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FOXFIRE

— *Boogers, Witches, and Haints* —

APPALACHIAN GHOST STORIES



Edited by

FOXFIRE STUDENTS

Boogers, Witches, and Haints: Appalachian Ghost Stories

The Foxfire Americana Library
Edited by Foxfire Students



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A NOTE ABOUT THE FOXFIRE AMERICANA LIBRARY SERIES

For almost half a century, high school students in the Foxfire program in Rabun County, Georgia, have collected oral histories of their elders from the southern Appalachian region in an attempt to preserve a part of the rapidly vanishing heritage and dialect. The Foxfire Fund, Inc., has brought that philosophy of simple living to millions of readers, starting with the bestselling success of *The Foxfire Book* in the early 1970s. Their series of fifteen books and counting has taught creative self-sufficiency and has preserved the stories, crafts, and customs of the unique Appalachian culture for future generations.

Traditionally, books in the Foxfire series have included a little something for everyone in each and every volume. For the first time ever, through the creation of The Foxfire Americana Library, this forty-five-year collection of knowledge has been organized by subject. Whether down-home recipes or simple tips for both your household and garden, each book holds a wealth of tried-and-true information, all passed down by unforgettable people with unforgettable voices.

BOOGERS, WITCHES, AND HAINTS

Probably my earliest memories are of the times when the power would go out and we would have to get down the kerosine lamps. My grandmother always used these times to the best advantage by telling ghost stories—or “booger” tales. I don’t remember the tales as such, but I can remember the lamp that lighted only her face as she recalled the choicest horrors of her childhood.

That the people of these mountains should have a rich supply of “haint” tales is not at all surprising. They had conquered the land—but only in a small area around their doors. No matter how friendly the woods seemed in daylight, there were noises and mysterious lights there at night that were hard to ignore if you were out there all alone.

We tape-recorded the following stories in an attempt to let you share a singular mountain experience—a night of ghost tales by a slowly dying fire.

DAVID WILSON

1

To be absolutely truthful, most of the people we talked with did not believe in ghosts or witches or anything of the sort. They had either seen their fears proved false (a white dog, a flapping sheet, natural gas, or the like), or they simply had never had to have them proved false—they just never believed. We met many of them in the course of our wanderings. Here are some of the best of their comments.

MRS. E. H. BROWN: Oh, I’ve heard a number of ghost stories. They come in here and they went out here and I didn’t pay any ’tention. I never have been hainted. I didn’t think I’d ever done anybody any harm that they’d bother me.

I moved t'Highlands and they'uz some people come in tryin' t'tell me how terrible th'old Methodist Church was haunted there at Scaly there where I lived. Well, I'uz raised there. I let'em tell their tales. They said that you just couldn't go in that church at night—they'uz th'awfulest thing they ever were in there.

I let'em tell their story, and I laughed at'em. I says, "Well, I've been in that church after dark by myself and I didn't hear a thing." I said, "I wasn't a bit afraid."

There'uz a boy that'd been murdered that's grew up with me was buried out there, but I never done th'boy no harm, and I didn't 'spect him t'make any noise and bother me.

And then they thought they would get me. Said, "Just as sure as you pass th'school house about midnight, you'll see a little girl and a little boy walkin' that rock walk."

"Well," I said, "I've passed there alone many nights about midnight and I never did see anything." That was just a fancy someone had told. Why, I passed that place numbers of nights. I didn't see nothin'. I believe most a'that is imagination. I say imagination, or maybe a guilty conscience. Then you might see somethin'. I wouldn't be surprised. If you'd done some dirty deed or murdered somebody or something, why I wouldn't be surprised if they wouldn't imagine they saw something.

But I never experienced no such thing. Only thing I was ever afraid of was a dog or a snake.

DANIEL MANOUS: No, I don't think there's anything like that. Do you? I don't think so. I think that's th'imagination. You think on a thing till you think it's real.

I used to hear my grandfather tell one about when he'uz a boy. They'uz a cemetery right close to where he lived, and he could hear a baby cryin' every night over at th'cemetery.

He'uz scared and didn't know what t'think about it and told one of th'neighbors. Said, "I heard a baby cry over yonder at th'cemetery every night. I didn't go about it." Said, "I'm afraid to. Are you afraid to go over there?"

He said, "No, I'm not afraid to go over there."

Grandpa says, “You come over t’m my house tonight. If that baby cries, if you’ll go over there and see what it is, I’ll give you ten dollars.”

So he came over then that night, y’know, and waited till seven o’clock. Said, “All right. If you’re not ’fraid t’go, now’s th’time t’go.”

That man just took off and went over there, and they’uz a big basket sittin’ on top a’th’tombstone, and they’uz a baby in it. Little baby boy. He just went and picked up th’basket, went on back and took it to him and said, “It’s a baby.”

He’d been a’hearin’ th’baby for several nights he claimed. He kept that baby and raised it, and it went by th’name a’ Billy Tombs—after th’tombstone. That was actually th’t truth. I’ve heard my grandpa say that he’d seen th’boy a many a time. Billy Tombs.

The Bible preaches that th’d dead don’t know anything at all. After any person dies, why they don’t know anything. They don’t have any thoughts, don’t know a thing in th’world.

Well, they *couldn’t* come back here. They couldn’t come back and cause trouble and bother th’livin’ because they can’t *get* back. They’re dead. They don’t know anything.

If you don’t believe th’Bible, you just as well not believe nothin’. If it didn’t teach that, y’might have somethin’ t’base it on, y’see. But since they don’t know anything, how could they come back? ’Cause they’d have t’be doin’ a little thinkin’r’somethin’r’nother before they could get back and trouble anybody’r’anything.

They’s mediums that say they could talk t’th’d dead and all that. I don’t believe that. That’s just a evil spirit. Really, I don’t believe in’em. They’s nothin’ t’base it on. They’s no foundation. Cain’t build a house without no foundation. Th’Bible destroys all th’foundation. If somethin’ dies, it’s gone—don’t know a thing in th’world. You kin find th’s stories, but there ain’t no foundation for’em. That’s what I call a myth. Just not reality.

MARY CARPENTER: There’s a place over yonder at Jim Branch—they had been people said they’s seen balls of fire big as these old-timey washpots roll th’road there. I forgot who it was told me that they’uz comin’ there one night and said they was a big ball of fire.

And they said they hit Frank Kelly's field and cut out across through th'field and wouldn't pass it.

HOYT THOMAS: I had friends treed a possum one night, and said they seen a ball a'fire that gave enough light till they seen how t'get that possum out a'that tree.



ILLUSTRATION 1 Annie Perry

And then one night last winter we seen a light, but it was a weather satellite put up in fall that was burnin' up. It just looked like a extry moon. It had kind of a purple-like glow around it. Didn't last but a few minutes till it was gone. Then it trailed off in a cloud of smoke.

And one night it just looked like th'world was afire back in there. Like a big forest fire, y'know. And it come on around, and at twelve o'clock it went right square up in th'middle of th'sky and made a question mark. Just as pretty a question mark as you ever looked at.

ANNIE PERRY: I don't know nothin' about ghosts. In fact, I never was brought up t'hear ghost tales. My daddy said not t'tell children ghost tales. Said it'ud make'em afraid. Well, I'm not afraid, but I tell you I had a sister that wouldn't open a door an' go out on th'porch an' get a drink a'water at th'well. She'uz just afraid a'th'dark.

They's no such thing as a haint. It's not a thing in th'world but imagination. They just imagine they hear these things and they don't hear'em at all.

Now this is not a haunted tale—this is true. I'uz seven years old when I started school. Had t'go through these woods over here, and ever'body thought they'uz haints in th'woods.

And th'neighbors, they had lots a'big old brood sows. And if you caught a pig'r'made a pig squeal, they'd bite you. And they'd say, "Now, Annie, don't you get out there on th'side a'th'road (them pigs'uz on th'side a'th'road), an' go through there or them old sows'll eat you up."

Well, they had me afraid a'hogs.

I'd have t'go by m'self through those woods over there. I'd look way out here and way out there. There wouldn't be a thing in th'world. Directly I saw a thing that looked like a hog. I had t'go by it and I was skeered. And there wasn't a thing in th'world. Not a thing. They wasn't a hog within a mile a'there—just some old stumps a'lyin' there. But I guess it looked like a hog t'me. Imagination. That's so now. They skeered me with hogs. And I'd look way out an' I'd see somethin' and I'd make a hog out of it.

Now *that's* th'way ghost tales get started. Ain't no ghosts.

LAWTON BROOKS: 'Bout two mile and a half out a'Hayesville, there kind'a in a bend in th'road is where a man was killed and just shoved out ont a this big old white rock by th'side a'th'road. And he died and left blood a'settin' on th'rock. That blood wouldn't wash off. Stayed there a long time. An' ever'body passed through there got scared, y'know, seein' blood on th'rock where that man just fell out and died.

'Course people got their nerves up and got scared about it and they'd see ghosts. Some of'em said somethin' would be gettin' on behind their mules or horses an' ride with'em an' spook their animals an' make'em jump around scaired and crazy like. People was really scaired t'go by that big white rock 'cause so many people says somethin' would get on their animal an' aggravate th'dickens out'a'em.

I was a'courtin' up there, and I had t'come by there. 'Course I could'a went around, but if I went around it would'a been further out'a my way, and I decided t'go by it. It was a'rainin' that night, and I'd just take th'near cut and go down through there.

When I got pretty close t'where that rock was, m'horse got scaired and wouldn't budge nary an inch. Just bowed right up, front legs stiff like boards. I teched'im wi'm'spur and he jumped over t'other side th'road. Took a step'r'two and bowed up again, and I could feel'im a'shakin' a little even.

'Bout that time I saw somethin' white comin' off th'bank right down t'where that rock was at and stopped. I thought t'myself, "You got me!" I just knowed that'd 'bout done me in.

So m'horse, I think he found out before I did what that thing was, and he just commenced walkin' along and walked right up next t'it. I got me a match out'a m'coat pocket—they wasn't no things like flashlights in them days—and I struck me a match, and there set a big white dog—big old white shepherd dog a'settin' there in a ditch.

And if I'd a'went on and hadn't a'never discovered what that was, I'd a'always said I seen a ghost. But I found out what it was.

ETHEL CORN: They call them balls'a'fire jack-a'lanterns. It's kind of a round-lookin' thing, an'hit'll come and they'll play up—they'll go

down low t'th'ground and high up. And they're see'd always over here on what they call th'Chainey Hill. And some said hit was from mineral. They's a vein a'minerals goes through there. And they'd rise and they'd go up, and they're pretty good-sized lights, and they're playin' all over th'bottoms down below there. And sometimes they'll go away-y-y up and then back down.

I'd been out a'plowin', and I'uz a'wantin' t'get th'bottom plowed out. And I plowed—hit was a dusky dark when I got in. And I went t'put up th'horse and got th'corn and went t'feed her, and right at th'back of th'stable they was jest a big light rose down right at th'back of th'stables in th'swamp.

And hit kept a'goin' higher and higher. I was young—I wadn't plumb grown—and I was awful cowardly, and I throwed th'corn through a crack in th'stable—I didn't put it in th'trough—and I run and I run and I never knowed what it was. I didn't take time t'see how high it went. I run!

And Andy Burrell'uz goin' up th'branch home one night. It'uz in th'winter time an' right cold and th'wind'uz a'blowin' right hard; and it got t'blowin' an'floppin' his tie back over his shoulder. And he never thought of it bein' his tie, and he run about a quarter mile up th'mountain till he just give completely out.

And when he did, he found out hit was his tie that'uz a'doin' th'floppin' and makin' th'rackets. He'uz scared, and he took a hard race from it!

MINYARD CONNER: This boy that lived way back in th'woods had t'go hunt his cows ever' evenin'. There was a big tree beside th'road. He'd drive his cows in there and they'd be somethin' hangin' down from th'limb up there on th'tree. Couldn't tell what it was. He said it would just be hangin' there. Just nearly dusk.

And he had some more boy friends that lived pretty close. He told these other boys about it. They didn't believe him. And he told'em a certain time of th'evenin' it'ud be hangin' there. Said it wouldn't be hangin' there when th'sun was shinin'r'anything. It would be right late of evenin'. He told'em t'come a certain time.

Well, th'night th'boys was t'come, he went up there. He kept watchin' that limb t'see if anything was a'hangin' there. He'd bet some money, and he'd lose his money if they wasn't. Well, they wasn't, so he just decided he'd get out and climb th'tree and hang down *himself*.

'Bout that time, here they come around th'curve, y'know. He'uz a'hangin' down yonder. He'd slipped down on th'limb and he'uz a'hangin' down there.

Th'boys come up and looked around. Said, "Well, he told th'truth. But he said there'uz just one. There's *two* of'em." And that boy kept turnin' his head around, y'know, and kept turnin' his head around. He turned around and seen that'un hangin' right beside him! He just turn loose and here he went! And when he hit th'ground, th'boys broke and run.

Well, he jumped up and took atter'em. He said, "Wait there, boys. I'm one of you!"

One said t'th'other'n—they was a'runnin' right t'gether said, "What did he say?"

"He said, 'Wait there, boys. I'm gonna have one of you!'"

That's th'way them ghost stories gets started.

WILL ZOELLNER: I didn't think much a'ghosts then. We told a lot a'tales—pulled off some stunts on people—done lots a'foolishness around about that.

One time we sent a couple a'girls t'get some water—needed some water. It was Christmas I think it was. They went out t'th'spring, and when they got out there, there was two fellas had a bed sheet wrapped around'em.

Well, th'girls filled their jugs—one of'em had th'jug done full and th'other had it 'bout nearly full. Th'moon was shinin' just as bright, and they'uz about four'r'five inches a'snow on th'ground—had been fer several days. And them fellas just popped out acrost th'spring on th'other side.

Those girls, they just fell down like dead. By God, I thought we'd never get'em back t'th'house. We toted'em and ruffed'em around. Even got a rubbin' doctor from Pine Mountain when they come to.

Gosh, they never played that game n'more. They'uz just scared t'death. Them girls—I heard their hearts a'beatin', and they groaned a lettle bit onct' in a while. They'uz just limber as rags!

MARGARET NORTON: They say th'best way t'keep from gettin' scared when y'hear somethin' is t'find out what it is. Go right on and find out what it is, and then you'll know. It's usually a animal'r'somethin' like that. Maybe a possum in a tree.

2

There were, however, a surprising number of contacts who had seen, or whose relatives or close friends had seen, phenomena that were inexplicable to them except in supernatural terms. Most believe unshakably that haints, boogers, and evil spirits walk the land, and after hearing their stories, one wonders.

AUNT NORA GARLAND: There was about thirteen couples of us, and we took a notion to walk out plumb to the Mountain City Blue Heights Church to a box supper.

Well, we all were coming, and there was about thirteen couples I guess, and we started back up th'mountain and in th'dead of winter. Awful cold, but y'know we were young and didn't care much, and we were all coupled up together, and me and m'husband; of course—we weren't married then.

But there was a little girl there. And there was a family that lived about a mile and a half from th'church back up th'mountain on that old road, and they was pretty well-to-do people. And I thought strange about them a'lettin' that child go—them leavin' that child at th'church.

So we started from th'church and this little child—it looked t'be about four year old and it was barefooted and it had on a white dress and a little band in it like they use t'make'em, and it had blond colored hair and curls plumb down t'its shoulders—it walked right at my heels every step up that mountain.

