

**Biscoe**  
*In Central North Carolina's Heartland*  
*Birthplace of North Carolina's Educational System*

***A Brief and Rambling Account of Biscoe, North Carolina***  
***During the 1930's***

by  
**Charles M. Johnson**

**About the Author**

Early in the year 1927, there came the biggest snow to date. Measures of two feet and more were reported. Later in the same year, totally unplanned and as surprising as the snow, I came on the scene. I was one of those late-in-life unexpected events of my parents life. Ready or not, I was here and a citizen of Biscoe Township. In later years, I recall having wished I could have come earlier and seen that snow.

**About the Town**

In January 1901, the Town of Biscoe was incorporated and finally given it's proper name, having previously been known as Straw's Old Field, and Filo. This year, we celebrate it's one hundreth birthday. Herein, I give you an account of Biscoe during the 1930's as I remember it.

**Economic Situation**

Two years after the big snow and after my arrival, the Stock Market crashed, leaving businesses shut down, banks closed, people by the millions out of jobs, people committing suicide, and many, many people hungry. Bank of Candor closed it's doors. Biscoe's size was in it's flavor in that what one does not have, one can't lose. I recall my dad saying that Jonah McAulay came to our house with a fairly late model used car for sale, asking \$15.00 for it. My dad did not have fifteen dollars to spare and could not have kept gas and oil and tires on the vehicle. This was a community accustomed to striving. The Town was not in debt and most of its citizens, very poor by todays standards, were used to struggling to make ends meet anyway. Thankfully, there were no credit cards, and no Easy Credit Finance Companies around. Most every house had a small garden near it to help supply food. There were several barns with cattle and horses inside the city limits. Woodpiles were seen at almost every house.

**The Town**

The Town of Biscoe lay along and on both sides of the railroad, after all, the railroad is why Biscoe developed here. I don't know exactly where the city limits were on all four sides, but the Business District lay almost entirely on the East side of the railroad, stretching South from the crossroads. Where McBride's Auto Sales, formerly Red Sedberry's service station, in the 1930's was a Pure Oil filling station with bus station and cafe attached.

The Bus Station served both Carolina Trailways and Queen City Coach Company, and the Cafe served home-cooked meals. I worked there in it's heyday. Across 24-27 another filling station, this one an Esso Station operated by Walter Kanoy. Both this station and the Pure Oil Station set angular to Highways 24-27 and 220. Where the Medical Building now stands, stood the Adams or Burt Hotel. Also on this lot was the Drugstore building. This building housed the original Bank of Biscoe and Post Office during the 30's and also held the Skipper Martin Pool Hall. In the back left corner was the office for Burt Oil Company.

With a small lawn between this building and the next, there stood one building in Biscoe that remains in use for the same purpose it did in the 1930's. The Barber Shop is still in use and the remainder of the building was Millard Williamson's Store. Behind the Barber Shop stood a building (still existing) which housed John Barringer's drycleaning establishment. Between this building complex and Church Street was a fair sized vacant lot. The town on several occasions erected a Christmas Tree for the Season. Later in the century, this lot housed Hallum's Furniture, now the Miller Hardware Building.

Where the parking lot for the NAPA Auto Parts Store is now, once was the Jeff Wilson building, home of this Firestore Store, Soda Shop and Theatre. Where the Laundromat is now located was an old house, at that time, the home of Arthur Lewis and Family and later in the 30's the home of Bob McLeod. Also located where the parking lot is now, were several wood buildings, on of them the Ewing Store, and next to it, Harvey Mashburn's Store followed by a small wood building, at that time a store operated by a Mr. Utley. Mr. Utley came to Biscoe to paint and decorate the Hotel and settled here and ran the small store.

The Auto Parts Building is an original, once home of the Hardware and Skeen's Store. Upstairs lived George and Daniel Cole, colorful characters of the day, who made their living hauling. They owned an old model flat bed truck, and were for hire to whomever needed their services. The current Flea Market building is an original. It once was Page's Garage where the new Model T's were sold and later in the 1939-40 years became Roy Garner's first Pontiac Sales and Service store. The house next door was home to the Chriscoe family and there was another house next to Hunsucker Street (still standing).

The present Post Office building replaced the Glenn Wright Store building. The store building was a wooden structure and an unusual store, probably the last of it's kind in Biscoe. One could buy home grown products such as cane syrup. The remainder of this block contained the Clarence Freeman Store and the Coca-Cola Plant. The original Coca-Cola plant exists today with much modification.

The next block contained a filling station and the Ice Plant. Further down 220 was Robinson's Store, and this pretty much concluded the business district. Mr. Dunlap had a store on Mill Street, close to the now existing Little League Ballpark.

## **The West Side**

This side of town was home to Aileen Mills, The Depot and water tower for the train and the Railroad Maintenance Shop and Paint Shop. Also where the Little League Ballpark now exists, was Clarence Poole's Planer Mill and Lumber Yard. There were very few homes or buildings on Highway 24-27 going west. The Gladys and Ethel Monroe house was in its prime in the 1930's.

## **The North Side**

This side of town was a pretty section, both the Baptist Church and Presbyterian Church. Between them, the Bruton residence that was very pretty and well kept. The Kanoy and Dallas Drake homes were well kept and the Burl Drake House was an original Page house. The Ballard Home and farm was in the city limits and also the Jack Williams house. On the other side of the road was the heart and Soul of Biscoe—Biscoe High School (more about this institution later). The Hicks House and Bruton House were also pretty.

## **The East Side**

This side of town has changed tremendously since the 30's. Beginning right at the stoplight from the Pure Oil Station and Bus Station going east, the only buildings existing in the city limits were the C. R. Poole House (now Reynolds), the Earl Baldwin House, the Tom Hurley House and the Leland Cagle House (still standing, but in a bad state of disrepair). The D. A. Monroe house and farm were probably not in the city limits. This property is now the Food Lion Complex. On the South side of 24-27 East, the buildings that house Thigpen and Jenkins Law firm and the Mexican Store, etc., did not exist but this area was Ma Burt's garden. These buildings did originate in the later thirties. Where Fidelity Bank is now was the Lewis Motor Sales building. There were six houses on that side of the city limits, but many were added during the late thirties.

## **Industries**

The main industry in Biscoe during the 30's was the cotton mill. This provided income for more people than any other industry in town. This was about one fifth its present size in those days and a recent modernization of the structure destroyed that last vestige of the original look. In those days the mill produced beautiful bedspreads.

The lumber yard operated by C. R. Poole was a busy place, planing lumber for building purposes and also producing mouldings. Several people worked there.

Kellam Foundry worked quite a few people. They not only did castings, but repaired and made many products from scratch for use in industry and farms.

The Coca-Cola plant hired quite a few people also. This plant bottled the

products and trucked them to stores throughout the county and some surrounding counties.

Carolina Power and Light Company had a substation at the North end of town and repair crews worked out from that site, keeping the lines in operation. I recall Mr. Charlie Gaddy, Mr. John Rocket and Mr. Joe Herndon who were employees of the company.

The several service stations, the ice plant, the various stores and cafes, and other businesses provided employment for many. At that time, there was a Roller Mill in Biscoe, located south on 220 where the Reece Lynthacum house now stands. Local farms furnished employment during the summer months. Earl Baldwin worked many hands in the Peach Industry. I worked at the Baldwin Farm when I was a school student. I also worked in the Cafe and Bus Station and in the late forties, I worked in Bank of Biscoe when the bank was located in the building now occupied by the Mexican Store on East Main Street.

Many people from Biscoe worked in adjoining towns at mills and other industries. The economic situation became better during the last part of the thirties, but the real cure for the 1929 depression came during World War II, with its many demands for products and services.

Not every household in Biscoe during the thirties owned an automobile. The bus station was a busy place. Several times per day, the busses rolled into the station bringing people home and carrying others away to distant cities and places. There was a taxi service available for shorter rides. It was not at all unusual to see a horse and wagon in town or even a buggy. Local students walked to school and the rural students rode a bus provided by the county.

## **The School**

Biscoe High School bearing the claim of being the first state supported accredited high school in the State was in its prime of life. I entered that school in the fall of 1934. Mr. Thomas was the principal and Miss Evangeline Carr was my first teacher. The building was heated with a coal fired steam radiator system. The first grade was so far from the furnace and the radiators were located on the ceiling that it did not supply enough heat for the room. There was a wood burning stove in the classroom and Miss Carr had to fire the stove during the day in inclement weather. In my second year there, Mr. V. R. White became the principal and he served for several years in that capacity. One great thing about the school was that all eleven grades were contained in the building. There was never a problem with this and I think it was good to have them all together. All classes went to the auditorium each month. Usually a play was given by one grade or the other and you marched into the auditorium with music playing, and you left the same way. Many problems were presented during the year and in the Spring, an operetta was always presented. One year the performance was staged on the lawn of Mrs. Bertha Hicks home next to the school. Music was always a part of the school. Piano was

taught by Mrs. C. R. Poole and during the day you could hear the faint sound of piano coming from a small room back of the stage in the auditorium. There was a real togetherness in the school during those days. Corporal punishment was allowed, and it worked. There was also an abundance of respect for the teachers and for the students.

During the early thirties, there was no lunch room and students who could not walk home and back during the lunch hour brought their lunch in a paper bag and ate it somewhere on the grounds or in the building in inclement weather. Later in the decade, the lunch program was established and for a dime you could get a delicious meal. Ma Burt (Mrs. E. R. Burt, Sr.) was the first supervisor for the lunch room and Mrs. Claude Wright helped and was such a nice person.

Teachers for the most part were single people. That was a left-over requirement from the twenties. The school provided the usual required subjects and also provided training in agriculture and woodworking, home economics and several foreign languages and an excellent typing and business administration classes taught by Mrs. Geneva Austin Turner. The school had a band and you could take piano, violin, or horn lessons. One year the town built a band stand near the bus station and band concerts were given from that stand. During the thirties, the west wing of the building was added. It is now the Allen Library.

### **The Churches**

The town had five churches that I remember. Page Memorial Methodist Church located on Church Street. The pastors that I remember were Jack Page, M. E. Tyson and Jim White. My dad was a member of that church and later I became a member of it. I recall an incident when Jack Page was pastor. My dad had wheat that was ripe cutting and he could not get a combine. Everyone's wheat needed cutting and all combines were tied up. He mentioned this to Ed Burt. Ed went to work on the problem because Burt Farm had a combine. Ed checked with Mr. Goodman, who operated the machine and he told my dad that the only day he was not tied up was on Sunday. Ed told my dad that if he didn't have any objections to cutting the wheat on Sunday that they could do it that day. My dad asked Jack Page what he thought about it. Rev. Page's response was that he had to preach that day at eleven o'clock, but when he got through with that he would be out to our house and help with the combining of that wheat, and he did.

The Baptist Church, located next to the Pure Oil Station had a good membership and the Pastor that I remember was Rev. Hancock from near Star. I attended that church some and I remember Burl Drake being a leader in the church. I remember that there was some good singing from the choir and the congregation.

The Presbyterian Church, located at its present site. I visited that church some in the 30's, but I do not remember who the pastors were. I recall that C. R. Poole was one of the leaders of that church during that time and I recall that Geneva Austin Turner was one of the Sunday school teachers.

The Christian Church on Highway 24-27 West. I did not know any of the pastors. I do recall that the Parker family was prominent in the church.

There was one other church in the town. This church was located beyond Aileen Mills toward the South end of town. It was almost across the road from Bob Medlin's house and near the Covington house. I do not remember the denomination, nor any of the pastors. I do not recall any other church in the town limits during the 30's.

## **The People**

When you begin to name names, it is possible to get in trouble. There were many great people in the town of Biscoe during this decade, but I lived about two miles out of town and had no social contact with many of the citizens of the town and I only recall those who visited my family or that I had knowledge through the school or other means and who made a lasting impression on me. The people of Biscoe were happy and festive people. There were gathering places throughout the town where the latest news and some gossip and some joking took place. I went to many square dances in Biscoe, mostly in the gymnasium at the school. I did not have a pair of roller skates, but I recall that many of the town people did and you could see people skating on the highways. There was not enough traffic in those days to give much of a problem. People turned out to programs at the school house.

