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***THIS IS NOT A CHRISTMAS STORY...***

**yet, it is a true story given at Christmastime...**

**to my children, to my brothers and sister,**

**to my aunts, and to all my many nieces and**

**nephews...each and every one the posterity**

***of JASPER NEWTON COX.***

**To me there is a value in memories...of the  
peak experiences in life...and what happened  
in the past.**

***MERRY CHRISTMAS WITH LOVE,***

***~ from Jerri***

***December 1, 1990***

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## JASPER NEWTON COX

May 10, 1884 – September 21, 1974

*When I told my grandfather one Sunday morning in May 1969 that I wanted him to tell me something of his parents and his early history, he invited me to come sit with him out on his screened-in back porch where it was quiet and peaceful. This was a time before I had a tape recorder, and for the interview, I had brought a pen and shorthand notebook. We sat down in two white-painted wooden rockers and sipped our coffee before getting started with his story. We looked out over a lush green blanket of St. Augustine grass covering the back yard. A cement bird bath filled with rain water beckoned two blue jays that were having a squawking match in the row of tall crape myrtles lined up against the back fence. Just in front of the porch was a newly planted bed of petunias, and the scent of freshly mowed grass floated on the summer breeze. Inside the kitchen, we could hear grandmother as she finished up her morning chores.*

*In response to my first questions about when he was born, his parents, and his brothers and sisters, my grandfather paused for reflection, then answered:*

I was born on May 10, 1884 at Cromwell, but near the old Select neighborhood, about nine or ten miles south from Beaver Dam in Ohio County, Kentucky. My parents were both born in the county, too. My great grandparents were some of the first to come into the county. The Coxes and the Leaches.

What education I have I received in the common schools at Cromwell and Select.

My mother named me Jasper Newton after two soldiers who were heroes in the Revolutionary War. She read about them in a book, she told me. It was a popular book of the day. One soldier was a corporal and the other was a sergeant and they made a daring rescue of some other soldiers who were about to be hanged. The name of the book was "The Life of Marion." It was my father's book.

My father was James William Cox and my mother was Mary Elizabeth Cox. She was a Mitchell before she married. They were married about a year before the Civil War started, and my oldest brother was 22 years old when I was born. I was the youngest son and the 12<sup>th</sup> child of the 14 children of my parents. I am the last one living of my generation, that is, my parent's children.

My father was crippled and wore a size six shoe on one foot and a size ten on the other foot. He had an education, and in his younger days, he taught school. And then he was a farmer, a blacksmith, and he had the post office. When he left Rough River he bought a farm close to Cromwell. My brothers ran the farm and he had the blacksmith shop. He studied and learned to temper iron and was one of the best horse-shoers in the country. At first he didn't always have the money to buy the iron he needed for his blacksmith shop, but his word was his bond, and he would get the iron he needed and pay for it when his customers paid him. The man he bought his iron from told him he could buy all the iron he wanted and he would ship it to him. And when my father got it worked up and got his money, he paid for the iron.

My father voted in the elections every year, but he was not a party man. You know, he voted for the man he thought would make the best candidate; therefore, he was an independent. He was 93 years old when he died.

I heard my father tell about his Grandfather Leach, who came from Maryland. He traveled down the Ohio River in a boat, bringing whiskey, just drifting along and stopping along the way to sell this to the Indians who wanted to buy liquor from him. They gave him some money, and he would go draw the whiskey, and when he went to cut the spout off, the Indians would slap his hands and let a little more go in their jug.

Thomas Jefferson Cox, my grandfather, didn't like dogs in the house. And when he used to come to our house to visit, he would always make the dogs go outside. One time when he was visiting, us kids had let Old Hunter in the house because it was winter, and we wanted him in by the fire. And my grandfather kicked the dog, and Old Hunter turned around and snapped at him. And when he did, his teeth caught the toe of my grandfather's shoe and made him fall down. Us kids all laughed. It tickled us because the dog made him fall and paid him back for kicking him.

