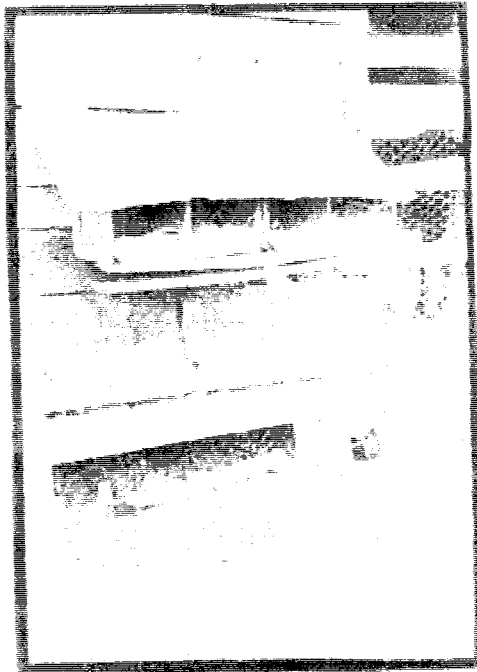


South Carolina to the

In spite of all the danger the wilds, nothing gathering eggs on the crucial for Mama to gather evening after the chickens, gone too roost, [turning in would roost everywhere the fowl house, in trees, rafters in the barn, you were there. she didn't them before, afraid the



Hens Nest

coastal low lands.

and excitement in compared to farm. It was the eggs in the what we called for the night] they and anywhere, in on fence rows, name it and they want to gather hens were still

laying. she would accompany one of us to gather the eggs. Me, I would do anything to avoid going along. Those hens would lay eggs in the most dangerous places and especially when the snakes, rats, opossums, raccoons, spiders and other varmints was on the prowl. As we gathered the eggs Mama would cradle her apron and placed them within, being careful not to break any. Reaching for eggs in the most mysterious places [under the barn in hardly a crawl space from which those varmints was in abundance,] I have come in contact with them many times. When we found an old hen not wanting to get off the nest, Mama knew the old hen wanted to "set" [want to become a mother hen]. She would carefully hand me ten or twelve eggs to be placed under the hen and after a few weeks she would recognize the old hen going about her daily routine of raising her chicks. When we placed eggs under an old hen, nesting in a boxlike contraption, nailed to the side of the barn or smokehouse, she would pay closer attention to those, whereby, when hatched, she would cradle them into her apron and slowly placed them on the ground along side the mother hen, otherwise they would fall to the ground, become prey, and end up in the belly of old Tom Cat. And so it goes for a little sandy haired boy, on a sharecroppers farm.

It was two things ,of many my father liked to do, and that was mudding [which I will speak of later] and coon hunting. On the Walker place we had three dogs, one pit bull named Spot, a small squirrel dog named Trixie and a coon dog named Rover. Now you mention old Rover's name to any coon hunter, that was familiar with his technique and determination they would stand at attention. He was so good he could hunt and tree what you ordered. He would do anything, find anything. He would bypass a bob tailed cat to tree that coon. He had a sound different from any other dog. From a pack of coon dogs, Papa knew the sound of old Rover and for sure to put meat on the table and the fur hide to be tacked to the barn for cure.

Uncle Morie, acquired a coon dog and wanted to bet Papa, that his coon dog could out perform old Rover, anytime, anyplace. Uncle Shelt , had two coon dogs, old Red, and old Blue, and wanted to enter the bet that old Rover would win.

They waited for a bright moonlight night and entered the river swamp turned the dogs loose and went about gathering wood to build a fire, sit around and chat while the dogs pick up the scent. They heard the baying dogs for hours, trailing but not treed, Just before daybreak, they decided to call the dogs in and head for the home, Uncle Morie's coon dog showed along with old Red and old Blue but no old Rover.

The next day they heard old Rover at the edge of the wooded swamp near the house, any one would know that sound, he had brought that coon back , treed him up a tree close to the house, the biggest boar coon they have ever seen, old Rover was in one bad shape, with cuts, bruises and swollen places , Papa rubbing him down with kerosene from the old kerosene lamps and treating his wounds with axle grease. Uncle Morie never mention about, betting against old Rover, ever again.

