

# When We Were Boys

By Oden Walker

Minnie, my wife, is the oldest of her family. The next in line is her brother, Lee. Minnie is many grades ahead of him. He would amuse himself by looking through his reading book as they wended their way in the afternoon to their home on Sugar Fork. When Minnie, looking over his shoulder, would tell him that such and such a page was a very hard lesson, Lee would promptly tear that page out. He kept this up evening after evening, and by the time the term was out, Lee didn't have much left of his book but the backs. Minnie says she used to go to bed early so she could dream of being as her Prince Charming. I had to live nearly 40 years, and he called everything else under the sun, before I learned that I had never been anyone's Prince Charming. Somehow I just don't get it. Minnie kept her secret well, for when we were going to school, she teased the life out of me.

A lot of folks have "griped" because Col. Connelly bought up a lot of land on North Fork and tried to keep it posted, but Mrs. Connelly did more for the young people of this community than anyone else. Of course, there was Cousin Della who gave us the best years of her life, but Mrs. Connelly made it possible for her to help us more than she ordinarily could have. I have told you about the phonograph that we had so much fun with, and she gave the community a Christmas tree each year with presents, fruits, and sweets for everyone. The most prominent ladies of the neighborhood would meet to divide and mark these presents, and sometimes there would be a good deal of bickering. The regular county school term at that time was four months. Mrs. Connelly paid our teachers for two added months, and therefore, we had a much longer time in which to pursue the elusive goddess of learning. I have mentioned our library which Mrs. Connelly gave us; it wasn't very big, but the selection was good. Dickens, Hawthorne, Seton, Longfellow, and other great poets, Uncle Remus stories, humorous stories, and all the good fairy tales. I read all of these books, and some of them several times. I think this very little library had a great influence for good on North Fork. I think Cousin Della originated the idea of reading to the school on Friday afternoons, and, believe me, she was good at it. These Friday afternoons are among my fondest memories.

Years later a young woman, who was teaching her first school, was reading to us. It was late fall and buckeyes were ripe. At noon recess some of the boys put a handful in the wood heater, which had had a fire in it that morning, but there was only hot ashes that evening. Well, we became engrossed in what the teacher was reading and forgot about the buckeyes. About three o'clock there was a terrific explosion, blowing the top of the heater off and spraying soot and ashes all over the house. I don't suppose that woman knows yet just what happened. Everyone was afraid to tell.

Maybe I ought to explain about the buckeyes—You see, it is a nut that is supposed to be partly poison. It has a very tough shell, or skin. There is a lot of moisture in the meat, and when it is put in coals, or hot ashes, it produces a lot of steam which the shell holds confined until it is highly compressed. When the pressure becomes greater than the shell can stand, you can imagine what happens.

Most of the teachers would let the sixth and seventh graders go outside in balmy weather to study their lessons. We were put on our honor to behave ourselves within reason. There was a big beech tree that stood between the schoolhouse and the spring. The trunk of this old monarch was about two feet in diameter, but the lower branches grew downward and almost touched the ground. We used to climb these low-hanging limbs and go on nearly to the top, the girls coming modestly behind, and there, swayed by the breezes, we would get our lessons and cut initials and cute sayings on the trunk of the tree. Once a girl whom I was crazy about stood under this tree and let me kiss her. You could have knocked me over with a spruce twig, for I had been trying to do this for months without success. Minnie and I went back to the old school grounds a few Sundays ago, and the old beech tree is like the most of us; she is looking a little worse for wear, but you can still see some of our initials on her. I found the metal end of one of the desks and brought it home for a keepsake.

Each year the senior classes of the consolidated schools present a play. Some are good, some are indifferent. Then the different classes present little plays all along through the term. Besides the high school band, the smaller children have rhythm bands that sound like fun. All this is fine; drama and music are very important subjects. We didn't have the facilities that they have today, but we did the best we could with what we had. There used to be a day in late spring that was called Children's Day. Strange, but you don't hear of it anymore. We would practice a couple of months for this gala occasion. There would be gay and lighthearted songs about the spring of the year and the spring of Life. Singing was one of the few things that I could do, so I was in lots of the musical numbers. When the girls sang by themselves, the teacher used to let me drill them. We had one girl who would "flat", and you couldn't keep her from it. I wonder if she still does. There were many and varied recitations. This was not in my line, but I have many glamorous memories of our beautiful girls in their Sunday best, quaking before an audience as they recited long poems. Among the favorites were The Face on The Barroom Floor, Sail On, Sail On, and Riley's Raggedy Man. And the girls garnished these recitations with suitable gestures.

We usually had flag drills. One year we had a very complicated one that was to be done entirely by girls. We lacked four girls of having enough to do the drill, and the teacher called for volunteers among the boys. Now it

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## Betty Marshall Elected Montreat College May Day Queen

Miss Betty Marshall, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Lacy S. Marshall, Williamsville, Va., has been elected by the student body of Montreat college to reign as May Queen next spring.

Miss Marshall, who is a senior, is also editor-in-chief of the student publications.

Representing the senior class in the court will be Miss Carolyn Williams, Wilmington, N. C. Miss Pat Conger, Atlanta, Ga., will represent the junior class, and Miss Virginia Blackburn, Elkin, N. C., will represent the sophomores.

The freshman representative is Kathryn Mull, Asheville, N. C. Miss Toni An, of Korea, a senior at Montreat Preparatory School for Girls, will serve as maid of honor.

Other preparatory school representatives will be: Ann Harris, Rutherfordton, N. C., senior; Maria Spence, Montreat, junior; Barbara Betts, Black Mountain, N. C., sophomore, and Shirley West, Newport News, Va., freshman.

## All Club Women Invited To Tea By Pen Women

All club women in Swannanoa, Moore VA hospital, Black Mountain, Ridgecrest and Montreat are invited to a tea to be given by the Pen Women of the Swan-

nanoo Valley at The Little Arts Club, 12½ Wall street, Asheville, Saturday, Dec. 8, from 3 to 5 p. m.

Hostesses will be Mrs. Thomas S. Sharp, Mrs. James Crawford, Mrs. John Payne Williams, and Mrs. Frank Howard Richardson.

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