My mother died while I was in the service in 1903. Her daddy was Martin Mitchell and her mother was an Acton. We never saw them very much. They lived over around Sulphur Springs and Dundee. My mother and daddy separated when I was about five or so, and my mother later remarried. She died from pneumonia in Obion County, Tennessee. My brother Ira attended the funeral to represent the family.

My father married Aunt Becky Patterson, and after she died, he married Aunt Pru. Prudence Taylor. We called her Aunt Pru. She prepared a wedding supper for us, and we spent the night at my father's house after we were married, before going to the mines the next day.

*When I asked Granddaddy to tell me about the earliest thing he could remember, he looked down at the floor and studied a minute, then said:*

Well, now that would be going quite a ways back. You know, the first thing anybody can always remember is his mother. I used to like to play little dirty tricks, and my mother would say, “Now, don’t you do that again or you’ll catch it.” And you knew you had better not do that again *that* day, or you would. So I would just wait a day or two until she kindly forgot about it and then I would do it again to see if I could get by with it.

*For a few minutes we sat there silently. The scent of spring was everywhere. A spider was busily weaving her web in the corner above the little clothesline erected across one end of the porch where grandmother hung her cup towels out to dry. Granddaddy was rolling the years back in his mind.*

*The next thing he told me about was his military career. He served two different tours in the U. S. Army – one in the artillery division and the last in the infantry.*

When I was 17 years old I left home and enlisted in the Army, giving my age as 18. It was in August and I was living in Cromwell, Kentucky, but I enlisted at Leitchfield, Grayson County, Kentucky. From there I was sent by train with a big bunch, about 80 or so other boys, to Louisville, and from there I was sent to Fort Howard, Maryland. Fort Howard was just 12 miles down the bay from Fort McHenry where Francis Scott Key wrote the national anthem. We went by boat from Fort Howard to Fort McHenry during the Spanish American War. Actually, the main war was over, and at the time I enlisted, the war was called the “insurrection period.”

I was a gunner in the heavy artillery section where they shot 12-inch three-foot long guns. I had to stand directly behind the gun where it went out over a concrete parapet. It had a long lanyard with a leather stock. I had to stand on my tiptoes, and stuff cotton in my ears because the gun was so loud and the recoil was so hard. The gunner had to stay there and he would do the shooting after the gun was loaded and everybody else took cover.

You know, Jerri, this affected my hearing and finally I had to wear a hearing aid. I got my first hearing aid through the VA when I was 84 years old on September 30, 1968. Gilbert drove me to Dallas to get it. We got up at 4:30 in the morning, so we could get to Dallas in time to beat the heavy traffic.

I got out of the artillery on August 4, 1904, but in October 1905, I went back in again for three years in the infantry. The 18<sup>th</sup> Infantry had orders to go to the Philippine Islands and I requested to go because I wanted to go very bad. They sent a bunch there, but my orders were changed and I was sent instead to a Military

Prison, which had once been a Federal Prison. So I applied for a guard in the “D” Company of the 18<sup>th</sup> Infantry and became a prison guard and stayed on that for six months. The 18<sup>th</sup> got orders to go to the Islands again, and I tried to transfer back so I could go, but they wouldn’t let me go. I stayed there 18 months, and bought out my discharge. At that time, you could buy your way out of the service. I think I paid \$85 to buy my way out. I made \$13 a month while serving in the Infantry Division, but two bits of that was taken out to support the Old Soldier’s home.

Now, I remember that my discharge papers came back and a man told me they had been laying on the First Sergeant’s desk for three days, and he had not even told me. So I went to him and asked how come he had not given my papers to me, and I threatened to write Washington about it. So I didn’t have to go out to the field the next morning, but was discharged that day.