Since most of my acquaintances came about through the school, one of my first memories were of Glen and Cohen Wright, who lived at the Wright house and farm near the school. They had to do with the elections in the county. From those days, I also remember a tall straight man who always had a smile and something good to say, Mr. Charlie Gaddy who operated the substation. I well remember Joe Herndon and Helen. He worked with Carolina Power & Light Company and he and Helen came to our farm almost weekly. They were always helping us with problems on the farm and were enjoyable to talk with. They had no children and Joe had a drinking problem. In spite of that, I do not know any man who did more to help people than that man. I visited him at his death bed and told him how much I thought of him. I remember Sam and Sally Eanes who visited with us often and who kept us spellbound with tall tales. I remember Jim Bradshaw, who had a tract of land adjoining ours. Jim lived in the middle of town, but had a barn with cattle and a horse, and when he came to our house or visit his land, he always came by horse and wagon. I remember Arlie Bostic as a school kid. He often came to our school grounds unshaven and always with his shoe laces untied. He would tell us some interesting stories. He had a choice of words that particularly interested me. He had a slight problem with booze, but never a problem with society. I liked the man, and I was a pallbearer at his funeral. I recall the preacher at his funeral starting with a good hearted man he was and referred to a confession Arlie made to him. He quoted Mr. Bostic as telling him "I have often times drunk from the cup of wrongdoing". What a unique way to put it. I often times use that confession myself and I think of this man.

I remember Burl Drake, who was on the local school board and who visited the classrooms fairly often, giving encouragement and advise to the students. I well remember Mr. Charlie Buie, superintendent of the mill. A very compassionate and caring man, he hired me when I worked in the bus station and cafe. The business was run by the Thomas girls, one of them his wife, Jessie Thomas Buie. Edgar Maness was well known by most people. He was cashier at Bank of Biscoe, and most of us depended on him for financial help during our lives. Millard Craven cut my hair and he did for most of the Biscoe residents. Millard Williamson ran the store next to the barber shop and walked with crutches, having lost a leg in some accident early in life. Clarence Freeman ran a grocery store next to the Coca-Cola Plant. Clarence was a very witty man who kept us laughing at his many practical jokes. Jakie Saunders, the local painter was an old man when I first knew him, yet he lived to paint my house on two occasions. Lonnie Hurley ran the Pure Oil Station and was a very well liked man. Van Hicks was a very prominent man in Biscoe, he ran Candor Oil Company. Jim and Ed Burt, I knew from my first year in school. Jim was a very pleasant and likeable man and Ed was just the opposite, grouchy and not friendly. Anyone who did not come to love Ed Burt never grew up. This was on the best friends I ever had. I bought my lot and built my house here in Biscoe on Pine Street, which was owned by the Burt Family.

John P. Leach and his relative, Earl Baldwin were an important part of Biscoe in this decade. Bell Ballard and Gladys and Ethel Monroe, I think I have always known.

Mrs. Bertha Hicks always had the prettiest house and yard in Biscoe, and it is still a pretty house, now owned by Mr. and Mrs. John Richardson. Mrs. Hicks did a lot for the school, giving the Hicks Memorial Medal and I recall that she paid off a balance we owed on the piano in the auditorium.

At the close of the 30's, I was only twelve years old and it would be hard to put all the names of all the families in Biscoe. All my school mates are listed in the museum history about the old school.

Although childhood is a delightful time in almost everyone's life, all was not roses in the thirties. There were tragedies along the way. On July 4, 1938, Greta Dunn, a young school student drowned in Bruton's Pool near Biscoe. On April 15, 1937, Clara Elizabeth Moore, a seven year old student was killed after exiting her bus at her home. On January 22, 1937, John P. Leach was killed while dynamiting a stump on his farm. Early in the 40's Cletus Dunn died of a self-inflicted wound and young Audrey Anita Crofts was killed very near the same spot as was Clara Moore by an automobile.

## **Conclusion**

In my opening statement, I told you about my unplanned arrival into this lovely part of the USA. I think I paid my parents back for my untimely entrance. At the age of 44 and quite as unexpected as I was, Louise and I had our last child (to date). James Charles Johnson turned out to be a real blessing as I

I hope I was to my parents.

I told you about missing the great snow of 1927. Well in January, 2000, we had just such a snow which was just as deep, and quite honestly, I do not care to see another one of those.

I have been quite a number of places in my seventy-four years and have seen lovely scenery, homes and buildings and have enjoyed some of the best entertainment in the world. I have enjoyed living and enjoyed traveling, but in all honesty, I have not been to that place where I had rather live than Biscoe. I yet enjoy going to the cities and to great resorts, but I am always happy to get back home. I know no more peaceful place on earth than right here in good old Biscoe.

Respectfully submitted, this 10th  
day of January, 2002

**Charles M. Johnson**



## BISCOE IN THE FORTIES.....by Charlie Gaddy

[DISCLAIMER....What follows is from the memory of the writer from the best of my recollection and may or may not be historically accurate in every detail. Accounts from others who lived through the same period may differ from mine. My writing stems from what is now my best memory of people and events of long ago]

The forties were my growing up years in Biscoe. I went from nine to nineteen during that decade. The impact of World War II made those momentous years for me, the town of Biscoe, the state and the nation.

My father was the superintendent and operator of the Biscoe substation for Carolina Power and Light Company. We lived in the small company house beside the station on the outskirts of town, just outside the city limits. The house is still there. The substation was dismantled when the company went to automation. Before that my Dad had the job of keeping the lights on and the cotton mill running,

Surrounded by all that power, we lived literally in the brightest spot in town. The floodlights in the station yard put a glow in the night sky that could be seen from anywhere in town.

Blessed with wonderful and loving parents we enjoyed a secure and quiet life in that little house. Daddy just walked up the sidewalk to his work so we had the security of his being within earshot all the time.

We lived somewhat in isolation. When school was out we, unlike those who lived in town, usually didn't see other children until the next school day. I believe that is why, to this day, I am never uncomfortable being alone.

Biscoe looked different in the forties. Across the highway (220 North) from our house was the farm of Mr. Frank Thomas, father of the popular Thomas girls. Mr. Thomas had a house in town but farmed and kept livestock on a number of acres beside the highway. I was told that Mr. Thomas moved to Biscoe so his bright and pretty daughters could attend Biscoe High School which had an excellent academic reputation and is said to be one of the oldest state supported high schools in North Carolina.

Our lives centered around the family, the school and the church.

While the youth of today would surely consider ours a dull existence without TV, video games, or computers....it was not at all.

We loved the steam freight trains that rolled past our house and through the town several times a day. When we waved at the engineers and firemen we could nearly always expect a wave back. Sometimes we would place a penny on the tracks to be flattened to twice its size by the train and if we crossed two straight pins they came out pressed together and resembling a tiny pair of scissors....that is, if they didn't vibrate off the track as the train approached.

Our recreations were so enjoyable. I always loved it when my daddy said we would go to Little River and fish. It all started with digging for worms up under the eaves of the garage and chicken house where there was nearly always an abundance of fat worms. Or we would go to a creek with seines fashioned of long sticks and burlap bags which caught minnows that we scared out of their hiding into our homemade nets.

A real thrill was if Daddy took us to the Pee Dee. Now that was a real river and believe it or not...hardly a soul lived on its banks in those days

Before we started out, our long cane fishing poles were tied to the side of the car, some cans of vienna sausage, and soda crackers were packed for our lunch and mother's last words were always...."be careful".

Scouting was important in our young lives. It made us boys feel connected to a national organization...dedicated to outdoor activity and fellowship. My father was asked to be Scoutmaster of Biscoe Troop 79. He served many years in a leadership role and helped numbers of Biscoe boys become better people by his patient teachings and his impeccable role-model inspiration. He, Curtis Crotts, and I raised the first flag, during a solemn ceremony,

on that flagpole that still stands in front of the old Biscoe school building.

Among my regrets is that I never attained the rank of Eagle while my dad was serving. He and my mother would have been so proud. Several Biscoe boys did achieve that rank at that time. Among them are Charles Buie and the late J. M. Dyson.

The scout hut was constructed during those years. Not only used by the scouts, it became a place for teen-age class parties and special off-campus school socials. We were always thoroughly chaperoned during those events. Today the scout hut provides a meeting place for the Biscoe "Good Old Boys" organization.

The nearest swimming pool was about a hour away by car at Morrow Mountain State Park near Albemarle in Stanly county. It was a joy for us to get to swim in the huge pool complete with lifeguards, dressing rooms, and a numbered metal basket for our street clothes. We were issued an elastic ankle bracelet with a metal tag that corresponded with our clothing basket number.

The very first time we went there was also the first time I was ever required to take a shower before swimming and made to walk through a tray of disinfectant before getting to the pool area.

We loved it!

In the late summer of 2000 I returned to that pool for a nostalgic swim and for happy memories of days gone by.

A trip to Troy was a special treat. We went there for school clothes, Sunday suits, furniture, appliances, and scout supplies at Belk-Cline. I loved the Scout section. There were uniforms, canteens, hiking packs, books, scout knives, and tables loaded with scout stuff to be wished for.

We got our school and dress shoes at B.C. Moores. Two other memorable treats from a Troy trip were a hamburger from "Wimpy's" and my mother always managed to have

enough left over for some dime-store candy....chocolate cream drops, "orange" slices, and marshmallow peanuts!

In the summers, the Candor curb market was a place of high excitement. Farm trucks lined both sides of the streets. Watermelons, cantaloupes, peaches, corn, beans, squash...all being loudly marketed by aggressive farmers competing with each other for the business. My mother loved engaging the lively men with a give-and-take about the ripeness or freshness of their products!

A special excitement was to see the Allen girls, a family of hard-working spinster farmers who wore men's slacks and huge straw hats rimmed with a red trim that had little red balls. There were four or five of them and they road around in a black, open-air, A-model touring car. Many people made fun of the women. The truth is they were hard-working farmers who never bothered anyone and made their way without asking for any help.

During those years we could count on two annual community youth trips courtesy of farmer Earl Baldwin. He would throw some clean hay in the back of his big farm truck and allow his son Ferd to take us to the state fair in Raleigh in the fall. Any boy in town could go. A great trip for us and coming back late at night we huddled under a tarp to try to stay warm. In the spring, the same truck took us for a day on the banks of Pee Dee river on Easter Monday.....a state holiday.

Every little town in the county had its own high school, but all school-aged children went to the same building...first through twelfth. The grade school kids had classrooms downstairs, the high school students occupied the second floor. Through the eighth grade a child stayed in the same room all day with a single teacher. You can't imagine what a big deal it was to get to the high school years upstairs where the big kids actually changed classes and had several teachers.

We walked the half mile to school each day. The Wallace children, just down the road, were transported,. They lived just far enough away to be on the bus pick-up. Walking to school suited me just fine except on icy, rainy days when the Wallace children had the advantage.

There were three sounds that were heard throughout the town....the mill whistle, the school bell, and the planer mill.

There was the "first bell" a few minutes before classes began. When the second bell sounded we were required to be in our classrooms. The bell now has a permanent resting place beside the Municipal Building.

Walking to school I passed the old Cochran house, owned by Mr. Ben Cochran. The house would later be home to the Blalocks, the Simpsons and finally by the attractive Crotts family.

George and Edna Crotts had five girls; Georgett, Charlotte, Kay, Linda and Judy. Their brothers were Vance, Curtis and Michael. The Crotts children were all bright and talented. They sang in the church choir, participated in sports and were very visible in the community.

Right next to the school was the Kellam house, a sturdy brick structure full of sturdy boys

and several daughters.

Biscoe began as a railroad center, complete with a depot and roundhouse. By the forties the roundhouse had been demolished and the town's largest employer for men and women was Aileen Mills. At that time the plant made bedspreads. In good times the mill ran three shifts. I had many school friends whose parents worked in the mill. I can still see the men on hot summer days on their smoke break, some standing, others squatting...none sitting. Hollow-eyed from the heat...the noise...and fatigue....silently puffing their cigarettes.

They were good, hard-working people....rearing their children in the mill houses behind the plant.

While there were other small businesses, the town's economy was fueled by the mill. Since its construction I don't believe the mill has ever closed. It certainly flourished in the forties.

Biscoe was, and is, a crossroads....220 north and south and 24/27 east and west. In the forties the town had a more compressed texture. There was a service station (that's what we called gas stations then because you actually got service...gas was pumped, oil was checked, windshield wiped, tire pressure checked while you sat in your car) on three corners of the crossroads and a fruit and produce stand on the other. Carson Kanoy's station was on the northwest corner, on the southwest corner next to the railroad water tank was Rufus Britt's produce stand, on the southeast corner was Walter Kanoy's station, with Lonnie Hurley's on the northeast corner.

Just around the corner, actually attached to Lonnie's, was the bus station....a place of great excitement for us kids. We loved to see the big Queen City Trailway buses, air brakes hissing, as they rocked to a stop at the station. The bus station was also the Sandwich Shop. A traveler could get excellent sandwiches or if time permitted a full home-cooked meal served on a white linen tablecloth. We loved watching the passengers, from far-away places we could only imagine. The uniformed bus drivers were greatly admired and in our estimation held a position almost up there to the level of the exalted state highway patrolmen.

The solid block of buildings (still standing) looking east from the stoplight contained at the time a cafe, the post office, Biscoe Drug store, a grocery store and on the east corner the Bank of Biscoe.

