

“No, It Wasn’t Close.....But It Wasn’t Far Either”

A Talk with Ruth Elna (Winton) Northcutt

Written by Jackie Layne Partin

2009

“No, It Wasn’t Close....But It Wasn’t Far Either”

A Talk with Ruth Elna (Winton) Northcutt

Written by Jackie Layne Partin

Not too long ago, my five-year-old granddaughter, Jocelyn, said to me, “Granny you have wrinkles!” As though I didn’t know that, I asked her, “Where?” Pointing at each area on my body, she answered, “On your hands, arms, and neck. Granny, they scare me. Get rid of them.” With a chuckle I answered, “They scare me too, Sweetie!” The elderly women, who allow me into their homes to listen to the stories of their lives, have such inner beauty that their wrinkles aren’t noticeable. On June 17, 2009, I met one of those beautiful women who is soft-spoken and has an affable manner about her. **“Drum Roll Please!” This Is Your Life – Ruth Elna (Winton) Northcutt – a first class lady!**



Ruth Elna (Winton) Northcutt – 2009

lives together at the old Clay place near their parents. It was there in **1916** their first child, Leonard Dale Winton, was born.

On February 11, 1919, in Coalmont, Tennessee, Ruth Elna Winton was born to Leonard “Lynn” Bascom Winton, (b. 1895 – d. 1981), and Nina Tera (Campbell) Winton, (b. 1896 – d. 1994). Ruth’s parents didn’t have the traditional wedding ceremony; one might say it was a novel affair since it was carried out in a buggy during a big rain. When Nina was a teenager, she got wet by saving a young boy’s life who had fallen into the icy cold waters in Wonder Cave, so a little rain on her wedding day wasn’t going to bother her. On September 30, 1915, in front of the P. T. Gilliam Store in Pelham, the acting Justice of the Peace, John Gallagher, officiated while Dr. Upton Beall Bowden held an umbrella over the couple’s heads as they repeated their wedding vows. They started their

Ruth’s paternal grandparents were John Lincoln Winton, (b. 1863 – d. 1946), and Nancy Emmaline (Crabtree) Winton, (b. 1864 – d. 1958). They reared their children, Sam Estill,

Robert Emmett, Leonard Bascom, Claude Leo, Mary Helen, and Dillard Reuben, in Burrows Cove. In 1914 at the age of twenty-five, Sam Estill Winton was stabbed to death at an ice cream party in Pelham by a man from Burrows Cove. The Winton family's hearts ached over the loss of their loved one at such a young age. Ruth's maternal grandparents were William Harris Campbell (b. 1864-d. 1929) and Ida (Woodlee) Campbell (b. 1873-d. 1923), parents of Lela, Vance, Nina, Lota, Hilda, Ethel, Ava, Vernon, Eloise, Taft, and a son, Ethridge who died young. These children were also reared in Burrows Cove. A coalminer himself, William Harris Campbell took part in the miners' rebellion in the 1890's when local miners took up arms against the use of convict laborers by the Tennessee, Coal, Iron and Railroad Company.

Lynn, (*I must call Leonard Bascom by his nickname, Lynn, because Ruth says that her father would turn over in his grave if I called him by his real name*), and Nina Winton let no grass grow under their feet. Lynn followed the coal in the winters since he owned a wagon and team useful for hauling it. The family first moved to Sweeton Hill in Coalmont before Ruth was born. Dr. Henry Douglas Lockhart, Sr. was the family doctor and delivered Ruth in **1919**. In the springtime, the family moved back to the Valley to raise, harvest and sell crops. Ruth said every time they moved, it was into a different house. Her earliest memories were created while living at the Clay place. Elston Clay, who grew up to become one of Grundy County's sheriffs, was six months younger than she was, and they became close friends and remained so throughout the years. To help her build the memories that she was now sharing with me, she had the company of her brother Dale and two more brothers, Jamie born in **1921** and Wayne born in **1924**; both were born in the Valley.