Upon leaving the army, I went to Atchinson, Kansas and went to work on the Missouri Pacific Railroad in the roundhouse. Harvest time came and I liked to wander, so me and Dr. Carroll’s son went to Beloit, Kansas for harvest time. When that was over, I went back to Atchinson and worked in the roundhouse again for the Missouri Pacific Railroad. I finally quit that and went home to Kentucky and went to work in the Broadway Coal Mining Company. I married while I was working in the coal mines.

*Grandmother had come out on the porch and sat down in her rocking chair by this time and was listening to what Granddaddy was telling me. When he said he went to work in the coal mines after they were married, she said:*

“He only worked in the coal mines for about three months, as I didn’t like for him to work in there. It was too dangerous.”

*Then Granddaddy continued:*

In the coal mines, I ran a machine to cut boards. Worked eight hours a day and went back lots of nights and worked extra blasting out the next day’s work so loaders could work next morning taking coal out.

*At this point, it reminded Grandmother that she went down in the mines with him once, and she told this story:*

“One time your daddy and I went down into the coal mines with him at night when they were to blast out a section so there would be coal to dig out for the next day’s work. We wore carbide lights on our foreheads. When the blast went off with a huge and deafening noise, we stood behind one of the coal pillars. And after it was over, we were all covered with coal dust and were black as could be. And I had worn my new red dress.”

*Grandmother laughed at her remembrance, and continued:*

“I had to give all of us a bath in a zinc tub, and it took lots of scrubbing to get clean.”

*By this time, Granddaddy had thought of another story he wanted to tell me about learning to box:*

I learned to box while I was in the army. A man named Hackett from Boston, Massachusetts, who was our cook, taught me a lot about boxing. And I got to be pretty good, too. One time after I was out of the army, the brother of one of the boys in McHenry came to visit him. He had just gotten out of the Navy. Well, he started boasting around town that he sure wished he could find somebody to box a round with him. But nobody would. Finally, I told a friend of mine that if he kept on boasting what a good boxer he was that I was just going to take him on. Well, that word got back to the Navy man, and so they rigged up a match for us to box each other in the Odd Fellows Hall for a percentage of the sales. Neither one of us got knocked out, but people who were watching said I got in the most licks. We got very little money for boxing. We wore regular boxing gloves, but not like the ones we have now. These were a lot thinner.

*Grandmother had sat quietly while he was telling this story. I asked her if she went to watch it, and she replied, emphatically:*

“No mam, I did not! I was so outdone with him for making that match that I didn’t go watch, and I told him I didn’t care if he got whipped real good.” *She chuckled to herself.* “But I helped nurse his bruises when he got home that night.”

*I changed the subject here and asked Granddaddy to tell me about his marriage.*

Well, after I asked her to marry me, I went to our Baptist preacher by the name of Preacher Gordon and asked him to marry us at a certain hour of the day. The preacher told me he was sorry but that he had already promised to marry somebody else at that particular hour. Preacher Gordon said, “Could you wait until another time so I could have time to marry both couples that day?” *Granddaddy said he told him:* “No, I can’t change the hour, but I can change preachers.” And I did, and so Pendleton Taylor, another Baptist preacher, married us. We had a home wedding at her house with just family and friends there. When the coal mines went on strike, I went to farming on Ben Amos’ farm. Raised mostly corn and tobacco. I did that for two or three years, and then went back to the mines. Gilbert was a baby when we lived on that farm. Eula Mae was born there.

*When I asked how they met each other and about their courting days, Grandmother told this:*

“We were raised in the same community, being neighbors, and we attended the Select School together. The first date we ever had was to go to church. Daddy did not have his own buggy and always hired one to go courting in. I always thought he tried to pick the wildest horse he could get at the livery stable.”

