

Fred Holden Memories

My dad was born at Woolsey Arkansas just south of West Fork. He grew up in and around the West Fork area. His father was a tenant Farmer on Sugarloaf Mountain where he built a road from their home over the hill down to Harp's gas station on 71 between Brentwood & Woolsey. So that his children could walk down and catch the bus to school.

Dad loved dogs and hunting. He learned his skill from the need to feed his family. Every day when he came home from school his dog would have a squirrel treed. He would have his gun hidden in the woods near the bus stop. That's what they had for dinner.

His mother was a hard woman. She instilled the motto, "you're on your own". He understood if he got into trouble, he would have to get back out of trouble without any assistance from her.

One of his first jobs was tagging cows at the Washington County Sale Barn in Fayetteville. Since he didn't have a car and it was safer back then, he hitched a ride to work on the weekends. He said he always could give a hell of a hand shake, from all his days of using the tagger he had a very firm grip.

In high school he played four years of basketball, was on the student council and was voted president of his senior class.

He joined the Air Force and was stationed overseas in France and Germany. When he came back, he went out to visit his brothers JD and Kenneth Clark out in the Arizona.

Then he lived with JD and Charlene and their girls for a couple years. He hired on with a tile-layer, there was a big building boom out there and that's where he learned his trade.

From there he was fixing to go to Florida to build houses out there. But he came through Northwest Arkansas and stayed a little while just to see family and attend a dance with his brother JD. While there he asked my mother to dance. After that dance he brought her over to meet his family and my dad. From then on, they were inseparable and soon wanted to marry.

After their marriage, they lived in Fayetteville for a time. Fred continued working in the flooring trade and became a residential builder. He and Naomi purchased and worked different pieces of property, and eventually settled down on Cove Creek. They did many things to keep everything together on the farm; cleaned poultry houses and hauled chicken litter, built numerous houses for different families in the area, grew wheat and had a combine at one point, raised cows, leased land to cut and sell hay, put up hay for others, built and ran his own rental properties in Fayetteville and Greenland.

Fred was one of the men on Cove Creek that others would turn to for everything from fighting fires to river rescue. If you found yourself down in a ditch or a three-foot mudhole, he would lend a hand. If you needed help building something on your place, he was there. Fred and Naomi also had a wide circle of friends who shared many good times; camping, fishing, boating and skiing, hunting, dancing, and trail-hay rides. Any excuse to get together for companionship, from ice cream socials to New Years Eve parties, would find them in the thick of things. Fred and Naomi were part of a group of open and caring people that made Cove Creek a special community. One of the events he and Naomi loved having was the 4th of July party, below the barn on the creek. Horseshoes; volleyball, softball, good food, and tall tales of all kinds, could be found beside the hayfield on that day. They truly cared about the place they called home and the people around them.

Growing underneath and around them, we learned self-reliance; determination, compassion for others (even with grumbles sometimes), and that the best gift to yourself is the time and help you give others.

Fred and Naomi instilled these lessons into so many of us. Something we've heard said many times the last few days was that Fred's passing seemed the ending of an age. To some extent that's true. But so often without thought we carry out mundane daily acts and react to the setbacks that we all have in the manner that Fred and Naomi taught us. There is a growing recognition now that simpler living in less complicated surroundings is a happier way to live. It may be that it frees us up to recognize that the journey with others is more rewarding than anything else. Some people change others around them so profoundly, that their age won't ever really end. It will just reverberate and ripple down through the generations of those that miss them.

