

Old Jim



By Dan Caldwell

(Volume Two, Chapter Twenty Three Pt 1.)

On the hill behind the Stidham's' farm, built solidly and almost in the midst of the stream, the huge millwheel squeaked and groaned as the water poured continuously into the compartments. The old mill had stood use for many, many years but by the sound of it as it was getting started one would think that this may be the last of it.

"She'll quieten down in a little while. Soon as the grease gets to her," Elijah Stidham said, "She does this every year. Always the same and it's always the same result. We'll let her turn free for a while before we begin to load her up. Let the grease get settled into all the right places. She'll take the strain."

As they watched, the huge stone wheels began to turn, slowly at first then faster as Elijah engaged the gears fully. A brown field mouse ran from beneath the stones as they made their first turn. A handful of leaves filled with acorns and seeds fell from the chute which fed the finished meal into the sacks. Jay kicked this away into the empty floor below. With brooms and rakes they began then to thoroughly sweep away any leaves, dust and cobwebs which might have collected over the past months. The old mill had sat unused for more than two years now. Today they would begin the grinding of the old farmer's corn meal. He and Jay had carefully selected the ears which they would grind. These had been shelled and poured into bushel sacks. Twenty sacks in all. These would, after having been ground, make about eight or nine full sacks of cornmeal. This would then be distributed evenly or, proportionately among the Hawkins family. John would need more than Luke or Matthew. Mark as well would need almost as much. After the first grinding was finished the old farmer would store away several more sacks of long, clean, white grains for grinding at a later date. It was not good to grind too much at a time. Weevils were a concern when cornmeal had been stored for a very long time. The old farmer had learned that it was best to grind smaller amounts and grind two or three times each year. The same was not true with feed for the animals. This could be ground in bulk, sweetened, and stored. The old farmer was always especially careful though when it came to grinding and mixing the sweet feed for his old white-haired friend!

"I think she's ready now fellows" called Stidham.

France Napier, who had come to help with the loading of the chutes jumped from the loft onto the floor below.

"They're ready up above" he said. "Shall I tell them to start feeding the corn into the hoppers."

"Yes" Stidham replied, "Tell Jay to engage the shaker to sift out all the bits that escape the stones. We'll dump those back into the top chute when we're done"

Elijah Stidham, father of Jay, took the first empty sack and sat it on the platform beneath the bottom chute. As the old mill groaned and creaked, with stones grating. Within minutes clean white cornmeal began to pour into the sack. As they turned slowly around and around, the grains were compressed between the stones crushing and grinding them into small dust like particles. These then fell into a hopper below, which in turn, fed the meal through a screen or shaker which sifted it for any pieces that may have escaped the stones. These were collected and returned to the top while the rest fell into the chute that led down to the bottom of the mill where the sacks were waiting to be filled.

As they worked the old farmer began to whistle a merry tune!

Granny's Porch

Flooding

Good Morning Everybody! As I am sitting here enjoying my first cup of coffee this morning, I was just thinking about how unpredictable the weather is. One day it's cold and rainy. We even had sleet night before last. Today, it's in the 60's. The next day it will rain and flood the area. Well, of course, we know this nice weather is a short-lived thing and it will be getting cold and will soon be seeing snow. This reminds me of years ago about the cold weather and people having fires to heat the house and having house fires and losing their homes.

Just listening to the reports bring back memories of a flood in 1935. I was nearly seven years old, and as I've said before there were very few battery-powered radios in that part of the country back then. As I recall there were only two, one belonged to our neighbors, Chester, and Minnie Caldwell, and the other to my first cousin, Henry Simpson.

One evening, daddy came home and said to mother that as soon as the chores were finished, they would go somewhere to listen to the radio. He had heard reports of flooding in all the counties around them and wanted to go and check out the news.

The milking was finished, and everyone had eaten supper. Mother and daddy were getting ready to go to the neighbors. As usual, I was intrigued and wanted to learn something new, so I asked permission to go along. Permission was granted and I clearly remember there being water everywhere. There were places in the road that was completely covered, so we had to wade through the water. However, we lived in the upper end of Leslie County and the flooding didn't affect us as much as it did others.

Daddy was acquainted with a lot of people in the surrounding counties and was very concerned as we walked to Chester and Minnie's house. The reports came from the Harlan and Hazard radio stations about flooding in Leslie, Perry, Harlan, and Bell Counties. It was terrible to hear about all the destruction.

The next flood I remember was in June 1947. By then, I had been married for about fifteen months. Even though we didn't live near a river, the flooding was so widespread, that it affected nearly everyone in our country in one way or another. The following day, we walked down the road to view the damage and assist in any way that we could.

There was one family, Millard and Mattie Brock and their children whose house was nearly demolished by the water. Millard had built an addition on the back of the house, and this was the kitchen. The whole house had washed away leaving only the kitchen with three walls. The front part of the house had been built for some time before the kitchen was added on and that was all that was left.