And I just thought ever' one of th'rest of'em seen it, and I just thought these well-to-do people had just left this child in church. Just went off and left it t'sleep there.

It kept right at my heels. It didn't walk at th'side a'my husband. It walked right at my heels all th'way up that mountain to a branch. And just before we got t'th'branch, why that child fell down and spread out its arms thataway and was just as gone as gone ever be. I said, "Lord have mercy," I said t'my boyfriend. The instant I said that, there wasn't a thing there a bit more than nothing in this world.

That's th'reason I believe in ghosts.

I wouldn't have found out such a thing as that if I hadn't see'd it with my own eyes. But of course I wasn't a bit afraid, y'know, because they'uz about thirteen couples along in front. But that little'n had walked right at my heels ever' step up that mountain till we got t'th'branch, and my mother always said that a ghost wouldn't cross water.

Her and my father used t'live right on up above there in a house, and she said every morning there was a naked baby sittin' on th'chimney. She's told us that so many times, but I didn't see that. I'm just'a'tellin' y'what I see'd. It might have been th'same thing, but this child was dressed in white. But I wouldn't have thought of a ghost, and hadn't thought of one, if I hadn't see'd it with my own eyes.

JIM EDMONDS: When my gran'daddy was a little boy, he had a aunt that died. She run a old-time loom. Worked herself t'death.

She died, and th'old man tore th'loom house down where she worked. Wanted t'get it out a'th'way. And he was goin' a'courtin' three weeks after she died—courtin' with another woman. Gran'daddy said he heard th'boards a'rattlin' just like th'old loom a'runnin'. Heard th'loom a'rattlin'. Said they had a big fire a'goin'—a big blaze—and she walked up t'th'door.

Th'little baby—her baby—they had t'hold him to keep him from goin' to her. Kept sayin', "There's Mommy! There's Mommy!"

And my mother would tell them witch tales. My mother said that her grandfather moved from South Carolina to Townes County. He drunk a lot and weren't scared of nothin'.

They were lookin' for a place t'camp, and they asked this feller. He said, "Go t'th'second branch. Don't stop at th'first. Can't stay there. It's hainted."

He said he was goin' t'stay there. Weren't a bit scared. They fixed their camp, got their supper, and went to bed; but he was up. He was a'feelin' good. Heard someone comin'—like a wagon. Looked down and saw it a'comin', and just like a big white sheet over th'wagon. Just a'rattlin'.

The old man just hollered at it, but it didn't go very far before he heard it comin' back, so he hollered at it again. He got t'hollerin' at it and cussin' it—even got out his knife t'cut at it—but you can't hit'em. That thing faded up and down th'road all night.

Somebody been killed. That's th'reason for it.

And old Billy Jesse claimed he was a witch. Ol'Gran'daddy couldn't shoot a thing. Somebody put a spell on his gun. He went over to Billy Jesse t'take th'spell off. He lived in what they call Bitter Mountain Cove. Told him he wanted him t'take th'spell off him. Somebody had witched his gun.

So Billy loaded that gun and went t'every corner of th'house and shot sayin', "Hurrah fer th'Devil!" Run t'every corner and shot—never did load it but once—hollerin', "Hurrah fer th'Devil!"

Billy then said, "Now, th'next thing you will see will be a great covey of quail. Now don't you shoot at nothin'. Then th'next thing you see will be a big buck. You can kill him. Just shoot nothin' else."

Gran'daddy done just like he told him, and here come a big drove a'birds. He just held still. He went on and there was this big ol'buck. Shot and killed him. Th'spell was off his gun.

There used t'be more ghosts then than now.

LAWRENCE MOFFITT: I heard of ghosts but I never did believe. But I lived one time down here, I'll tell you that, talkin' about ghosts. I don't know what that was and never did know.

I moved down t'Maysville, Georgia. The man I rented from said there'uz a house *below* there that was hainted—an old house—and nobody wouldn't go into it.

Well, th'first night I moved into this house (not th'hainted one) there'uz a racket on th'porch just like you was a'draggin' a big chain. Well, that would come right on through that house, and there was a side-box kitchen we called it, on th'far side. Well, that would come through every night. Never missed a night.

I'd get up and sit on th'hearth, and had a flashlight. Never could see anything in th'world, but you could hear it just as plain as you can hear me a'talkin' to you.

Well, I wasn't used t'nothin' like that. I talked t'th'man I rented from there. I said, "What's th'matter? Is *this* house hainted? You told me th'lower one down there yonder was, but is this one too?"

"Well," he said, "I'll tell you. There was a man killed here. You've probably seen th'stains there on the plank there on th'wall in th'kitchen."

I said that I had, but I didn't know what it was.

"That's where a man was killed, and ever since, this racket has come through th'house."

Well, I stayed there six months. There for a week or two, I couldn't sleep. I was tryin' t'find out what it was. The minute th'light would come on, that stopped. You didn't hear nothin'. You put that light out and you'd hear that. It'd come every night at nine o'clock as long as I stayed there. But I got used t'it. I got t'where it didn't bother me a bit in th'world.

But now t'*start* with, if I'd had a way, I'd a'come back home!

OSHIE HOLT DILLARD: Way over in North Carolina somewheres, they was a Indian cave when Grandpa Harkins was just a young man. And they thought this Indian went t'th'cave every day—or at least once a week. And they was a white man which slipped around after him for three days and nights until he got a chance to shoot

him; and he killed him and got his waybill that was printed on a deer skin.

And he went up there, come by this old farmer's house and wanted to borrow his mattock. And th'old farmer said, "If you'll wait till I get my hogs fed, I'll go wi'ya'."

And he said, "I don't want y't'go!"

And th'farmer said, "Well, th'mattock is a'settin' out there under th'smokehouse shed. You can just go and pick it up." And he said, "Take good care of it and bring it back. It's all I got."

Said way over in th'evenin' after they got back from church, th'farmer thought about th'man. Thought he might of found some gold'r'somethin'. He'uz a'lookin' up through th'field th'way that man had left that mornin', and said he seen somebody wanderin' around up there. Said th'farmer went up there and said that man was just as gray-headed as he could be and didn't have a lick of sense—didn't even know how t'go home—couldn't even see. Said he went back and got some help t'carry him home, and th'man lived three days and three nights and died. He never spoke a word.

Th'farmer wanted t'go back and get his mattock—y'know, th'news got out all over North Carolina over in there—and he had t'have his old mattock t'farm with, so he went back up there with a whole bunch a'people. They said, "We'll dig this mountainside down [looking for gold]."

He said, "You can dig it down if you want to, but I'm gittin' my mattock and gittin' out of here."

So they went t'diggin', y'know, and laid their coats off. And it sounded like ten thousand freight trains comin' off th'bluffs. And they was a big old locust tree standin' there, and said ever' limb and th'bark fell off of it. And they run off and left their coats.

Grandpa said nobody had ever been back to it. Now he said that was th'*real truth*.

LAWTON BROOKS: Bob Meeks was his name, and he was a'workin' somewhere in Tennessee over there. He come through by Benton while they didn't have th'road then, and he had t'come across that mountain. Now I don't know whether it was Frog Mountain,

whether that was th' name or not. But anyway, there was twenty-two mile there that there wadn't no houses on it—and steep and twisty, my Lord.

And it was late in th' night. His wife had a' called him. Some of his kids got sick, and he had t' come in. And he'uz a comin' along up that mountain, and he said he come around a curve and he seen this thing. Said it'uz th' biggest man he ever saw.

The man stepped out of a water ditch by th' side of th' road, and said he just leaned over a little, and as he come by he just stepped on th' runnin' board, reached down, opened th' door, got in, set down, and looked him over. It was a old Model T, and th' way it was goin' it didn't make much more time than a man walkin'.



ILLUSTRATION 2 Lawton Brooks

And he said he looked at that thing's hands and that's what he couldn't figure out. Says hit's fingers, one of'em was as long as two of his'n if they was put together, and as big again around. He said he had awful big arms, and on top of his hands was just as hairy

plumb on down toward his fingers. His fingers was th'longest he'd seen on anybody. Must have been ten inches long.

He said he spoke t'him and he never did speak back. He said he didn't know whether he was gonna do anything t'him or not. He said he knowed he was big enough. They wadn't nothin' he could'a done about it. They wadn't no need a'gettin' scared because that man could'a reached plumb around him one-handed. Big tall man—all hairy.

Said he had a beard way down, an' face hairy, an' said he was a kind'a'nasty-lookin' old man. Said he looked as old as th'hills.

Said he never got a sound out'a'him. He could hear him a'gettin' his breath.

And he said he rode at least three mile with him, and he wondered if this thing was goin' plumb t'Ducktown with him. An' he was goin' around another curve, an' said that thing—man, what'ere it was—he just stepped out. And said he looked back and it'uz just a'standin' there in th'road.

Said he was th'ungodliest man he ever did see all th'days of his life. He said people might not believe him, but he said it'uz th'truth.

Now I believe it, 'cause I don't believe Bob'd tell a lie. He was a man never got excited about nothin'.

And after that man got out, Bob said he just kept drivin' on.

And me and Walter Coleman and George went a'possum huntin'. Now that's th'only thing ever I did that I never found out what it was. Now I didn't find out *what* that was now, I'll be fair with'y'.

We left, and it sounded like somebody a'takin' a fit. Jest like somebody a'cryin'—hurting awful bad. An' it jest commenced when we walked t'where a dog treed a possum out on th'ridge right on't'th'Hia-wassee River.

An' we jest went out there t'get a possum, y'know, and when we went out there, by gosh, we just walked around t'th'end a'this old big log there—jest got a little bit past it—an' somethin' commenced.

Walter said, "Lawton?" Says, "What in th'world is that?"

An' I said, "I don't know, but," I says, "ain't that a pitiful noise? That's somebody or somethin'r'nother hurtin'."

So we took our old lantern then and walked around th'log. Plumb around it. Come back t'th'big old stump there where th'tree had been sawed off. We looked at th'stump. It wasn't holler. Looked in th'end of th'log. It wasn't holler. Well, I went up t'side of th'log with m'lan-tern. Shined th'light along it. Couldn't see no hole in th'log on either side of it. It still sounded like somebody a'cryin' and moanin' under th'log.

And we started a little away from th'log to where it sounded like it was comin' from now, and then it sounded like it'uz right back there at th'log. And then we'd start off out t'th'log again and it'ud be comin' from a little away from th'log. And then it commenced there right there at th'log.

And we never did find out what it was. We left there—I mean, we *left*—old George an' Walter an' me. We started off that mountain away from all that moanin' with nary a possum—into a field (Old Man Smith's field)—and we run right into a wire fence that we didn't know was there. Way we went flyin', when we hit that fence it scared th'daylight out'a us.

That was th'only thing I ever heard I never did find out what it was. Why, I wasn't skeered s'bad, but I wasn't gonna stay and them boys run off and leave me! They wouldn't stay wi'me, and I sure wasn't gonna' stay up there an' listen t'that thing by m'self.

So we didn't take time t'get any possum!

MRS. MARY CARPENTER: I've heard Mama tell about th'one my daddy saw one time. Said that there was a preacher, and there was a forks of a road somewhere near a church I believe it was.

And he said that hit was about ever' evenin' about sundown that you could go there, and there'uz a woman that—she was so high up in th'air that she looked like she was on a quilting frame—just high up. And she had on a long black dress and she'uz just a'walkin' along, and it rustled like leaves a'rattlin', y'know, as she walked.

My daddy and another man, they worked for Earl Hudson at a sawmill, and they said they'uz comin' in one night and it was a'rainin', and they was a'ridin' them mules on in home.

And that man said to my daddy, said, "I'd like t'see that preacher's ghost tonight, wouldn't you? While it's dark and rainin'?"

Said my daddy said to him, "Well, yonder she comes!"

Said they went on—just kep' a'ridin'—and Papa said to him, "You ride on one side a'th'road and I'll ride on th'other and let her come between us, and we'll see what she looks like."

And so they did. They reined th'mules over and let her come right in between'em. Said he said t'him, "Let's foller and see where she's a'goin'."

Said it was just a'pourin' th'rain down, and said they turned th'mules around and followed about a half a mile back out th'road, and said there was just a curve in th'road—a little ridge. And said she just riz and flew over that ridge and they didn't ever know where she went.

Now is that th'kind of haint tale y'want?

Well, all right. Now there's a place down next t'my brother's that they've seen things down there on that hill. My husband said they'uz a'goin' out through there one night—him and Lawrence Talley I believe it was. They'd been t'church up here t'th'Flats to a Holiness meetin', and they was a'goin' down Mud Creek goin' back home.

And he said they was goin' up along there, and he said he didn't know what it was. It didn't say a thing in th'world. But somethin' just hit them. It was as cold as ice, and he said they just begin t'shiver and shake.

And he said Lawrence said, "Are you cold?"

And he said he was just about t'freeze t'death, and it was in th'summertime.

And he said, "Well, I am too." Says, "Seems like there's ice all over me!"

And John said, "Well, seems th'same thing t'me."

He says, "Let's run."

And John says, "I can't run."

He said, "I don't guess I could either."

And said it just jumped off of'em just like that, whatever it was, and went away.

He said there's people said they'uz haints out there.

And there at my brother's right across th'creek—you've been over there on Kelly's Creek up there where Jim Taylor lives—there's a Mason woman lives over there. She said she'd seen a little baby out there that was flyin'—had wings. And she said it came up out of her garden more than once, and she'd be out there on th'back porch up in th'evenin' doin' her night work, and she said it would rise up with wings like a little angel—a baby.

And I know she seen somethin' one time, fer because her husband's [Frank's] daddy lived over on Germany and he was sick—bad sick. And so Frank—he'd went t'see his daddy. They were lookin' fer him t'die.

And she had a hog pen out in th'woods there, out toward our house, and she began t'scream. And Mama hollered t'me t'run over there fer somethin's th'matter. She may be snakebit.

Well, I went a'runnin' just as hard as I could, and Dad, he went a'runnin' over there. And you know, she'd fainted 'fore th'time we got over there.

By th'time we brought her to, she said there was a man there at her hog pen with a white shirt on and no head! Blood was all over his white shirt.

Gran'pa said they moved one time—said Mama was a little girl then. And he said they got moved all but their chickens, and he had t'go back and catch them after dark.

So he got him some sacks t'put his chickens in and went back t'th'place he'd moved from and caught his chickens up and tied'em and put'em in a sack. He was ridin' a mule.

He had some slung across his saddle—some on one side and some on th'other—and he was comin' along, and all at once there was somethin' in th'road. Said it looked like somebody in th'moonlight.

Said he said, "Whoa" t'th'mule. Said "Is anything th'matter?" And said it looked like a log. Said it started rollin' toward his mule, and

his mule started runnin' back'erds with'im. Said it just rolled so far and stopped, and it rolled back up th'road.

Said he started back up th'road with his mule—back up through there—and said it'd come back toward him when he'd start.

Said he made two or three trips like that and decided it wasn't goin' t'get out of th'road and let him by, and said th'mule was afraid of'im; and so he just laid th'fence down—a rail fence—and let his mule run through th'pasture and come back out, and laid down th'fence again, and passed that place.

And Gran'pa said one time him and Uncle Dave was goin' home from a dance, and as they come around there where a pond was, why they heard something' a'sayin', "Oh Lordy! Oh Lordy!" Takin' on pitiful.

Gran'pa said he was scared—and said he was little—and he grabbed Uncle Dave by th'coat and said, "Dave, don't you run!"

