



## Front Porch Music

By Ron Isbell  
Publisher

### It's butchering time in Rusty Springs

The first frost of the year has already visited. It was a clear, still night with just a sliver of a moon to light up the countryside. Breath was rolling out of mouths in a fog. Jackets were pulled tightly around bodies out for a stroll. Persimmons took that big leap from bitter to sweet.

And in Rusty Springs, the town where I grew up, my Dad and men like him were sharpening knives, cleaning up butchering kettles and laying in hickory wood for the smokehouse.

That chill in the air means sausage, hams and cracklins. And ours didn't come from Ingles or Food Lion. They came right on the hoof.

Butchering day was an event of gigantic proportions. Because eight hands could do three times the work of four we usually pooled our resources. (for you math students: in real life two plus two isn't always four).

That meant that at daybreak my Uncle Johnny and cousins Jim and Virgil would roll into our driveway with a couple of 250 pound hogs in the back of the truck. Grandpa would be right behind with another hog in his truck. Dad would have already sorted out the two he wanted and have them penned up.

The day before Dad had hung a rope and pulley from the big beam over the door of our machine shed and attached a single tree for hoisting the hogs. He'd also built a "scraping platform" out of saw-horses and some sturdy oak boards under the pulley and leaned a couple of 50-gallon barrels at about a 60 degree angle against the end of

the platform.

Our two big 30-gallon charred black cast iron butchering kettles were sitting not far away on their tripods with a generous pile of split firewood under them. The first job the younger generation faced that morning was to carry water from our well - five gallon bucketsful at a time - to fill the kettles.

The blazing fire under the kettles soon shook off the early morning chill. We stoked and stayed close to the fire until that "watched pot" finally did begin to boil. Then we transferred the hot water to the barrels. And started all over again.

After the "crack" from Dad's .22, he and Uncle Johnny would muscle the first hog onto the scraping platform and dip it into the hot water several times before pulling it out onto the oak planks. We joined in with the tedious task of scraping all the hair off the hide of the hog using either knives or a special tool with a very sharp circular, convex head with a wooden handle. Then we did it all over again, and again, and again until we were so wet and cold our fingers hurt.

It was amazing how clean and white those hogs looked after their final dunking. They bore little resemblance to the grunting, muddy animal they had been 30 minutes before. But until they were hoisted up on the singletree and gutted they still didn't look like the ham and bacon they would become 30 minutes later.

Deftly cutting away strips of fat that lay just under the skin, Dad would soon have those hams and slabs of bacon isolated and ready

for rubbing down with salt and seasoning. They would be hanging in Grandpa's smoke house later, soaking up the hickory-scented smoke for days. Pork chops or tenderloin were carved from the carcass, destined for the freezer.

While we didn't quite adhere to the old adage of using everything but the squeal, we did keep the liver, heart and brains from the pile of "innards".

While Dad and Johnny would carve up the carcasses, Grandpa supervised the rest of us in cutting all the meat that wasn't destined for the smokehouse or freezer into strips that would be fed into the sausage grinder. The tubfulls of sausage would be seasoned with spices that assaulted the nose with pungent aromas. Hustled off to the freezer it would later give pancakes a life of their own on a cold winter morning.

The last chore was to cut all that fat into small pieces that we fed to the gaping mouth of that big black kettle.

With the fire re-stoked we stirred the pot with a wooden paddle and cooked the fat down into lard. The final job was to dip the contents of the kettle into the lard press that would squeeze the last of the lard out of each piece of fat. All that was left was a tin can full of lard and a mound of cracklins. If you've ever butchered hogs I know you're tasting them right now, like 'em or not. Personally, I'm in the "not" category, but it seems my share never went to waste.

I was a bigger fan of the lard. I knew it would grease the cast iron skillet that cooked my eggs and would mix with flour to make the crust that would hold a cinnamon-apple mixture that would make my mouth water the entire time it sat on the window sill cooling.

Somewhere during this cooking process Dad would pick up the paddle and pull a piece of tenderloin he had wrapped in cheesecloth out of the kettle and let it cool. We all stopped for a real treat...the sweetest, most tender piece of meat ever prepared for man's mouth. It was like appetizer, entrée and dessert all rolled into one bite.