At times old Rover would be trailing a coon so close, the coon would never have the opportunity to climb a tree and be treed, instead the coon would head for and disappear in the first hollow tree or crevasse available, from which Papa would build a fire and smoke-em out.

Not long afterward, old Rover disappeared, having never been seen or heard of again. Papa, search and roamed the whole country side, looking for his dog, and, to no avail. Every one knew and heard of old Rover, but no one had seen him. He was raised from a pup and it was very meaningful and significant, to accompany my father during his long absents, making shingles deep in the river swamps. When leaving the swamps, old Rover would

always reach home first and we knew my father wasn't far behind. Leaving the Davis's landing on the Edisto River, old Rover would start with a slow trot, getting faster as he neared the house, leaving Papa far behind. Once he saw us kids in the yard his transition turned from a steady trot to a fast run, reaching and jumping on us, slapping and licking us in the face with that long wet tongue, howling and groaning, showing us in his own way how appreciative it is being a member of the family and how happy he was to see us and definitely, wanted us to recognize that fact in unknown terms.

Trixie, was a small mixed breed dog, weighing about twelve, fourteen pounds and just as equal to a squirrel dog as old Rover was to a coon dog.

Trixie just loved hunting squirrels and didn't know the meaning of hunting season, and come to think of it neither did we, for our family, hunting and fishing was a year round thing. On the Walker place between the farm and the creek was a wooded area and frequently spaced nut trees, live oaks, white oaks, hickory nuts, and occasionally the flat type pecan tree intermittently placed through out the woods and along the banks of the creek between the house and the Edisto River, Early in the morning at daybreak, my brother Kenney or Carl would take Trixie and head for the woods and be back with squirrels for breakfast before Mama would hardly have the fire going in the old wood stove. The slightest mention of squirrel hunting to Trixie, she would be out the door, into the woods, have a squirrel treed, and holding him there until you arrive. Main while old Rover, resting underneath the house in his dug-out bed, knew all the ruckus above him was about squirrels and he had no interest in such minor display and the assassination of his character, hunting squirrels that resemble rats climbing nut trees, this is Trixie's day and its nothing more than child's play.

Most of the year, weather permitting, the window and doors in the old house remained wide open and Trixie had free rein to come and go as will. He had a very keen sense of hearing and would take notice to the smallest of sound. Hearing all the commotion going on from we kids skinny dipping in the creek, he would come running and being his natural self would tree a squirrel. Near the top of some trees were hollow with natural holes made from rotted or decaying branches or from Woodpeckers looking for insects, the holes being the size, sufficient to reach in without difficulty and being an escape route for a treed squirrel. From skinny dipping and in our birthday suits we would climb the tree, reach our hands into the hole, bringing the squirrel out clinging to a very hurt and aching finger or two. This was one of many ways, we would entertain ourselves, climbing trees searching out

decayed holes and discovering what's within. Mostly our findings were small birds and animals with or without their young, and very seldom non-poisonous snakes. Bigger hollow trees at ground level we would find raccoons, opossums, and sometimes rabbits.

Many mornings and from his animal instincts Trixie would be out the door and into the woods, chasing squirrels from tree to tree, barking with his sharp shrill bark and yapping until late evening and from time to time had to be fetched and literally brought back to the house under restraint. Other than hunting squirrels, Trixie would stay in the house and when missed Mama would ask us kids to go look for him and though we knew Trixie was either in the woods hunting squirrels, or under the house pestering old Rover, we didn't put too much time or effort in looking. We knew he would show, either way, with or without a squirrel in his mouth, dropping it in the middle of the floor, Mama swearing at the cats to stay away. [Squirrel gravy tonight!]