When I asked Ruth about the chores assigned to her as a child, she laughed and explained that taking care of her brothers took most of her time. Mothers usually were so busy with everyday tasks of housekeeping, laundry, gardening, canning and cooking, that babysitting was usually passed down to the oldest girls in the family. In Ruth's case, being the only girl at the time, she was constantly caring for little boys who were made of "frogs and snails and puppy dog tails." "What were the diapers for all the babies made from?" I asked. "Flour sacks!" was Ruth's response. "And we washed them in a tub with a rub board." I should have known the answer to that question because all of my mother's dishcloths were made of flour sacks, and some of my favorite clothes were made from "feed sacks." And yes, I have used a rub board! I wondered if Ruth's knuckles got scraped and sore like mine did the few times I was given the job of scrubbing clothing on the bumpy board. My hands never got the hang of being certain that the item of clothing was between my knuckles and the glass ridges inserted into the board frame. Many, many years later in my life, a lady in the Fiji Islands showed me that it was much better to use a flat board, large bar of laundry soap and a scrub brush instead of an old-fashioned rub board. I got the hang of that method without hurting myself. I had to.

Ruth started first grade in the Elkhead School. Mamie Hamby was one of her teachers. Her cousins, Paul and Louie Winton, were her playmates at school and at home. (*In later years, shocking news came to all the Wintons that while logging, Paul had been killed by a falling tree. Louie grew up to become another one of Grundy County's sheriffs.*) At school the usual games of Hide and Seek, Hop Scotch, Annie Over, Tag and Marbles took up the recess time. "Did you ever play marbles?" I asked Ruth. With a mischievous grin, she answered, "No, that was the boys' game." Ruth missed a year of school due to typhoid fever. Since the disease was contagious and at times lingered for weeks or even months in the days before antibiotics came on the scene, she was kept home and not able to catch up with all her work. Later on, she began to attend school over behind Cleve Hamby's Store at the Bethel School or Campground, as it was more commonly known. Cleve was the father of Melrose and Jewel Hamby. As a child back then, there was nothing more exciting than getting anywhere near a store hoping that a parent might just step inside for an item and maybe come out with a couple pieces of candy. The Great Depression was knocking at the door, but most folks didn't hear the knock and had no idea what lay ahead for them. If there was ever a time for a child to get those pieces of candy, in the early and mid 1920's was the time.

On her morning walk to school, Ruth passed on by the store with her little metal lunch bucket filled with a homemade lunch. One of my favorite questions to ask the interviewee is, "What was in your lunch box, bucket or bag?" Nina Winton prepared biscuit and sausage left over from breakfast and corn sometimes and placed them in Ruth's little bucket. Cooking the foods in the morning made them safer for the children to eat by lunchtime. There were no refrigerators for safe keeping of foods, so in warm weather, mothers had to be careful what they packed for their children. At Campground School, Mamie Hawk was Ruth's teacher. During these Valley years, Ruth's brother Dale had an accident with a knife, which took the sight away in one of his eyes, but over time, he regained his vision. A family move was coming up again, but Ruth would remember her Valley days as being happy ones.

Around **1925** Lynn moved his family back to the mountain to Sweeton Hill where Ruth's only sister, Nannie Mae, was born in **1926**. Shortly, the family moved over to a small community called Torbet near Mt. Vernon in Gruetli. This made it more convenient for Lynn who had been hired on to help build the railroad to Ross' Creek. He had a team of mules that he used to do his assigned work. When little Nannie Mae was eighteen-months-old, she became ill with intestinal problems, probably colitis, and passed away. Her tiny body was taken back to the Valley and buried at the Bethel Cemetery in Elkhead. It must have been sad for Ruth to lose the only sister she had. Now life went back to being just "Ruth and the boys." This contributed to her becoming a tomboy. What other choice did she have?

There were several moves from place to place and house to house, and the Great Depression was now a reality. Finally, Lynn saw the wisdom in settling down back in Coalmont where Ruth was later presented with two more brothers. Ray was born in 1930 and Howard in 1933.



