

# The Old Homeplace

By Ronald H. Lowry  
Virginia Beach, VA  
Continued from Last Week

Recently I visited the place where I was born down by the railroad on the old family farm. Things have changed since the roaring twenties when my folks took up homesteading in a land of plenty.

In nineteen twenty two the first son arrived to be followed by five plus one girl whom we idolized. A hard-nosed depression came in the thirties but we weathered it by being strong and sturdy.

We worked the soil to bring forth food galore to feed a family of 9 with food left over to be stored. Having no refrigeration much food went to waste but we survived the winters with canned food we ate.

We used muscle power employing both human and animal to cultivate the land to yield a harvest each annual. The old crosscut saw was used on a regular basis to keep muscles firm and supply fuel to heat fireplaces.

Back when I was growing up on the family farm the crosscut saw was used to convert wood into a usable form. Today when I read and hear of ways to stay in shape I reflect on how the old crosscut saw helped maintain a suitable weight.

I have fond memories of Old Kate and Old Nellie who for many years helped put food in our bellies. I can't forget our first male dog, Hitler, a big mutt who turned out to be some kind of stud.

Old Hitler roamed the area far and wide tracking down those female mutts before they could hide. He was a big black dog and we gave him that name which he lived up to by being a terror and downright mean.

I remember one summer on a Saturday night Dock Lowry was walking across our farm about half tight. Old Hitler spied him and took up a chase and old Dock Lowry lost the seat of his pants in the race.

Old Hitler did not live to a very old age the result of living a life bordering on promiscuous rage. He met his fate consorting between the railroad tracks when a train bore down as he clung to some mutt's back.

Old Kate is what we called her when I was young she was the first mule I learned to run. We depended on Old Kate for her mule power and this she supplied amounting to many hours.

In the late 20s and throughout the 30's Old Kate earned her keep by plowing acres. She was a slow mule and stubborn at times but easy to handle being one of a kind.



"The Old Homeplace" (1943) "Old Hitler" on watch in backyard.

I yearned for the day when I could hold the plow and give forth those commands of Get-Up, Whoa, Gee, and Haw. After years of fooling around with Old Kate I am glad I looked elsewhere to seek my fate.

In the springtime when stored feed was scarce I would take Old Nellie to the woods to eat grass. As she stuffed herself to the point of getting sick I wondered why a brown cow eating green grass gave white milk.

The old iron kettle had a special place by the fireside so that the heat would cause the steam to rise. This would be a signal for old clothes to be layed aside and climb into that tub which was galvanized.

On a Saturday night when the cold wind blew we would rush through that bath for we knew, that one side got hot while the other was not, even though a big grub fire was burning hot.

The old iron kettle now sits in a designated shrine by a modern fireplace with nothing to do but age with time. Sometime I will recall some past Saturday night when the old iron kettle steamed proudly with all its might.

The woodpile was a common scene at the old homestead usually located along beside an old shed. The ax and chopping block were always available to start a chicken on the trip from barnyard to the table.

The family farm was a very lively place and one could move along at a steady pace: When you stopped to calculate your hourly rate you were motivated to look for some other state.

As time moves along and changes are made and everyone is in a hurry as if in a race, I will always be grateful for having worked and played, in that part of the country we call "The Old Homeplace."

## » "CRYING EYES"

I am a Lumbee Indian. I disagree with this name. About 1956 the government, who else, decided that all the Native Peoples, of many different Nations, living in a certain area of North Carolina, would be named after a river, the Lumber, which flowed through the land. In one fell swoop many Peoples became disenfranchised of their heritages by becoming a non-nation. I was born in North Carolina and raised on farms there and in New Hampshire. In High School I was more active in sports than academia. That's not unusual for a farm boy. I received letters in Football, Basketball, Cross Country and Track. After High School I was drafted to fight in the Vietnam Conflict. I spent fourteen and a half months in Vietnam. My company was destroyed twice in one year. In my final battle I became the sole survivor, after receiving burns on twenty percent of my body and after being shot three times. (I still carry one of those bullets in my back.) When we were finally "rescued", in the confusion of the battle I was mistakenly assumed to be dead, even though I was conscious. By sheer will I remained alive for several more hours in the middle of a pile of fifteen of my dead comrades. It was only after the bodies were being loaded onto a helicopter that I caught the attention of a soldier by wiggling a finger of my left hand.

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After spending six months in a Navy hospital I was discharged and I began attending college. In 1975 I graduated from Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. I have a degree in Biology and Psychology.

Since 1975 I have spent five more years, back home, in North Carolina, five years in New Jersey and five years in Charleston South Carolina as Civilian-In-Charge of the Military Sealift Command Detachment. I am currently in New Jersey working for my headquarters.

I guess what life has taught me is not to give up. I believe in pressing forward on the things in which I believe. I try to live truthfully and with strength, like a Warrior. I fight for the truths and ideals of my people. I believe that we can make a difference. I hope "The Spike" can make a difference.

I believe that being Indian is a matter of philosophy. More a religion than a matter of blood.

I do not bear an "Indian" name but a small, warm group of friends from home call me "Crying Eyes."

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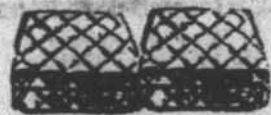
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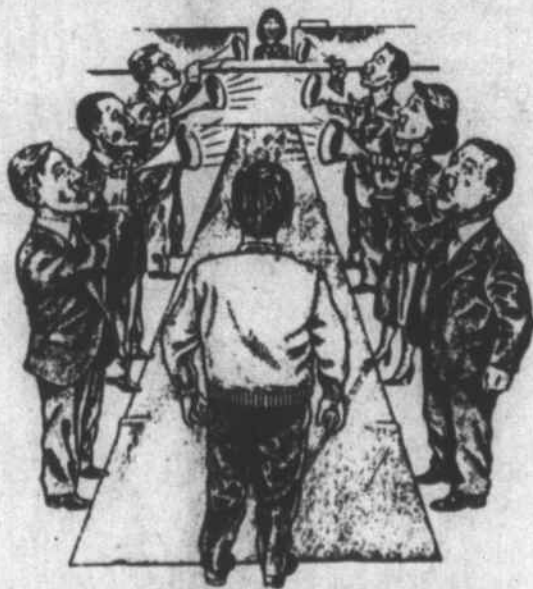
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## PUBLIC NOTICE To Robeson County Taxpayers

The Robeson County Tax Bill which you recently received may include a new Landfill-Collection Fee of either \$30.00 or \$60.00. The \$30.00 fee is for use of the County landfill where your household waste is taken for disposal. This fee is billed to each household in the County. The \$60.00 fee includes the \$30.00 Landfill Fee mentioned above and an additional \$30.00 Solid Waste Collection Fee. The Solid Waste Collection Fee is billed to each household that does not have a municipal garbage pick-up service.

These fees will be used to defray the increasing costs of collecting, recycling and disposing of solid waste. New State and Federal Environmental Regulations are expected to increase the County's cost from the present \$1.0 million per year to approximately \$3.0 million over the next two (2) to three (3) years.

The alternative to these fees would have been a property tax rate increase of approximately 6 cents per \$100 valuation.

For further information, you may contact W.C. Baxley, Solid Waste Director at 1-800-682-2014 or James E. Martin, County Manager at 671-3022.