

The Foothills View

"We See It Your Way"

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BOILING SPRINGS, NC

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Four Mules, And Faith: Willie Blanton

"Thy age shall be clearer than noonday."
— God's promise to Job

"Daddy, the newspaperman's here to take your picture."

The 62-year-old man stepped to the open screen door of the neat, white house off Clifside Road — not to have his photograph taken, but to call to his father, 84-year-old Willie Blanton.

The senior Blanton, father to James, 62, and Johnnie, 57, is a familiar figure to most townspeople. The reason is simple: Willie Blanton has lived in Boiling Springs since before most residents were born.

Tuesday he was surrounded by family, including son James from Salisbury, who had gathered to celebrate his birthday here last Sunday.

"Oh, law, I could tell you about some changes," Blanton laughed and began to recall for a reporter his years as a maintenance worker, farmer, and, finally, landowner in this area.

A short, broad man, Blanton still retains a powerful-looking chest, the result of decades of plowing and of stoking boilers at Crest High School and the old Boiling Springs School, where he worked mornings as custodian.

For generations Willie Blanton was part of going to school at Crest — and still is. He officially retired as custodian there only three years ago, when he was 81, and is still called back when labor is short. But Willie Blanton's work in the fields is also part of the history of farming in the area, beginning in 1910, when he and his mother moved from near Washburn Switch to Boiling Springs.

"Now where the post office is now," Blanton said recalling the town in 1910, "there was a livery stable. My uncle worked there."

"My mother and me had moved down here to be close to him. We worked on a farm hoe-cropping then." He smiles at a reporter plainly born after 1910. "I guess you do know what hoe-cropping is?"

Willie Blanton was wise enough to answer his own question. "Hoe-crop is a crop the man who furnishes the land plows. You hoe it. He gets two bales, you get one."

"Now when I was 15 and took the family in charge," he remembered, "with my mother, four sisters, and two brothers, I rented crops on the halves instead of hoe-cropping." After 67 years Blanton still smiles at the memory of the move up. "I could plow it."

The next move up was to own the land he plowed.

Blanton was determined to own, and hearing of a farm for sale by the late O. P. Hamrick, he went to see the Gardner-Webb educator at his home.

"Professor Hamrick was down on his knees fixing something in his house when I went in and asked him about the farm. He said, 'I'll take five thousand and five hundred dollars.'"

Blanton looked steadily at his listener. "I didn't have but two hundred dollars."

Blanton recalled what happened next. "Professor Hamrick's wife started, 'Now, O. P., you ought to sell Willie that land...'"

"Professor Hamrick got up, and we wrote up the terms."

Blanton was eager to move to his new farm, but had promised to rent and work for a season's crop for the farmer to whom he had made the original offer.

"He came to me, it was it September, and said, 'Now, Willie, if you want to move I won't think hard of you.' 'I said, 'No, sir, I've rented from you for a year, and I'll stay on another year'."

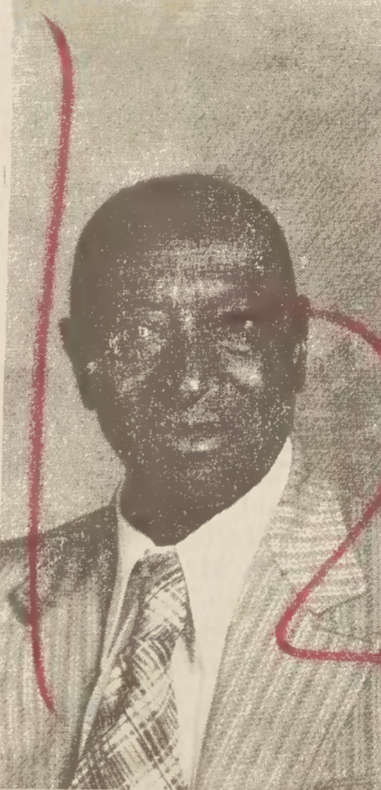
After that year's wait, Blanton at last began "farming heavy" in 1947 with four mules and a tractor on his own land. He has made a good living for himself, his late wife Maggie, and his two sons. Johnnie Blanton is considered one of the area's master mechanics; James Blanton is an accountant and works at the Veteran's Hospital at Salisbury.

"I've sold down to 90 acres now," Blanton says, having earned, with his four mules and a tractor, a maximum of 130 acres during his farming career.

Now remarried to Francis McDowell Blanton, Willie Blanton lives next to Johnnie in two white frame houses side by side. Well-tended flower pots are on the porch; each twig appears to have been carefully picked up from the smoothly-mowed lawns in front of the houses.

Advice for the young? Blanton considers his memories of the Depression, his struggles to acquire land, and an economic future for this country that worries him.

"There are some things," he says, "that a man must just place in the hands of the Lord."



"Hoe crop is a crop the man furnishes the land plows. You hoe it. He gets two bales, you get one."

Willie Blanton

G-W Alumni Local Woman On Board

Ms. Elizabeth Ann Lancaster of Boiling Springs has recently been appointed to serve as a member of the alumni board of directors at Gardner-Webb College.

Ms. Lancaster is employed by the Cleveland County school system as a sixth grade teacher at South Cleveland school in Shelby. She also is currently assistant organist at

Boiling Springs Baptist Church.

In addition, Ms. Lancaster is a member of the Cleveland County Women's Club, the Cleveland County Choral Society, and the Gardner-Webb College Bulldog Club.

Ms. Lancaster holds an associate of arts degree from Gardner-Webb. She received a bachelor and masters degree from Appalachian state.

Lions Club

Time Left On Calender

Don't forget that birthday or anniversary — just remember to list the important date on the Lions' Club calender.

The Boiling Springs area club will be listing dates through August for inclusion on their 1983 birthday calenders. Each listing is forty cents.

The deadline is September 3. The club asks anyone not contacted by a Lions Club member to go by First Federal Savings and Loan or the Maxwell Hamrick Insurance Agency for a listing.

Calenders are \$2 and will be delivered in December.

College Belles

Among the 250 freshmen women enrolling at Peace College in Raleigh this fall are Nancy Vaughn, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Henry Vaughn of Boiling Springs, and Laura Lynn Williams, daughter of

Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Williams of Shelby.

Classes at the Presbyterian junior college for women began Tuesday, Aug. 24. The women at the private school work toward associate degrees in liberal arts, business or music.

Drop By Drop



Most areas of Shelby received a rainfall Tuesday night that could be counted by the drops instead of inches.

Car Skips School Here

A student at Gardner-Webb College moving into Royster dormitory returned to the parking lot Sunday night and discovered his car had been stolen while he was inside unloading his belongings. Boiling Springs police report.

The gold, 1969 Opal was taken about 10:30 p.m., police say, during a five-minute period while the student was inside the dormitory. Police say the keys were left inside the car.

License numbers of the vehicle are VBP-807.

A Fair Day In October

Cleveland County Fair manager Joe Goforth announced this week that the 1982 fair will open Oct. 1 and continue through Oct. 9.

Attractions scheduled for the 1982 fair include tractor pulls, a rodeo, Carla

Walenda highwire show, fireworks displays, and a gospel sing.

Last year attendance at the county fair was counter' at 93,164.