Elizabeth (Smith) & Dale Winton, Ruth Winton, Lynn & Nina (Campbell) Winton, Ray, Howard, & Larry Winton



Front: Dale, Lynn, Nina and Ruth
Back: Howard, Ray, Wayne and Jamie

At the time of the move, Lynn was still driving the mule-drawn wagon to haul coal, but around 1933, he finally got a truck for hauling the coal. Like their father, there was a time when Ruth and her little brother Wayne had their own wagon and a team of goats to pull it. After hooking the goats to the little wagon and hopping onboard, away they went off through the woods. On one particular venture, the wagon overturned, and the desperate children yelled for help. The hardworking, railroad men left their jobs to come lift the wagon and children and send them on their way. Little wagons pulled by goats must have been popular during hard times. It was in the early 1930's that a good friend of mine in Monteagle, A. J. Long, built one and rode his siblings and friends around the great outdoors. What a refreshing playtime for children! *(My friend A. J. Long died this week, June 25, 2009 at the age of 89. He will be missed.)*

One of their homes was on the old C. W. Nunley property that Ruth believes was owned by her father at the time. Then they moved to the Bennett house that later belonged to Susie Mae and Hubert "Hub" Griswold. Ruth and her siblings attended the old Coalmont School near the Methodist Church and Howard Brown's house. Vera Brown, wife of Frank Brown, Miss Nellie Jossi and Hester Nunley were three of her teachers in Coalmont. Henrietta, Willene and Lillian Dyer were some of Ruth's new classmates. When Ruth's daughter, Wilma, asked her if the house they were living in at the time was close to "Little Granny's"

home, Ruth answered, “**No, it wasn’t close** – (*then a short pause and silence*) – **but it wasn’t far either!**” We all broke out in laughter at this statement. What a fun person, Ruth is!

Near the Methodist Church, the Winton house, and Lawson and Myrtle McCarver’s home, someone (*maybe Omar Mills*) came into the neighborhood and put up a planing mill that made wonderful, adventurous opportunities for the Winton children. Ruth, being “one of the boys,” and her brothers climbed onto a stack of lumber then proceeded to run and jump from one stack to another. They *really* found interesting fun when they crawled through the huge pipes that were used to blow the wood shavings out onto large piles. One of their homes was in the area where Lonnie Bone, brother to Clara (Bone) Landon, lived. All the neighborhood children came to their house to play. They were successful in breaking one of the family’s bedsteads when they all piled onto the bed. Ruth didn’t mention the punishment for that deed. However, when my brother and I were young, we broke the wide footboard in half lengthwise on my parents’ bed. Being the dummies that we were (*are*), we used a hammer and nails to try and put it back together. Did we really think we could hide the damage? If we had not driven the nails into the bed, it could possibly have been fixed with glue without ever showing the break. After a little “hickory tea,” we couldn’t sit for a while because of our *great* carpentry work! One rule in our home, and I think in most homes in those days, was that one could not play on the beds. Fair enough!

When the neighborhood boys wanted peanut butter candy or chocolate fudge, they brought the sugar and peanut butter, and Nina Winton made the candy. The Winton family was hospitable to the neighbor children. The Winton boys had a dog, but Ruth said that it never stayed in the house, but slept in the barn amongst the haystacks. The table scraps were put out for the dog to eat. We’ve come a long way now when some dogs eat out of crystal bowls, wear ribbons on their heads and sleep in their owners’ beds! While that old dog was snoozing away in the barn, the Winton family slept well on their straw and shuck mattresses, but Ruth recalled that the houses were so cold that one had to stand in front of the heat source and warm one side of the body at a time. Ruth’s grandmother had a wonderful feather mattress that helped Ruth stay warm and cozy on nights that she visited her. Lynn and Nina bought their first cotton mattress when they were living in Lockhart town.

In one of the houses the Wintons lived in, the yellow one, there were bedbugs. They prevented comfortable sleep because the little creatures bit their victims. Nina pulled the beds away from the wall, and placed the bed legs in little lids of coal oil to try to stop them from getting onto the beds. Strangely enough, bedbugs are attracted to heat, such as body warmth, so they could crawl onto the ceiling and just fall down onto the bodies below. Much like the mosquito, the bedbugs were an aggravation in that they fed on human blood.