From the crossroads looking south:

Beyond Walter Kanoy's station stood the town's grandest and most imposing home. The Burt "mansion" was a two-story brick colonial adorned with giant Corinthian columns and painted a gleaming white. E. R. Burt, Sr. raised his lively family there. We all loved his wife Henrietta "Ma" Burt, the jolly, irrepressible "town mother" to all of us.

As for Mr. Burt, we basically stood in awe of him and not without some fear. He never bothered us but we kids took great pains not to annoy a man of such substance and power.

Still looking south, another solid block of brick buildings contained the old bank building (later to become Elwood Long's radio repair shop), a grocery store, the Joann Shoppe (a dress shop named for my sister and managed for the few years of its existence by my mother).

Following a break in the buildings came the Biscoe Barber Shop (operated today by Flynn Morgan in the same location....see how the front step is worn down by the decades of male customers). Next was Millard Williamson's store. I never knew how Mr.

Williamson lost his leg but marveled at how he conducted himself on crutches.

Following a vacant lot came the Biscoe Soda shop, the movie theatre (we called it "the picture show"), Mr. Ewings dry goods store, a shoe shop, Biscoe Hardware and a food store, (both run by D.W. "Dick" Hurley and D. C. Deaton) and finally T. H. Skeen's dry goods.

Next was the old fire station and two blocks down the Biscoe Bottling Company where Mr. Scott bottled Coca Cola for many decades.

From the stoplight looking south on the right side of highway 220 was the green monster....the railroad's wooden watering tank that leaked all the time. I liked watching the firemen climb to the top of the train's tank, lift the lid with a clang, pull the rope attached to the tin spout and then the rope that released the water.

On the coldest winter days the water from leaking tank would form icicles that sometimes reached the ground.

Next to the water tower was one of my favorite places...the depot. O. H.(Ollie) Lambert, Sr. was in charge. A tall, thin, man who smoked a pipe, Mr. Lambert oversaw the freight shipments, had the power to stop trains or send them on through. His skill at telegraphy was most fascinating to me. He could send and receive messages from anywhere in the world using Morse code and a telegraph key.

The trains brought supplies to the mill and picked up mill's finished products for shipment. The trains also hauled gravel, sand, pulp wood, and during the war military supplies.

### *THE TRAINS*

The steam train was an awesome machine that almost seemed a living thing. Children today, unless they are lucky enough to visit a railroad museum or one of the few restored locomotives in existence, will never experience the sight, sound and smell of a steam train under power.

The sound alone was enough to hold your attention. They clanked to a stop, hissed steam, and belched smoke that was blackest when straining to start, but thinned out at cruising speed.

Often the giant drive wheels would spin during a start, much to our delight.

The steam engines disappeared, seemingly overnight. It would be about forty years before I saw another one under power. In 1988, while on assignment in northern China, just as I was about to fall asleep after an exhausting day, I heard in the distance the unmistakable wail of the whistle of a steam locomotive. The sound brought back memories of my childhood and brought tears to my eyes.

## *THE BARBER SHOP*

Men and boys didn't wear long hair in Biscoe in the forties, which meant frequent trips to the barber shop where Millard Craven and Albert "Doc" Deaton gave all of us our cuts. The only aspect of it I hated as a boy was the wait. Unless your daddy was with you, any grown man, especially if he were considered to be important, could come in after you and take your turn, unless he gave you permission to go ahead. One of the sure rites of passage to adulthood was when Millard began allowing you to take your rightful turn.

The smell of the shop was distinct and not unpleasant. A mixture of the scents of hair tonic, shaving soap, and shoe polish blended into a fragrance that might have been named "Men Getting Clean". The tonic was strong and came in your choice of red, green, blue, and amber.

As a boy I was fascinated watching the grown men get shaved. First a hot, wet towel was carefully wrapped around the customer's face with only the nose sticking out. While the towel was softening the beard the barber used the time to hone the straight razor to a keen edge with rapid strokes against a strop (strap) hanging from the side of the chair. Shaving soap was whipped to the consistency of your mother's whipped cream in a large white mug, the towel was removed, and the face and neck liberally lathered. The operation slowed with the shaving...no room for mistakes with a straight razor. The shaving done, a fresh hot towel was wrapped. After a few relaxing minutes the towel was removed, a brisk lotion splashed on. The barbers used the towel to fan the customer's face dry.

Men came out of the chair with literally shining faces.

Through a door at the rear of the shop were shower stalls. It was a place for complete service. That is...a man could come in on a Saturday afternoon after a hard week of logging, or farming, or driving a truck, pick up his fresh clothes at the cleaners close by, enjoy a hot shower, get a haircut, shave and shoe shine. He was then ready for a night of promise.

Millard and Doc were wonderful men. While "Doc" was quiet, Millard was talkative, fun-loving, witty, and one of Biscoe's beloved and unforgettable characters.

## *THE WAR*

There was nothing in the decade of the forties that had a more profound impact on our lives than World War II. Biscoe and the world would never again be the same. Most historians agree that the event that defines the 20th century, and set the course of the world, was World War II. The Japanese, in a surprise attack, bombed the American Pacific fleet in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on December 7th, 1941. 18 US warships were destroyed and over 2000 Americans lost their lives.

The impact of that event would engage America and our little town in a four-year-global war, the likes of which had never been seen before or since.

Every community was deeply affected and our lives were changed forever. The war would become the most dramatic reference point in our lives.

The Pearl Harbor bombing took place on a Sunday. The attack had virtually destroyed America's Pacific fleet.

The next day (Monday Dec. 8th), President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared war.

In Biscoe school, on that day, principal V. R. White assembled all of us in the school's auditorium. He had placed a radio on the stage and a few minutes before the President was to speak, he turned it on.

The President's deep voice and solemn words would go down in history..."A day that will live in infamy....."

I (ten years old) didn't know where Pearl Harbor was, but I could read the expressions on the faces of the teachers and concluded that this was something terrible....I didn't know how terrible.

Nearly everything that happened for the next four years was related to the war.

Young men from Biscoe were being drafted or were joining up.

In the year 2001, when a Biscoe centennial committee was researching the history of WW II, as it related to Biscoe, it came up with a remarkable story.

The 1940 census concluded that Biscoe had some 800 plus people.

We learned that over 200 young people from Biscoe served in the armed forces in WWII.

If you consider that about half of the 800-plus people of 1940 Biscoe were women....it meant that virtually every young male in town went to war.

In a town as small as ours, the impact of that many our young people going off to war as a patriotic duty was a source of pride, but beneath that pride was the constant fear that some of them would not come back. Those fears were valid.

Of the 205 (three women) who served, nine Biscoe boys died in the conflict.

The boys from Biscoe served with distinction and honor. Many of them came home with medals for bravery on their chests.

The nine who never returned were honored posthumously on the night of Biscoe's 100th anniversary....January 29th, 2001 in the old Biscoe High School auditorium where those boys had walked across that same stage receiving their high school diplomas.

The evening was well attended. A concert of big band music, reminiscent of the times, was presented by the North Carolina Jazz Repertory Orchestra and dedicated to the Biscoe veterans of WW II.

Just before intermission, a tribute was presented to those who died. While the orchestra softly played Glenn Miller's arrangement of "Danny Boy" the faces of every boy who died were flashed on a giant television screen and the following words of tribute were spoken:

*LT. WILLIAM REID AUMAN....graduated from Biscoe High School. Graduated from NC State College in 1940 with a degree in Architectural Engineering. William Reid was a navigator in the Army Air Corps and served in the Pacific theatre. He survived the*

historic battle of Midway and shortly after that he volunteered for a secret mission to an enemy-held island on June 16th 1942. His plane disappeared. Not a trace was ever found. William Reid was the first Biscoe boy to die in the line of duty. The Biscoe American Legion Post bears his name.

*KEITH BUTTS*.....U.S. Army. Keith was killed on duty in a war zone from injuries received in an accident in a military vehicle.

*JAMES DEATON*...U.S. Army...James was killed in Germany as the Allies were pushing the German army back to Berlin. His medals included the Silver Star for bravery under fire and two Purple Hearts.

*ROBERT GILLIS*...US Army. Robert enlisted in 1940. He was a member of the 903 Field Artillery Battalion. Robert's outfit fought in the Battle Of The Bulge, the German's last massive offensive. Robert was killed in action as the Allies were crossing the Rhine River on March 12th, 1945.

*CECIL GREENE*...US Navy. Cecil died in combat in 1945. He was aboard the USS Underhill in the Pacific, off the island of Luzon in the Phillipines.

*ALLISON MEADE MONROE*...US Army. Meade went into the service in 1943. He was shipped to Ireland for advanced training. Following that training he was sent to the front lines in France where he died in action on August 24th 1944.

*ROY MOORE*...US Army. Roy was in M Company of the 47th Infantry. He was killed in action in Europe on November 1st 1944.

*WILLIAM EUGENE SAUNDERS*...US Army. William was driving a tank when engaged in a horrific battle in Salerno, Italy. He was killed on September 11th 1943. He was 24 years old.

*MARSHALL SIMPSON*...US Army. Marshall was 18 when he went ashore in the invasion of Normandy. While there would still be nearly a year of hard fighting, the invasion was the beginning of the end of Hitler's conquest of western Europe. Marshall was a part of the largest military armada ever amassed. Serving in the 29th Infantry Division he survived the landing but was killed a few weeks later on July 16th 1944 in the break-out battle at St. Lo.

Marshall is buried in a place of honor in an American cemetery in northern France near where he fell. What I remember about Marshall is simply this....one day when we were playing in his yard (the old Cochran home up the road from us where he lived with his mother and sister Viola) he made hot chocolate drinks for us. Little did we know that he didn't have much longer to live.

The parents of those young people went through the same agonies of fear that millions of other mothers and fathers in America suffered during those years. Yet they went on



quietly with their lives. Some Biscoe families had multiple sons in service and scattered around the world. All of the sons of the Kellams, the McCaskills, the Johnsons and all the boys in other families were in uniform.

When the boys finished basic training they were usually granted a furlough home. This was an especially tough interval because it usually meant they were being shipped overseas when the leave was up. There were emotional goodbyes to parents, girl friends, wives, kid brothers and sisters.

Those years were a time of patriotism and sacrifice. On the home front, gasoline, sugar, meat, (margarine was introduced to replace butter...in the beginning the housewife had to mix the yellow coloring into the lard-like stuff to try to make it palatable for her family) were rationed. Tires became impossible to get. Our family car was a 1936 Plymouth which lasted us until about 1948. People would buy second-hand tires, or recaps. Recapping had not been perfected then so between the second-hand tires and the recaps, a two hour trip might include not one but two blow-outs. You seldom took a long trip without two spares.

President Roosevelt encouraged us to buy War Bonds and even got the children involved with War Stamps. Enough books filled with stamps could be traded in for a bond.

It was during these war years that an outdoor bandstand was built in a grove of trees just east of the bus station. There were only a few concerts presented there and the structure was used mostly for people to just relax with a lunch or a snack. One concert I vividly recall featured a military band. Our Biscoe High School band members (which included a lot of us kids who were not old enough to be in high school but needed in order to fill out the band) were to sit among the soldiers with our instruments and were invited to play along. I sat in the trumpet section and was encouraged to play the notes before me by the soldier next to me. I was so intimidated by the military players that I put my horn up to my lips but never hit a note.

We didn't know it at the time but German submarines were running in packs just off the North Carolina coast and were routinely sinking American ships carrying supplies for the war effort overseas. The US War Department (today called the Dept. of Defense) decided that if the American people on the east coast really knew that German subs were looking at our eastern shores through their periscopes...that we would panic. But there were many children my age who lived on the Outer Banks who were watching night fires on the horizon...fires from burning merchant ships the German subs were sending to the bottom of the sea.

The only civilian defense against an aerial bombing was a total blackout. That is...every single source of light must be extinguished. (Even lighting a cigarette)  
The US Civil Defense Department felt the need to train Americans (as the British people had already done) in the defense of our country. In case of bombing, or invasion, or espionage...the citizens needed to be educated and enlisted into the cause.  
My father, in charge of the facility that provided electricity for the area, was sent

instructions and schooled in the scenarios of what could happen. As such he was sent a booklet of instructions and two arm bands that had a CD insignia, indicating that he would have some civilian authority in case of a war emergency.

Biscoe actually participated in total "practice blackouts". The hour was set by some civil defense officials (probably in Raleigh) and at the prescribed hour (probably sounded by the mill whistle) the lights went out in Biscoe. You were allowed to burn lights inside you home as long as they were totally obscured from the outside. And CD officers (like my Dad) were charged with enforcing the blackout regulations on any violators. My mother tacked up thick quilts over the windows.