He said "I ain't a'goin' to. I'm goin't'stay here. It's risin', whatever it is."

And said somethin' come up out of the water with th'moon a'shinin'. Said you could see it like a white sheet. Said it had four corners, and it just kept a'goin' on up, and it was just takin' on th'pitifulest. Said it was sayin', "Oh Lordy! Oh Lordy!"

Gran'pa said that his mother said that what caused that—there was a miller there and he'd killed his wife and put her in there, but that's been many many years ago. I don't know. It could have been. Gran'pa, I believe, told th'truth, 'cause I never did know him t'tell a wrong. I believe he heard it. I believe there's things for certain people t'see.

When we lived in that old house right down there, they shore was one down there. Harv Brown owned th'place first, and his wife was afraid t'stay there.

They'uz goin' t'sell it, so we bought it. And we could hear a horse down there. Harv was afraid of it too.

At night he'd come, and you could be just as quiet as you want to, but when you blowed th'lamp out (back then you didn't have

electricity in this part of th'country) you could hear that horse—and I mean it'd come right up in th'yard just like a feller. You've heered a feller ride a horse—what a big racket they make—and it'd stand and stomp till you got up and looked, but when you got up t'look and shined th'light, there wasn't nothin' there. You didn't hear any more that night.

But it's th'truth if I ever told it—if I'm a'sittin' in this chair. I've heard it.

And Gran'pa said one time that he went t'make music one time fer somebody, and said he broke th'banjer string.

They said, "Well, we'll have t'quit. We ain't got another banjer string."

One of'em said, "John, you run over t'Ken Muse's." Said, "He's got some banjer strings—some extry ones." Said, "Get one over there." Said, "It ain't late and we'll play some more."

Said he looked out. Said he wadn't afraid, but he didn't like th'idea of goin' fer he had a big dog that'd bite—a great big ol'dog—and said he said, "It's pretty dark out there an' I'm afraid that dog'll get me."

"No!" he said. "I'll make you a board light." There wadn't such a thing as a lantern or a light or a flashlight. Said they got him a pine torch and lit it.

He said, "Now if you'll hurry along," he said—that'uz just a big ol'pine knot, y'know, and they just keep a'burnin' and a'goin'—said, "If you won't stay too long and hurry along, it'll last you till you get there and back."

And so he did. He started out with his pine knot, and said he got nearly there and somethin' just rared up on him and put his hands up on his shoulders and pushed him back'erds and blowed his breath in his face!

Said he reached like that t'push it off and couldn't feel nothin', and said that he plodded on pretty fast till he got over there, and he said to him, he said, "Is your dog loose tonight?"

He said, "No. I've got him tied up."

He said, "I *thought* you kept him tied at night." He said, "Now you tell me what that was that rared up and like't'pushed me down out

here.” And said. “He’uz ’bout as big as yore dog.” He said it was a big thing, “And it put his front feet right up on my shoulders and like t’shoved me back’erds!”

“No,” he said. “It wadn’t my dog, John,” he said. “Come here and I’ll show you. I chained him tonight.”

Said he went around t’th’back of his house to his cellar door, and that ol’big dog was tied up there. Said he never did know what that was, but said somethin’ shore pushed him back’erds. And said he had th’light and could have seen if it’d been somethin’, but he didn’t see no dog.

And I know another’n. I know one more I’ll tell’y.

Gran’pa said that one time they moved t’a place, and Mama was their baby. Th’old man that owned th’place lived off in an older house—and his *good* house, he had it for rent.

Said, “Why do you reckon th’landowner lives in that old house and rents this good one?”

And [Gran’ma] said, “I don’t know.”

“Well,” he said, “I don’t know either, but there’s somethin’ sorta fishy to it. Maybe he gets more pay fer th’better house though.”

Well, Gran’ma done th’milkin’. She went t’milk that evenin’, and when she started milkin’ in th’bucket—you know milk in a tin bucket’ll make a racket—right out from a big rock pile a baby begin t’cry.

Said that Gran’ma just milked on a little while, and said she just took her bucket and went t’th’house and told Gran’pa. She said, “I want you t’come out here and listen.” She said, “When I go t’milkin’, there’s a baby goes t’cryin’ in that rock pile.”

“Why, now,” he said. “There ain’t.”

She said, “Come on out here and hear it!”

She poured her milk out t’where it’d make a racket in th’bucket, and she went back and she started milkin’ and th’baby commenced t’cryin’ again.

They talked t’th’man about it, and he said, “Nah. There wadn’t nothin’ to it.” Said, “People just imagined hearin’ things.”

And Gran’pa, he was a little bit afraid of it. He stayed on a while—just milked and let th’baby cry.

Said that some of th'neighbors around there, they got t'talkin' to'im. Said they didn't nobody ever know what become of that man's wife and baby. Said he had a baby and a wife and they just disappeared and nobody ever knowed where they went to.

And Gran'pa said that he didn't know, but he sorta thought they might be in a rock pile up there. He said, "When y'go t'milkin', th'baby goes t'cryin' out there."

A bunch gathered up t'gether out there, and they went t'milkin', and th'baby cried. They moved a big pile'a rocks and dug down there, and he had—he killed his wife and baby and buried'em there and piled rocks on'em.

Gran'pa and Gran'ma, they moved away from there. But that's why that man couldn't live in th'house. I reckon they'd come back t'him in th'good house there.

ALEX JUSTICE: One night we just wanted t'camp out, and we saw haints all night. All night. 'Long about ten o'clock I guess it was — th'wheat mill was down there and they'uz a old sawmill down there —somebody come ridin' a mule up, and somebody come right up t'th'bridge, y'know.

We run out there, and it was gone as quick as we got there.

Then along about four o'clock, there was a yoke of cattle—yoke of steers come down th'road hitched to a sled. They'd get 'bout as close from here t'th'porch there. We saw it all. We'uz just boys. It did scare us. There'uz big old white dogs just a'troatin' along, and a man—he had on a white shirt and didn't have no head. Chains a'rattlin'. Then it'ud go away, and then it'ud rise up again. Just a bit down below us—and here it'd come. We'd grab corn stalks and run out there, and there wadn't nothin' there.

Then I saw a sled with a load a'wood on it comin' down th'road, and they wadn't nothin' pullin' it. I could see th'standards on th'sled, I could.

And once my wife was sick—we'd had a dead baby and been t'bury it that day. There'uz snow on th'ground, and somebody come up on th'porch and knocked on th'door.

And old Aunt Katherine Adams was there, and I told some of th'boys that worked with me, I said, "Open th'door."

And Miss Adams said, "They ain't nobody there."

It just walked up and knocked on th'door just as plain as anybody was there, but they wadn't nobody there.

She told me, she said, "That ain't th'first time!"

CALVIN TALLEY: Back when I was a young boy—I guess I was about ten year old—I was headed t'church one evenin', and I rode down th'highway with my brother.

And we got out and I started walkin' up toward th'church, and all of a sudden a somethin'—there was somethin' that come around from th'side a'this old building. And it was kindly dressed in white, and I couldn't hardly make it out. I had always heered that this old building had ghosts, and I couldn't really understand what it was, but it made me pick up speed!

MYRTLE LAMB: Well, it was up near Sunburst, North Carolina. It was a house nobody wouldn't live in. Ever'body would get scared, and you would hear all kinds a'rackets.

They said a girl had a baby, and said she didn't want it so she took it and fed it to th'dogs—or hogs—and when it rained, on a cloudy night, you could hear that baby cry just as plain.

Then in th'house you'd hear all kinds of things—like stockings rubbin' against th'wall. My mother said ever' night somethin' would come and kick th'cover off her. And she would git up and sit up scared t'death, and this other woman got afraid and come and stayed with her and'ud sit and dip her snuff and talk and go on.

MRS. R. L. ELIOTT: Well my mother, y'see, she was raised in a house 'at was haunted. She said ever' rainy night that there was always noise to be heard.

And her daddy would send'em out, y'know, 'cause a lot of nights would be like hogs under th'floor; and he'd send'em out with lanterns, and they couldn't see nothin'—but they could hear it. It

was just like hogs. And when you'd get around there, why you wouldn't see nothin'. They'd just hear this noise.

And then maybe a night'r'two later it'd go like horses, y'know—jest different noises all th'time.

And her daddy was just kept a'runnin' all th'time. They'd go just like a big bunch a'hogs under th'house—rootin', y'know how they'll do. I don't believe you can see a spirit. I think you can just hear'em.

And where anybody is killed, there's always a noise t'be heard. That's really true. Now I've experienced a lot of that myself, and I know that is true. I've been around a lot of these places, y'know, where people has been killed.

I've lived up here at th'hotel where Mr. Ramey was killed. One night I was up there. I was out alone—jest me an'm'son—and we heard a bunch a'people comin' down th'highway a'cryin'. Moon was shinin' jest as bright as day. And I stood out and listened—kept listenin'—and they kept comin' closer and closer, an' come on up t'th'house. Seemed like th'sound jest went around th'house, but I never did see nobody. But it went like a whole bunch a'people.

So I jest went in th'house. I got scared an' went in th'house, y'know, and locked th'door.

Then one night across th'road from my house it looked like a little calf out on th'side of th'road jest playin' around, y'know. And they shot at it an'ever'thing, and it jest kept dancin' right on—playin' around—and they never could hit it'r'nothin'. Jest a spirit, y'know.

Mr. — and his wife, they saw it too. We all saw it. Th'moon was shinin', and hit was jest across th'road there. It was jest playin' over there jest like a newborn calf. It'uz jest a spirit of some kind.

And my uncle, he said he lived in a house over yonder, an' after his mother died, one night him and his brother was in th'bed and somethin' woke him up a'chokin' him. And he said he tried ever' way t'get his brother awake and couldn't get him awake, and he lit th'lamp. And he said when he lit th'lamp, it looked like a big animal

that had black hair. And it was a *big ol'* animal. And he said it made another dive at his throat, y'know, t'choke him again.

He never did get his brother awake, but he follered this thang in th'front room, and he said then that thang went up jest like a ball'a'fire through th'top a'th'house.

You see, that was a spirit. That wasn't nobody. It went up through th'top a'th'house right there in th'room where his mother'd died.

They's been a lot a'things seen, and I believe in ghosts.

Now up here right above Rob Williams' they's a house there where a old man poisoned his wife. They's always thangs t'be see'd there. My mother saw a man with no head on there.

We used t'go up there an' play. They had a downstairs and a upstairs in it. And we—a bunch of us children—was upstairs playin', and they'uz a baby cried downstairs—cried just like a real baby. So we tore th'top out an' come out th'top a'that house!

And one night my aunt was comin' up four house and this big ol'thang caught her in th'road and choked her like a bear. Well, hit'ud sleep on that porch at night. They could hear it lay down on that porch. But they never did know what it was. And her husband's brother hit it with a axe handle one night, and hit jumped back across th'fence, but they never did see what it was. It was a big thang like a bear.

So I've always believed in'em m'self.

And at Miss Maggie's house they's always a noise to be heard there at some time. She lived there for years and years, an' she'd tell us lots a'times about bumblebees in th'winter time. You never hear bumblebees in th'winter time, but she'd hear'em swarmin' in th'house, y'know.

And my uncle lived in a place where some nights it would go like ever' dish in th'cupboard would fall out. Said he'd get up and look, and ever'thang was just like it was. Said maybe th'next night it'd go like somebody poured out a bushel a'corn right on th'floor, and it wouldn't be a thang.

Now up on th'mountain, my grandfather killed a man. They was both drunk, and he killed him up on th'mountain. They got t'fightin' some way over a still that was cut down on his place, and he cut his head off and laid it up on a stump—cut it plumb off an' laid it up on a stump—and then he served twenty years in prison.

Well he got rich in prison. He waited on a train robber, an' he brought back—I don't know at th'money.

But on that mountain you can pass that stump an' you can hear things of a night. Anybody on a rainy night, if they want t'hear'em, ought just t'walk down that road an' they can hear'em.

I took my baby up on th'mountain one time an' was comin' back—bringin' him in a little ol'carriage. Just as I got even with that place I heard a singin'. You never did hear such a racket. An' bov I drove him off that mountain in a hurry. I brought that carriage *down th'road*—I got away from that place. I was scared teetotally to death!

MRS. ARDILLA GRANT: I seen'em with m'own eyes. 'Course th'woman that was with me is dead. I couldn't bring y't'her, but if she was alive I could. But they's a house at Hewitts—I guess you've heard tell of there in North Carolina—there's a big house they call th'white house up there, and ever'body that stayed there would hear somethin', 'r hear somethin' say somethin'.

Well, one night we went out there on th'end of th'porch, and th'lights was shinin' out th'windas, y'know; and they'uz a barn out yonder. Great big ol'barn they had.

We'uz out there on th'porch, an' this ol'lady, she come out from under that barn now. I'm tellin' y'th'truth exactly th'way we seen it.

Well, I didn't say a word, nor she didn't either. We watched her till she just came up close t'us, an' she had her hands out like that [Mrs. Grant puts her arms out like a sleepwalker in front of her], and she'uz just as quiet an'th'purtiest thing. She was old, y'know, and she had her hands out like that, an' she came up close. And this woman that was with me, she said, "Lord, child, do you see that?"

And we run back in th'house an' we told th'men—it was a boardin' house then—an' we told th'men what we saw, an' they got up and went out on th'porch. They thought maybe someone had stopped

out at that barn t'camp out'r'somethin'. But they didn't find nobody. Not a sign of anybody. No tracks nor nothin'. Now that did scare us!

And then down below there—what they call th'Mud Cut—there's a curve in th'road, and a railroad went aroun' down there. An' down below there you could see a man—his legs and a lantern. Y'could see th'lantern an' his legs; an' he'd come up on that railroad an' he'd walk down that railroad t'th'top of th'grade they called it; an' he'd just get out'a'sight till he'd pop up right in th'same place.

That starts about nine o'clock, and I'll bet you go right up there tonight at nine o'clock an' see th'very sight. He'd go along and disappear an' start right back where he started from. He'd just keep a'goin', y'know. You could see th'lantern swingin', and his legs, and right back down th'railroad he'd go.

Now lots'a'people seen that. Now it must a'been in time—some time'r'nother—they'd been somebody murdered there.

[At this point Mr. Grant said that he had heard that a Bill McCathey had killed his brother there by mistake, thinking he was a groundhog.]

Then on up th'road they was a second house that th'railroad men boarded at, y'know. Now I didn't hear that. This is what they told me; but now they told it, an' I think it was true: somebody—just went like somebody'd come in an' thrown down a load a'lumber an' got t'hammerin'. Just like he was makin' a coffin.

Well, it just worried somebody that lived there. It was that way continually. An' it sounded like it was in th'wall, y'know, at times.

An' he went an' tore th'ceiling off and he found a little baby skeleton in there!

JUD CARPENTER: One night I was passin' along, th'moon a'shinin' pretty bright. It'uz along about ten o'clock at night.

Directly I heard somethin' come scra-a-a-pin' along behind me. I turned around and looked around. 'Bout that time that thing hit me right in th'bend of th'legs. Felt just like a old dry cow hide.

I danced away, but couldn't see a thing. I stood around there a while, kept lookin' around, but never did see nothin'.

Finally I just walked off'n'left it. Never did find out what it was.

And we used t'live in old John Sanders' house there. They'uz a winder there at th'chimbly end—right next t'th'chimbly. And they'uz somethin' ever'night'r'two would come there at th'winder and moan an' groan an' make funny rackets.