Sometimes the families had to place a container of sulfur in a closed house and light it with a match. This forced most bugs out of the house, but it left a disgusting smell. I have slept where there were bedbugs when I was a child, and just in case one thinks his or her surroundings are immune from these disgusting little bugs, please realize that they have made a come back in the U. S. and have been found in motels, hospitals and homes. There have even been National Bedbug Conferences to study how to eradicate the little pest since the use of DDT is no longer permitted. So, dear reader, don't be snubbing your nose up at those of us who have experienced "the event;" one never knows when and where "the bed bugs might bite."

Lynn and the boys always planted a large garden, and Nina and Ruth prepared and stored food for the winters. The family compound had an orchard and hay fields; pigs were raised for meat and lard, (*Ruth and her daughter Wilma noted that it was acceptable to eat pork often because Granny Winton ate it every day of her life, when she had it, and she was four months shy of being ninety-eight when she died.*); hens were set on their nest of eggs so that later plenty of eggs and frying chickens were available for meals. The cow was milked morning and evening, and the children had plenty of sweet milk, buttermilk and butter. Summer months were berry-picking time. In the autumn in the backyard, Ruth took her turns stirring the hard kernels of corn that had been placed in the old black kettle filled with lye water. Hopefully, those stubborn little kernels would shed their tough hulls and out would come the white or yellow hominy; Nina then canned it in jars, and placed the hominy on the cellar shelves. During the winter is when the "hog met the corn." Good bacon drippings were a necessity for frying up good hominy. That old kettle also was used to make lye soap for bathing and for washing clothes. Ruth said that she didn't mind all the hard work, and she was happy to be able to help her parents and brothers. My husband and I have made lye soap the old-fashioned way, and let me tell you that it will clean the dirtiest hands perfectly. It's probably a lot safer than the more modern soaps on the market, but one must keep it out of the eyes. Since Lynn hauled coal for the coal company, his family shopped at the Company Store where at times, instead of money, scrip was used. For the most part, only necessities that could not be harvested or made at home were bought at the store.

In due time, Lynn and Nina Winton built their home near the new Coalmont School; their days of moving around were over. They purchased the land from Glen Fletcher who lived on Freemont Road, and while they were building their home, they lived in an old garage building that Jamie Winton remembers being separated into rooms by hanging blankets. Nina and the children lived in that little building while Mr. Duncan from Sweeton Hill and Lynn built their home. Lynn and Carmen Hargis of Gruetli did a little bartering on the lumber; Ruth's dad traded a mare to Carmen for the lumber. Once they moved into their new home, Lynn and his son Jamie built a garage or car repair shop nearby. Ruth recalled

that some time in the 1940's, the Civil Conservation Corp built a campsite near their home. Years later, Dale Winton bought his mother's home, but in the early 1990's, the Winton home burned.

Lynn and Nina took their children to the local Church of Christ meetinghouse for worship. Many Sundays the preacher came to their house to eat. Ruth and Nina got up early and cooked fried chicken, potato salad and green beans for the big, Sunday dinners. The old church building sat on the same spot as the present Coalmont Church of Christ building. Luke Gibbs, a well-known and well-loved preacher, was the one Ruth remembered hearing speak in her youth. The Lappin and Winton families were good friends and fellow churchgoers. One of the Lappin boys, Herman, married my Aunt Artie Mae Layne, so I am personally familiar with that family.

