

## "THE CENTURY OLD FIRE" IS OUT

C. O. Hearon

(In Spartanburg Herald)

The "Century Old Firfe" is out.

The hearthstone is cold in the cabin of William Morris, under the hill, on the Holbert Cove Road, about 3 miles from the post office at Saluda, N. C.

Monte Dedman, tells me. Yes, he's tellin' me.

I knew it, but I just din't want to tell anybody.

At William's death about 3 years ago, Mrs. Ida Owens, a relative became custodian of the fire, and of William's place, a little mountain farm. She kept the fire burning until a month ago, when because of illness she was taken to a hospital.

William Morris was a neighbor of ours in the mountains. Three generations of us have scratched in the coals of William's fire place, but never failed to find a blaze or deep red coals.

William's story was that the fire was kindled, with flint and steel, long over a hundred years ago, when the family settled in Saluda Branch of Green River. In those days it was essential to keep the home fires burning, else they might have to travel far to a neighbor's house to get coals in a kettle. When the family moved from Saluda Branch to the site of the present cabin, the coals of that original fire were carried in a pot and put down on the hearth. His grandmother never let it go out. His mother never let it go out and so long as he lived he never let it go out.

William never married. After the death of his mother, more than 20 years ago, he lived alone. On his farm he raised vegetables, corn and had apple trees. And always a mule, a sled, a wagon, a dog and a few hens. There was no hurry about the place. From dawn to dark he performed his chores, drove to town in his wagon on Saturday.

However, farming and patching a garden, along a stream that passed his house, were not the things that brought distinction

and recognition to William. William was a sentimentalist and a fiddler. A romancer and a musician. His fiddle, in its case, leaned just inside the door and when we got set on the porch, he didn't have to get out of his split-bottom chair, just legged it over, about a step, reached in and the concert was on.

His favorite was "Napoleon's March—Back from Moscow". It was a dirg. It had no beginning and no ending—just trudged right on, until some one called for "Turkey in the Straw" or "Arkansas Traveler," and that would break the march.

William went to New York and appeared on the radio program—"We, the People". He gave the experience of his life, and came back with a battery radio, the prize he won.

It was over that radio, in William's house before the fire on Sunday morning I heard the King of England declaring war on Germany—and World War II was beginning. I had walked over the mountain with Wylie Goforth and had suggested that we pay our respects to William.

"Is your radio working?" I ask—  
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