One time we had a horse that balked a lot hitched to the buggy. He balked every time we came to a hill. And there were lots of hills. When the horse balked, it scared me and I would get out and walk. One time when that old horse balked, daddy got so mad at the horse that he got out and jerked back on the reins and it scared the horse. He reared backwards so far that he fell over into the buggy and broke the buggy shaft and turned it over. But we righted it, and daddy fixed it together again with hickory bark that he stripped off a sapling tree. (*Granddaddy called grandmother “mama” and she usually called him “daddy” because that is what they got used to calling each other when their children were small.*)

*Granddaddy remembered another story about that balking horse:*

Another time, Jerri, at Easter time, we went up to stay all night with my sister, Delaney Duvall, and going home the next day, the horse balked...it was a gentle horse, but he just balked on level ground. Eva got out to walk and told me she would just walk up the road a piece and if I ever got the horse started again, I could just pick her up when I got even with her. When I got him started, I was afraid to stop the horse for fear he would balk again, so when I came alongside of her, she just jumped in while it was still going, and it was the wonder she didn't miss her footing and get run over by the back wheels!

*I looked at Grandmother, surprised that she was so daring in her youth. But she reminded me that when you are young, you are not afraid of anything much. I asked her how old she was when this took place and she said she was about twenty years old at the time. Then she continued:*

“I remember that just like it was yesterday. That was an old iron gray mare, and she tore up my daddy's buggy once. She kicked the dash board in with her hind feet, turning the buggy over and tearing it to pieces, until she stripped the harness and we had to walk home.”

*Next, I asked about how they happened to move to Texas, and Granddaddy summed it up:*

Well, you know, Auntie and Uncle lived at Edgerly, Louisiana. And one time when they came back home for a visit, we all got to talking and I decided to move

my family up there and go to work in the oil fields. I worked on a drilling rig, 12 hours a day for \$3.00 a day. Steak was 35 cents a pound. We went by train from Kentucky to Louisiana. It was a long trip for the children. Gilbert had his sixth birthday in Edgerly, which was about 17 miles from Lake Charles.

While we lived in Edgerly, it was the time of the great flu epidemic and all of us had it except Eula Mae. We were very sick. Lots of people died, including the mother of Gilbert's playmates next door. Gilbert had a relapse with the flu and almost died...and he thought he was going to die. The doctor was called, and he came and convinced Gilbert that he wasn't going to die like he thought he was. We called Dr. Brooks, who was a good doctor, and he told Gilbert that he couldn't die, even if he wanted to.

*Grandmother remembered that while they were living in Edgerly, the school children had to dress up for the Mardi Gras in costumes, and Gilbert didn't have one. So when he came home from school, grandmother got some soot out of the stovepipe and blacked his face and hands, and gave him some old ragged clothes to wear, and he went back to school dressed as a tramp.*

*She also told the following story about "Ole Meaness" which she used to tell us, many times, when we were children and had to take naps. She would say, "Now come lay down and be real still and I'll tell you a story about your daddy when he was a little boy."*

When we lived at Edgerly, Gilbert, Eula Mae and Joye used to go down to an old pond of water that had a buggy sitting out in the middle of it. They liked to wade out in the water and sit in the buggy and fish from it. They tied pieces of bacon on a string and tried to catch crawfish. Now, there were lots of snakes and lily pads in that waterhole, and I was afraid for them to go down there. Because I was afraid a water moccasin would bite them. But every chance they got, they would sneak off down there anyway. Finally, I told daddy he was going to have to do something about those kids getting out in that water.

So, he hired an old gray-haired Negro to scare them away from the water hole. His name was Ole Meaness and he took a gunny sack and walked down the path to the water, shaking that sack open, and declaring he was going to catch them and make soap out of them. And they jumped out of that buggy, splashing out of that pond and ran for home as fast as their legs would carry them. They were hollering and crying, they were so scared. They didn't even take time to open the gate, but went over the top of the fence as fast as they could go. And Ole Meaness was chasing them, kind of slowly, all the way to the fence.