In my seventh year, was a date to remember, trekking and journeying through the woods and swamps fishing, trapping, digging for worms, etc, nothing compared to the day my father finally gave in and gave me permission to hunt. We had one gun he would let me use and that was an old, single barrel shot gun with a thirty six inch barrel. The stock was all split and wrapped with stove pipe wire and had a very loose breech. Nevertheless, I was so proud and very excited. My father gave me two shotgun shells and gave me instruction not to return without two squirrels. With little Trixie by my side how could I miss. Out the house, down the steps and headed for the woods with the gun placed over my right shoulder, just as proud as a proud horse on the fair grounds. Trixie running ahead had a squirrel treed. When I located the squirrel in the tree, I aimed and the gun misfired, I cocked the hammer again, aimed and fired, the gun kicked so hard it knocked me backward against a tree. Falling flat on my back side, trying to get up with Trixie licking me in the face, as if to say, get up, you got one more to go. I put the dead squirrel in my pocket and off we went for the last and final shot. That day filled my fondest dreams of being an equal to my big brothers, but not too anxious to go hunting again anytime soon.

Just prior to leaving the Walker place Trixie was found near a narrow sandy, grassy road leading into the woods lifeless, reason unknown, assumption was probably by a poisonous snake or large animal. Having aged a little and not as rapid in his movements and not capable of moving as quickly as in previous encounters or confrontations became more evident.

Old Spot was a different kind of a dog, if you didn't want him chasing, catching or rounding up hogs, he just as soon be left alone. His favorite position was lying in the middle of the floor and should have been entered in the, Guinness book of world records, for the most stepped over dog. He would only get up when he smelled food and especially when we were cooking sweet potatoes, roasting eggs or broiling pieces of meat over hot coals in the fire place. He was always there to help us get rid of the scraps. Teasing him, sometimes we would throw a potato peeling out the window. He would make a mad dash out the door, around the house, gulp the potato peeling and was back in a flash. Waiting for the next morsel. It was one consolation we had from Spot, tho, he always reduced the fly and gnat population around the house, mostly in the summer time, they would have him covered at both ends, in his ears, eyes, mouth and his rear end. All he could do was twitch his ears, shake his head and flap his tail around. After awhile, when he could no longer tolerate such misery, he would get up, move to another location and this seemed to disturb the flies and gnats even more and his situation became worse. Disgusted with the whole mess he crawls under the bed.

To see Spot in action, one would never consider him as being a fly and gnat dog. When called upon, he was ready, full of vim, vigor and vitality to face any task given him and do it well. Disgusted with the mules Pete and Red, after finding they kicked pretty well, and old Betsy, the cow, nothing there, he turned his attention to hogs. And became one of the best hog dogs in the country. Old Spot was a hog dog as a sheep dog is to sheep. The talk was no sheep dog could ever herd sheep as Spot could herd hogs. In the spring, at roundup time after the hogs were turned loose in the fall to fend for themselves, Spot was in very much command to bring in the hogs from the fields and in some cases from the river swamps. In the river swamps, Spot would catch a hog by its ear and bring him out and for some unknown reason the others would follow. It is without a doubt, Spot was one hell-a-va hog dog. He died of old age.

It would, without a doubt, take more than a few pages to write about the friendship and dedication of these three animals that went well beyond the call of being a family's best friend and companion.

Mudding, was a type of food source that my father liked to partake in with his brood. Some called it tickle fish, some called it coanin, and some called it nooding but we called it, plain old mudding. When Papa mention mudding we siblings could hardly wait.

Across the branch, on the grassy dirt road going to Bob Walkers home, there was once a low land wooded area, twenty acres or so and within those wooded acres was a pond, a small pond surrounded by a mud flat buffer.

Bob Walker cleared the land for farming, leaving the pond in the middle of the field, in the mud flat was tall oak , pine and mulberry trees along with thick underbrush and briars, an ideal place for wild life.

The road continued through the field and after crossing the branch [creek] the pond was located about one half mile on the right.

Papa, always like to go mudding early in the morning whereby we could work in the fields in the afternoon, or go late evenings when work was done and accomplish two- folds, bathing ourselves while mudding the pond for fish.

