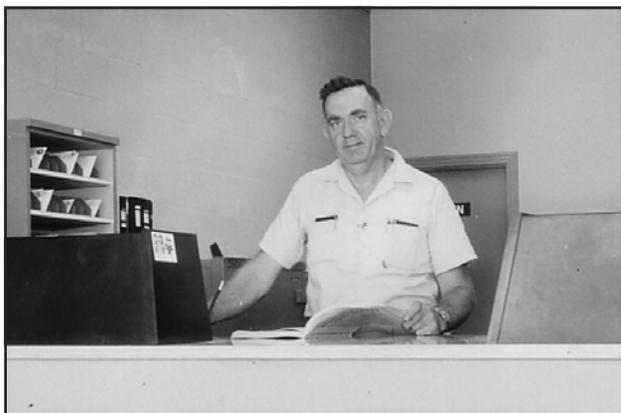


CITIZEN OF THE MONTH - Mr. Harry M. Patillo

By Charlotte Patillo Gray



Mr. Harry Patillo at the Post Office in Eagleville.

A long time resident of Eagleville, Harry M. Patillo will celebrate his 85th birthday the first day of November this year. Born in Murfreesboro, he began first grade at MTSU, then called the Normal School, moved to Central High School, then called the Training School, and then on to Smyrna High School where he graduated in 1939. He always got a chuckle out of telling people that he started college when he was only 6 years old. After serving in the Air Force in WW II in the chemical airfare division between 1942 and 1946, he was discharged having attained the rank of sergeant. Shortly after returning home, he took the civil service exam and was sworn in as postmaster of the Eagleville Post Office on September 12, 1949. Three days later he married Lillian May Webb and they began their lives in the community of Eagleville.

As postmaster for 35 years, he is known and loved by many. He was postmaster in 1952 during the big fire when a quarter of the town was burned to the ground. The Post Office was then housed in the back of Puckett's Grocery at the present location of the Dairy Bar. Because of his quick actions, all the letters, equipment and the safe, which was pulled down the street with a chain behind a jeep, were all moved before the fire got into the building. They lost nothing and were open for business the next day. For eight years until the present building was built in 1960, the post office was housed in the

Crosslin Supply Company. When asked what the biggest change in the postal system was during his years as postmaster, his ready answer was the "zip code".

My most vivid memory of my father as postmaster during my growing up years in Eagleville, was how early he got up to open the post office and raise the American flag over the town, and how reverently he lowered the flag every afternoon at 4:00 and carefully tri-folded it to be ready for the next morning. If I happened to be there with him, he would let me help him fold the flag, never letting it touch the ground, all the while teaching me about respect for the country it represented. During the last ten years before his retirement, he became a training postmaster and was sent all over Tennessee giving instruction to new postmasters in the area.

He retired in December of 1980 and was honored with a reception given by fellow employees: Herbert and Evelyn Crick, Ellie Wilkerson and Charlotte Ralston. Although retired from the post office, he was not retired from life. He spent many hours working on his farm and raising Black Angus cattle. He is still an active member of the Eagleville Lion's Club. He is the only active charter member, which is now in its 59th year. Together he and his wife Lillian, enjoyed life together. She was known around town for her ready smile and laugh and her good cooking, especially her angel food cakes. She was a member of the local homemakers clubs and they enjoyed attending events at the community center and the local basketball games. They were long time members of the Eagleville Church of Christ. After 45 years of marriage, Lillian passed away in September of 1994.

Harry and Lillian's greatest joy was their two children and three grandchildren. Their daughter, Charlotte, attended David Lipscomb College and then married Dr. Jim Gray, and taught science in Louisville, KY until their children were born. They now reside in Springfield, TN. The granddaughter Deborah, is a first grade teacher in Springville, Alabama. The middle grandson, son Michael and his new wife

are in Alpine, Texas where he is pursuing a graduate degree in Range and Wildlife Management, and the youngest grandson Jonathan, is attending Abilene Christian University in Abilene, Texas, pursuing a degree in Computer Science.

Their son, John Thomas, is well known in the middle Tennessee area as a much sought after mechanic and a farmer. After graduating from Eagleville High School, he graduated from the Tennessee State Area Vocational Technical School with a degree as a machinist. Having completed several courses in advanced engines and training with John Deere, he worked for the John Deere dealership in Triune until it closed its doors.

Harry and John still reside in the only home they have ever known in Eagleville, where John's familiar gray 1966 Chevy truck full of tools still comes to the rescue of many a farmer, and Harry's familiar red 1990 Chevy truck still makes that trip to the center of town to the dairy bar for lunch or the post office to mail a letter. ■



Herbert Crick, Harry Patillo, Ellie Wilkerson, Evelyn Crick and Charlotte Ralston at Harry's retirement reception.