Those kids ran into the house, Joye was the last one coming. And Gilbert ran and hid under the bed, and Eula Mae jumped right in the middle of the bed, muddy and



mossy as she could be. She was almost hysterical she was so scared. It was a wonder she didn't have a heart attack. I liked to never have got her calmed down. Them that wasn't crying was as white as a sheet. And it broke those kids from going to that waterhole. And after that, I never did...not once...have to tell them not to go down there fishing again, because they never went back.

*Granddaddy took up the story again and told about moving from Edgerly to another oil boom town where work was supposed to be plentiful.*

From Edgerly we moved to Burkburnett, Texas and Iowa Park where I worked in a refinery on a pipe machine. While we were living there, your grandmother had typhoid fever and was in bed for 121 days. She nearly died. About that time, I had a chance to buy a wagon and a team of two horses from a man who was selling out. But the team cost four or five hundred dollars and that was a lot of money then. Anyway, I told Bob Counts that I sure wished I had the money to buy the team and wagon. And, Jerri, Mr. Counts knew how sick my wife had been and what a hard time we were having. And he told me if I wanted that team and wagon to go tell the man and he would loan me the money. I made a note for it and bought the team, and hired another man to drive it for me, and I kept running my pipe machine. The man drove the wagon 18 miles to the North Field every day, loaded with oil field equipment. I got paid \$12 a day for my team and two horses.

And I worked all over the oil fields in Texas, the East Texas Oil Field, down in the Valley in South Texas, Mexia, and the Panhandle, and just wherever there was a boom going and there was work for me. And then I worked once at Fort Hood, where I was a carpenter's helper. Then I quit there, and went to work at the prison camp in Mexia during World War II, so that I would be able to live at home.

When Bob Smith, Eula Mae's husband, left to go into service in the Navy on a mine sweeper, we moved to Leoti, Kansas where Bob and Eula Mae had a grocery store, and I helped Eula Mae run the store while Bob served his time in the Navy. And from there we came back to Texas and bought this place where we are living now. And you know the rest.

*Granddaddy gazed across his pasture up to the barn, musing to himself, and he said, "I've got one more story I want to tell you about, and that's about a football game that I played in when I was 19 years old in about 1903 or 1904." I'm not sure if he meant that the coal miners in the Army played the iron workers, or if this was after he finished his first tour of duty with the army. Because I understood him to say he was working in a coal mine; if so, this must have been in Virginia or Maryland. Anyway, he told it like this:*

The coal miners had a football team, and we had a big football game between the coal miners and the iron workers from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The football

team rode the train from Baltimore, Maryland to Harrisburg and stayed at the Commonwealth Hotel. Going up on the train, some of the boys liked their liquor and two of them had a little too much. The game was about two o'clock in the afternoon and there was about 5,000 or 6,000 turned out to see the game.

All the boys were hard and had lots of muscles on account of coming from the coal mines and steel mills, and there wasn't a flabby one in the bunch. But they really shouldn't have played the game because of the two players who had too much to drink on the train that night from Baltimore. Two was in no shape to go out on the ball field, but the game had to be played because, as I said, there was a crowd of 5,000 or 6,000 watching.

Well, we played the first half of that game and we didn't score. When the signals were given, those two were so drunk they didn't know if they were up or down. But in the last half, we held them to the line, but they had scored 35 points and just run away in the first half.

One of our guards, named Polander, got hit on the head and knocked him dizzy, and he played either three or four more plays in that condition. Then he got another lick on the head, and he said his head cleared up like a bell.

Anyway, we lost the game that we should have won. After the game was over, people came up to me and told me that one of my kicks was the longest one they had ever seen. I kicked it almost to the field goal from the other end of the field.

*Then I asked Granddaddy if he would sing "The Preacher and the Bear" for me, a song he used to sing as he rocked us when we visited him at Aransas Pass. It always made us giggle, the way he sang it. But first, he said:*

Jerri, tell me how *you* spell bird? I don't know if you have ever seen this bird, but you might of. This is one that we used to sing when I was a boy in school. We sang it to our teacher.