Ruth was blessed to have been able in those troubling economics years to attend Grundy County High School. She thinks she started about **1933**, a couple of years before the school burned in **1935**. A married couple, Arlie and Lucy Hamby were two of her teachers; she also named Ms. Schulze. Buford Anthony from Hubbard's Cove drove the tiny, wooden school bus with its two seats side by side. The morning ride that Ruth remembers the most was when all the students went to the back of the bus, and it "rared up." Ruth and I laughed so heartily at the image she painted of that bus being up in the air in the front. Kids are all the same no matter what generation they are born. Good, clean fun was fun then and now. "Now, Ruth, be honest with me. I know you had to be sweet on some boy in high school. Who was he?" I wittingly asked. She looked over at her daughter, Wilma, and then back to me, and I blurted out that Wilma wasn't listening and would never tell. Her answer was, "Buster Dyer!" Buster's full name was Samuel Dyer. Some years later, Buster married, and the couple had a child; then he was sent off to war. He died in 1944 of wounds received during World War II. Because of sickness, Ruth had to drop out of high school when she was a sophomore, and was never able to make up her schoolwork. When she wanted to ponder her future and have fun as a young girl should, she and her friends walked to the steps down below the old Patton house, sat down to watch the traffic go by and talk about all the things they wanted to do in their lives—and let's don't forgive the gab about *boys*! How many years has that set of steps been used for dating, conversation/gossip and people watching?

Families, who had land and were willing to work hard and take care of their farms, did not go hungry during the depression years. In 1939, at the age of twenty, Ruth got a job at the Wigwam in Coalmont where the National Youth Administration, or NYA, was operating in the area. The NYA was a part of the WPA program and was set up by President Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration to help the young people during the lean years of the Depression. Ruth and fellow workers, two of whom were Edith and Carlene Givens, were taught how to cook and clean house; they also repaired pants for the Army. At some places educational subjects were taught. They were paid twelve dollars fortnightly. She remembers the experience as being fun, and of course, the twenty-four dollars a month, helped her family during the economic slump. During the WWII years, she worked at Essick Wire Company in Michigan riding a streetcar back and forth to work. She stayed with her brother Dale in Dearborn, and stayed some with her Uncle Dill Winton in Detroit, Michigan. Her job was making electrical parts used in airplanes. She only stayed at that job for a few months; then she returned to Coalmont.



Ruth Elna Winton and James Alton Anderson
in front of the Wigwam

Turning the radio on and listening to the news coming over the airways between December 07, 1941 and the year 1945, was a frequent happening for Ruth. Rooted memories of the announcements of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the United States' entry into World War II, the death of President Roosevelt (*Ruth heard this announcement at the factory in Dearborn, Michigan.*), the swearing in of President Truman, the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the unconditional surrender of Japan, still surface in Ruth's mind today. Her hometown of Coalmont was saddened about the many deaths caused by the bombs, but they were happy that the end of the war was near, and the soldiers would be coming home. Sadly, at least two young men from Coalmont, Hoyt D. Meeks and Bobbie Phipps, did not make it home alive. Their remains were interred in the Bonnie Oak Cemetery.

Happier times for Ruth came at the end of the war. Durward Vernon Northcutt, (b. 1913), son of Vernon Levi and Jay (Northcutt) Northcutt, was the young man who became her love interest. He had broken his leg in high school, so during the war was not sent overseas to do combat duty; however, he reached the status of Corporal in the Army. D. V., as he was better known, made his contribution to his country when he helped build Camp Forrest in Tullahoma.



Seated: Era (Northcutt) Pernell and D. V. Northcutt; Standing left: Sherwin Hallis Northcutt and Lyte Northcutt



“Granny” Jay (Northcutt) Northcutt and Vernon Levi “Poop” Northcutt

He and his brother Sherwin Hallis Northcutt had gone to college at the University of Tennessee, and D. V. spent some time studying at the Tennessee Polytechnic Institute in Cookeville. His brother Lyte and sister Era attended Freed Hardeman College, and Lyte also attended school at Abilene, Texas. D. V. lacked only a few hours finishing his college degree, but he had to quit. Earlier, he and his brother Lyte Wilson Northcutt, had asked a couple of girls, Ruth Elna Winton and Billie Ruth Pocus, out on a date. In those days the young men were expected to come to the front door and escort the young ladies to the car. D. V. and Ruth became friends. Lyte and Billie Ruth were friends, but she later married an Overturf. D. V. asked Ruth to marry him on a trip to Chattanooga to pick up his sister, Era, who had worked in Washington, D. C. as an office worker. She was coming home, but because of fog, she was unable to get all the way home. D. V. and Ruth had to come back home, but he went back the next day to get his sister.