What I remember most about that night was that my father allowed me to accompany him on his rounds at the substation. All of the lights (the giant flood lights and all) were turned off for the duration of the blackout. Daddy's assigned CD duty was to patrol the fence perimeter of the substation ostensibly to detect any saboteurs who would be poised to take over the power source of the area. He allowed me to walk with him and wear the extra CD armband that starry night. I was so proud!

I remember that I had never seen the stars so bright. The Milky Way was spectacular. I have never before or since seen it more defined in the heavens.

As I walked with my dad I remember thinking of the boys my age in Europe who were having bombs actually dropped on them. It was a night to remember.

News of those killed or wounded in action in the war came to their families via telegram...which meant the first person to know of the family tragedies was Ollie Lambert, the telegrapher. I was told how he dreaded the times when it was his duty to deliver the tragic news.

He did the best he could to present the news with sensitivity. Recently Martha Buie Tyson told me of her memory of the day Marshall Simpson's sister Viola was told of the death of her brother Marshall.

The young Viola worked at the Sandwich Shop/Bus Station for the Thomas sisters (Jesse Buie ...Mrs. C.G. Buie, Sr. was one of those sisters) who ran the place. Viola was asked to take a break from work and was driven to the Buie home where several people were waiting including a minister. When she was seated, she was told of her brother's death. Martha Buie Tyson recalls seeing and hearing Viola cry out and fall over on the couch in grief and agony. But, by plan, beginning with Mr. Lambert, community people were there to try to help her.

### *MANEUVERS*

Military maneuvers, or war games, were an exciting part of our childhood in Biscoe. There were huge military bases all around us. Fort Bragg and Camp McCall were the premiere training bases for the 82nd Airborne and also for glider troops, as well as a basic training facility for hordes of infantry troops. Just over an hour's drive from Biscoe, young generals who would become military legends were training paratroopers and glider troops for the invasion of Europe. Among them were Matthew Ridgeway, James Gavin and Bill Lee.

It was during my news coverage in 1994 of the 50th anniversary of the invasion of

Normandy that the full impact of it came from a French woman I was interviewing in the small town of St. Mere Eglise. (If you saw the movie "The Longest Day"..that's the town prominently featured where actor Red Buttons' parachute caught on the steeple of the church)

France had been occupied for several years by the Germans. With tears streaming down her face the lady recalled to me that before daylight on the morning of June 6th 1944 she was awakened by the sound of young male voices shouting in English in her front yard. She looked through the curtains to see American paratroopers landing in her yard. She said she fell to her knees with the joy of knowing that the Americans had arrived to free them. Those paratroopers were 82nd Airborne...our boys from Fort Bragg.

By early 1943 war games were being conducted throughout the sandhills.

We boys were thrilled by it all. We never considered that war was anything but glamorous, as portrayed in the war movies being produced by Hollywood at the time and playing on our screen at the Biscoe theatre. We were, of course, inspired by the excitement of the motion pictures and could not wait to grow up to become soldiers, sailors, and airmen and sent into combat. The music, the glorified stories and the actors who were playing parts of real heroes consumed us. There were: "Remember Pearl Harbor", "Back To Bataan", "The Flying Tigers", "The Sands Of Iwo Jima", "The Sullivans" and countless others. Those movies each had an inspiring ending...usually Old Glory waving in the background accompanied by our most patriotic songs..."God Bless America", or "America" or "America The Beautiful". John Wayne, who played the hero time and again never wore a uniform that wasn't provided by the movie wardrobe people. He never served.

Little did we know that the war games being played out in the woods around Biscoe and the sandhills were preparation for the invasion of Normandy.

Military exercises and mock battles were conducted in and around our town. We children were thrilled to see all the convoys, and the soldiers, literally encamped in the woods in our back yards. I recall the news reached us that there had been a night glider drop in the fields around Candor and that many of them had crashed. We rode with my parents to see what we could see. We found some of the fields with wrecked gliders, some smashed against trees, and we knew there had to have been casualties. Before the war was over, the US abandoned the use of the glider because there were so many casualties caused by their crash landings.

During the war two young Biscoe pilots gave us the thrill of a lifetime. Joe Kellam flew his huge navy plane over Biscoe, making several slow circles over the town, waggling the plane's wings when he passed over his family home. Sometime later Woody Baldwin put on a show for us with his fast fighter plane. Woody roared over main street so low as if he were trying to put the exhaust pipes on the pavement. Those of us who witnessed those two "air shows" would never forget them.

I recall seeing soldiers in tents behind our garage. Frozen in my memory is the sight of a Corporal, sitting under a tree behind the garage with a tiny fold-out table in front of him

on which was a typewriter. I approached him with shyness and curiosity. He told me he was a company clerk and his job was to do the paper work for his outfit. I was most impressed to watch him type at such a furious pace.

The troops were good to us children.

We were all safe around them and they seemed to enjoy seeing us. I guess we reminded them of their little brothers and sisters back home. They gave us tins of powdered coffee, which we had never seen before. We gave them apples we gathered from my daddy's small orchard, and often took them some of my mother's home-cooked delicacies.

Americans were supportive of the war effort and especially the troops. A hitchhiking soldier in uniform was seldom passed up. My father, a veteran of WW I, never refused to stop to give a soldier a lift...even with five of our own family in the 36 Plymouth we would often pick up as many as three servicemen.

I would move up to the front seat between my parents, Joann would move up front to sit in mother's lap and Bob, who was little at the time, would often sit on the knee of one of the soldiers. I always looked forward to these occasions, being close to the soldiers and hearing my Daddy talk to them about where they were from, and their families back home. One Sunday a Corporal Larry Kluge (don't ask me how I remember his name after nearly 60 years) showed up for services at our church. My mother invited him to have Sunday dinner with us. Larry was from "up north", stationed at Fort Bragg and had never tasted many of the southern dishes that my mother put on the table like okra, or persimmon pudding. Larry loved her cooking and seemed to love being with us, in fact he began to show up at our door about every other weekend. Here was a lonely soldier, a long way from home, enjoying the kindness of a southern family. This went on for several months. We heard from Larry by letter just before he was shipped overseas. We never heard from him again. I have often wondered if he survived the war.

#### *RADIO*

The radio was the most influential medium in our lives in the forties.

The sound box brought us the news from the war fronts and entertained us during what could have been the most drab days of our times.

The most serious responsibility of network radio was to report the news from the war zones.

There were sonorous reporters on duty in the war zones in Europe, Asia, and around the world.

The two who stand in my memory forever are: Gabriel Heater and the CBS icon, Edward R. Murrow, a native of Greensboro, NC.

On summer nights my father sat on the front porch with the radio playing through the screened open window of the living room. I sat with him there on the porch many nights and marveled that we were getting live reports from the fighting front. It was Ed Morrow, speaking to us on our front porch in Biscoe, who planted the seeds in my mind that broadcasting must be an exciting profession. As he reported the news from London, we could hear the background sounds of the bombs falling all around him as he described what it was like to be living through the German's bombing of one of the world's greatest cities.

His descriptions were chilling and powerful. I have never forgotten the emotional impact

of the Morrow reports. He began with that deep baritone voice...."This is London....."

Gabriel Heater was a different kind of voice of the times.

In retrospect it is obvious that his reports were carefully edited, either by himself or by the network producers. His reports usually began with ..."There's good news tonight"..... He never said that there was bad news. Surely there were many evening broadcasts that, in truth, should have been bannered ..."Bad news tonight".... however, the facts that American boys had been slaughtered in a number of battles were down-played at the time by the American journalists.

The FDR administration in Washington had to present a positive front to the American people.

The President was a genius at rallying support for the cause. The radio reporters were vitally important to the morale of the American home-front.

The radio was also our entertainment. Radio drama held us transfixed as we sat in our living rooms to hear "The Green Hornet," "The Inner Sanctum" , or "Gangbusters". Comedy shows included "Jack Benny", "Duffy's Tavern", and "Fibber McGee and Molly". My all-time childhood favorite was the "Lone Ranger", the great masked-man of the plains...sponsored by Merita bread. Millions of us American boys joined the Lone Ranger Safety Club. For a couple of bread wrappers we were sent an official badge, a membership card, and a set of safety tips that we pledged to follow.

On Saturday nights it was Daddy's time to hear WSM's "Grand Old Opry" from Nashville.

### *TELEVISION*

I was a teenager before I ever saw my first TV set. Elwood Long who at the time ran a radio sales and repair shop on S. Main street put a television set in the window of his store. He would leave it on at night after he closed the shop. I would pass that window after the late show, stand and watch with fascination the green-tinted pictures coming from that small screen, even though I couldn't hear the sound. Sometimes there was only a test pattern on the screen. I would watch that too. While I was fascinated with these green pictures that were flying through the air from New York to Biscoe, it would never have crossed my mind that I would spend most of my professional life in that industry. But by 1949 Americans were buying television sets at the rate of a hundred thousand a day!

### *POLIO*

Infantile Paralysis, or Polio, was an over-riding fear of enormous proportions for us kids in the 40's. We thought, and at the same time didn't know, that our beloved President FDR had some sort of physical handicap.

The press kept it from us, but truth is that FDR had been horribly crippled by an insidious disease known as Infantile Paralysis or....Polio.

In Biscoe, and around the state of North Carolina, there were fears that children would be stricken by a condition that would cripple and alter their lives forever. The paralysis was devastating. For many of the victims, breathing was impossible without a huge metal,

body-tube called an "iron lung".

Arms and legs shriveled, and unassisted walking became impossible for many of the victims of the disease. It was thought that Polio was passed along from one child to another.

We kids were frightened by the newspaper and newsreel pictures of children encased in the iron lungs, their faces being reflected in a mirror, strategically placed to allow the victim to converse with those standing nearby.

Special hospitals were set up in North Carolina to take care of the many victims.

Newspaper interviews with the patients were often presented in the feature pages complete with pictures of the reflected faces..... courageous and smiling.

Because of the fear we kids were quarantined for several summers in the early forties. We were not allowed to assemble, we couldn't gather in groups for any purpose and swimming in the same pool was strictly forbidden. The pool restriction was not a problem since there was not a pool in Biscoe, the closest was Morrow Mountain State Park.

We kids and our parents shared the ever-present fear of a polio strike for years.

A young doctor and researcher, Dr. Jonas Salk, would finally put an end to the horror many years later by developing a protective vaccine.

#### BISCOE CHILDREN IN THE 40S

Despite the backdrop of a nation at war, Biscoe children went about their lives with fun, frolic, and gusto. Parents were careful to shield us from their burdens of worry in those days and we were a pretty happy lot.

The safest places in the world for a child were home, church and school. It is simply amazing to my generation that today children are taking guns to school to kill teachers and other students, and that many schools are now staffed with armed law-enforcement people, and that metal detectors are often used. AT SCHOOL? Yes, I'm afraid so. Recent polls have shown that one of the biggest fears among little children is that they will be killed at school. In our whole history, what a tragic moment we have come to. One of the many ironies is that because of the violent climate of the times, a boy these days can be arrested for carrying a pocket knife.

In the forties every boy carried a pocket knife...for whittling, peeling apples, and fashioning beanshooters. The thought of cutting someone never entered into our thinking.

In the lower grades we played jump-board, not encouraged by our teachers. A long stout board was centered lengthwise on blocks. Two kids of approximate weight could launch each other high into the air.

We played "roller-bat-batter" where you could get your turn at bat by catching a ball on the fly or the batter would place the bat on the ground and the fielder would be required to hit the bat by rolling the ball at it.

The girls played hopscotch and jumped rope. The boys had horrendous marble games. Many of the "town" kids rode their bikes to school. There were two big bike racks to the

side of the building. No bike locks were necessary. My bike was called a "victory bike", a skinny version of what had been the heavy, streamlined standard bike before the war. In an effort to cut down on the use of metal, the slimmed-down version had a thinner frame, slim wheels and tires and very short fenders. It was pretty ugly but I rode it with pride.

In high school there were varsity sports...basketball, baseball, and in 1949, my senior year, Biscoe fielded a six man football team. Howard McKinnon, Maynard Miller and J.M. Dyson were the best players on that first football team. I was never much of an athlete but Coach R. H. Mathews allowed me to play enough to get a letter.

Biscoe had some good athletes in the forties. The Tyson boys...Earl and Vernon were prominent on our teams, as was Bill Lambert who once pitched a no-hitter. The best all-round Biscoe High athlete at that time was Roger Paschal. Roger came from a long line of family athletes, seemed perfectly coordinated and developed the skill of "hang time" in basketball. Long before the term was coined Roger could go up for a one-handed push shot, draw his feet up and "hang".

The girls played half-court basketball. It was thought at the time that a full-court game would be much too strenuous for girls. Biscoe produced some excellent female athletes. The one who stands out most in my memory Lorraine Parsons who developed a beautiful hook-shot that was practically unstoppable.

Since every little town had its own High School, there was intense competition among them. The schools were only a few miles apart but loyalties were fierce.