Loading the wagon was no problem, each carried a cotton hoe for mudding the pond and two of Mama's wash tubs to hold the fish. Crossing the creek at times was at a minimum and fun and the mules forging had no problem keeping contact with the bottom. Once arriving, the mules safely tied, making our way carrying our hoes and the wash tubs, Papa leading the way, being careful where he stepped, informing us to do the same. Reaching the pond, we all would just stand for a few moments and observe the tranquility the quietness, egrets, quietly stepping, looking for any movement that might satisfy his fancy. A crane , with his long legs, long neck and long bill, standing, motionless, waiting for small fish in passing, Bull frogs sending out their mating calls, Turtles sunning themselves on decayed logs and stumps. This peaceful moment to be interrupted only by biting mosquitos, gnats and ruffling in the leaves.

Papa, would designate a place where each of us would enter the pond. The tubs placed on the water, floating, we would slide ourselves into the pond, hoes in hand, and standing on the mud bottom. We'd start churning until the water was completely muddy, reducing the oxygen whereby the fish would appear at the top gasping for air, with their mouth's opening and closing. When one sees a mouth opening and closing, he'd slowly reach behind, grasp the fish or whatever, placing it into the wash tub. We'd dangle our hands among sunken tree roots, beneath the overlapping bank, mud hollows, anywhere, feeling for fish that we thought might be a there.

Once finished and all tucked out, Bob Walker always had a knack of



Where we lived on the old Walker Place 1931
 Me [Swift] and brother Carl with Rock Fish out of the Edisto River
 1/4 th. Mile from the house. Note, the barn and wagon.

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unloading the fish from the wagon, every chicken and duck would come running, gathering around, waiting for a morsel. When opening the fish and throwing the insides to the ground, one has never seen such commotion. Entertainment of the day was watching which one got the first morsel. We had an old and wise duck, he would stand back, knew the one that got the morsel would take off running and the others would follow, running all over the yard while he stayed there stuffing himself.

It was ponds located throughout the river swamps but none as productive and convenient as this one. The swamp ponds would rise and fall as the river and creeks would rise and fall. After heavy rains causing the river and creeks to rise filling the swamp ponds with water and fish, the ideal time to muddify was when the water was receding back within the banks of the streams, leaving the fish stranded. With this method you had more competition with wild life, who got there first got the prize, and this prize to be shared with no one. Papa would often keep some of the fish to use as bait, setting out his coon traps, catching coon's for meat for the table and their hides to cure, sell or trade their fur for staples at Mr. Huffman's mercantile store in Blackville. Trapping and catching animals for their fur was one of many ways of making a little extra money, and my father was always looking for ways to make extra money. He was making shingles, sharecropping, had his syrup mill, fishing and hunting, had three dogs and a batch of young'uns, he had to get another side line. His nephew, Judson lived down river four or five miles, was making caskets out of pure white cypress and my Dad thought they looked so good, he started making fishing boats, little eight footers, one sitters with a fishing well, using the same type material, made to last, He worked many extra hard working days making his first master piece. He couldn't wait until his nephew saw his finished product. Judson told him it was really strong, steady and well put together, all he needed was a top and he would have a perfect casket. Papa, #%^*&!?, and continued making the boats and had each sold with back orders. Contemplating discontinuing making shingles and making boats full time, he had another enterprise in mind for which I will speak of later and his decision and his final analysis, causing him to discontinue making shingles and fishing boats.

There was a little one room school house located about four miles from the house, surrounded by china berry and sweet gum trees. The little school house consisted of four windows, a hinged door, a fireplace with chimney, wood benches and a slate board, placed on a table leaning against the wall.