Down yonder in that school house,  
Where the darkies used to go.  
There was a ragtime pickaninny  
By the name of Ragtime Joe.

When teacher called the class one day  
To spell one kind of bird,  
He called on everyone but Joe,  
But they could not spell a word.  
So when he called on Joe  
To spell that word to him

He didn't hesitate a minute,  
This is the way he began:

C – am the way it begins.  
H – am the next letter in  
I – that am the third  
C – am to season the bird,  
K – am to fill in the end  
E – am nearer the end (N)  
C – H – I – C – K – E - N  
■ That am the way to spell chick-en!

Now, I'll sing you the song you asked me for:

### **“The Preacher and the Bear.”**

“A preacher went out hunting, ‘twas on one Sunday morn.  
It was against his religion, but he took his gun along.  
He shot himself some mighty fine quail,  
And one little measly hare,  
And on his way, returning home,  
He met a great big grizzly bear.

The bear marched out in the middle of the road,  
And walked up towards the preacher, you see.  
The preacher got so excited, he climbed up a ‘simmon tree.

The preacher climbed out on a limb.  
He turned his eyes to the Lord in the sky,  
These words he said to him.

Good Lord, didn't you deliver Daniel from the Lion's den?  
Also, Jonah, from the belly of the whale, and then,  
The Hebrew children from the firey furnace,  
The Good Book do declare.

Good Lord, if you can't help me.  
For Goodness Sakes,  
Don't you help that bear.”



*In my memory, I can hear him now...just as he sang these songs, and he chuckled at the funny little songs he had remembered from his boyhood.*

*As we sat there musing about the past, a mockingbird began to sing in the distance and trilled his repertoire of songs. His singing reminded me that Granddaddy always called his farm, “Mockingbird Hill,” because mockingbirds were everywhere. One in particular used to follow him as he walked to and from the barn. It flew over his head as he walked, back and forth, as if he were playing a game. When winter approached, he disappeared, but for several years, he would always return every spring. Until, finally, there was a time when he came no more.*



*When this interview was taken, my grandfather, at age 85, was slightly bent where once he had carried himself erect, a trait left over from his military days. He still had a stout frame that age had altered but not covered up. (In his prime, he was nearly 5’ 9” tall, and weighed 175 pounds). He had been married to my grandmother for almost 61 years. Many times he was heard to say, “If I had my life to live over, I would still choose the same little girl for my wife.”*

*My grandfather loved his Lord, and spent hours quietly reading from his worn Bible. He could answer almost any question we could ask, and more often than not, he could quote the exact verse or turn right to the page he needed. He also tried to live by its highest principles. He had a keen sense of humor, and he was always an optimist. When we visited and asked after his welfare, he always replied with enthusiasm, “I’m sitting on top of the world!”*



*When I first asked Granddaddy to recount some of his life story, he seemed a little skeptical that anyone would be interested, but when I explained that it would be his gift to his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, he seemed to warm up to the idea of his legacy. As his stories unfolded, he smiled and laughed in remembrance of other times.*

*Before ending this narrative, I am compelled to put down one last thing – the words to a favorite song of all the children and grandchildren of Jasper Newton Cox. My dad said his father taught him the words to this song when he was about ten, and explained to him that the story was about a young man who had become lost in the swamp in Louisiana, and finally reached the summit when he came out on the railroad. We were about ten when daddy taught this song to us. My aunts all remember it. And once, Retha told me that she sang it to Beverly Kay when she rocked her as a baby. I do have a tape of my dad singing, “On the Shores of Lake Ponchartrain,” one Christmas as his grandchildren listened. Lest it be lost to our memory, I set the words down here:*

*“On the Shores of Ponchartrain”*

Through swamps and alligators,  
I wound my weary way.  
O'er railroad ties and crossings,  
My weary feet did stray.