There were no activity buses and hardly any high school boy in town with a driver's license had his own car. Players were taken to away games in the private cars of the coach, the principal, and parents. After the games the "town kids" were usually let off at the Soda Shop, and walked home. We felt no danger in walking through town at night. Claude Wright was our one policeman. When Mr. Wright died while still a young man, a very large fellow named Battley was hired to perform the police work for the town.

Sometimes the Soda Shop would be closed after the Friday night games and the boys would gather around the stove on winter nights at Lonnie Hurley's service station to have a soft drink and talk over the night's event.

### *BLAKES*

In 1947 a young couple from Candor set out on a business venture that had a profound impact on the young people of the county. Colon and Inez Blake bought an old service station on 220 about halfway between Biscoe and Candor. After some remodeling and redecorating they opened an eatery specializing in barbecue, hot dogs, and hamburgers. The pig was cooked over a pit in a shed across the highway from the restaurant. It's a wonder that Colon was not hit by a car going back and forth...however in those days there were no traffic jams.

The business grew quickly as adults and young people flocked to the drive-in which offered curb service. It was a clean, safe place for youth to gather and enjoy some good food.

It was also a place for kids from all the little towns to get together, and many romances

sprang from the contacts made at Blakes.

Blakes opened about the time I got my driver's license. What fun it was to get the family car, drive to Blakes with a dollar or two in your pocket.

In later years Colon and Inez would demolish the old structure and build a more modern building and a new motel adjacent to the restuarant.

When the new section of 220 by-passed the restuarant, they simply picked it up, placed it beside the new by-pass where it remains today as popular as ever.

In the late forties Blakes was a significant force in our young lives.

### *THE MUSIC*

The forties were the golden years for the big bands. Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, Harry James, and others became wealthy and famous. They were our heroes...loved and admired by millions of American kids from Biscoe to New York to Los Angeles. We were linked up by radio and bought records by the millions of the music we heard from coast to coast on the radio network's orchestra broadcasts from the great dance halls and elegant hotels across the nation. As we listened to those live broadcasts we could hear the background of young people having fun. I turned the volume up to hear the shuffling feet of the dancers and vowed that when I grew up I would learn to dance.

The popular dances were the swing, or jitterbug, invented by the kids to fit the hard-swinging, hot music of the bands. The servicemen brought home the latest steps from far away places and we tried our best to pick them up.

The best swing dancers in Biscoe at the time (in my opinion) were: Dan McCaskill, Jeff Wilson, and a pretty girl named Molly Cagle. When any one of these three took a partner the rest of us stood back and watched.

The poignant ballads and love songs of the war years often reflected the sadness of the countless young people across the nation who were saying goodbye to each other. Some of the titles were:

"I'll Be Seeing You", "I'll Walk Alone", "Saturday Night Is the Loneliest Night Of The Week", "I Left My Heart At The Stagedoor Canteen", "When The Lights Go On Again All Over The World", and the one that was finally banned from Armed Forces Radio because it made the soldiers so homesick...."I'll Be Home For Christmas".

The music was a morale boost for the troops. Some of the bands signed up for USO tours overseas. Glenn Miller went into the Air Corps and formed up his legendary military band. He played for the troops in war zones throughout Europe and was lost in a small military plane one foggy night crossing the English Channel.

In Biscoe there were several juke boxes, those wonderful, colorful, record machines with a superb tone that emphasized the thumping base line. The ones I can remember were located in the Soda Shop, the bus station, and the service station across from the mill.

For a nickel you got three minutes of the most exciting popular music of our time.

Business owners didn't select the records that were installed in the machine. While I worked at the Soda Shop a rather gruff man from out of town came, opened the machine, installed some new songs, and left the ones that were still getting a lot of plays. He came



about every three to four weeks. The best part of his visit was that he left the machine with about ten free plays for us. I recall mopping the floors with my buddy Alvis Harris one Saturday before opening while we played Opus One and Bing Crosby's "Tallahassee" over and over again. We turned the volume up as far as we could. The music made the mopping fun.

### *JEFF B. WILSON*

Jeff Wilson didn't grow up in Biscoe but when he came to town, a lot of things changed for the better for the social life of the young people. Jeff was a big man in every respect. He was a portly fellow, light on his feet, who came to us with big dreams and plans to implement them.

He brought with him a stunning, dark-haired wife named Elizabeth whom he called "Lib". His two major contributions to the teenagers were the Biscoe Theatre (later run by Hazel and Elwood Long) and the Biscoe Soda Shop. The theatre was grand for a town our size. When not being used, the padded seats would automatically spring up so one could easily get in and out of the rows. The theatre floor was elevated steeply enough that everyone could get an unobstructed view of the screen.

Air conditioning was unheard of in those days but a large but quiet exhaust fan kept a cooling breeze moving through the high-ceilinged structure.

We saw all of the great movies of the times in that comfortable little theatre: "Wizard Of Oz", "Mrs. Miniver", "Gone With The Wind", "Lassie", and all the aforementioned war movies.

Saturdays were reserved for the westerns starring Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, Charles Starrett, Lash Larue and all their side-kicks. Saturdays featured blockbuster double-features with usually a "Three Stooges" comedy and a newsreel to boot. For a quarter a boy could have himself a great afternoon. 15 cents admission with ten cents left for popcorn or a candy bar.

One of my favorites, because it lasted so long, was a candy bar made of sections of hard but wonderfully flavored taffy called Bit-O-Honey.

The little kids sat closest to the screen. The teenagers who brought dates to the movie wanted to be closer to the back, with the very back row reserved for those into serious "necking".

But Jeff kept an eye on things. He usually knew everyone in the theatre and if he thought things were getting a little too heated on the back row, you would see his lumbering frame appear in the aisle-way. He would stand there silently staring at the potential trouble area until things settled down.

From its opening day, The Soda Shop became the teenager's premiere place to be seen and to see others. Boys and girls gathered there after school and on weekends to have a Coke, talk, flirt, play the jukebox. In that atmosphere many young romances would flower.

When I was old enough to get a work permit I worked for Jeff as a "soda-jerk", just like the kid in the "Archie" comic books. I enjoyed being at the center of the teen hang-out because I got to see all the girls. The work wasn't hard but the hours were long.

Jeff taught me how to create a banana-split, an ice cream soda, a fountain Coke, and a

cherry smash. We served grilled sandwiches, hamburgers and hot dogs. Jeff later installed a case containing gift items: watches, perfume, and gift boxes of candy and cosmetics, and those huge pecan logs.

On Saturday nights the place was jumping. Boys from Star, Candor and Troy would show up. We thought they came to try to "steal our girls". Sometimes they did.

The civic pride of the community was always reflected in the activity of the Lions Club and the Woman's Club. Those two clubs were paramount in promoting issues for the betterment of the community. Jeff Wilson became a national officer in the Lions organization and at a national convention in Los Angeles, Jeff put on a diaper, placed his enormous body on the smallest motor scooter he could find, paraded through the streets with a banner across his chest that read "Fatso From Biscoe". The photographs of Jeff made the wire services and were featured in newspapers around the nation. Jeff put Biscoe on the map.

### *THE DRUG STORE*

Our medicines came from our trusted pharmacist Walter Jenkins who, with his vivacious wife Fannie Morris, ran the Biscoe Drug store. The front of the store was spacious and contained one those classic soda fountains where you could get a fountain coke, a cherry smash, a milk shake or a sandwich. There were several "Coke" tables and chairs, designed and produced by the Coca Cola company. They were made of twisted wrought iron and today are considered prized antiques. The atmosphere in the store was very pleasant, though more quiet than that of the soda shop. My favorite section of the store was the large magazine rack, filled with the latest Captain Marvel and Archie comic books, the latest movie magazines featuring pictures and stories about the faces and figures we saw at the theatre and many other publications of interest like Popular Science or Field and Stream.

### *THE CHURCHES*

The old Baptist church, a white clapboard structure, faced 220 just north of the bus station.

The brick Presbyterian church was, and is still, just north of that.

Page Memorial Methodist on Church street, still serves the people in its same location. Since there were more churches in rural areas than there were paid preachers, the ministers were assigned to "charges".

That meant they served more than one church. It also meant that your church didn't have "preaching" every Sunday. So we would go to each other's churches to hear a sermon. The young people liked that arrangement because sometimes a boy or girl's heart-throb went to a different church.

During most of the forties the pulpit at Page Memorial, our family church, was filled by two pastors: Jack Page in the early forties followed by Jack Tyson.

The Presbyterian pastor that I can remember was Mr. Houck.

The Baptists had "Preacher" Hancock. I never knew his first name and a young person,

out of respect, would never have asked.

I always dreaded the long altar call at the end of Mr. Hancock's services. While we repeated the last hymn numerous times, he would go so far as to walk out into the congregation and stand beside those youth who, in his judgment, "needed to be saved". It made us nervous and we did our best not to make eye contact with him. The best you could do was to make sure you were not seated on or close to the aisle where he could actually speak to you. Some of us thought we could love the Lord and receive His blessings without being required to go down front and "break down" in front of Mr. Hancock and a rather large audience.

I wasn't there when it happened but the story goes that my friend Bill Skeen was on the aisle one night when the preacher reached out, put his hand on Bill's shoulder while repeating in a highly emotional voice..."Don't you feel it....don't you feel it?" Bill replied in his non-emotional, Skeen-like voice...."Yes. I feel your hand on my shoulder."

The churches were all positive influences on us in one way or another. Some of my happiest memories are those of Christmas Eve services. We would sit together as families...singing the great Christmas hymns together and listen to the ancient Bible story of Christ's birth. While the story was being read, church members (mostly the young people) in costume would re-enact "the greatest story ever told". Wearing head wraps and in the night robes of their fathers, there was the processional of wise men, the shepherds, and the kings to bow before the manger (fashioned out of oak slabs by the men of the church). Mary was usually played by the prettiest girl and Joseph by the most solemn-faced man. The Baby was depicted by a doll, placed in the hay-filled manger. One year my father was asked to do some special lighting for the pageant. He rewired the reflector of an old electric heater, put a light bulb in it and covered it with some amber cellophane. He placed the light behind the doll and when the house lights were lowered the golden light from the manger reflected off the faces of Mary and Joseph. By the time we sang Silent Night, Holy Night....it was just that.

Following the pageant the lights were turned up, Santa Claus came bounding from the back to pass out the Christmas "sacks" that were already under the giant decorated cedar tree.

The spicy-smelling cedar was always donated, and cut from the meadow of some local landowner.

The brown sacks were full of Christmas treats. They contained: an apple, an orange, a tangerine, two sticks of peppermint, assorted nuts and hard candies, and a bunch of golden raisins still on the stem. The first treats to be eaten, usually on the way home, were the favorites..... the chocolate covered cream drops.

I share the Christmas story because it represents, in many ways, what went on in the churches of the other denominations in Biscoe in the forties.

### *AFRICAN-AMERICANS IN BISCOE IN THE FORTIES*

There is no way for a white person to even come close to describing what life was like for a black person anywhere in the South in the forties.

Segregation was strictly enforced....both by custom and by law and Biscoe was no different.

I can only share my observations and memories.

Black kids were bussed from all over the county to the all-black Peabody on the outskirts of Troy.

Black patrons of the Biscoe theatre climbed wooden stairs on the outside of the building to enter a very small area adjacent to the projection room where they sat on benches without backs on them. In summer this was the hottest part of the building and their movie viewing was interrupted at any time by the noise of the projection room....the rewinding of the reels of film, the changing of the carbon rods in the projectors, by the light coming out of the projection room anytime the operator opened the door, or by anyone coming in from the outside stairs.

Blacks were not allowed in the Soda Shop and had a separate waiting room at the back of the bus station. They could buy sandwiches from the kitchen through a window in the back. There were separate drinking fountains and segregated seating patterns in public buildings like the county courthouse.

The Armed Forces were segregated during WW II. Even if black soldiers were able to get to the fighting front, and even if they distinguished themselves in battle...it was not reported.

At the WW II museum in northern France near the beaches of Normandy were framed copies of the London Times front pages of various battles during the Allied invasion. In 1994, during my coverage of the 50th anniversary of the invasion, I saw pictures and read the stories of the London Times' accounts of black artillery units performing in combat during the Allied push. There was the picture of a black American sergeant, aiming his 45 pistol at several German soldiers he had just captured. These accounts were featured as front-page news in the London Times. They were not covered by the American press, certainly not by newspapers in the south.

The story of the courageous Tuskegee airmen was published decades later.

The only black man allowed in our church was "Bud" (probably a nickname given him by a white person) Butler, the sexton or janitor. Bud was a dignified, slender man who wore a derby hat, suspenders, starched white shirts with a high collar, and possessed a gold railroad watch. Bud fired the church furnace to keep us warm, swept the carpet and at the precise moment on his railroad watch, rang the church bell by pulling a rope that hung through a hole in the ceiling of the narthex.