One night it climbed up in th'winder—th'winder was made out a'planks, y'know. He just come up there on that winder an' scratched and went on an' kept jumpin'n'scratchin'.

After while, my daddy decided he'd get up and see what it was. When he got out there, it vanished away—couldn't see nothin'.

They said they'uz a man killed in there—claimed it was hainted. They was right.

And I passed along by th'Methodist church one time. It was 'bout eleven'r'twelve o'clock in th'night, but th'moon'uz shinin', and th'church doors happened t'be open.

So I heard somethin' runnin'n'jumpin' across th'benches in there an' makin' th'awfulest racket I ever heered.

I didn't have no light a'no kind'r'nothin', but I went on in'ere—went plumb back in th'back a'th'church. That racket disappeared then and I couldn't see nothin'—couldn't see a thing in th'world, and th'moon'uz a'shinin' in at th'doors an'through th'winders too, so I could see pretty well.

So I walked on down th'road a piece, an' directly I heard a li'l racket behind me. I just turned around and looked. It'uz just like somethin' a'draggin' a little old sheep skin'r'somethin'. But I never could see a thing.

HILLARD GREEN: Ghosts are just th'Devil after somebody, and they're seein' these things for some lowdown meanness that they've done. It's in their eyes and in their mind is what it is. People will see things where they ain't nothin'. A ghost is a spirit or something that comes t'somebody that they've done evil to—harmed them some way'r'other. Maybe killed somebody.

They're things that way that can be seen and heard, y'know. Th'Bible speaks about these ghosts and witches and so on. You may

not believe in a witch, but they are, for th'Bible tells us.

I've heard of'em. I've *seen*'em. I've seen people that could witch. They can do just anything they want to.

Now I've seen an old woman down on Cowee where I lived, and I know she was a witch. Alan, down there, he wanted t'go and plow somebody's garden, and his mother said, "No, you're not a'gonna plow that garden." Says, "You're gonna plow mine first or you won't plow nobody's."

And he said, "I'm a'gonna plow over there and then I'll plow for you."

She says, "You'll not do it."

And he went out there t'get his old steer t'go plowin'. You know, that steer just fell over like he'uz dead nearly. And he lay there three days and he never eat a bite ner nothin'.

Well, Alan took on about his steer, and he tried t'doctor it and ever'thing and finally at last he says, "I'm gonna have t'kill that steer t'get him out a'my way."

His mammy says, "Oh, you don't have t'do that. I can go out there and lay my hand on him and that steer'll get up *if* you'll go out there and plow my garden."

He says, "Well, Ma, I'll plow it then."

She just walked out there t'that steer and laid her hand on it, and that steer jumped up just th'same as there wasn't a thing in God's world th'matter with it.

I've seen a lot of things that she done, and I know she could do anything in th'world she wanted to that way t'destroy you. That was forty-seven years ago when that happened. I'uz livin' right close t'them.

I seen her get mad one time and witch a baby, by gosh, till it died 'cause she got mad at th'parents. There's somethin' to it. You don't know when it comes t'their power.

Be like old Mrs.—over here was. Lived right over here across th'ridge over here. She got her a book and was goin't'learn how t'witch.

And somebody come t'her, y'know. Told her where t'go to out there on th'ridge and set down on that log and then they'd come

and learn her.

Well, when they come to her, they said, “Now you put one hand under your foot and one on top of your head and say, ‘All th’rest belongs t’th’Devil.’ ”

She said that she couldn’t do that at all. They’uz somebody standin’ there but she. didn’t know who it was. And she said, “All that belongs t’God-a’-mighty.” And that person was gone and she didn’t see nobody and didn’t know nothin’. She just got up and went t’th’house and threwed her book away.

A spirit can appear to you any time that way if you’ll serve th’Devil.

3

In addition to the retellings of personal or interfamily experiences, we were also told a number of pure ghost tales—tales that have been told and retold throughout the Appalachians for years. They are a part of a rich oral mountain tradition. And they’re also among the wildest stories we’ve ever heard.

ETHEL CORN: There’s an old tale told; I don’t know who it was, but said there was this hitchhiker. He wanted a place to stay all night, and they told him that he could stay in that house, but it was hainted. He said he didn’t believe in’em. There weren’t no such thing an’ he’d stay in there.

Later on he heard cats around, an’ this cat with no head jumps up on th’bed. That feller, he jumped out of th’bed an’ he started t’runnin’ t’get away from it.

Said he run down th’road till he give out—till he thought he was fer enough away that there wouldn’t be nothin’ around. He’d sit down t’rest, and said that directly somethin’ said, “We’ve had a hell of a race, ain’t we?”

He turned around an’ there set th’no-headed cat by him!

GRADY WALDROOP: Man said, "I got a house over there on th'edge a'town. You can stay in there all night—all winter if y'want to. Won't cost a dime. There's plenty a'wood, books an'ever'thing in there." Says, "I'll tell y'th'reason it's thataway." Says, "Ever'body that's ever stayed there says it's hainted." Says, "There's a ghost comes in there an' they all afraid a'it."

"Aw," he says. "I don't care nothin' about that. I won't be afraid-r'nothin'. I'll just go over there. May stay a day'r'two."

He went over an' fixed him some coffee an' lunch an' ate it. Got a book and'uz settin' readin' when a big ol'cat come down an' went up an' wallered in th'fire an' says, "Don't know what t'do about attackin' y'now." Said, "I reckon I'll wait till Martin come."

Said he didn't like that much. Said he got him another book.

Directly here come another'n down th'steps. Big ol'angoran cat. Said he got under th'forestick an' rambled around an' knocked fire all over th'place, an' he kicked th'fire back'n said, "Y'wanna commence on'im now or wait till Martin gets here?"

"Well," [the man] says, "I don't know when Martin'll get here, but when he comes, you tell him I've been here and gone!"

JIM EDMONDS: There was a man one time—had a lot of money, all silver. Had no greenbacks then. Had about half a bushel of silver—sold his place out, y'know, an' was goin' t'go out west—out of th'country. So he was gettin' ever'thing ready. Had his money he got from th'place, y'know.

So he got this feller t'come and give him a shave as he was gettin' all fixed up and ready t'go. Well, th'feller got him half shaved, an' then he took th'razor and cut his throat an' killed'im. But th'feller couldn't find th'money 'cause th'guy had it buried.

Well, they find this guy dead. They didn't know what happened ner nothin'. Somebody killed'im, but they didn't know who did.

When people way back then would start t'go from one country t'another an' they didn't have a place t'stay, they would just go on an' find a empty house. Some folks came drivin' by one day lookin' fer a place and asked a feller about it. He said, "I got a place down there. Can't nobody live down there. Tell what I'll do. If you live in

that house fer twelve months, I'll give it t'you. Can't nobody live down there. Don't know whether you can stand it'r'not. You can move in th'house if y'want and live there."

They just had one child, y'know. Th'little feller, they just laid'im on th'bed. Th'old man, he was out workin' around gettin' wood and fixin' up—goin' t'stay all night. Th'woman, she was a'fixin' supper, and here come a man runnin' in with his head half cut off and a razor in his hand startin' like he was a'goin' t'th'bedroom.

That woman was scared t'death and said, "Lord have mercy; don't kill my baby!"

He just stopped right quick and said, "Fine thing you spoke t'me. Tell you what I've come fer. I want you t'do somethin'. You do what I tell you."

He told her th'man's name that cut his head off. Said, "I was fixin' t'leave here and he cut my head off t'get th'money. Tell what I want you t'do. You go and swear out a warrant for that man and get him to come to court for a trial. You don't need no witnesses. Don't need no witnesses. You just have him come to court. You'll have a witness. And I'll tell you what I'm goin' t'do. You'll have some money. You come and foller me."

He just went down a little ways t'where a big rock was a'layin' there. Said to move that rock, but th'woman said she couldn't. But he said, "Yes you can."

So she reached down and that rock just turned over real easy and there was all that money down there where he had dug th'hole. He said, "Now you get all that. That's yours. You do what I tell you—you have a trial and have him come t'court, and when you get ready t'have a witness, you'll have a witness."

She went ahead and had that man arrested—got that man and told him what he was guilty of. People, didn't understand at all. Th'judge asked him what he was charged with. "Murder," he replied.

Th'judge then asked him if he was guilty or not guilty. About that time, here come that feller walkin' in th'courtroom with th'razor in his hand and his face half shaved and his head half cut off.

When that man saw him, he just tumbled over dead!

MRS. MARY CARPENTER: There'uz a man one time—him and his wife was a'travelin' along, and he said they went t'a house and they went in. Said that it was a'rainin' and they was a'goin' t'stay all night.

And he told her t'stay in th'house—light a lamp and stay—and he'd go t'th'field and see this man and see if he cares if they stay all night in his house.

Said she went in and scrambled around and found some matches and lit th'lamp. Th'house had furniture in it. Said there was a Bible layin' there on th'table and she just opened it up and set there by th'lamp and was a'readin'. She just kept a'settin' there waitin' fer him t'come back. Said it was rainin' harder, y'know. She thought that when it slacks he'll come back.

Her husband went over in th'field and they told him th'house was hainted and that you couldn't stay there.

She just kept a'settin' there, and directly a great big drop a'blood just hit th'Bible there and just splattered out on it.

She looked up and didn't see anything. She just read on. Pushed her book up a little and read down below it.

Another drop dropped on it.

Said she just set there and read on till th'third drop dropped. When th'third drop dropped down, said she heard somethin' a'comin' down th'stairs and she just looked around. This haint, he just set there and said, "Well, you've been th'only person that's ever stayed here when I come back."

"Well," she asked him—however it was to ask him—"Well, what do you want? Why did you come back?"

Said he was killed fer his money there but they didn't get it. He said that they'uz a fireplace in th'kitchen, and they killed him and buried him under th'hearth rock. He said his bones was under there and asked if she'd take them up and get a coffin and put them in it and bury'em in th'graveyard. Told her where t'bury'em.

Then he said, "You come back and look out there at th'gate under th'tree and dig down so fer"—I forget just how fer. Said his money'uz buried there and he wanted her to have it.

Th'next morning th'old man come back at daylight and asked her if she was ready t'go. He wouldn't come in.

She said no, she wasn't ready t'go, and wanted to know why he didn't come back. He told her th'house was hainted.

She said, "You just go along if you want to. I've got a job to do." And she just dug that ol'hearth rock up and got him up and took him and buried him and dug th'money up, and it was shore'nough money. Said he had a *lot* a'money buried out there.

But I don't know if I could have read with that blood a'droppin' or not. I'd be afraid somethin' was upstairs hurt and would've come a'tumblin' down!

I don't know who told me this'n. Somebody said they was a preacher and he had a boy that was awful mean, and all he done was hunt—fox hunt, y'know. Ever' evenin' said he'd gather up his ol'pots-'n'pans and his dogs and his gun and go out campin'.

And said his daddy thought if he could just scare him, maybe he wouldn't go. So he went up to th'church and left his Bible up there. He'd hired a man t'scare him, y'know, up there at th'church.

Th'boy was a'gettin' his food and stuff up ready t'go, and he said t'him, said, "Son, you goin' a'huntin' tonight?"

And he said, "Yeah, I thought I would."

And he said, "I wonder if you could run up to th'church and get me my Bible before you go."

"Oh, yeah," he said. "I got plenty a'time."

So th'boy, he went runnin' up there to git th'Bible, opened up th'church door and walked in. Said he got good'n'started, and said there'uz somebody in behind th'pianer said t'him, "What are y'after?"

And he said, "I come after my pa's Bible."

Said he said, "You're not a'gonna git it."

And he said, "I'll git it too."

And he said, "You ain't a'gonna git it."

Said th'boy just kept a'walkin' and went on up through there. Said he was just a'cussin' as he went, th'boy was.

And he come on back, and th'preacher was sort'a surprised that he got th'Bible. He said, "Well, did you git it?"

And th'boy said, "Yes. I got it." And cussed again and said, "I had a time a'gettin' it. They'uz somethin' up there said I wadn't gonna git it, but I showed'em anyhow. I got it."

So he laid th'Bible down and got his dog and went on and went to a old house. He was a'makin' his coffee and fryin' his meat, and said his coffee boiled and he set it over in th'corner. Said th'stairway come down in th'corner there, and said they'uz a box like a big size tool box come a'slidin' down'n slid right up on th'hearth rock right by where he was.

He looked around and said, "That's a mighty nice thing t'set my coffee pot on." Said he just picked it up and set it down on it.

Was fryin' his meat and th'lid began t'come up. He said, "Wait a minute! Hold on! You're gonna spill my coffee!"

He set his coffee pot down and said somethin' come out. It was somebody with a white shirt and no head on, and said he told th'boy about his money. Asked if he had a sister and he said he did.

Th'haint said, "I want you t'divide it with her. If you'll give her half of it, you'll never hear from me again; but if you don't divide it with her equal, I'll be back every time when you don't want me t'be."

So he went and dug th'money up and went on back and sent half of it to his sister, wherever she was.

Now I believe I'd run when somethin' began t'spill my coffee!

MINYARD CONNER: There was a boy that went possum huntin' one night. Took his dog and his lantern, and he'uz a'goin' along up a holler, and they'uz a old tiny log house up there. It was about fell down, y'know.

He seen a little dim light in it, and he just put his light out, y'know. And he just kept easin' up and easin' up, and atter while he peeped through a crack, y'know.

He looked in there and he seen five'r'six oh awful pretty women in there just a'dancin' around, y'know. Around'n'around. Just watch-in'em.

Atter while one come up t'th'chimney, reached down and got a'hold a'th'hearth rock and turned it up sideways. She rubbed her

hand down on th'back side, y'know, and rubbed it on her chest and said, "Up and out and over all; up and out and over all." He said she was gone like a flash then.

Said th'last one done that. Said when she done that, she kicked th'rock back.

Well, he got a'hold a'that rock and he begin t'hive and hive, and directly he pulled it up—yanked it up sideways. Put his hand over there where they had been a'feelin'—where they had been rubbin' their hand. It felt sort'a greasy to him.

He just rubbed th'rock, y'know, and he said, "Up and out and *through* all. Up and out and out through all." They had said, "*Over* all," y'know.

And he give th'rock a kick and he just out th>window he went just like a flash, y'know. Out through th'hills and briers and bushes, y'know, just a'knockin' and bangin' and slammin' and cussin'. And he kept goin' and goin' and he went across a big wide river and ended up where they was havin' a dance. Big fine place, y'know. Said they was big white horses all around there.

And said he went in and he danced with'em. Said one of'em come t'him and said t'him, "*Now don't say th'Lord's name at all!*" He give hisself t'th'Devil. Said they went up ready t'leave then.

Said they went back out and they all got on their horses and here they went. Said they pointed to a bull calf and he began t'stamp. Said, "There is your horse."

So he jumps on that little devil. Said here they went just a'keepin' up with them big white horses, just a-lip-a-tee-lip tee-lip tee-lip—goin' right on.

Said directly they come to a great big creek. Said they all jumped it and that bull calf just laid right in there and went across with'im.

Said directly they jumped a big wide river. Said he said, "*God Almighty* what a jump!" and he was in th'*dark!*

firmly held as fact by individuals here. Ed Watkins, for example, claims that if you rebuild or repair a part of your house with new lumber, any ghosts that are there will leave. Others follow.