One of Ruth’s classmates was Lena Grace Patrick who lived in Palmer. She, Ruth, Lyte and D. V. were going to pick up a package in McMinnville for the boys’ mother, Jay Northcutt. While Lyte walked up to Lena Grace’s house to escort her to the car, D. V. gave Ruth an engagement ring while sitting in the car. Eleven dates after Ruth and D. V. went on their double date with his brother Lyte and the young lady, Billie Pocus, they were ready to become man and wife. On December 25, 1945, in Rossville, Georgia, they did just that. They honeymooned for several days in the Reed House in Chattanooga, and the bill was just over twenty dollars.

D. V. and Ruth moved to Altamont and settled on Sandy Ridge Road in the same neighborhood as his parents, Vernon and Jay. Vernon and his sons, D.V., Lyte and Hallis, owned and operated



D. V. and Ruth (Winton) Northcutt in front of her parent's home in Coalmont

Northcutt Brothers Lumber Company. On occasion, Ruth's mother Nina shopped at a store in Altamont that had been owned by Tom and Jim Northcutt originally and later by a couple other different men, one being H. B. Williams. Nina often went upstairs to look at dresses where she noticed that men would come in and lift the lid on a trunk, put money in the trunk and take a drink. I suppose this was some sort of great moonshine, or who knows, maybe the men liked to watch the women shop for dresses, especially after they had had a big swig of liquor!

Lynn and Nina were proud of the three little girls that sprang from their daughter's marriage to D. V. They became grandparents of (1) Wilma Jean Northcutt who married Stephen Arthur Trussler; their two sons are Jay Michael and Jon Seaward. Jay married Leslie Henley, and they have a son, Jett Edward. Jon Seaward has two children, Jake Stephen and Nicholas Richard. (2) Joyce Anita Northcutt who married William Pennell; they had one son, David Michael, who passed away from complications of cystic fibrosis. (3) Verna Lynn Northcutt who married Wayne Johnson; Verna Lynn is the mother of three children, Megan Elizabeth Searcy, Bryan William Searcy, and Anna Katrina Johnson. With her extended family around her, Ruth can visit and "spin family yarns" no matter what color house or Grundy town she lives in.

Fannie Moffitt, an eccentric, old maid cousin of Vernon Levi Northcutt, had died and left no will. Her mourning, mansion, lonely without its Mistress, was full of mystery, antiques, bonds and cash money. When the big day came in 1955, for the auctioning off of Fannie's personal effects and house, Ruth Northcutt was at the old Altamont School with the PTA making fried pies and other delicacies to sell to the buyers. Ruth's daughter, Wilma, and Susan (Scruggs) Ramsey's job was to carry the fried pies from the school down to the Moffitt house to sell. Those two girls were having a ball and gaining weight like crazy since every trip they made, they ate a fried pie. That day and the big auction made some of the biggest news in Altamont, all around the county and far beyond.

Vernon Northcutt bought the old house for the exorbitant price of \$10,000. Ruth and D. V. Northcutt moved into Fannie's old home. It was named "Moffitt Manor" when it was later turned into a boarding house. The workers who built the Altamont to Pelham road stayed in the boarding house with Susie Mae Griswold keeping all the hungry men fed with her good cooking.

With Ruth's permission I want to insert a wonderful story written by Dean Northcutt about his father, Sherwin Hallis Northcutt. The story follows:

"He was born on October 17, 1915 in McMinnville, Tennessee to the late Vernon and Jay Northcutt. He was raised in Northcutt Cove between Irving College and Altamont, Tennessee. His brothers and sister are D. V. Northcutt, Lyte Northcutt, and Era Northcutt Pennell.

His education was attained at Irving College as a boarding school student, and then he finished high school at Grundy County High School where he was a renowned basketball player. Following high school, he attended the University of Tennessee and played basketball there until he had both feet broken. He graduated from the University of Tennessee with a degree in Agricultural Economics in 1941 and with a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the U. S. Army.