Rudy Clegg was janitor, furnace fireman, and general handyman for Biscoe High School. In his community he was patriarch of a large family. He was also a moral and spiritual leader and a baseball umpire of such respect that his calls were seldom questioned. The black teams were allowed to use the field when they weren't being used by the whites.

Rudy's booming voice was enhanced by colorful expressions. A batter who challenged a called third strike might be startled by the roaring words....."Batter, lay your timber down!"

During cold weather Rudy had to spend his time close to the coal furnace to keep the steam coming to the radiators in the classrooms. We children could and often would visit him there.

I had heard that he had the power to "talk off" warts. I had been plagued for about a year with a huge wart near the middle knuckle of my right index finger. When I asked Rudy if he could do anything to help me, he took out his pocket knife. I was afraid he was going to cut it off. He smiled, took my hand in his, passed the flat of the knife across the wart with a few mysterious words. He told me to forget about the wart.

I must tell you that in a week there was no trace of the growth and to this day it has never grown back.

Black men and women in Biscoe mostly held menial jobs. Cooks, janitors, maids, farm workers, and ditch-diggers. Some of the men worked as firemen on the steam trains. Once they got the steam pressure up they could sit by the fireman's window to catch a breath. I can see their smiling faces returning a wave from us kids along the track.

The prominent black families of Biscoe went about their lives with restraint and dignity. Here are just some of the names of those families:

There were the Austins, Cleggs, Johnsons, Harrises, Butlers, Ledbetters, Baldwins, Manesses, Dunlaps, Martins, Thomases, and Cagles. Some of those families, or their descendants still live in Biscoe, basically in the same housing areas of the forties.

#### *THE ICE PLANT*

I don't know who owned the Biscoe ice plant before Sam Eanes but by the time I got to be a teenager it belonged to Nelson Foushee. The plant froze water into 300 pound blocks and delivered chunks of it all over the county. Eanes and Foushee hired young black workers and drivers. It was not a bad job for a teenager since once on the road you were on your own. The drivers were responsible and worked hard. There was also a lot of fun involved. A driver got to be very popular along their routes. They delivered refreshing ice to homes sweltering in summer in the middle of farm fields, and to country stores where large drink boxes chilled Pepsi Colas for the field workers. The drivers also met and flirted with the pretty rural girls.

One summer I got a job as a driver. I don't know how I got it other than I had already made a reputation as an honest and responsible worker at the Soda Shop. I was the only white driver so it was with some trepidation that I reported for the first day of work not knowing how or whether I would be accepted by the other guys. Henry Maness, about my age, who already worked there was assigned to work with me. He knew the stops on the route and all the customers.

I need not have worried. Not only was I accepted, but some of those teenagers became life-long friends. There were "Hoot" Cagle and Robert Harris who still live in Biscoe and there was Zeke who somehow found a way to override the governors, or speed controls, on the engine of his truck. He had the fastest truck and everyone but Nelson knew it.

Probably Nelson knew it too.

In a small town, summer jobs for teenagers are limited to say the least. But they were there if you looked hard enough. We "town" kids could usually find work on the peach and tobacco farms in the area. Other jobs I held at various times were: Biscoe Grocery Store clerk...Soda shop clerk...cannery worker (for several years Biscoe had a cannery which operated on the school grounds where people could bring their produce..peaches..corn..beans or tomatoes to be canned and processed. My classmate G.B. King fired the boiler), and one summer Don Bailey, another classmate, and I measured tobacco fields so the state could determine whether allotments were being followed.

### *THE FOUNDRY*

I have long held the opinion that the Kellams, in terms of sheer brainpower, were the smartest people in Biscoe. I still believe that if you hooked them all up to an IQ meter at the same time it would blow up the machine.

The family patriarch was Charles E., who came to Biscoe and opened a foundry. The old sheet metal building still stands behind the old Coca Cola bottling plant. I never saw Mr. Kellam many times but when I went with my father to the foundry, Mr. Kellam was always bending over a mold he was working on. I am told that he could fashion a mold for any kind of metal part or instrument to perfection, just out of his head. Mr. Kellam reared a house full of bright and lively kids. Five of the boys went off to war and served with distinction.

The offshoot of what Mr. Kellam began is the modern foundry across from the new Walmart.

### *THE WAR ENDS*

The war, which began with the destruction of 18 U.S. warships and over 2000 Americans killed at Pearl Harbor, began to swing toward a victory for the U.S, and her allies On April 12th, 1945,as American and Allied troops swept to within 50 miles of Berlin, a news bulletin punched us all in the stomach. President Roosevelt, trying to relax and posing for a portrait in Warm Springs, Georgia, suddenly complained about a "terrific headache". He literally dropped dead. When wife Eleanor was notified in Washington, she called Vice President Harry Truman out of a meeting and said to him..."Harry...the President is dead."

When the news reached Biscoe, there was a pall over the town. The warrior-President had not lived to see the end of the war. He had led the United States through the conflict, had mobilized the American people to present a unified front to the world, had approved the invasion of Normandy, and had reached an agreement with foreign allied leaders on how the world would be divided up in the post-war era. Yet, fate had denied his seeing it all through.

Roosevelt was the single person that America and her allies, especially England and

Winston Churchill, had leaned on for leadership during those horrific war years. Before that he had pulled the nation out of a depression with his "New Deal". Now he was gone. The last photos taken of FDR revealed the haggard and exhausted face of a man who might have been in his mid-eighties. The enormous pressures brought to bear in leading a nation through a world war had taken their toll. FDR had used himself up at age 63.

In less than three hours after FDR's death...Vice President Harry Truman, practically a stranger to all of us at the time, was sworn in.

I recall seeing tears in the eyes of some of the Biscoe women that day, and the news of FDR's death was being widely discussed in hushed tones. Roosevelt had been our President since 1933.

On May 8th, Germany surrendered.

Japan had made it clear that it was not about to capitulate, so President Truman and our allies had to consider an invasion of the island empire. The military leaders evaluated casualty estimates....some were as high as a million.

But Truman now had at his disposal a secret weapon. He made his decision to use it and on August 6th the world's first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

When the headlines reached us in Biscoe we, like other Americans, were mystified by a weapon that had been designed and tested in secrecy that had the explosive power of 20,000 tons of TNT. When Japan didn't respond, another atomic bomb was released three days later over Nagasaki. The next day Japan surrendered. However the official ceremony took place on September 2nd on the deck of the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay.

The day Japan surrendered, Mother had taken us kids to town in the car to do some shopping. Coming home, as we approached the house, we could hear Daddy's 12 gauge shotgun blasting. We came through the front door and saw daddy sitting on the steps of the back porch firing into the air. Mother said to him..."Charlie, what in the world?" Daddy turned to us with a smile and said "The war is over." He had heard the radio bulletin and was engaging in his own personal, joyous salute. He continued firing off the shells until they were gone.

The boys from Biscoe began to come home, not all at once because they were scattered around the world.

Some of them picked up where they left off. Some left for good. Many of them took advantage of the greatest piece of legislation ever enacted for veterans....the GI Bill. Among the options were a college education, a trade school, or a liberal GI loan for a house.

The next few years, before the worries of the Korean conflict began to surface, were the happiest and most peaceful times of the the decade.

I have tried to think of what a typical day in Biscoe might look and sound like in the forties. Let's try an early morning in September in the late forties:

*The cotton mill is already humming with the first shift well underway. Charlie Buie Sr., is in his office going over the myriad things he has to oversee that day. The third shift people are on their way home for some sleep or stopping off at the filling station for a cold drink. Up the street Lonnie Hurley is washing off the oil and debris from the pavement around his service station. Yank Cagle and her helpers are busy preparing food for the bus station menu for the day. Buck Burt is sorting the mail, while Garl Dawkins wheels his Coca Cola truck up to replenish the Biscoe Grocery.*

*At the Methodist parsonage, Jack Tyson is taking advantage of the quiet since all the kids left for school to prepare his sermon for Sunday. At the ice plant, Hoot, Zeke, and Henry are sliding 300 pound blocks of ice onto the platform to be loaded on their delivery trucks.*

*The Coble Dairy man has already been in town since daylight dropping off cases of milk. Jeff Wilson is talking with D.C. Deaton while D.C. is slicing a cheese and ham order for Jeff's soda shop. The machinery is already jangling in the Coca Cola plant...it's bottling day.*

*T. H. Skeen is sweeping around the front of his store and laughing about a joke just told him by Millard Craven. Doc Baldwin is firing up the old boiler to get enough steam for his pressing machine at the dry cleaners.*

*There are two heavy, metal film cans on the sidewalk that were dropped off in the middle of the night containing the next movies we are going to see.*

*Rufus Dunn is busy serving early breakfast and hot coffee at his cafe. Grady Klass is crossing the street to get a cup.*

*On the other corner, Rufus Britt is unpacking and displaying a delivery of fresh produce at his fruit stand. Frank Thomas is feeding and watering the livestock on his farm on the outskirts of town.*

*At the CP&L substation across the highway from that farm, Charlie Gaddy has taken his first readings of the day off the dials of the transformers and the instruments in the control room. My mother takes a breath after getting us all out of the house and prepares to go open the Joann Shoppe.*

*Edgar Maness has opened the bank vault and the cashiers are loading up the money trays before opening hour.*

*The planer mill is huffing, puffing and sending that unmistakable whine throughout the town every time a board goes through. The sound was so repetitious you finally didn't notice it.*

*Mr. McLendon has long since left with his railroad maintenance crew. They'll be changing out some cross-ties near Star.*

*Jabo Freeman is filling up his oil truck and D. A. Monroe is headed for the post office. At the schoolhouse, the last bell has rung and while Emma Connor and the other teachers prepare to launch into another day, some of us wistfully glance out the window at the magnificent fall day and wonder if we will ever be done with school.*

*And so it goes.....on a typical day in Biscoe, North Carolina in the forties.*

There were 14 of us in the 1949 graduating class of Biscoe High School, seven boys and



seven girls. They were: Donald Bailey, J. M. Dyson, G. B. King, Maynard Miller, Jack Rumble, Lewis Trent, Juanita Epps, Dorothy Maness, Florence Monroe, Velma Pankey, Nettie Jean Shepard, Marjorie Strider, Ima Jean Wallace, and me. We perhaps didn't fully appreciate it at the time but we had gotten an excellent high school education and were prepared scholastically to go in any direction we chose.

Most of us had been together for all twelve years. We were practically as close as brothers and sisters. It was a lonely feeling to know that at the end of the summer of 1949 we would not be seeing each other...as we had every fall since 1937.

After college I never really lived in Biscoe again but, in truth, a part of me never left. The forties were dramatic years. The War...FDR's death...The Peace...The beginning of the Atomic Age and the beginnings of the powerful television medium.

If my account of those times seems idyllic, in many ways it was. We were blessed with wonderful parents, teachers, and townspeople. There was seldom a divorce and kids could count on family stability.

I have not dwelled on the negatives but would be remiss to imply that everything was rosy.

As someone once said, many people live out their lives in a state of "quiet desperation". I know that to be true. There were two suicides in Biscoe in the forties, both men were widely known in the community.

There was also a loneliness about growing up there...especially for a teenager. I have walked through on winter nights after the town was asleep, the stop light blowing in the wind, and felt as if I were on the edge of space...alone. I wondered what boys in the cities were doing.

In the summer I could hear the peach trucks gearing down late at night to catch the stoplight green. I had heard that they made runs to exotic places like, Greensboro, Baltimore...even New York. I wanted to go with them.

We would sit at the crossroads at night in the cars of the older boys and watch what little traffic was moving, while listening to "Our Best to You", a late-night radio program from WPTF in Raleigh featuring the golden voice of Jimmy Capps reading dedications (mostly from college kids) of the latest love songs to their sweethearts.

Once, in the wee hours of the morning, my father came after me. The time of night had slipped up on me.

I sometimes have entertained the thought of moving back to Biscoe but then realize that I am caught up in a wonderful memory of times gone by. If I returned, it wouldn't be the same. Most of the adults who were a part of our lives at that time are resting on cemetery hill. I pass the gravestones of those who either encouraged, disciplined, intimidated, or loved me. I miss the all.

In closing I offer just sketches of some people not mentioned before, living and dead, and present it with appreciation and affection.

Charles Buie, Sr....ran the mill. Smart, caring businessman....great father and community leader. He left us all too soon.

Jesse Buie....a former Thomas girl...energetic....knew how to fix things pretty...mother of Charles, Martha, Beth and Sally.

Charles Buie, Jr....galloped horses down the road in front of our house headed for his grandfather's farm. Rode English seat and won ribbons in horse shows. The first boy I ever saw in the uniform of a military school. Energetic, caring, and today owns several mills.