JIM EDMONDS: A witch will come t'borry somethin'. If they don't get nothin', then they can't do nothin' to you.

I heard about a man—a witch said he'd make a witch out a'him if he followed him. They come t'this door and th'witch said, "Hi-ho, hi-ho! In th'keyhole I go." He went on in and got all he wanted.

Th'other feller said th'same thing and in he went and got all he wanted—ate all he wanted.

Th'old witch came and said, "Hi-ho, hi-ho! Out th'keyhole I go," and went on out.

Th'old man came and thought he'd do what th'other did and said, "Hi-ho, hi-ho! Up th'high hole I go," and fell t'th'floor!

You just had t'pay no 'tention t'witches. They can put a spell on you, but they can't turn you into a witch if you pay them no mind.

ETHEL CORN: I was livin' in Charlotte—we lived off in th'back-woods. There one night about eleven o'clock we looked up an'thought th'house was on fire.

I got up and looked out, and back in th'east it looked like th'sun a'drawin' water—but it looked like streams a'blood a'comin' down. And it went straight a'towards th'north and it lit up till you could'a'-picked up a pin in th'house. I guess it'uz ten'r'fifteen minutes goin' on.

And it looked like that was blood comin' plumb down t'th'ground. They was a lot a'people see'd it, but nobody knowed what it was. It lit up th'whole house, and it like t'scared th'young'uns all to death.

I wasn't scared because I believed it was representin' a fulfillin' of places in th'Bible. An' I got th'Bible and got t'readin' in Revelations where it speaks of all these things and wonders that we'll see—it was somethin' that God had sent. It wadn't intended fer us t'know just what it was all about.



ILLUSTRATION 3 Ethel Corn

And before Uncle Jake Collins died, he see'd a light, and it looked like a torch. It was just two'r'three days before he died—er nights rather. They was a trail come from th'house down through our swamp, and he watched hit, an' hit come on down right at th'end of th'swamp and went up by his bee gums and come down nearly t'th'kitchen door, an' hit went out.

It was just two'r'three days after that that he fell dead, and we always thought it was a "talkin' " of his death, because "talkin's" will be of things t'happen like that.

Looked like somebody just a'carryin' a pine torch lit in their hand, an' it come down fright at th'kitchen door and it just vanished.

And another "talkin' "—we had been workin' in th'fields up behind th'old Union Chapel Church, and hit went like benches and everythin' else turnin' over in that church. And I thought there was somebody in there who'd broke in, and I went and th'doors was still locked; and I looked in th'winders and we never could see nothin'. There was no benches ner nothin' disturbed.

And I went on home. That evenin' late they come and told me Gertrude Norton was dead. They'uz goin' up there t'ring th'bell.



ILLUSTRATION 4



ILLUSTRATION 5

AUNT NORA GARLAND: My mother and Aunt Jane—they was young girls then—they were a'goin' some'ere t'spend th'night with somebody, and they were goin' together, y'know. They was t'meet in a certain place.

Well, she waited and waited and waited there in that place, and she never did come. And she started up th'road and she looked back and seen her a'comin just as plain as she'd ever see'd anybody in her life.

But it wasn't her. She was dead. That was th'reason she wasn't comin'. She was dead.

She said she'd see'd her plainer than anybody in this world, and stopped and waited and thought that she was comin' on, but she never did come—some kind of a vision.

And they say t'never look back, y'know. They say t'never look back 'cause if y'do, you'll be th'next t'die.

MYRTLE LAMB: I always possum hunted. We would always go on a rainy night in these old fields. That is th'place t'go. They would always go up in a old tree that is growed where nobody lives. Go on a dark, drizzly night. I always had th'best luck with'em.

I was comin' back, and m'shoes was hurtin' m'feet. I set down t'pull m'shoes off. I just felt like somebody was right behind me. I looked back, and he was just a little ways from me. He said he wanted t'pray fer me.

I said if he wanted t'pray fer me t'stay right there. I wadn't a'goin' with'im.

Then a night'r'two after that, he claimed he'd been to Franklin. I believe he was tryin' t'come up Middle Creek and said he got lost. Then he come—said he wanted a lantern.

I didn't feel like he was gone, and I went upstairs and looked out th>window and he'uz standin'—his light was shinin' out from under th'porch.

My mother and my brother went out and he run through th'corn fields.

Later it was like somethin' up in th'upstairs jumpin' up and down. I heard it twice. People said that was a warnin', and th'next day, my mother got bad off with pneumonia.

MRS. MARY CARPENTER: I reckon I must be superstitious'r'-somethin', whatever y'call it. If a rooster crows of a night, th'older people said somebody'd be sick. Or if somebody went t'bed a'laughin' and a'cuttin' up and a'havin' fun, somebody'd be sick in th'family, or your neighbor'd be sick'r'some one of'em dead.

One night — and — went t'bed a'laughin' and a'cuttin' up, and their mama said, "Cut that out in there." Said, "Somebody'll be sick in th'mornin'."

And said next mornin' 'fore they got up that somebody was knockin' on their door. Their closest door neighbor, one of'em was dead.

And you heard about my boy fallin' on his shotgun and gettin' shot? Well, about two'r'three nights before—now I don't know if that had anything to do with it or not—but that rooster crowed at midnight and I thought it was time t'get up. They wake me up when they crow, so I jumped up—thought it was time fer'im t'get up and go t'school.

And I got up and it was just midnight. And John, he told me that chickens crowed anyhow at midnight, and I said, "Well, maybe they do."

I didn't think too much about it, but it wadn't too long till I was back asleep and they waked me up a'crowin' again. Well, I bounced out t'see if it was time t'get up and go again, and it was between two and three o'clock. And I *knowed* then. I thinks, "Well, somethin' must be goin' t'happen t'us."

And two'r'three days after that, LeRoy, he started t'huntin'. And there was snow on th'ground, and ice, and he stepped on a log with ice on th'log and his foot slid and he fell off backards off th'log and shot his foot in two.

I don't know. I guess there's nothin' to it, but I couldn't help think it was because that rooster crowed. I killed th'rooster. Yeah, I killed that rooster before he ever got out of Greenville Hospital. Took him off out yonder and dug a hole and buried him.



ILLUSTRATION 6

HAINT TALES AND OTHER SCARY STORIES

Storytelling is not an uncommon thing around here. It's a tradition in my family that's been passed down from generation to generation.

When I was a small child, my grandmother, Ruth Holcomb, would always tell me stories—day or night, it didn't matter to her. Whenever I wanted to hear them, she'd sit down with me and tell panther stories or mad dog tales. Those were my favorites and she knew lots of them because she grew up seeing mad dogs in the neighborhood and hearing about panthers (pronounced "painters" by some people around here).

We always sat in the living room when she went to storytelling. She'd tell me story after story and have me so scared there was no way I'd even go into the next room by myself. Somebody would have to go with me.

I was always told if I saw a dog coming up the road, when I was waiting on the school bus of a morning, and it was foaming at the mouth, I was to either lie down in a ditch or stand real still and try not to breathe, so it would pass on by without biting me. I went to wait on the bus one morning and I practiced how to hold my breath and stand completely still. I think it's silly now that I look back on it, but I sure believed it then.

When I began editing these stories, I was at home lying in front of our heater on my stomach. Nobody was around me. Mom was taking a nap and Dad and my little brother were away. The television was off and it was real quiet. The house was popping—you know how a house does when it cools. And it was pitch dark outside. I got so interested in these stories that they were giving me a creepy feeling all over, and I finally decided I'd better put them away till the next day.

Kim Hamilton, Rosanne Chastain, and I collected most of them over the summer. Others had been told to **Foxfire** students over the years but have not been published previously. Tales about panthers and mad animals get inserted into someone's conversation occasionally and don't seem suitable as you're putting together an article that deals specifically

with some other subject. So this was an opportune time to pass along stories we've had tucked away in the files for a long time.

Every person that told us haint tales or scary stories was quite happy to share them. Each of them had his or her own unique and fascinating way of telling them. Lots of the stories have come from their own personal experiences and from what their parents and grandparents had passed on to them.

I still love for my grandmother to sit down and tell me these stories. I get terrifying feelings of panthers tearing through my skin or mad dogs snapping up at me, but I really know I'm quite safe with Granny.

Put yourself back in time and let your imagination roam as you enjoy these stories. Can you see a panther getting after you or a mad dog biting at you? What would you do?

DANA HOLCOMB

PANTHER TALES

MARGARET NORTON: They used to have real panthers here, but I never have seen one. There used to be one up on the creek here long years ago before I come. There was a trail come up this mountain and they always said everybody was afraid to travel it after night. Said they could hear that panther walking right along with 'em. You'd be in the trail and it'd be down below, and it'd just be pat, pat, pat right along till you stopped to see about it or shine the light on it. It'd stop, too.

I've heard them tell that lots of times but I'm not afraid. I don't go out after dark by myself.

JAKE WALDROOP: Well, I see'd a painter at the Deep Gap. I'd been to Tallulah River and I was coming back. It was in the nighttime and I come through the Deep Gap to the head of Kimsey Creek on an old trail. They was a tree that had fell from right at the side of the trail, and lodged in another big tree. I guess you've see'd them that way, ain't you?

I was coming down the trail and the moon was shining, and I seen this old gentleman [panther] just walk across the trail, and he come

to where this tree had fell, and he just went walking out in them big limbs, you know.

I had an awful vicious Plott bitch with me [a dog usually bred for bear hunting]. And I didn't have no gun, but I had a great big old dirk knife. I stopped and I looked at him and I says, "Well, ol' fella, if you come down here, you may get me but I'm gonna get some of you."

So I got my old knife out and I called Con, the dog's name. She had a collar around her neck and I had a great long cord about six or eight feet long in my pocket and I tied that cord in the ring on her collar. I wanted us to both be together if that painter come in contact with us, so I just walked on by him and he laid out there wagging that old tail back'ards and forwards. I went on down a little piece and I looked back. I was about a hundred yards down. I'd keep my eyes on him as best I could, so he just kept laying there. I come to where there was a whole lot of underbrush and I went out of his sight. Well, I went on down a little ways where they was a branch [creek] coming down. And I had some whiskey, so I said, "I'll take me a drink of whiskey." I turned up the jug and took me two or three good swallows and put the stopper back in it. I set it down and laid down to get me some water out of the branch for a chaser. And just as my lips hit the water, Con growled and just jumped the full length of that cord and I heard that thing jump and I wasn't thirsty no more! I got up and got my jug and down that trail I come, and it was a half of a mile to where my brother and another boy was waiting on me. And just as I got down close to the camp, that thing screamed right up on the ridge above me and they opened the door and come out and see'd me a-coming and they said, "What was you a-hollering about?"

I said, "I wasn't. That was a cougar or a painter, whatever you want to call it."

It went right back up over the Yellow Mountains and you ain't never heard no such screaming in your life.

RUTH HOLCOMB: A long time ago, these people sent for this lady who was a midwife. The only way she had of getting to their house was

to ride a horse. This panther came up behind her when she was riding to their house. She took off her scarf and throwed it down at him, trying to scare him off. It tore that scarf up and kept on coming. She kept her horse a-running and kept pulling off her clothes piece by piece, trying to stop that panther.

When she reached the house where she was going, she almost had all her clothes off and the panther was still right in behind her.

HARRIET ECHOLS: Now my mother said that when she was young, she knew some people and there was a new baby being born. Back then, they had home deliveries by midwives, you know. This neighbor woman was expecting herself, but she wasn't too far along not to go help out. They had come to tell her they needed somebody to be there to help the midwife with the baby delivery, so she went around to her neighbor's house.

The next morning when her husband got up, he was expecting her to be home for breakfast. He thought she and the midwife would walk back home together. She hadn't come, so he started over there to see if everything was all right.

On his way, this panther was laying on the fence on the side of the road and it jumped at him. I don't remember if he had a dog with him or what, but anyway he got away from it. Then he saw his wife. The panther was guarding her. It had killed her and had tore into her and ate the baby. My mother said that was true. Said all they found of the baby was one little hand and it was just mature enough to tell it *was* a hand. That panther was guarding the woman's body because when it got hungry again, it'd eat her.

JAKE WALDROOP: When I was out in the state of Washington, why they was some Indians living there. And this Indian woman, she had a washplace about a hundred and fifty yards from her house. She had something on the stove cooking and she went from her washing to see about it. She run up to the house to see about her stuff she was fixing for dinner and left her baby sitting in a box down at the washplace. She said she heard a painter scream, and she wheeled

and run back, and when she got there she heard it scream again, and it had took that baby off and eat it!

HARRIET ECHOLS: My mother told me this story about a panther, too. People had to ride horseback or go in wagons or buggies in those days, you know.

They were having this revival meeting, and this man and his wife had a pair of horses and they were riding them to church. They had a baby just big enough to sit up and hold onto one of them as they rode.

The minister said he'd eat dinner with them that day, and the woman rode back to the church with him that evening, but her husband couldn't go. He had to do something else, but he knew she'd be safe coming on home without him. So she had a little ol' dog that followed her when she rode off anywhere with the baby. After church that night, she didn't think anything about riding back home by herself. She knew her husband would wait up and look for her.

He was sitting there on the porch when he heard her horse whinny and come tearing in home.

She said she'd come around a bend in the road where there was a big bank and a panther was up on that bank. It jumped down trying to land on the horse, but just missed. The dog had sensed it and kept it from jumping on the horse with the woman. She just wrapped the reins around the saddle horn and told the horse to go home, and she held to the baby. That horse just stretched out, carrying her home.

The man grabbed his gun. He'd felt like something was wrong and he had his hunting dogs at the house. When the horse had got to the fence around the yard, it'd jumped it and her holding to the saddle with the baby. That panther was still right behind 'em. That little dog would jump at the panther whenever it'd jump at the horse.

The hunting dogs run out and scared the panther, and it run up on the haystack and got up on the stack pole. He had his gun and he shot it, and that's all that saved her and the baby.

JAKE WALDROOP: One of my uncles, Millard Cruse, one time had been to a mill over in Tusquittee to get his corn ground. He had loaded up six or eight bushels of corn and went over there to the mill, and when he came back through Tunny Gap, why it was dark. And he said he heard this panther scream up on the ridge.

He had a big yoke of steers to his wagon and he had him a big long whip that he would whip them along with. And he said he began to whipping them steers when he heard that panther hit the back end of his wagon. He said he beat it off with that whip—beat it till it would get off. And them steers a-running! He said it would take a little bit for it to catch back on, but it followed him for two miles, trying to get in that wagon.

I heard my mammy and all of'em tell me that the whole back end of the wagon bed—said there was his old claws where he had tore out planks and everything trying to get in. I reckon he was gonna eat my uncle. That's all that was in the wagon except the cornmeal. That's the only one I ever heard of attacking anybody around here.

ETHEL CORN: They said one liked to got Carrie Dillard one time, when they lived at the Lloyd's Cove. I think she'd been to Highlands or somewhere. Everybody back then rode horseback and she was on a horse, and a panther jumped and just scraped the horse as he come down. That horse reared and started running, and they said that's all that saved her. She was just a young girl and that horse a-rearing was all that saved her.

HARRIET ECHOLS: This was before I was born, but it's a true story. My dad said one evening he and the children in his community was coming home from school—the whole crowd was together. They all had their lunch boxes and their books in their bags hung across their shoulder. When they separated, going out to different places, different roads, they heard this screaming and hollering. You know, a panther hollers just like a person, and the children answered back. They thought it was some of the other children. It kept hollering and they kept answering it back. He said to one of the other boys, "That's not nobody hollering at us! Look coming down the fence!"

