

Jane Stephenson Simpson



I have been a resident of Eagleville all of my life. My daddy was Dr. J.E. Stephenson, a dentist from Spring Hill, Tennessee, the son of George W. and Lucy Elizabeth Epps Stephenson. My mama was Mary Claire Hughes of Eagleville, daughter of David Henning and Lucy Holland Jones Hughes. There were two boys and four girls in our family. George Hughes, Elizabeth Holland (Holly) died at age two, Walter Henning (Bub), Virginia (Sis), Pauline (Paul), and Mary Jane (that's me). We lived on Hwy 99, second house on the right going into Murfreesboro, where Suzanne and Johnny McClaran now live.

Our house was, you might say, in the middle of town and a good place to play. All of my life I can only remember our yard being full of boys and girls of all ages,

ready to play games such as, kick-the-can, hiding, croquet, card games and many others. It was just a convenient place to gather. Daddy and Mama like for all the children to be in their yard. They said that when the children were in their yard, they knew where their own children were and they knew all were safe. Mama didn't have any flowers or shrubs

in the yard until all of us were grown up and going our own way. It was just as well because we would have killed them while playing. We all did have lots of fun. I can't begin to name all that came to play, but they knew they were always welcome.

Our summers were always fun. In addition to all of our friends getting together, we liked to do different things. Lots of days we all would walk about three miles to the river to go swimming. Mrs. Penson, a very nice lady, would let us come into her home and change our clothes. She also let us come back into her home, wet as we were, to dry off and change clothes again. Daddy would usually come and get us when he got home from his office. We didn't have to walk back to Eagleville.

Traveling shows use to come to Eagleville in the summertime. This was something different. It didn't cost much to get in the show. They sold little boxes of candy and crack-jacks, which had prizes in them. They really made it sound like we would be getting valuable prizes but we soon found out that wasn't true. One show set up in a vacant lot owned by Mr. Riley Wheeler, about where the Mexican restaurant is now located. At a different time, I remember one in the lot where Mrs. Dot John's house now sets, then, there was a carnival like show that set up in a vacant lot on Mr. Ed McCord's farm on Hwy 41A, North. These shows didn't come to Eagleville often, but they were fun and something different for all.

Gypsies used to come to Eagleville. They were people that just wandered from place to place. Everyone always dreaded seeing them coming to Eagleville. They went into the stores and would steal items and distract people while they picked pockets. This made the people of Eagleville very uncomfortable while they were in town. I was afraid of them. One time, when I was very small, it seemed that you couldn't look in any direction unless you would see several of them. I locked every outside door so that they couldn't get in the house. Bub, my brother, came home from the store and couldn't get in the door. He started rattling doors and making all kinds of noises. This really upset me. I just knew something bad was going to happen to us. Mama went to the door finding only Bub playing a joke on us. I was really mad at him. He just laughed and laughed at me. The gypsies usually stayed around for three days to a week and would then move on.

Then, there was the "Goat-man" (that is what we called him) that came through Eagleville many times. I don't remember much about him other than he had a wagon pulled by a team of goats. I think goats also followed the wagon. There was a young boy that was always with him. They would stop, feed and water the goats. The "Goat-man" and the boy would eat and rest and be on their way.

A memory that is very vivid in my mind is the first day of my school years. Fall of 1934, age five years & seven months, Miss Grace Fann (married Mr. Bill Wheeler later) was my 1st grade teacher. Our parents left all of us with Miss Fann. This was not to my liking. Miss Fann led us into a large room, the auditorium, where the whole student body and visitors assembled for the first day of school activities. I was in the seat next to the center aisle (lucky for me). Being very unhappy to be there, I looked to the back of the room and saw my mama. I ran as fast as I could go to get to her and everything was finally good again.

Miss Fann taught 1st and 2nd grades, Miss Erlene Carlton (later married Grady Elmore) taught 3rd and 4th grades. Due to some changes the next year, Miss Erlene also taught us in the 5th grade. Mrs. Frances Nance taught 6th grade. The 7th grade was different for us because for the first time, we had a man teacher, Mr. Raymond (Bull) Brown. I really liked him. He coached the high school basketball teams. In the 8th grade, we had two men teachers, Mr. J.B. Pressgrove and Mr. Lemmie Manier. Miss Ethel Elmore taught music. This included all kinds of instruments, voice and glee clubs. Teachers changed from year to year. These are the teachers that I had in elementary school. Grade one



through eight only went to school eight months out of the year. Grades nine through twelve went nine months a year. The year that I was in the 8th grade was the last for anyone to go only eight months.

School was never called off due to bad weather, at least when I was in elementary school. If the school buses couldn't run, everyone got to school the best way they could. Usually the ones at school were those that lived close in Eagleville. I remember one big snow, Mr. Grigsby with the permission of all parents, went with the students to Mr. Sam William's hill. We did have fun sliding down the hill on slides and whatever we could find to slide on. Another time, the weather was so cold that the river in front of Edna Jackson's house froze over. We sure did have fun ice-skating.

High school found us changing classes all day. This was different for us. The teacher that I remember when I was in high school at Eagleville were Mr. Bill Wheeler, the principle, who also taught Spanish, English and maybe some math; Marie Farmer taught Home Economics, some Science classes and maybe English; Mrs. Edna Windrow taught Science and math classes; Mr. Lemmie Manier taught history, geography and social studies; Rush Taylor, Jr. coached basketball, baseball and softball teams. He also taught some classes in the 8th grade. Other principals that I remember were Mr. Ray Dowdy and Mr. Charles Grigsby.

The competitive sports that we played in high school were basketball, softball and baseball. There were very little changes in the rules, if any; in the way the boy's basketball and baseball games were played. The players did not have the run of the whole court. The floor was a three-division court, two forward players, two center players and two guard players. I played this way when I was in elementary school



as a center. When I played in high school, the rules for the girls changed to a two-division court, three forwards and three guards. I played forward position. We could only dribble the ball one time until the rules were changed again for us to dribble twice. We thought we could really cover a big area with that second dribble. Fast-pitch softball was all we ever knew. We never heard of slow-pitch. That was the only difference in softball. No lights, so we had to play games in the afternoon, during school hours, sometimes at our school and sometimes at the school of our opponent. We usually had a crowd at the games because most of the student body was excused to watch the games.

Daddy and Mama always went to all of our basketball games. They didn't ever go by themselves because when time rolled around to go to the away games, many students that had no way to go were at the house to see if there was room for them. Daddy never refused to let anyone



ride. One time I remember, there were eleven that rolled out of the car. They didn't mind how crowded, just along as they could get to the game.

Graduation finally came the spring of 1946. After two years of college, two years teaching at Eagleville School and finishing college in 1951, Milton Simpson and I were married the day after I finished. Milton farmed full time until sometimes in the early 1970's. At that time, he farmed part-time and worked in construction. We lived in Eagleville with my mother. I taught one year at Rockvale and two years at Chapel Hill. At this time an opening became available at Eagleville School again. I accepted that position and became a permanent fixture at Eagleville until I retired in 1983, with 31 years of teaching experiences. Since the year that I taught in Rockvale, I have been the song leader and choir director at the Eagleville United Methodist Church, of which I have been a member since 1938.

We have two daughters, Suzanne, married to Johnny McClaran and, Rita, married to George Boyd. They each have one child; Davy McClaran married to Melissa Daugherty; and Gretchen Boyd Thompson married to Lucas Thompson. We are proud parents, proud grandparents and now proud great-grandparents of Ryley McClaran and Lizzy Thompson.