Brought Peggy to the Soda Shop when they were dating...she was something to see.

Garl Dawkins...hardest working man I ever knew. After a long day of delivering crates of Coca Cola, he ran the projector until the late show was over at the theatre. Couldn't have gotten more than a few hours sleep at night....positive and optimistic.

Belle Ballard...widowed early....hardest working woman. Sent all four of her children through college by the sweat of her brow.

Charles Johnson...youngest of the four boys...all served in WW II. A good friend who shared with us his cars. Buick lover...gray convertible with white side-walls. Funny. Great story-teller...Community stalwart and superb public servant.

Kitty Poole...Our band's first majorette. Lively, pretty and smart. Last time I saw her..she still was.

Ruby Bradshaw....dear soul...deaf since birth....cleaned up the bus station...taught me the old two-handed sign language for the deaf...I can still do it.

J.F. Allen....Navy. Started in as a carpenter after the war and built a financial empire.....went hunting with him one fall night and saw him kill an owl with an apple he had in his pocket...the bird never knew what hit him...J.F. picked up the apple, wiped it off and ate it.

Married the pretty Jean Maness. Friends who have always been good to my family. J.F. saved the old school.

Harold Maness...first military officer I knew. ...came to our church....married vivacious Buena Baldwin...war hero...retired Colonel...reared outstanding children.

Leslie Kellam....took loving care of his crippled mother...fireman....drove cars as fast as they would run...once owned a black speed-boat ...married Mary, a dark-haired beauty from Candor.

"Ma" Burt...taught little-boy Sunday school class...made us take turns praying out loud

which scared us to death. I was always afraid nothing would come out of my mouth...a fear I experienced somewhat in my early days in radio. Thanks "Ma" for helping me.

Mrs. Bertha Hicks....wealthy widow..beautiful house near school...St Bernard dog named "Ralph"...green Packard. When daddy wouldn't take any money for helping her with outside Christmas lighting...she reached in her fish pool and handed him a green cement frog the size of a large cabbage head which had a hole in the bottom for a hose so water would squirt from its mouth. Mrs. Hicks told daddy to take it home to his children. It became a permanent fixture in our fish pool. I still have the frog.

Richard "Dick" Kissell....Normandy...postmaster....husband of Vi.....brothers James and Ray...all served.

Lacy "Bootie" McCaskill...boyhood friend...."town" boy..known by all....little but tough... When another boy came toward him in a car one night, Bootie stood his ground and let fly with a drink bottle that went right through the windshield.

J. Edgar Maness...ran the bank...serious and dignified. Made loans based on his own judgment of character....was seldom wrong. Father of Harold, Faye and Myra.

The Harvell girls...Betty Lou and Nettie Sue.....good students.....pretty and popular.

Viola Simpson....smart...pretty...worked at the Sandwich Shop...one summer went with our family on our vacation to White Lake....sister of Marshall.

Josh Hinson.....embarrassed me so when I was a kid I vowed to never taunt, embarrass, or make fun of a child in my life...and I haven't. One Sunday after church ( I was about eleven) I went into a service station alone to get myself a soft drink.. My mother had recently bought for me a red bow-tie that she thought looked good with my Sunday suit. The station was full of adult men. When I entered, Josh began to point at me and laugh. He roared that I looked like "a kitten that had won first prize in a kitten contest". The other men began to laugh and Josh continued to taunt me. I was so mortified I just turned and left without my drink.

But thanks to Josh I have never teased a child.

James Johnson.... the smile...flying was his passion...pilot for my first plane ride...military officer ...killed in crash....the whole town mourned his passing.

Bill Lewis...another passionate flyer. He and James flew yellow bi-winged planes (I believe they were Stearmans) around. I'm told that one had an emergency and landed in a field...the other followed. Married Inez Saunders...one of the prettiest girls in town.

Arthur Lewis..Bill's dad...head of draft board....owned furniture plant that made wooden bedsteads.

Ralph and Rose Chappell....Biscoe Grocery...hired me one summer...Studebaker..couldn't tell whether it was coming or going.

Elwood and Hazel Long...friends to all...ran the theatre...the radio/tv shop. Elwood later elected county sheriff. Never spoke without a smile on his face.

D.C. Deaton....businessman....partner of D.W. Hurley....food store...hardware. Co-signed my note for a college loan...became mayor....always a friend.

The Burt brothers....Jim, Ed, Buck. I was closest to Jim because he married our beloved choir director Eleanor Bruton. Ed...married to the lovely Nancy....longtime mayor...community icon.

Buck...died young...father of several bright and lively girls...Ann, Sarah, Jane and Mary.

McCaskill brothers...all served...Frank became Greensboro cop....Dan became a Biscoe institution and friend.

T.H.Skeen...funny...roaring laugh....merchant...loved his family and his dog "Blackie".

Earl Skeen...dry cleaners...husband of Loreena...father of Bill and Duffy.

Bill Skeen...school friend...pilot...played saxophone....worked for Jack Reynolds the cropduster one summer...took my girlfriend....became successful doctor.

Betty Charles McLeod ...pretty...great dancer...basketball....coal-black hair...sister of Evelyn. I sat on the steps of her back porch the night before leaving for the Army and talked it over.

Daughter of Charlie McLeod....county welfare officer.

W.C. Martin....vet...married Evelyn...community icon...organizer of "good old boys".

The Asbill boys...vets..Bill mayor...Eugene, distinguished military career...Ralph married Mary Jean Williams.

Harvey Williams...mill boss-man...Page Memorial stalwart...father of Dr. David.

The boys of Jack Tyson....preachers kids and friends.... Dewey, George, Tommy, Earl, Vernon and Bobby....closest to my age were Earl and Vernon.. Vernon financed my first plane ride...he and Earl were athletes. All six of them became Methodist ministers.

A.S. Hunt and G.B.Lamm...school principals during the forties. Each different from the other but both ran tight ships

Gladys and Ethel...the Monroe sisters....fun....lively and up-to-date on all community news. Great church workers and Godmothers to us all. Charles Johnson and I, disguising

our voices, called them at two o'clock in the morning thinking it would annoy them. They answered the phone on the first ring and when we started in with our phony voices they called out both our names. They never got angry with us.

Sam Kellam...friend of my father's...crossed English Channel in a glider in the invasion...co-signed a bank note for my college loan.

Fred Ray...suffered frostbite in the war....good dancer...married Doris, a beauty from Troy.

Emma Connor, Vi Kissell, Alice McDuffie, Winfred Dozier, Geneva Turner....renowned teachers...gave us what I call a "classical" education. G.B. Lamm assembled this excellent faculty. They made many future goals achievable for us.

Joann Gaddy Grimes....sister...talented...pretty...by the time she was twelve she was being asked to play piano for weddings.

Bob Gaddy...brother...my best friend....became a Montgomery county fixture...met pretty Doris Johnson at Blakes and married her.....rescue squad...great father.

D.A. Monroe....foundry....brilliant mind. Father of D.A., David, James, and Florence. He startled Charles Johnson in the post office one day with...."I'd run for high sheriff of Montgomery county if I knew I'd get one vote".

David Monroe....Air Corps pilot and officer....married the beautiful Elsie...brought her to our church.

Lydia Gaddy...my mother. Worked her fingers to the bone all her life for her children. Without complaint she made sure her family sat at the table three times a day for meals so delicious that I still dream about them. For a pittance of a salary she cooked and served the entire school population and ran the lunch room, and in the summers instead of taking a break...she worked at the Boy Scout Camp Dick Henning in Ellerbe...cooking and cleaning up the kitchen after serving the campers and staff three meals a day. She loved us and my father without reservation.

Her reward was that we loved her back.

She sat the highest standard of morals, manners and ethics. She was cute...fun...and lively. She taught us to love flowers, birds, and the beauty of the earth.

Charlie Gaddy...tall ...handsome....gentle. My daddy could do anything from building a soap-box racer to handling dynamite. His job of substation operator was one that he meticulously performed and was known as one of the very best in CP&L's entire system. Since he was the oldest of a large farm family in Anson county, he had to drop out of school as a teenager to help out. His good common sense and keen interest in the world around him served him well.

The high standards of morality he set for us (I never even heard him utter a negative word

about anyone in my life) and the security and protection we felt from him make him my lifetime hero. He became a valued member of the community....Scoutmaster of troop 79...Lion...American Legion....friend to all. Of all the people I met in my life's work, I never came across a greater man than my humble father.

I have not come close to mentioning all the people of my town who were important to us in the forties in Biscoe..... I have simply run out of space.

In conclusion: Thomas Wolfe said you can't go home again. It's true. But sometimes at the end of a hot summer's day when I smell the honeysuckles and hear the call of a mourning dove across a field, I long to hear my mother's sweet voice singing...

"Just a song at twilight....  
When the lights are low....  
And the flickering shadows....  
Softly come and go....."

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# THE DECADE OF THE 50s

Dewey Jackson

The decade of the 50s has been referred to as the fabulous 50s, the fantastic 50s, the nifty 50s, and the decade of the American dream. It was a time of great change; however, it was also a time of normalcy. The two previous decades had the Great Depression of the 30s and World War II in the 40s. Those were difficult times and people had to sacrifice and struggle to have successful lives. The 50s were a time of relief and hope for a better life. The beginning of the decade did not appear all that hopeful as the Cold War and threat of spreading communism were present. Also, the Korean Conflict occurred in 1950, during which 33,600 Americans lost their lives and 103,000 were wounded and missing. Also, this "Police Action" cost America a tremendous amount of financial resources which had a negative impact.

However, the inauguration of President Eisenhower brought about the beginning of better times. "I like Ike!" was the country's slogan and citizens gave Eisenhower a landslide victory over Adlai Stevenson, a very able statesman. Mr. Stevenson was quoted as saying, "I like Ike, too." Times became happier as the U. S. produced two thirds of all the world's manufactured goods. By 1955 unemployment was reduced to almost 4%. People had money, and they could purchase items such as cars, household appliances, and other consumer goods to make their lives easier.

Another tremendously positive thing that happened in the 50s was the introduction of the GI Bill that allowed veterans of the war to study at colleges and technical schools. Almost half of the veterans took advantage of the GI Bill to increase their skills, resulting in more successful careers.

The following list of events, by years, will enable us to remember what a time of great change the 50s were:

1950 -

President Truman ordered the Atomic Energy Commission to begin developing the hydrogen bomb.

The first transplant of a kidney from one human to another was performed.

The North Korean People's Army invaded South Korea and United Nations forces, under Gen. Douglas McArthur, joined South Korea in this conflict.

Charles Schultz's comic strip, "Peanuts" made its debut.



1951-

The 22<sup>nd</sup> Amendment to the Constitution, limiting the president to two terms was adopted.

CBS introduced color television in a program hosted by Ed Sullivan and Arthur Godfrey.

US Public Health Service announced that adding fluoridation to water would reduce tooth decay.

1952 -

US successfully tested a hydrogen bomb in the Marshall Islands.

The price of a postcard rose from one to two cents.

Dwight Eisenhower was elected President of the US.

1953 –

Earl Warren was appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

New York Yankees became the first team in history to win five consecutive World Series.

An armistice ending the Korean Conflict was signed at Panmunjom.

1954 -

The Navy launched Nautilus, the first nuclear powered submarine.

Mass inoculation against polio began with a vaccine developed by Jonas Salk.

A Gallup Poll indicated that a family of four could live on \$60.00 a week.

The Supreme Court ruled that the policy of “separate, but equal schools” had no place, thus beginning the end of segregated schools.

Elvis Presley released his first commercial recordings, “That’s All Right,” and “Blue Moon of Kentucky.”

1955 –

Roy Kroc opened his first McDonalds Restaurant.

Walt Disney opened Disneyland in California.

Ann Landers began her advice column in a Chicago newspaper.

1956 –

Congress authorized the construction of 41,000 miles of interstate highways.

“In God We Trust” became the motto of the US and was added to new coins and currency.

Segregation in public transportation was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.

1957 –

Martin Luther King, Jr. helped organize the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and became its first president.

Evangelist Billy Graham held a five month rally at Madison Square Garden and attracted more than 500,000 people.

US Congress passed the first civil rights legislation since Reconstruction.

The Soviets launched the first manmade satellite, Sputnik I, into orbit around the earth.

Ford Motor Company produced the Edsel, which became the buzz word for failure.

1958 –

US launched its first satellite, Explorer I, into orbit around the earth.

Nikita Khrushchev assumed leadership of the Communist Party and government in the Soviet Union.

National Airlines inaugurated the first regular jet service with flights between New York City and Miami.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration was established to oversee nonmilitary space activities.

The Federal Aviation Agency was organized to control civilian and military air traffic.

1959 –

Alaska and Hawaii became the 49<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> states to enter the Union.

NASA named the first seven astronauts.