The panther was walking the fence coming down to them. So they threwed their books and lunch boxes and everything down and ran to get to the nearest house. It was a mile from where they was at to the Rogers place and they ran out there and told Mr. Rogers that there was a panther after 'em.

The boys got the dogs and went back but they didn't get the panther that evening. The dogs kept chasing it and stayed out all night. They went back next morning to hunt the dogs, and the dogs had treed that panther and killed it.

JENNIE ARROWOOD: They said there was somebody that used to go across to Shooting Creek—across that mountain over there—and play the fiddle and make music for people.

They said one time a painter got after him and he climbed a tree, and the only way he ever got down was to play the fiddle and scare it away. If he quit playing, it'd go to climbing the tree toward him!

RUTH HOLCOMB: One time this man was out a-hunting and he see'd this panther coming so he laid down on the ground and covered up with leaves. That panther finished raking some leaves up over him and left. He figured it'd be back to eat him, so as soon as he saw it was gone, he jumped up and got away.

And then they was telling about this man that had this little shack built and another man was looking for a place to hide out, to keep from having to go to war or something. He had come to this man's shack while the man was out hunting for something for breakfast, rabbits maybe. So this man that was hiding out crawled up in the top of the house. There was beds built out of poles up near the top of the house. He could peep out from up there. He heard this panther come to the house, and when the man that was out hunting came back to the house the panther jumped him, and this panther tore that man all to pieces. The man up in the rafters on the bed was afraid to come out. 'Fraid that panther would eat him, too.

HARRIET ECHOLS: My uncle Harv was staying at his house by himself one night. He'd been hunting squirrels in the afternoon and had

dressed them and put them in a pan on the stove. Because some of the neighbors had been hearing panthers screaming at night, Uncle Harv had kept his hunting dogs on the porch that night. After he fed the hogs and milked the cow, he fixed his supper and got ready for bed. He called the dogs and told 'em to stay put on the porch. See, they trained the dogs to mind and to stay. Maybe he put something out there of his and told them to take care of it.

So he went to bed and said along in the night, all at once he heard the awfulest fuss in the kitchen. He said it scared him to death.

The chimney of his house was built right up against a high bank and the panther had crawled down the chimney and come into the kitchen and found those squirrels. He had pulled the dishpan down into the floor, ate up all his meat, and went back up the chimney.

Uncle Harv got out and put the dogs out after the panther, but it got away from them. Finally he came back, and next morning the neighbors took some dogs and killed the panther. Of course, he said he couldn't swear it was the same panther but it *was* in the area and that's the one they thought it was.

ETHEL CORN: I've heard tell of 'em a-trying to get in a house where people lived. Back then, half the time, they didn't have no glass—only hang curtains over their windows. One night Octy McCall heard a panther and happened to look, and it was a-sittin' in her window.

Back in them days, they used broom sage—they'd get out and get the broom sage, broomstraw, and make their homemade brooms—and she went to throwing that broomstraw in the fire and that run that panther off. That's the way they scared 'em off—with fire.

JENNIE ARROWOOD: Panthers never did come in *our* house, I don't reckon, but I've heard tell of 'em getting into people's houses. People used to have straw ticks on their beds, and they'd take 'em off and put 'em right at the hearth if they thought panthers were around. If a panther started down that chimney, they'd take so much of that straw at a time and burn it, and not let it get in on 'em. They'd try to come down the chimneys if they couldn't get

through the boards. I've heard tell of panthers scratching the boards off the house trying to get in, but now I wasn't there to see it.

MAD DOGS, EAGLES, AND OTHER ANIMAL TALES

ADA CRONE: One thing that happened back when I was about nineteen or twenty, I guess, was a circus came through town. We didn't never get to see a circus. We didn't have the money to go to one. But a wild animal got loose. We really don't know what it was. Some of 'em say it was a laughin' hyena, but we really don't know what it was. I'd went to town one day, an' comin' back I had to walk through the mountains a pretty good ways, three or four miles I guess, and this thing started hollerin' at me. It would start hollerin' real low and it'd get louder an' louder. It'd make your hair stand on top of your head, I'm tellin' you. It skeered the daylight out o' me. But I was afraid to run. If I'd run goin' down that mountain, I mighta stumbled an' fell an' it [might've] jumped on me. This is what I had in my mind. I stopped and I looked around an' tried to see it, an' I never could see it. I went on home. When I got home and went in, my mother said, "Did you hear that thing a-hollerin'?"

I said, "Yes, it followed me down the mountain."

She said, "It's goin' to get you one of these days if you don't get in afore dark."

I said, "Well, it's not dark yet."

She said, "It's almost."

And I said, "If it does get me it'll have a good meal, I guess, one time." And I went somewheres a few days after that. I came back another way. And I heard somethin' run across in front of me. It went like a horse with iron shoes, made a big racket. I run around some big ol' rock cliffs down below me. I run around below those rock cliffs an' I seen it! It was a big old yeller thing that was standin' there. It looked sort of like a dog but it had a real slim body and long legs. I was a little bit afraid but I wanted to see it. I just wanted to see what it was. It had mange too. It was yeller and it was a pretty thing. I stood there and looked at it long as I wanted to and it looked at me. Never did try to hurt me. I walked off then when I got

through lookin' at it. I told my mama 'bout it and she didn't believe it. She said I didn't see it. But I really did, though. I seen that thing and I don't know what it was.

Finally it just got gone. I really don't know what happened to it. My two brothers and some of their friends would take a dog and go and try to catch it at night. And the dogs wouldn't run it. They wouldn't even track it. They wouldn't have nothin' to do with it. And it would stink. It stunk like a—I guess what y'call a civet cat. It really had a bad smell to it. But it just got gone. I don't know whatever happened to it.

RUTH HOLCOMB: There was a place up on the mountain where the men used to come a lot hunting for 'possums and other animals for furs. They took their dogs with them and when they'd get near that place, the dogs would run off and leave the area. Something would spook them and nobody knows what it was. They've never found out till today. Still don't know what it is, but the people that was hunting with the dogs could hear it.

And one time this woman set her baby out in the yard to play while she was doing her housework. Then there were a lot of eagles—bald eagles, we called 'em. While she was in the house doing her work, this eagle came by and picked this baby up. The folks seen this eagle a-going with it and they went to see what it had done with the baby. It had gone to a hollow tree and had hid the baby down in there. They said all that saved that baby's life was that the eagle babies were eating on a lamb's leg right then. The mother eagle had caught a lamb and the little eagles were eating on that.

The people had to get up in that tree and get that baby down.

HARRIET ECHOLS: This neighbor of mine where we used to live told about helping to take care of a little child that had been rabies-bit.

Said one day the little fellow was out playing, he was four or five years old, and this dog come in the yard and he played with it awhile. After a while the dog bit him and he went in the house crying. He told his mother, "My puppy that come up out there bit me."

She didn't think nothing about it, but the next day word got out that there was a mad dog out. They finally found it and killed it, and they knew that was the dog that had bit the little boy. Back then they didn't have these shots for rabies. There wasn't anything they could do for him, and the little child went mad. This neighbor of mine was one of the men who took care of him. He said the child would say, "Please, don't let me bite you. Don't let me bite you." He just felt like he wanted to bite somebody.

They stayed with him two weeks. These two men just took turns sitting by the bed. They wore rubber gloves when they cared for him. He couldn't eat anything, wouldn't eat, and sometimes he couldn't drink water. He'd want water and they'd try to give it to him, but he couldn't drink it. He said that was the most pathetic thing he ever saw in his life.

It'd take both of those men to hold that child when he would have those fits. Said he would say, "I'm gonna bite somebody. Please don't let me bite nobody."

He died after about two weeks, they said.

ETHEL CORN: Oh, yeah, they was afraid of mad dogs! And there used to be a lot of 'em through here. Only at certain times of the year that they would come through. I never had one to get after me, but there was one to come by the house where I used to live. I heard it and I looked out, and just before it got to the house, I knowed by the way it traveled something was wrong. It had took a fit and before I could run in and get the gun and load it and get out, it was too far away for me to shoot it.

That night it made a lunge at Edward Carpenter's horses. He'd been loggin' and he was late coming in.

Then I heard a fight in the night and it had got my dog. He wouldn't hardly come out to me when I called him the next morning. I never thought of it being my dog in that fight till he went mad. He went mad in about nine days and I had to have him killed.

Another time Poppy had two dogs, and they both got bit. I got 'im to build a pen and put 'em in it. We weren't for sure but we thought

the dog was mad that had bit 'em. Poppy put 'em in that pen, and when they did go mad, you never heard such a racket in your life as they was doing. They didn't go mad, though, for about twenty-one days, and every time they'd make a racket, I'd run down there. I wanted to see how they'd act when they did go mad. I always went down to feed 'em, and the first I detected of 'em going mad was one of 'em went to growling at the other 'un when I put in the food. When I scolded him to try to make him hush, he just kept a-growling, and I picked up a stick and stuck it through a little crack like I was going to hit him. When I did that, he lunged at it and I backed off from there. They couldn't get out, though, for the pen was built out of logs and even logs covered over the top.

RUTH HOLCOMB: A mad dog can smell you, can really smell you. I was on my way to school. I had to walk by my grandmother's house and I had just went by the door when I heard somebody holler and tell me to get in the house. A stray dog had stayed at our house all night and was following me to school. It went on up in the settlement and bit some people's dogs. Well, some people up there killed it before it bit anybody.

People couldn't hardly do their work for watching for mad dogs. They'd have to get done before dark. Nobody would hardly go out after dark for the mad dogs would bite 'em. They said if you got bit, you'd go mad in nine days.

Mr. Holcomb had a cow to go mad. He'd just bought it and milked it, and he and all the children had drunk the milk. It didn't hurt them, but the cow went mad and climbed the wall.

BLANCHE HARKINS: My mother told us a story about a boy getting bit [by a mad dog]. They couldn't do anything with him. They put him off in a building. They kept him in there till he acted like he was wild. They put him in a cage just by himself.

MARGARET NORTON: They didn't use to have that vaccine for rabies, and when you saw a dog coming down the road slobbering, all the children got in the house. Your daddy got the gun and shot him.

LEONA JUSTUS and RUTH HOLCOMB: And back then sometimes you didn't know which dogs were mad. Lex was tending Daddy's land and they was out there at the old barn and Daddy was putting up the horse. Lex had a little feist dog and it went mad. It got after Daddy and Daddy run in with the horse in the barn. When he come out, the dog went after him again and he finally jumped up on something and got away until Lex could get the gun and kill it.

They used to say if you saw your dog's eyes looking like glass, looking red, right then it was going mad. And a mad dog'll lay there and then start looking way off. Then they leave home, start running till they come to a branch of water, and then they'll go mad. They'll foam at the mouth and run around in circles.

Their tongue swells out of their mouth. I know that for I saw one in town. It was one they kept penned up till it went mad, and they was showing it in town. That thing would run up to anything and shove its head up against anything. Its tongue was out of its mouth and was swelled out till it couldn't bite. They killed it.

You don't have to get bit to go mad. If you get some of that foam in a cut or a sore place, you'll go mad.

Some people in the mountains believe that a madstone—a stone taken from the paunch or stomach of a deer—can draw poison from the bite of a snake or mad animal. The first one we ever saw was brought to school by one of our students. It was smooth and flat—about the diameter of a silver dollar and one-third of an inch thick. His father had found it in the stomach of a whitetail deer he had just killed and field-dressed, and it was one of his most prized possessions. We asked several of our contacts about these:

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HARRIET ECHOLS: There was an old doctor I've heard about. He didn't live in our community and I can't remember just where he was. A lot of people just thought he was a quack, you know, but they said he had a stone of some kind that he put on the place where these dogs would bite you and that would draw that poison out. Several

people went to him and then our neighbor's wife was bit by a mad dog and he took her to him.

JAKE WALDROOP: Well, I've heard of 'em. And ol' man Vance Dills had one. There was an old fellow who lived in the cove over from us, Bill Daniels, and he was plowing his steer up in his mountain pasture, and a copperhead snake bit his steer. He went and got Vance to come with his madstone. Bill said that when he stuck the madstone to where them snakebite holes were, it just stuck there. When the stone finally fell loose, he said the steer was all right. It cured the snakebite.

They said they could get them madstones out of a deer or out of a wild turkey gobbler. They were the ones who carried the madstones in their stomach. Vance Dills killed a white deer and got that one out of his stomach. That one of Vance's was the only one I ever seen. It was the size of a guinea egg, like a small hen egg. It was a little slick grayish-looking rock.

Jake knew of two more instances where that madstone worked. A girl bitten on the breast by a mad cat was cured by the madstone. And a man bitten on the ankle by a snake was cured. The madstone works by being soaked in milk about fifteen minutes. Then it's applied to the snakebite or bite of the rabid animal. It will cling to the bite and fall loose when the poison is all out.

HAIN TALE S

LOLA CANNON: My mother's people, the Godfreys, were one of the first three white families to settle here in the Chechero district. Where the cemetery down there is now was where they built their first cabins. A little girl made her a playhouse and played under a tree there. She died and they buried her there.

Later they built their house down the road a little ways. The mother said that on moonlight nights she could see that little girl in her playhouse. Whether that was just her mother's idea or not I don't know, but there was another old building right down there where queer things were said to happen. Back in those days, when

people died neighbors came in and prepared and dressed them for burial. Usually they had to keep the dead person in the home overnight, and then people would come in next day to dig the grave. The neighbors would stay and sit up all night to keep watch over the body. They always said when they set up with anybody at that old place, they would hear things. They would *hear* doors opening and closing, but they couldn't *see* anything. There were fireplaces on opposite ends of the house and they would hear something like the fireprongs and shovel falling on the hearth. Some of the brave people would go look and they would be lying there but nobody was in there. Noises like that. People said they could hear footsteps on the porch.



ILLUSTRATION 7

I don't believe in things like that, but older people repeated the stories and it built up in younger people's minds and made them think these things happen. I don't think dead people ever come

back. It's just in our minds that they come back. They may. Our minds may bring them back to us.

JENNIE ARROWOOD: My grandmother Ferguson told me about this house where somebody was killed and put in the chimney under the hearth, and the ghost of that person would knock four times, knock on every corner of the house. Nobody wouldn't live in that place very long. Yeah—knock on every corner of the house and then leave out. They said they found his arm bones after that—from his elbows down—everything. I reckon it'd knock and scare away the one that'd killed him, lived, you know.

RUTH HOLCOMB: Down on the creek—this was a long time ago—they said a white lady had a Negro baby and she didn't want people to know she had it.

Women used to wear these big long hatpins in their hats to keep them from blowing off. So she stuck that hatpin down in the top of that baby's head and killed it. They tell me now she buried it on the side of the hill down there. I've heard a lot of people say that they can hear that baby a-crying. After she killed that baby, she left here. Nobody knows where she went.

MAELANE HOLCOMB: Back when I was about ten years old, we moved into this big two-story white house right at the edge of Hiawassee. The house had a big set of stair-steps that went upstairs, and there was two big fireplaces up there. That's where Daddy and Mom was a-sleeping and the bathroom was right under the stairs. Me and my sister, Von, slept in one end of the house, and Daddy and Mama slept upstairs at the other end. We'd been living there about three months when one night they woke me up, woke us all up, and we heard something crying just like a little baby. Daddy looked and he couldn't find nothing.