Twas then to reach the summit  
And all around to gaze.  
It was there I met the blue-eyed girl  
On the shores of Ponchartrain.

She took me to her father's house,  
And treated me quite well.  
Her hair in golden ringlets  
Around her shoulders fell.

I tried to gain her beauty,  
But I found it was in vain,  
So handsome was this blue-eyed girl  
On the shores of Ponchartrain.”

Adieu, adieu, fair maiden,  
If I never see you more,  
I'll ne'r forget your kindness  
In the cottage by the shore.

And when in social circles,  
The sparkling bowl to drain,  
I'll drink to the health of the blue-eyed girl,  
On the shores of Ponchartrain.”



There is much more to the chronicles of Jasper Newton and Eva Caroline Cox, but these few pages give the history exactly as it was told to me by my Grandfather in his own words, more than 21 years ago. The porch was filled with fresh air and

sunshine that morning, and Granddaddy and I shared a closeness I will never forget.

*~ by Janice "Jerri" Cox Brown  
Oldest grandchild of Jasper Newton Cox  
November 1, 1990*

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## **JASPER NEWTON COX GRANDDADDY'S COAL MINING EXPERIENCE**

Granddaddy was working in the coal mines when he and grandmother married, although he didn't work there very long. Grandmother said she didn't like for him to work in the mines because it was too dangerous. The newspapers frequently reported mining accidents, which were all too common.

In 1907 the McHenry Coal Mine in Ohio County provided a livelihood for several hundred employees, who dug, loaded and hauled tons of bituminous coal daily from its depths.

Everyday, equipped with hard hats and a carbide light on their forehead, they descended a vertical shaft on a lift, about thirty to forty feet, or more, down to the bottom. Underneath in the miles of tunnels, they spent ten hours a day without seeing sunlight. Once on the floor, they wound through a maze of shafts to begin the day's work at the seam of coal where their shift had ended the day before. Each night, using dynamite, the shift's miners blasted out the next day's work. Granddaddy said he went back many nights to blast out coal after finishing his day job and worked to make extra money. The next morning the day shift miners, using picks, began digging out coal from seams formed more than 300 million years ago. After it was dug, the coal was loaded in cars on rails. Tons of coal were dug, loaded and hauled out daily from the depths of the mine. It was grueling work. At the end of the day's shift, every man emerged to the surface, bone tired and covered thick with dust "as black as coal."

It didn't take long for Grandmother to find out she didn't want her husband to be a coal miner. It was much too dangerous. And she didn't like being a coal miner's wife.

When he left the coal mines, Granddaddy bought a little farm near Cromwell and went to farming. They were living there on this farm when Eula Mae was born. And it was there on that same little farm where Gilbert got kicked in the head by the horse when he was about two years old, when slipped down to the barn lot, climbed through the fence, and tried to feed the horse some corn. He almost died from this injury. Grandmother tells this story vividly in another taped interview. Eula Mae was a baby and Grandmother was giving her a bath when she heard daddy screaming. Granddaddy and another man were plowing the cornfield nearby and came running. Granddaddy rode a horse to get the doctor because they had no telephone. The doctor came and they laid Gilbert out on Grandmother's big tall trunk for the doctor to sew up his head. Aunt Della, Granddaddy's sister, helped hold him down while the doctor tended him, and later she stayed with Grandmother and Granddaddy to help take care of him until he was out of danger, because Grandmother had her hands full with Eula Mae as a small baby.

(More on this story later in another place.)

(Research the mines in Ohio County for more information)

McHenry Mines were located in Ohio County, about \_\_\_\_\_ miles from Beaver Dam and were operated for \_\_\_\_\_ years.

2-15-98

## **JASPER NEWTON COX NOTES**

### **Spanish American War – Insurrection Period Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

Granddaddy Cox left home when he was 15 and joined the regular army, telling a fib about his age.

I need to add the following notes to his story, when I get it retyped for this computer.

