mr. and Mrs. Quincy Brown of Winston-Salem, were the weekend guests of Mr. Brown's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Brown.

NOTICE

North Carolina, Surry County

Before the Clerk
Woodrow Park and wife, Marvarene Park, vs. Mrs. Gertha Park Hatcher and husband, J. O. Hatcher; Mrs. Fannie Park Saunders (widow); Mrs. Beulah Park Hamilton (widow) and husband, Walker Hamilton and Nelson Park, minor.

The defendants, Mrs. Gertha Park Hatcher and husband, J. O. Hatcher and Mrs. Fannie Park Saunders will take notice that an action entitled as above has been commenced in the Superior Court of Surry County, North Carolina, for a partition of land, and that said defendants will further take notice that they are required to appear at the office of the Clerk of the Superior Court, said County, in the Court House in Dobson, North Carolina, within ten days after the 15th day of June, 1940, and answer or demur to the Complaint in said action or the plaintiffs will apply for the relief demanded in said Complaint.

This the 22nd day of May, 1940.

F. T. LLEWELLYN,
6-13 Clerk of Superior Court.

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ROCKFORD

The Rangers Quartette of Radio Station WBT, Charlotte, gave a program in the Rockford school auditorium last Thursday night, sponsored by the Methodist church. A large crowd attended.

Miss Mayrene Harrington of Taylorsville, spent last week with her grandparents, Rev. and Mrs. Geo. E. Burrus.

Miss Evelyn Holyfield graduated last Monday from Meredith College, and is at home with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. H. G. Holyfield, for the summer.

Mr. and Mrs. A. C. Adams of Concord, were the week-end guests of Mr. and Mrs. Spencer Coe.

Mr. Spencer Norman of Dobson, principal of Rockford school, was a visitor here last Monday.

Mr. and Mrs. Jay Matlock and family of Winston-Salem, spent last Sunday as the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Burrus.

Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Burrus and family, of Winston-Salem, were the Sunday guests of Rev. and Mrs. Geo. E. Burrus.

Miss Beulah Folger of Rural Hall, is spending several days with Mrs. C. B. Davis.

Mrs. Edgar Boles and children of Winston-Salem, were the weekend visitors of Mr. and Mrs. J. R. Coe.

The annual Sunday school convention will be held at the Rockford Methodist church the fourth Sunday in this month. The public is cordially invited to attend.

SURPLUS
A large amount of American surplus food supplies will be sold through the U. S. Department of Agriculture to the Red Cross at half price to feed war refugees in France.



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