After we heard that, Mama and Daddy got to talking around to people that lived in town and they said nobody wouldn't live in that house no length of time, that it was haunted. We come to find out that this girl had had this baby and she'd got rid of it. She had cut it

up and flushed it down the commode. And that crying had sounded just like it was coming out of the bathroom there under the stairs. We all heard it.

It scared Mama and Daddy both. It wasn't but about three days till they packed us up and we moved. That house is tore down now. There just wasn't nobody that would live in it.

RUTH HOLCOMB: They said a long time ago this lady and her daughter went to live way up on some mountain somewhere and nobody would carry them any food. They stayed on the mountain and starved to death. The woman died and the daughter got her buried. Then she died, too. They said after she was dead and buried that people could go near that mountain and hear her screaming. Said now since she was dead, they could still hear her screaming. I don't know why nobody would go near them. Back then they had typhoid fever so they could have had some disease that no one wanted to get.

Grandma Ada Crone used to tell me "haint tales" when I was little. When we interviewed her, I asked her to tell some of those stories to us again and they follow:

CAROL RAMEY

Between Tiger and Clayton, there was a graveyard called the Roane graveyard. Well, they claimed that you could go by there and you'd see a light there at night and it would follow you. It never did try to hurt nobody but it would follow you.

Well, there was a man—I forget his name now—but he went to see a lady that was called Gertrude Rose. And when he left her house, he told her he was scared that that light would take out after him. She says, "No." She says, "I'll fix it where that light won't hurt you." She got a lamp and she lit it and she stuck a pin through the wick. She said that would scare off any kind of a ghost or anything that looked like a ghost. Well, he started home and he went [through the graveyard] and the light took out after him. He threwed his lamp down an' he ran. He fell in a branch an' he was wet all over an'

skeered to death. When he got to his house he was out of breath, and his wife asked him what in the world was wrong with him. Was he drunk? He said, “No, that light took out after me and I ’uz skeered t’death.” Says, “I’ll never go through that way again in my life.”

I guess they had some haunted houses [back when I was a girl]. I don’t really know. I know of one they *said* was haunted. I really don’t know about that though. It was pretty close to where we used to live and we had to turn off the highway goin’ through the woods to our house. And there was a log house there and a man had been killed there. One of my brothers claimed when he came through there that he’d see a man a-walkin’ ’side of him without a head. He had his head in his arms holdin’ it walkin’ along. My brother started running and the man without a head would run too, but he’d carry his head in his arms. And my brother was skeered. He said it skeered him half to death. He tried to run off and leave it but the more he run, the more it would run. If he slowed up and walked, well, it would walk too. But it never did try to hurt him. He said he tried to talk to it, but it wouldn’t say nothin’. I don’t know whether that’s true or not, but that’s just a tale that I was told.

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Mike Cook, one of the Foxfire staffers, told us a while back that his grandmother, Mrs. Eula Carroll, had some interesting stories of her childhood. Well, we went to Cleveland, Georgia, and taped her and found Mike was right. This story happened when Mrs. Carroll was about sixteen years old.



ILLUSTRATION 8 Mrs. Eula Carroll

We went to a circus in Gainesville—me and my sister and a cousin. My daddy told me if we didn't get back Tore dark, I'd have to milk. We had a flat tire down here about Clermont, fifteen miles below Cleveland [Georgia]. It was on a T-model Ford. [It was getting late] and it started mistin' rain. Then it was dark as pitch [by the time we got home]. Oh, it was so dark, and my daddy was so upset with us.

He told me I had to go to the barn and milk that cow. He wouldn't let me take the lantern, and he wouldn't let me take the collie dog. So I went on down to the barn and opened that huge door. And honey, it was so wide! It had rollers on it and they needed greasing. [They're like little wheels on the top of the sliding door.] I opened that door and it screamed all the way down. It sounded terrible. Oh, me! It sounded like some kind of haint.

So I opened that door, and I couldn't see a thing in the world. I walked down that huge hall to get the cow's feed. We swept that hall and kept it just like a house. There was what they called a "hack" parked in there. It was like an old-fashioned surrey, except it

was larger. It had three seats and you could take out the seats [to haul things in it]. That was what they carried my [mother's coffin] to the cemetery in. It had curtains that came down and snapped, and it had little isinglass windows in each one. I had to walk by that hack and I had a horror of it.

Well, I got on by that and went on to this other huge door. I had to open it to go get the cow in out of the pasture on the other side of that barn. I got the cow and I opened that big door again to come back. The cow knew exactly where to go. [The cow and I] got back alongside the hack and something made a loud noise—sounded terrible. [If you've ever been around stock, they blow when they're frightened. She was just blowing.] She wouldn't move a pace, wouldn't move a step. And every time I'd move, that awful noise would sound again. And just about the time I'd stop a little bit, and she'd quit blowing, it'd start again. And I was standing there, and I was just praying. I was a Christian and I said, "Oh God, help me." I knew something was after me, was gonna grab me any minute. I *knew* it was gonna grab me. So I was praying, "Oh Father, help me. I can't go any further." The cow wouldn't move. She was standing, and she'd back up right against me.

And all at once I saw this halo of light up in the loft. Beautiful light! And in this light was my mother sitting on a straight chair. And she had on the last dress I ever saw her wear. Beautiful! It was a navy with white dots, and it had lace all in it. She'd made it, and it had long sleeves. She just looked lovely. And her hands—I had hands just like my mama—her hands were slipping down out of her lap. She said, "Eula, don't be afraid. I'm here." And I wanted to run up those steps.



ILLUSTRATION 9

The cow went on in then and went in the right stall, and I wasn't afraid anymore. I went on to milk the cow, and she stood just as still. Then I went on out, and that old door screaming didn't bother me a bit. I wasn't afraid anymore.

I [started walking toward the house] and Little Brother was sitting up at the other gate with a big raincoat over him, and had a lantern and the dog. If I had hollered, he was gonna run to me. My daddy wouldn't let him [come to barn with me to milk]. I went on in the house and I told my daddy [what I'd seen in the barn], and he cried. He said he'd never do that again. I said, "I'll go back tonight if you want me to."

Oh, and the noise ... When I went back by that hack [later], I saw that one of those curtains had come down in the back. See, there were three sections, and one had come loose and it had come down and was flopping against that spring seat in there. And you can imagine—well, it was weird. It was just blowing enough to move it and then it'd hit against that seat and then it'd flop. The wind had

probably caught it. It had those three tiers of curtains and they came down, and it'd come loose.

I just knew ... It looked like I would have known they wouldn't have made a noise if somebody was planning to get me.

My mother had been dead around seven years. Now I know that anything that happens to me, my mother's always there.

WITCH TALES

LOLA CANNON: People I knew didn't believe in witchcraft like it was practiced in Salem, but they did have some certain superstitions, I guess you would call them.

My grandmother had this funny belief. I think it was amusing to her. I don't know. She'd make a cross in the dirt with her toe, spit in it, and make a good wish for somebody. Any time she left the house and had to turn back, that was her idea. She would always smile when she did it. I think it was sort of fun to her.

There was one thing she wouldn't let us do. That was what she called "spin a chair." You have probably seen people standing and talking, swing the chair back and forth. She wouldn't let us do that. Said it was unlucky.

And she didn't allow us to walk with one shoe on and one shoe off. That's a habit I still have today. I just don't walk with one shoe on and one off.

People said it was unlucky to set out a cedar tree because when it grew tall enough to cast a shadow the length of a coffin, a member of the family would die. And a great many people wouldn't set them out.

And then there was a man named Mr. Page who lived down near the Chattooga River, in the Warwoman district. I just remember going to his house once. I had suffered with a toothache for a long time and he had a toothache remedy.

There was only one doctor in Clayton back then and children were pretty shy about going to the doctor anyway. Sometimes we'd suffer terribly without letting our parents know.

My grandfather took me down to Mr. Page's and he asked me how long my tooth had been hurting, all about it. Then he got up and went to a chest in the back of the house and took out something that looked like a piece of rich pine kindling. He cut a tiny sliver off of it and sharpened it. He said, "Suppose you pick the gum around your tooth till it bleeds."

Well, I did. Then he wrapped a piece of cotton around the point of this pick and went back and put it in a box.

Well, the tooth still hurt me on until we went home. I was terribly discouraged. I thought it was supposed to stop magically. I went to bed that night and slept, and the next morning my tooth wasn't hurting me! It didn't hurt anymore.

Some people would call that witchcraft, I guess.

David Payne asked his grandfather, John Lee Patterson, if he remembered any scary stories he'd heard or that had happened when he was young and these are two he shared with us.

This here is the story of back in the olden times around 1820 till about 1875, when they claimed they had witches in this county. Some of my grandparents used to tell me about an old lady who was a witch, and she lived over on Bullard Mountain. Her name was Holly Ballard, and the mountain is just after you cross the bridge on [Route] 76 west going toward Hiawassee. On top of that mountain is where she lived.

Her and her father were the only ones. Her mother passed away and she became a witch they claim, now. I don't believe in them myself, but back then they said there was such a thing.

[My grandfather] told me a tale about her that one time she wanted to buy a pig to fatten from one of my grandfather's uncles, and he wouldn't sell one to her, which they didn't sell for much back then. Three dollars, two dollars, maybe even seventy-five cents. I don't know. But she said, "They won't do you no good if you don't sell me one of them." Then he run her off, and she said, "Them pigs ain't going to do you any good. Something is going to happen to them pigs."

So he claims that she went on home, and the pigs quit eating and would run around squealing and getting poorer and poorer until they finally fell over dead—all of them.

So one day she was a-walking down the road and asked him how was his pigs a-doing, and he said that they all died out because of some disease. Then she told him they died because he wouldn't sell her one. And then she just went on down the road.

Then there was another man by the name of Alp Teems, and he was a distant cousin of my granddaddy, and they claimed he could turn himself into anything he wanted to and make you think he was a horse or cow or something or other like that.

So he had a brother who was all the time trying to kill a deer. There was a deer they claim would cross the river up there from one mountain to the other to eat, and they'd shoot at him and couldn't never kill him. So his brother was up in a gap on the mountain waiting for this deer one morning just about daylight, and then they said this big ten-point buck came down the ridge right by him. So he picked up his muzzle-loading rifle he had ready to shoot, and when the buck got up on him he shot him point-blank, and the buck jumped up the hill like a rabbit jumping, and then turned around, snorted a time or two, come right down by him, and he already had his gun loaded again and he shot him again.

He knew he didn't miss it, and he said the deer just kept hanging around there out in the thicket. Then he remembered his grandmother and grandfather telling him that if he scraped some silver off a coin onto his bullet and loaded it in his gun that he could kill any kind of witches with the next bullet. So he pulled a silver piece out of his pocket and scraped some of that silver off of it and packed it in there with the wadding and loaded his gun, and about that time he raised up and there stood his brother, Alp. And Alp said, "You wouldn't shoot me, would you, brother?" And his brother said, "No, I was trying to kill a deer and I have already shot it twice, so I thought I'd try this remedy on him."

And Alp said, "Aw, that was me pulling a joke on you!"

FIREPLACE TALES

The fireplace, built from rocks gathered from a nearby stream and held together with just the red clay mud from the hills, served as the place for families in the mountains to bond and share the events of the day. Bibles were read by light from kerosene lamps, prayers were prayed, and many legends and stories, both true and imagined, were shared as families huddled around the glowing red embers sometimes deceitfully hidden by the gray ash surrounding the bed of coals. Sometimes smoke would fill the room from winds that drifted down the open chimney. The smell of kerosene from the burning lamp permeated the air of the humble dwelling. It was often difficult to fall asleep after hearing the many tales of “haints,” ghosts, and witches.

As you read these stories, some legend, some true, shared by some of our contacts, light an old oil lamp, gather around the fireplace, and get ready to hear strange noises during a sleepless night.

—Joyce Green

“This happened on a cold, windy winter night.”

Family ghost stories from Melissa Rogers

This happened on a cold, windy winter night, where a brother of mine was walking down a road at Hiawassee, Georgia. He had been to visit a girlfriend that night. He had a great big old German Sheperd dog with him ever’ where he went, and that dog would fight for him and do anything he told him to. He didn’t have to speak to him but one time.

He stayed with his girlfriend till about midnight that night, and then he had about two miles to go down the road and up through and around the cemetery. About a half mile before he got to the cemetery, he heard something coming behind him—the ground was froze, and it was real cold and the wind a-blowing—and he could

hear its hooves a-cracking, and he said he was afraid to look back. After a while it got closer and closer to him, and he turned around to look back, and he saw this sheep a-coming as plain, and he told his dog to go get it, and his dog only got closer and closer to him till he rubbed up ag' in his leg. He said that sheep come right on down to the side of him and went on down the road out of sight, but he could still hear its feet a-ploppin' on the cold ground—just a regular-looking sheep, only it just didn't have no head!

My mother and daddy, at one time, lived in a house that was said to be haunted. People said that they had been some people that lived back several years before then that had killed a man there. They was two men and a woman killed this man there, and they cut his head off. And after they cut his head off, why, the woman kicked it over across the floor. They was some big ol' shoals off below the end of the farm, and they took 'im and put 'im over there in the big shoals where the water flowed off.

And they was a woman that her husband killed her in this house, and they said that he killed her because she couldn't have any children for 'im. They said that he abused her, and she died within a little while. He married this other woman, and they had about five boys and two girls, and they both lived to be real old. Well, anyway, this happened to my brother one night when he and my mother and my daddy lived in that old house. All the other children was married off, and he was the only son still living at home. The house didn't have no inside bathroom, so he had to go outdoors to the bathroom, and it was real cold that night. There was a big, long porch come all the way across the house, and when my brother got up and went to the door, he seen this woman sittin' on the banister of the porch, and he thought it was Mommy. So he went back into the house in a few minutes and stood at the door for a while, and directly Mommy called him from the bed and said, “^{H.P.}, what are you doin' up?”

He said, “Mommy, are you in the bed?” And she said, “Yeah.” Said, “What's the matter?” He said, “Well, I thought that was you a-sittin' out there on the banister.” Said, “There's this woman sittin'

out there where you've got that quilt spread across the banisters." And she said, "No, I've not been out." And she got up and they both went out on the porch, and it wadn't there anymore. He said it looked just like Momma sittin' there with her apron on. The moon was kindly shining, and he couldn't tell how she was dressed, but ...

And another time, when they didn't anybody live in the house, there was some men a-comin' up the road from way down on a place they called Persimmon. They was a-ridin' around this little crooked road, and it was gettin' just nearly dusky dark, and they seen a woman a-sittin' out there on the fence. They said when they got up close to her, why she got up and went towards the house. She had on a black dress trimmed in pink, and she sit down on the porch, and they rode on by and she was still sittin' on the porch, but they wadn't nobody lived there and hadn't been in a pretty good long time.

"Our cemetery is haunted. Did you know it?"

Louise Tabor relates a tale for Halloween

This story was told at Halloween. It could have been fiction, or it could have been true. A lot of tales had been told of a big man, with a hook on one side instead of an arm, who scared young people parked on a mountain called Lover's Leap. One or two had been killed. One night a couple was parked up there. All at once the girl screamed and said, "Get me away from here!" The boy didn't stop to ask questions but started the motor and zoomed away. When they reached the girl's home, she got out of the car and looked at the door. There was a hook grasping the latch that opened the door, and the door was scratched.