During his military time he was serving at Fort Knox, Kentucky and was later assigned to the 20th Armored Division and trained some under Gen. George S. Patton at Fort Benning, Georgia. He was at Fort Campbell, Kentucky when the 20th Armored Division was formed. During the years of training there, he coached the 20th Tank Battalion basketball team that beat the Harlem Globetrotters in a basketball game in Nashville, Tennessee. One of his most famous team members was Chuck Connors, the man who played "The Rifleman" on television in the 1960's.

He was the commander of B Company, 20th Tank Battalion, 20th Armored Division while in Germany in the last year of World War II. He led his tank company in the liberation of the infamous Dachau concentration and death camp a few miles outside of Munich, Germany.

Following the end of World War II in Germany, he served three years as the chief food distribution officer for CARE, Inc. for their field operations in Germany. During his service time following the end of the war, he was headquartered in Heidelberg, Germany and was the duty officer in the emergency room patting the feet of and talking to Gen. George S. Patton when he died on December 21, 1945. He withdrew from active service in 1949 and served in the U. S. Army Reserves until he had 30 years of total Army service.

His highest award was the Bronze Star, which he received when the 20th Armored Division was disbanded near Garmisch, Germany in 1945. While serving in the Army in Germany, he had the honor of meeting with Sir Winston Churchill.



Garmisch, Germany at the presentation of the
Bronze Star to Sherwin Hallis Northcutt

Upon returning to the United States, Mr. Northcutt helped manage and operate Northcutt Brothers Lumber Company in Altamont, Tennessee until a massive fire destroyed the company in the early 1960s. He was a pioneer in bringing the poultry business to Grundy County when, in 1952, he constructed the 2nd poultry house built in the county. He opened and operated M & H Broiler Service for several years and at one time had over a quarter of a million chickens being grown on contract. In his later years on the farm he raised feeder pigs and grew nursery stock.

He was the lead organizer in the establishment of the Big Creek Utility District in Grundy County and served as the chairman of the board of directors for over 50 years. Big Creek Utility District brought clean drinking water through hundreds of miles of pipe to nearly all the people of Grundy County and parts of Sequatchie County.

Mr. Northcutt served as president of the Cumberland Heights Community League for nearly 20 years. In this position he helped the community grow through many community resource development projects including the building of a community building that is being still used today for Head Start children in the community.

Mr. Northcutt was a member of the Altamont Church of Christ for over 60 years. He served as an Elder at the church for nearly 20 years.

Through the toils of life, Mr. Northcutt has been left as a widower three times. He has two sons, Galyon W. Northcutt and S. Dean Northcutt. Galyon was an air traffic controller until his retirement at which time he continued to work as a licensed land surveyor. Dean was an Agricultural Extension agent with the University of Tennessee for 35 years prior until his retirement in 2008. Mr. Northcutt has eight grandchildren."



Sherwin Hallis and Marion Northcutt

(Thanks to Dean for sharing his “Northcutt” story with the readers. What a wonderful legacy Sherwin Hallis Northcutt will leave for his family!)

Ruth (Winton) Northcutt’s husband, Durward Vernon Northcutt, died in 1999 and was buried in the Armstrong Cemetery in Northcutt Cove. He had been born in the cove named for his ancestors and left it for the mountain in 1936, but Ruth said that he never really wanted to go back there to live. Although Altamont was Ruth’s favorite place to have lived, she stayed on in their home in Coalmont until about two years ago when she went to live with her daughter Wilma and her son-in-law, Steve Trussler, near Tracy City. For years, she has remained faithful in her attendance for worship with the Church of Christ. I enjoy so much being with folks who haven’t forgotten how to laugh, and Ruth is one of those people. I told her that I knew her brother Ray Winton well; I bragged on his intelligence and the fact that he has a well-rounded personality. Then I asked, “Did you ever have to spank Ray?” With a big round of laughter, she said, “Yes, plenty of times!” “So, he was an aggravating brother?” I asked. Ruth’s eyes lit up when she answered, “He still is!”