Placed on a table near the entrance was slate pads, about four by six inches long, separated in four groups, first to the fourth grade. Each pad had the days curriculum, previously annotated by the teacher for each grade and handed to the students according to their grade. The students were separated by benches, while teaching the students in the front row, whether it be the first, second, third or fourth grade, the other three grades would be quietly

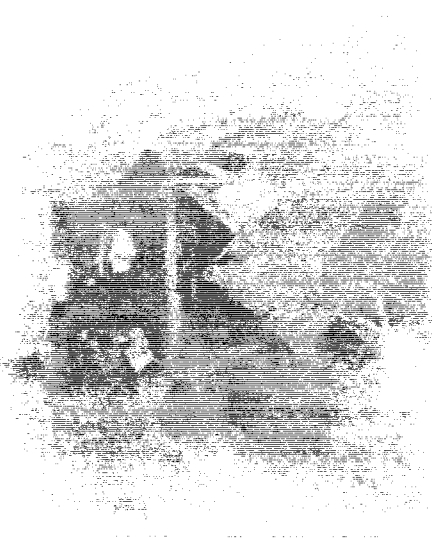
studying their assignment given to them on their slate pad, waiting for their class to begin.

Going to school for my older brothers was a joyous occasion but needed on the farm and the occasion only came in the fall when all the crops were harvested and safely put away.

School mornings were very exciting around the Davis home, my brother Kenney and Carl arguing, they both wanted to hitch the mule to the wagon and do the driving, and Papa would intervene and settle the whole matter, one would hitch the other drive,

Mama hurrying to get their lunch pail ready, seeing if all is dressed properly, Papa telling the boys to be sure to take enough hay for the mule. It was a sad day for me watching my brothers ride away in the wagon going to school. For several mornings I would follow, running after them, stepping on my little long gown, stumbling, falling and getting up, my little nose running, sand sticking to my gown from peeing in the bed, I would run after them until they were completely out of sight. crying with all the force and power my little lungs could generate. One morning Papa told my brothers to take me before I run myself to death. Mama cleaned me up, washed my face with the dish rag, [she was always doing that, wiping my face with her dish rag and with the bottom of her apron.] I remember that day well, my first school day, all I did was play with china berries, slept in the wagon and the teacher gave me a slate pad to write on. Big day!

Next year, I think it was 1926, when I was five, I started going to school with my brothers, I would sit flat in the wagon holding on to the side. Knowing that Papa may be watching, Kenney would wait until we got out of site and whip the old mule to make him run. Reaching the school house we would tie



My first one room school house

the mule to a tree , along with the other animals, the stench from their waste at times would drift inside and the windows had to be closed.

Mama would prepare our lunch in half gallon syrup cans, mostly grits or corn meal mush, fat back and dry peas that was left over from the previous day's cooking. Opening the can at lunch time the aroma was much more appetizing than the food. In wintertime, and before classes begin the boys would get the job of seeing that the wood got brought in from the woodpile at the back of the building. That same year the teacher, Miss Lona, married one of her students, my first cousin Clarence Bunch, the timing was right because the state started a school bus route the following year, taking the children to Blackville school, grade's one through eleven. The bus stop was about a mile from the house and the beginning of my full time attending school. Some of us had to ride as far as thirty or forty miles each way and had to catch the bus by 6:00 AM in the morning. The bus was long and narrow, and inside, with long board seats on each side running the length of the bus for sitting. The windows were large square wood framed glass, that recessed down into the body frame. Our bus driver was Standley Still, also a student. On our route there was, a little country store, where Standley frequently stopped. We kids, in our usual disorder fashion, I lowed a window, sitting and hanging half way out , Standley after returning, unbeknown started the bus, me falling out beneath the wheels, and being run over, Unconscious, when I became aware of my surroundings, I was lying across Papa's and Mr Cullom's lap in a back seat of a car, being taken to Aiken, S.C. hospital, a distance of about 30 miles. I was in a hospital ward with all adult patients and they had requested the hospital staff that I be placed by a window whereby I could see the squirrels eating their acorns, sitting, and playing on the window sill, beside my bed, their favorite spot. I remained in the hospital for about two weeks and was treated by the adult patients as being their own. I was visited by many from school, one being my first grade teacher, Miss Gunther, I think I was kinda special to her ,and she taken me under her wings, so to speak. When I was discharged from the hospital, it was the wish of the adult patients, that Papa carry me by each of their beds to say good-by. It was very depressing leaving my friends, but it was also a happy moment to leave the hospital go and be with my brothers and little sister again.