A woman told me this. She was part Indian and lived on the reservation when she was first married. She lived near an old Indian burial ground and people told her that it was dangerous to live there. They assured her that spirits lived there. She was young and unafraid, and one night she sat up until late and her husband was

already asleep. She was nervous for some reason and put off going to bed. She watched the moon come up. Finally, she decided to go to bed and when she undressed and got into bed, she was careful not to awaken her husband. She laid down on the edge of the bed on her back and when her eyes became accustomed to the darkness, she looked around the room and the moonlight made it bright. Out of the corner of her eye she glimpsed movement and turned her head and saw a man standing beside her with an arm upraised, and in his hand was a large knife that glittered in the moonlight. The scream she loosed raised her husband from the bed. As he was levitated, he grabbed her by the arm and dragged her out of the house. There was no sign of the man in the house, but they would not go back in there. They went and stayed with some of the family, and the next day when the sun was shining, the man went back and loaded the household goods on a borrowed wagon and moved them away from there.

My aunt Ellie lived in a house that was supposed to be haunted. By what, they knew not, because they had heard nothing. One night all the family went to church, except Aunt Ellie. She didn't feel like going. She was sitting in the living room, sewing, and she heard a noise on the stairs. "Now that's probably the ghost," she thought. She wasn't afraid, but when the noise continued she became interested. It was a drag, and then a bump that sounded like someone on crutches. As it drew nearer the bottom of the stairs, Aunt Ellie grew more unsure of her courage. She couldn't just sit there. The thing would be in there with her in a minute or two. She jumped up, and carrying a lamp, she hurried to the bottom of the stairs. There she saw a great rat dragging an ear of popcorn down the stairs. It wasn't told whether she was afraid of rats or not!

My grandpa told us one time about a cemetery just up the hill above their house where all of our relatives are buried. There was a path through the cemetery that was used as a shortcut to the house below. Grandpa said, "Our cemetery is haunted. Did you know it?" He continued, "You know when cousin Jed died?" Well, the grave had been dug and left open that evening. Just about dark, a storm cloud came up, and I carried a load of board over there to cover it

and keep the rain out. When I had the shelter set up, it began to rain, hard. I stepped down in the grave to keep dry. I heard somebody coming down the path lickety-split. I knew it was Wash Gibbey, on his way home. I stuck my head up out of the grave and said, "Come in out of the rain, Wash." I've never heard a man run as fast in my life! When Wash reached home he knocked the door down and was unable to talk for the longest time. Now he has been telling everyone that dead people up there called to him to *come in!*

Mrs. Tabor wrote a book titled, What Tales Are These? that contains many of the ghost stories she heard growing up. These stories have been told as true and are all said to have happened in the Appalachian region. Here is an example:

Did you ever see a ghost? Oh, yeah! I saw one. I was hurrying along a trail I had traveled a thousand times. The moon was almost down and there before me was this big white thing. It looked like a woman in a wedding dress. I said, "Howdy do," and it just stood there. I said it again a time or two, and it said nothing. Finally, I said, "If you don't speak I'm gonna run right through you." It stood there! I took a long run and go and landed in a big Spanish needle bush. It had grown to that size since I was last on that trail. It had been covered with needles, and it took me a week to get them all out of my clothes.

The Legend of the Deer and the Witch

Lillie Billingsley's "tale my daddy told me"

There is this other tale I can tell you about Scaly. This is a tale that my daddy told me. He told me that there was an old lady who lived not too long a'ways from us. Daddy said she was a witch, and my daddy said that she would turn herself into a deer. As the men went by to work, she'd see them coming, and she'd turn herself into a deer. And she'd be that deer coming around that field pickin' along like a deer would, you know. So they got the guns, and they was

going to shoot that deer. They went to work that morning, and she turned herself into a deer because she was a witch. I don't know anything about witches. They shot about three shots, and when they got back home, Dad said that they talked about it. One of them said, "Now, I'll tell you how we can do this. If it's a deer, we'll get it this way. We'll put some good stuff in the gun, and we'll get that old deer tomorrow." And the next morning they did, and they went on to work. That next evening as they come back from work, they went by that old lady's house. They went in and knocked on the door, and nobody come. They went on in, and she was lying in the fire. She fell in her fire and burned up. So when they shot the deer, they had killed her, too.

“You May Not Believe This But They Say ...”

Legends are recurring stories told to be true. They begin, probably, as personal-experience narratives or anecdotes about people known to the teller. As they spread from the source, they take on the character of a legend. Sometimes the truth is stretched, but the stretch is not emphasized. For a legend to survive, it must be interesting, memorable, and believable. Printing legends can be touchy business. Some people are offended that we refer to their true story as a legend; others are skeptical of anything less than documented fact. Believe them or not, legends are important. They educate us, they entertain us, they validate our culture, and they contribute to our sense of community.

These legends are perhaps the most intriguing of all the narratives we have collected. There are many people who believe them even though they defy the laws of physical science. But the laws of science never bind legends. They instead are bound only by human imagination and human need. It is satisfying to believe that the unexplainable might be possible.

—Julie Roane and George Reynolds

Light in the Cemetery

Lynn Phillips told us, “My grandmother, Allah Ramey, told this legend to me about when she was a girl. Grandma Rhodes is my great-great-grandmother; Allah’s grandmother. To get from Grandma Rhodes’s house to Tom Roane’s place you had to go past the cemetery where the floating lights was. Garnet Williams was a friend of Grandma and Grandpa Rhodes.”

I’s just spending the night at Grandma Rhodes’s. Whenever Garnet William come up to see us one night and whenever he got ready to leave, I don’t know, I guess he’s afraid that he would see that light. So we stood on the porch, and Grandpa went to bed. Garnet went out towards the cemetery. Grandpa said, “Now, if y’all want to see

that light in the cemetery, it's out there." And we went out on the porch just to look. He came to that branch that turns up to Maude Fisher's and right there it [the light] went up. It was just as bright as any car light you've ever seen. You could see the shadow of the leaves all up and down the porch. Garnet, he's scared to death, but he knowed he had to go home. So Grandma Rhodes said, "Garnet, why if you see anything, why holler when you get out there." Garnet said that he would. He got down nearly to the cemetery and said, "I don't see nothing, Mrs. Rhodes," and we just went back in the house. And boy, when that happened, the light come down the bank on Garnet, and boy, he just run till he got home, and he run again' the door. Mrs. Williams said, "What'n the world's the matter?" She said he just run out o' breath.

But it won't cross through water, though; it won't cross the branch. It just went as far as Tom Roane's. Mama lived there for years and she never did see it, but Gertrude did. It was a big light and there was a little one behind it. One night Virge Burton had blood poison, and they sent the Fisher boys down that road. That light got after them, and they come back to Grandma Rhodes's to call the doctor. They saw it as they went on, but they never saw it no more. Oh, they say a bunch of people seen that light. Papa said it was a mineral light. But it looked scary.

One night, Ernest was a comin' to Grandma Rhodes's to get his hair cut. He's gonna ride down there and put his horse in a stable and stay till the next morning and go on back home. When he come over the top of the hill at Tom Rich's, why he seen that light coming out of the cemetery. He thought it was the Greens fox huntin'. So he got up there even with the cemetery and that mare started jumpin' up and down and wouldn't go no further. Ernest turned and went back down to Tom Rich's to get Fred Henry to come back with him. Ernest had nothing to drink or nothin', but they never seen it as they come back. Papa said it was some kind of mineral in the ground and when it got damp, why, it looked like a light.

The Witch's Grave

A student in our school told the folklore class about the witch's grave.

Where Lake Burton is now, there used to be the town of Burton, and to build the lake they had to move the whole town. There was churches and graveyards and things, so they had to dig up the graveyards and move all of the bodies to another graveyard. Redo 'em, you know, re-dig 'em. And a lot of people who knew people there, that were buried there, had kinfolks there, really protested. And they left some of the graves—it was a family graveyard plot, you know, family plot up above it. And they'd said that there's a witch there, and that every time you go, you'll find new flowers on the grave 'cause somebody keeps puttin' new flowers on the grave, but nobody knows who it is. And they say that you can go up there any time, and they'll be flowers on the grave, and that weird things grew on it. Somebody went up there and tried to make it stop growing, whatever it was, and it wouldn't; it kept coming back. I don't know what it was, but they say that the woman that's buried is a witch.

The Big Shadow

One night, as a result of boredom, Julia Roane took a hike. I think she might think twice before doing this again!

Last summer my dad, my uncle, and a bunch of us kids got together and were going on a hike. We didn't leave until about twelve o'clock that night. We walked the lines of our property, and when we were coming back down, we came by the pond over behind the Negro graveyard. We heard a big gushing sound. There was a big shadow of a big bird on the ground, but when we looked up nothing was there.

The Car That Rolls on Level Ground

Frank Miller wonders if you have ever parked your car on level ground and had something strange like this happen.

There's a place somewheres, I don't know where at, where you can park your car at night, and when you cut your lights off, something comes around and pecks at your windshield. You can put your emergency brake on or anything, and your car will roll from a level place. It scares you, too, they say, but it's never happened to me.

The Tale of the Haunted House

Billy Joe Stiles tell us about the ghost in Clayton. Or was it really a ghost?

Just outside of Clayton there's this old house that's been abandoned for several years, covered up with kudzu. This house is supposed to have ghosts in it or haunted or something like that. You can hear chains rattling at certain times of night.

One morning a man got up, found out that he didn't have any flour for breakfast, so his dear wife sent him out to town to get a fifty-pound sack of flour. So it was kinda drizzling and one of those mornings he didn't much want to be out. So he put on his big slicker coat, walked to town, and got fifty pounds and put an old piece of cloth or something on it, a rag of some kind to keep it dry. And as he started back home, he had to walk by this haunted house. It was one of those mornings. His old lantern had gone out, so he was stumbling up the road to get home. His wife was patiently waiting at home to make biscuits. He looked across the road, and he saw a fellow coming by; it was his neighbor, John. Well, being a good neighbor, he hollered out, "Hey, John." Well, John was very scary and very superstitious. He had heard that this house was haunted. Here John peeped across the fog and saw a big black thing with no head, and John broke to a run; as he run, his neighbor kept hollering, "Hey, come back here, John, help me, John." The more the ghost (supposed to be the ghost) hollered, the faster John ran.

As time went by, this fellow didn't say a word. One morning he was out in town talking to John about the tale of the haunted house, about seven o'clock in the morning when he started for work. Now this is the way, a lot of ways, tales got started. All that ghost was,

was John's neighbor trying to be kind to him. He never did convince John that that house was not haunted and wasn't full of black ghosts.

The Faucet That Drips Blood

Helen Craig tells us about a house on Hellcat Creek that she once lived in. She said it dripped blood from the faucets.

There was this couple and they got in a fight, and his wife killed him and, now, like late at midnight, you can go in there and turn the faucet on and it drips blood. It was in Mountain City on Hellcat Road, but they tore it down. I'm not sure that it would really happen because I never got up and tried it.

The Ghost at Wall's Mill

Ricky Justus tells us about the old ghost house at Wall's Mill. He said his grandparents lived in this house.

Well, my grandpa and grandma, back in the thirties, lived in the old ghost house down at Wall's Mill. They gave it the name, ghost house, on account of there was a man killed himself in the bedroom of the house. My grandma said after they moved into here, she went in and found an old patched quilt or something to cover up with, for it was in the wintertime, and it was cold as blue blazes. She said she went in there and blood was just all over the walls and floors, and what was left of that old bed was rotten and falling all to pieces.

That night, my uncle and aunt, Ump and Grace, and one or two of their younguns had to spend the night. I forgot the reason. They spent the night and slept beside the bed where my grandpa and grandma slept. They made them a pallet on the floor beside the bed and slept on the floor. Along over in the morning about two or three o'clock, gettin' up toward daylight, they heard a racket that sounded just like a man walking around in bare feet—sock feet, you know, on those rough pine floors and them boards a-crackin'.

Grandma said along about crack of daylight, they heard a man saying, “I want my house.” She believes it and it woke Uncle Ump up, too—that man walking around pecking on the walls saying, “I want my house,” and so Uncle Ump said, “Ah, if you wait till morning, I’ll give the D— thing to you.”

Bloodstains That Won’t Go Away

We collected this legend about a father who killed his son because of the way he treated his mother.

I’ve heard this story a many of times. Well, you know over there where Tom Brown and Tee-bone lives? That man shot his boy because he had been drinking and been jumping on his mama. His daddy finally got tired of it and just shot him. The boy was eighteen years old. He shot him on the porch of that old store building and, right there, every time it rains, there will be a thing come up like oil. You know how oil comes up in rain and beads? Blood comes up where that boy lay and died, but that one up there at Franklin, they never did find out who killed that woman. They could paint and sandpaper the walls and everything, but they said that blood just comes up in spots—just like it come plumb through the boards.

The Mysterious Man

Bessie Stancil tells us about this mysterious man that was walking out of the graveyard.

This old man was going by the graveyard one night, and he was going alone. This here man came on down to the road. He looked, and then he went walking up to the side of his wagon. He had a basket on this arm and a head in the basket.

The Headless Woman

Lisa Lovell, a folklore student, heard this legend from Terry Benfield, who heard it from someone else.

I heard there was a headless woman in Roane Cemetery. At certain times of the year, she would come around and ask people for a pail of water from their well.

Glassy Mountain Ghost

How would you like to be looking up on a mountain some night and see a light come gliding off? Ricky Hopkins actually saw this.

There used to be a boy that would fly off the mountain on a glider. He was killed out in Utah. On a full moon you can see a light up on the cliffs. About twelve o'clock or twelve thirty you can see a light fly off the mountain, and a kite will land in the field down below there. Sometimes if he doesn't land there, it just keeps going till it's out of sight. I have seen the kite flying and the light, but it didn't scare me because I didn't know what it was. The last time I saw it was about the middle of last fall. He makes a screaming and squawking sound, but I don't know what it hollers like. When we saw it we were supposed to have been coon hunting; me and these two friends of mine was up there. We were about polluted, ya know, but we don't think our eyes was playin' tricks on us.

Monster Catfish

One of our teachers told us about the catfish that are down in Fontana Lake. Word is that they are as big as a motorboat.

What I heard was that, see, there was a crack in the dam, and they had skin divers to go down and check it. And when they went down, they came back immediately. They said there was catfish down there the size of boats, motorboats, and that they wouldn't go back down again. You know, that's what I've heard and that's what several people have told me. I don't know. It may not be the truth.

One time I hung something at Fontana Lake; I don't know what it was, could have been a turtle, mud turtle, or something because we were in the boat. We were anchored out in the lake, and I was fishing. All of a sudden then, the whole boat started moving with

the anchor on it! I ain't kidding you; you can ask the guy I was with; he was there. He couldn't believe it. And the whole boat just started moving; then, all of a sudden—*pong*—he broke my line. I thought I was hung all that time until it started moving. That's about twenty-eight miles from the dam. You know, at the dam, I don't know the exact figures, I think from the top of the dam to the bottom it's eight hundred feet, but usually it's about halfway up—the water—so you know it's like four hundred feet or something like that. Myself, I can believe it because you know if there's that much water, that depth, there could be fish that big. If there's one that big at the end where we were fishing, there could just as well be one at the dam that large, or larger than that (that's what I'm saying). I know one thing, they keep the dam closed. You know, it's a road that goes across, and every time I've been over there it's been closed. And I don't know if it's because of the catfish that they can't get the crack fixed.