It was a very hurtful sight to see when we got there. But there they all were, Millard, Mattie and all their children in the kitchen cooking. Yes, cooking! The water had washed away their house and most of their garden, but they were just thankful that everyone was alive and well. They had gone down to the garden and found a few rows of green beans, a few partial rows of potatoes, some onions, and a few other vegetables. They put it all together and were ready to eat a good meal. The kitchen was stocked with lard, cornmeal, coffee, cabinets, stove, and dishes, so they felt very blessed.

These people were so happy to see us, they said come on in, we're cooking dinner. Mattie was one of the world's best cooks and always kept things clean and neat. But the amazing thing was they wouldn't eat until they insisted that we eat with them even though none of us could eat very much. Can you imagine anyone being so generous these days? They just said let's eat and be merry the Lord will provide for us. And He did.

That evening there was a place provided for them to store what was left of their belongings and they stayed with neighbors. As I've said many times, whenever someone was sick or their house burned down or in this case, their house washed away, all the neighbors would pitch in and help all they could. People would divide whatever they had with each other, and this was one of the many times that I'd watched my mother go and pull a couple of quilts from her stack and whatever else she could get to help and give them to someone.

I remember the Red Cross gave them a couple of beds and by the time each family helped out some, they were ready to start over. We had great neighbors.

During this same flood, my husband's uncle, Ardill Caldwell, had a cow that washed away. He lived in the head of Middle Fork and the Middle Fork River was flooded. This river ran into Hyden, the county seat. The water was so high the cow couldn't get out and was washed several miles downstream. Someone reported seeing the cow go under a big bridge. They said when the cow saw the bridge she just put her head down and went under the bridge, emerging on the other side and was carried away by the water. It was a couple of weeks later that Ardill found his cow. She was fine. She just had a good swim. The water had carried her into a low place where she finally got out of the river several miles away from home.

I have had a lot of experiences with flooding, too many to write about right now, so I will once again put my pen away. Before I do, I would like to ask you to keep your neighbors and other people in mind and in prayer with all the troubles people have these days. Now, I must go and get busy doing something productive. So, meet me next week right here on Granny's Porch.

Love, Granny.

Inspirational Thoughts Into God's Word

By Lynetta Hunter

Bonding happens between two people who have something in common. Jesus came down on a human level, yet without sin, to bond with the weaknesses and emotions of humanity (Heb. 4:14-16).

Judas unfriended Jesus for a small amount of money, that got him nowhere. Judas made it look as though Jesus was important to him, but the time came when Jesus had to feel the hurt of a friend's disloyalty. Peter openly promised to stand by Jesus, vowing to never leave Him nor do Him wrong. Yet when trouble came, Peter left Him stranded and denied even knowing Him. Jesus knows the heartbreak from betrayal and broken trust. Jesus' own people didn't understand Him. They didn't accept Him for who He was, stand by Him in His times of despair, nor want any part of His troubles. Jesus suffered rejection and isolation from His people, now He helps others through the same emotions.

As Jesus carried His cross up the hill to be crucified, He had already been beaten, spit on, and physically torn and broken. The weakness of His flesh caused Him to fall, as the heaviness of the cross became more than He could bear. Every believer has a spiritual cross to carry, and circumstances of life can outweigh strength. Jesus generously imparts divine strength in times of human weakness.

As they nailed Him to the cross, it would seem like He had been through enough. But they kept on mocking, provoking, and slandering, right up to the very end. The enemy strives to steal quality of life, strip dignity, distort minds, harden hearts, and break spirits, to a point of death. Jesus understands this all too well. The connection He formed between man and God, as a Mediator who knows every emotional detail of earthly life, is why believers can go to Him, and find help in time of need.



Courtesy of
Laurel County
Sheriff John Root



Shopping during the Christmas holiday season can present unique danger. Taking a few prevention measures can help keep your holiday season joyous.

The holiday season is a time when busy people can become careless and vulnerable to theft and other holiday crime. The following tips from the Laurel County Sheriff's Office can help you be more careful, prepared and aware during the holiday season.

- Shop during daylight hours whenever possible. If you must shop at night, go with a friend or family member.
- Dress casually and comfortably.
- Avoid wearing expensive jewelry.
- Do not carry a purse or wallet, if possible.
- Always carry your driver's license or identification along with necessary cash, checks and/or a credit card you expect to use.
- Even though you are rushed and thinking about a thousand things, stay alert to your surroundings.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash.
- Pay for purchases with a check or credit card when possible.
- Keep cash in your front pocket.
- Notify the credit card issuer immediately if your credit card is lost, stolen or misused.
- Keep a record of all of your credit card numbers in a safe place at home.
- Be extra careful if you do carry a wallet or purse. They are the prime targets of criminals in crowded shopping areas, transportation terminals, bus stops, on buses and other rapid transit.
- Avoid overloading yourself with packages. It is important to have clear visibility and freedom of motion to avoid mishaps.
- Beware of strangers approaching you for any reason. At this time of year, con-artists may try various methods of distracting you with the intention of taking your money or belongings.
- Put packages or items you buy in your vehicle's trunk or out of sight inside your vehicle.
- Lock your vehicle when you park.
- Look inside your vehicle before you enter it to make sure no one is waiting inside for you.

These tips brought to you by Laurel County Sheriff John Root. Have a safe and happy holiday season!