After the Spanish-American War ended, fighting still continued in the Philippine Islands by factions opposing American control. Troops were recruited and sent to the Philippine Islands after the regulars/volunteers returned home from the war in 1898.

Granddaddy volunteered to go to the Philippines twice because he wanted to go overseas, he told me, but he didn't get sent either time. The last time, instead of sending him overseas, they sent him to Fort Leavenworth Military Prison in Kansas to be a guard in the Federal penitentiary where they were housing military prisoners.

I once read a letter from a soldier in the Ohio County Newspaper that I thought may have come from Granddaddy – writing home to his father. And perhaps James William Cox passed along part of the letter to the newspaper editor in Hartford. I will quote this article from the paper:

“This post is the second in size in the United States and has more soldiers than any other. There's a large college here for students going up for commission, and the Old Soldier's Home is a nice place to take your girl of a Sunday, but the U. S. Military Prison takes the cake.



There are 582 prisoners here and they are fed like a king. They have bread and water for breakfast sometime, and once in a while some oatmeal. For dinner they have soup made from black-eyed peas and an Irish potato. Prunes for supper, and they expect them to turn off as much work as a laboring man on the outside.

They are not allowed to speak to each other, except in the line of duty. Not allowed to speak to a guard unless they need something. If they are caught doing so, they are pulled away from the table and stood up facing the wall. It is a very common thing for one of the guards to get from 10 days to 3 months behind the wall for allowing one of them to ask another for a chew of tobacco. They are allowed one 10-cent plug of tobacco every Sunday.”

*Now, I just have a hunch Granddaddy wrote the above letter to his hometown newspaper editor. He mentioned to me the Old Soldiers Home and said they took twenty-five cents out of his paycheck for the Old Soldiers Home.*

*This article appeared in the paper at the period of time when he was there at Fort Leavenworth serving as a guard in the army at the U. S. Military Prison that he told me about. And you know, he told me that day on the porch when we were talking that he didn't like it there, and he bought his way out of the army for \$85.00 under a special act of the government.*

\* \* \* \* \*

## **JASPER NEWTON COX**

### **COAL MINING EXPERIENCE**

Granddaddy was working in the coal mines when he and grandmother married, however, he didn't work there very long. Grandmother didn't like for him to work in the mines because it was too dangerous. The newspapers frequently reported mining accidents, which were all too common.

In 1907 the McHenry Coal Mine in Ohio County, Kentucky provided a livelihood for several hundred employees, who dug, loaded, and hauled tons of bituminous coal daily from its depths.

Everyday, equipped with hard hats and a carbide light on their forehead, they descended a vertical shaft on a lift, about 30 to 40, maybe 50 feet or more, down to the bottom. Underneath, in the miles of tunnels, they spent ten hours a day without seeing sunlight. Once on the floor, they wound through a maze of shafts to begin the day's work at the seam of coal where their shift had ended the day before. Each night, using dynamite, the shift's miners blasted out the next day's work. Granddaddy said he went back many nights to blast out coal after finishing his day job and worked to make extra money. The next morning the day shift miners, using picks, began digging out coal from seams formed more than 300 million years ago. After it was dug, the coal was loaded in cars on rails. Tons of coal were dug, loaded and hauled out daily from the depths of the mine. It was grueling work. At the end of the day's shift, every man emerged to the surface, bone tired and covered thick with dust "as black as coal."

It didn't take long for Grandmother to find out she didn't want her husband to be a coal miner. It was much too dangerous. And she didn't like being a coal miner's wife.

When he left the coal mines, Granddaddy bought a little farm near Cromwell and went to farming. They were living there on this farm when Eula Mae was born.

Research the mines in Ohio County.

McHenry Mines were located in Ohio County, about \_\_\_\_ miles from Hartford and were operated for many years.

Research needed:

Name of railroad?

Type of coal?

How deep to the bottom?