Funny how thinking about such a cold day can warm your heart, but that's the way it is in Rusty Springs.

## Police log

### ARRESTS

DEC. 20: Kristy Leann Lail, 29, Grover, driving while license revoked, \$500 bond, secured. She was also cited for no insurance and for borrowing a license plate, fictitious tag and no seat belt.

DEC. 20: Daryl Scott Ransom, 23, 208-9 Bell Rd., felony possession of Schedule VI marijuana, possession of drug paraphernalia and resisting public officer, both misdemeanors, \$50,000 bond, secured. Ransom was also charged with an FTC money compliance in the amount of \$370 cash dating to August 2005.

DEC. 20: James Harley Allman, 20, Lowell, possession of non-tax paid alcoholic beverage and possession under 21, \$500 bond secured. Officers confiscated 3 1/3 quarts of moonshine.

DEC. 22: Chrystal Dawn Petro, 35, Charlotte, DWI, resist, delay, obstruct and worthless check, \$300 bond secured and \$2500 unsecured bond for the DWI and resist charges.

### CITATIONS

DEC. 20: Danny Ray Vanover, 42, Gastonia, no insurance.

DEC. 20: Cynthia Faile, 36, Lowell, no inspection, expired tag.

DEC. 20: Terrell Lee Badger, 26, Bessemer City, speeding, revoked license.

DEC. 21: Wanda Hord, 52, 106 Urban Dr., expired tag, no inspection.

DEC. 21: Claressia Fuller, 23, Lawndale, revoked license, expired tag, no inspection.

DEC. 21: Wendy Inman, 35, 119 Mountainside Dr. Lot 9, expired tag.

DEC. 21: Anthony McGill, 44, Bessemer City, no inspection, expired tag.

DEC. 21: Bradley

Gilliam, 19, 146 Hickman Dr., speeding, stop sign violation.

DEC. 21: Tammy Heath, 46, 119 Countryside Rd, revoked license.

DEC. 22: Edgar Flores, 19, Grover, underage drinking.

DEC. 22: Alonzo Badillo, 39, Gastonia, no operator's license.

DEC. 23: Jessica Cain, 22, 105 Wells St., possession of marijuana.

### INCIDENTS

DEC. 20: Rupp and Woody Associates, 606 Charles St., reported \$8000 damage to a central air unit.

DEC. 20: Norfolk Southern Railroad, Clarksville, TN, reported theft of diesel fuel.

DEC. 20: A resident of Cleveland Ridge Dr. reported theft of \$45.91 in motor fuel and damage to a gas cap.

DEC. 21: A resident of Northwoods Dr. reported damage to a mailbox.

### WRECKS

DEC. 15: Officer R.S. Davis said Alfred Payne Jr. of 103 Jeremy Drive was backing from a parking space at the high school and struck a 1997 Jeep operated by Reba Hudson of Grover. Damages were estimated at \$2100.

DEC. 20: Ptl. G.L. McKinney said a parked 1997 Nissan was damaged \$300 by a hit and run driver. The vehicle was parked at the Community Thrift Store.

DEC. 22: Officer Bryan McGinnis said that Mary Krieger, Grover, was attempting to parallel park her 2002 Buick on the side of NC 216 and struck an unoccupied 2006 Toyota owned by Jason Hughes, 107 Country Grove Rd. Property damages were estimated at \$1800.



# Building Futures

APPLY NOW!

## Things To Do...

- Complete an online application for admission or print and mail to:

Cleveland Community College  
137 South Post Road  
Shelby, NC 28152

- Apply for financial aid. Complete the FAFSA at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov).

(Cleveland Community College school code: 008082)

- Call the CCC Student Success Center at (704) 484-5325 to schedule your placement tests.

- Call your high school and request an "official" high school transcript be sent to the College or deliver it in person to CCC Student Services.

- Spring Registration January 5  
9:00 am - 1:00 pm  
4:00 pm - 7:00 pm