Montgomery County Board of Education developed plans to address the nation's desegregation mandate and to upgrade the public schools by constructing two new high schools, East and West Montgomery High Schools.

The Korean Conflict, or "Police Action," was an event that affected all of the United States in 1950. North and South Korea were divided by the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel after World War II. The North Koreans were supported by communism, and the South Koreans were supported by the United States. Conflicts occurred and on June 25, 1950, 100,000 North Korean troops came south across the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and overran Seoul, the South Korean capital.

The US considered this a major threat and decided a stand against aggression was needed. The US was able to get the United Nations to approve sending a multinational force to defend South Korea. The Soviet Union was boycotting the United Nations Security Council; therefore, they were not present to cast a veto. Thus, the Korean "Police Action" began, and it lasted until a cease-fire was agreed to in July, 1953.

What Americans learned from the Korean Conflict was that our freedoms and democracy came about with sacrifice and commitment, and to maintain our democracy we must always be on guard and be ready for a threat. What the world learned from the Korean Conflict is that we will answer any aggressive threat to America or to one of our allies. America proved that we are totally committed to defending our freedoms and democratic principles.

It is impossible to place a value on the loss of life or of severely injured personnel in times of conflict. American deaths in the action in Korea were over 33,600, and wounded and missing were over 103,280. It is safe to say that these were certainly some of our best citizens, and their accomplishments to our society would have been great had they been able to return home and resume their normal lives. We must remember these brave Americans and give them the honor they richly deserve.

I am choosing to honor our people who fought in this conflict by selecting a native son of Biscoe, who was a hero in the "Police Action" and went on to have a brilliant military career.

Harold Martin Maness was born November 5, 1922, the son of James Edgar and Bonnie Martin Maness. His degrees were in Military Science, Business Administration, and Biology from Oak Ridge Military Academy and University of Omaha, Nebraska. He served his country honorably in the 94<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, E Co. during World War II, the Korean War in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, and 30 years of active service in the United States Army, Infantry. During the course of battle and service he was awarded the Silver Star, Bronze Star with Valor and two Oak Leaf Clusters, the Legion of Merit, Commendation Ribbon, Purple Heart, Combat Infantryman Badge with Star, Expert Infantryman Badge, Distinguished Unit Citation Emblem, American Campaign Medal, UN Service Medal, and Korean Presidential Unit Citation Badge. He retired in 1972 at the rank of full Colonel and was appointed Director of Plans and Programs for the state of NC under the Department of Human Resources.

After successfully completing the University of NC's Government Executives Institute, he suffered a massive stroke in November of 1978 and lived the remainder of his life as an inspiration of the human spirit to his family and all who were fortunate to know him. Colonel Harold Maness died on November 5, 2000 on his 78<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Harold Maness' favorite song was Roy Rogers' theme song, "Happy Trails to You". A tape of that song was played at his memorial service. Colonel Maness, because of your life of dedicated service, you have made our trails easier and more secure. We owe you a debt of gratitude for your great contributions to preserving our freedoms and democratic principles. It has been said that the best of all the men are the ones who lived their creeds. Your life exemplified your tenacious love of family, country, and life. Your courage was without question, and your concern for welfare of others was evident as you lived your creed, even in the midst of great adversity at times. Therefore, the community of Biscoe salutes you, Colonel Harold Martin Maness, and says, "Happy Trails to You until we meet again."

Times, people, and places have changed dramatically since the 1950s in Biscoe; however, some things will remain constant. Memories of Biscoe, and how it was in the 50s will never change nor will the love for this small community and for the citizens who lived and worked to make Biscoe great.

There were many businesses that provided goods and services to the people of Biscoe during the 50s. The following list may not include all, but most, that were active at some time during the decade of the 50s:

Ira Maness operated an open air grocery and fruit stand at the south end of town. Ralph Batten purchased this and constructed a building which became the first customer self-service food store in Montgomery County. This store later became a Piggly-Wiggly.

On the north end of what is now Rouse Street, George Haywood had a small grocery store.

Frank Robinson operated a grocery store on south 220. The building still remains.

Nelson Foushee purchased the ice plant and coal yards that were in existence and continued this operation.

Oscar Stevens operated the Esso Station in front of the mill. From this station pulpwood was also purchased and loaded onto rail cars. I worked at this station during the summer once and remember pumping gas, washing cars, and measuring pulpwood that trucks brought to sell.

The Coca-Cola plant was a very active distribution center during the 50s. It was operated by the Scott family.

Clarence Freeman had a store on the same block as the Coca-Cola plant.

Jakie Saunders' paint business was also located in this area.

Mr. Brooks, owner of Aileen Mills built a town library building and purchased books for community use.

Glen Wright operated a grocery and general merchandise store where the present Post Office is located.

Earl Skeen was owner and operator of a dry cleaning business that was located beside the ice plant on south 220.

Frank Mostello opened a clothing and dry goods store that was called "The Family Shop".

D.W. Hurley owned a hardware store next to T. H. Skeen's grocery store. D. C. Deaton purchased this building and built a modern self-service food store. He named it "The Food Store".

Millard Craven operated the barber shop and Millard Williamson had a small grocery store in the same building.

Hallum Furniture had a store, managed by D. B. Navy, where Miller's Hardware now stands. Charlie Miller opened his hardware, plumbing, and floor sanding business in the late 50s.

Bill and Reva Hudson operated The Soda Shop in a building across Church Street from the present Miller's Hardware. This was a favorite place for high school students to hang out.

The movie theater was still in operation in the early 50s.

Dick Kissell ran an appliance store beside the Burt home. I remember this very vividly because that is where I first saw a television set in operation.

The new Exxon Station on the corner came into existence during the 50s. This replaced the old service station that was operated by W. A. Kanoy. Frank Drake was the new owner and operator.

Britt's Curb Market was located at the southwest corner at the stoplight. This was owned by Mr. Ruf Britt and later Harry McIver.

There was a small Gulf station on the northwest corner at the stoplight.

Biscoe Drug Store, owned and operated by W. I. Jenkins (and later son Ingram), was located in the center of town, on Highway 24-27. They supplied the prescription drugs for the community. You could also get a delicious fountain Coke and dipped ice cream. There was a little glass-topped table and metal chairs so you could sit and enjoy these refreshments. I always thought that was a classy place.

Biscoe Grocery, owned and operated by Woodrow and Ethel Robbins was located next the Biscoe Drug Store.

The Bank of Biscoe was in the same building as Biscoe Drug and Biscoe Grocery. At the end of the 50s the new bank building was constructed just across the street in the lot which previously had been the Lewis Furniture Plant. This furniture plant, which made bedroom furniture, belonged to Arthur Lewis who operated it with his son Bill.

Roy Garner had a Pontiac car dealership in the early 50s, and it was on the north side of East Main Street.

On the corner of North and East Main Streets was the Pure Oil Station, owned and operated by Ed and Jim Burt. Red Sedberry and Rufus Dunn purchased this property from the Burt brothers in the early 50s and constructed a new ~~auto se~~ service center station.

Next to the Pure Oil Station was Biscoe Sandwich Shop. Dan McCaskill operated it in the early 50s. This also served as the bus station and Dan was the ticket agent for bus service. Since the sandwich shop was located at the intersection of highways 24-27 and 220, it was a busy place.

In the early 50s Dan purchased the former Burt house and converted it into the Old South Inn. The sandwich shop was moved to this renovated building and became a more upscale restaurant while still serving as a terminal for bus passengers.

Biscoe Foundry was operated by James and Leslie Kellam. It was located behind Stevens' Esso Station on South Main Street.

David Monroe was the owner and operator of X-Way Foundry that was located on 24-27 East. This business was in operation during the 50s. In 1957 X-Way Foundry merged with Asheboro Foundry and became Foundry Service, Inc.

A small convenience store with gas pumps, operated by Mr. Hall was next to the Monroe Foundry. This store was in operation in the early 50s. The school bus stop was across from the Hall Store and I remember as many as a dozen children would meet there to catch the bus. Also, I remember that the gas pumps had a lever that would pump the amount of gas a customer wanted to purchase into a visible container at the top of the pump. If a customer wanted five gallons of gas, the operator would first pump five gallons into the glass container and then pump the gas into the car.

Brooks' Grill was located on west 24-27, across the highway from what is now J and J Builders. It was a good place to go to get sandwiches. They provided curbside service at night. It was operated by the Brooks family.

The Breeze Inn was also on 24-27, a little nearer to Troy. It was owned by Max Kearns. It was a favorite hang-out for young people.

Blake's Barbecue, located between Biscoe and Candor, was also a popular place. They served meals as well as short orders. They had their own barbecue pit.

J.F. Allen Construction Company was located at 220 North. They built many homes in the Biscoe area.

On East 24-27, James R. Stewart operated a garage that provided maintenance on cars in the Biscoe area. His son Paul joined Jamie during the second half of the 50s and they were well known as excellent mechanics.

Clifford Lawrence owned and operated a very successful upholstery business on East 24-27 during the 50s. This was C & B Upholstery, and people from great distances brought their furniture here to be recovered. Also, during the 50s, seat covers for cars were an important part of their business.

The railway depot sat on the west side of 220 at the center of town. One of the defining features of Biscoe during the 50s was the numerous stacks of crossties located beyond the depot. People from other places in NC would comment, "Yes, Biscoe is the small town we go through on the way to the beach that has all the railroad ties!"

In the early 50s Harris Lumber Yard was in this same area. It was just a little west of the crossties and near what is now an athletic field.

Kaley Hearne began a shirt factory in the old Baptist Church building on North 220 after the Baptists built a new facility on East Main Street in 1950. Later, Kaley built a new plant on East Main Street. This plant was in production during the 50s.

The Biscoe-Troy Drive-In Theater was located on West 24-27 and was a major source of entertainment during this time. Outdoor theaters were popular during the 50s and I clearly remember the first 3-movie I saw was at this drive-in. They issued special glasses to patrons, and these allowed you to get the full effect of the moving three dimensional objects.



When the Soviets exploded a hydrogen bomb this caused Cold War hysteria. President Truman began the Civil Defense Administration. Schools developed drills and planned evacuation routes in case of a nuclear attack. All across America fall-out shelters were set up. Some families developed their own. One such shelter existed in Biscoe. It was built by O. H. Lambert in his front yard on the corner of West Main and Lambert Road.

The major employer for the citizens of Biscoe during the 50s was the Aileen Textile Mill. In the early 50s this plant was under the ownership of Mr. Douglas Brooks of Memphis, Tennessee. Mr. Brooks built the town library, stocked it with books, and paid for a full-time librarian. He also financed a semi-pro baseball team in Biscoe.

The Aileen plant remained in the ownership of Mr. Brooks until 1955 when it was purchased by Morgan-Jones. During the Morgan-Jones years, the Aileen plant produced a complete line of Dobby bedspreads and the "Insulaire" blanket. By the end of the 50s, the Aileen plant employed around 700 people and was certainly the life blood of Biscoe. After Springs purchased Morgan-Jones in 1963, the Aileen plant was modernized and became the largest blanket and bedspread manufacturing facility in the world. Employment rose to over 800 people and the plant produced 80,000 bedspreads per week.

The Aileen plant has played an important role in Biscoe and Montgomery County. Certainly during the 50s, Aileen Mills contributed much to the local school and various town projects. Employees of Aileen have provided much leadership to Biscoe. They had civic pride and certainly were the largest tax base for Biscoe. Many residents of Biscoe worked long careers there. The magnitude of the influence that the Aileen plant has had in the history of Biscoe is difficult to measure, but it has been huge. I recently talked with Hatsy Smith, and she informed me that she had been employed at the Aileen plant for forty-seven years. That is an example of the strong relationship between many of our citizens and the Aileen plant.

In the 50s Mr. Charles Buie became the chief executive officer for the Aileen plant, and he set the example for the plant's assistance with civic projects. The Aileen plant has always been good school supporters, as well as promoting other worthwhile projects. Our community owes much gratitude for the generous attitude of the Aileen plant through the years.

I believe the location of Biscoe has always been a positive thing in the developing history of the community. Located at the intersection of two major highways, 24-27 and 220, it became a thoroughfare for travelers. Many stopped and purchased things from Biscoe merchants. Also, Biscoe is located near the center of North Carolina, about half way between Raleigh and Charlotte, and about an hour away from Greensboro. It was close enough to large cities to enjoy some of their advantages, but remained rural and avoided problems of urban areas. One of the best things about living in Biscoe was being surrounded with warm, friendly people who provided a healthy atmosphere for excellent living.

Transportation has played a vital role in the history of Biscoe, and that is one area that I think was so exciting during the decade of the 50s. Biscoe was a hub for bus transportation during this time; however, automobiles began to play a major role during this decade. Roads were getting better and family incomes were increasing. Therefore, by the end of the decade four out of five families had a car. Cars expanded our horizon, and people began to vacation more and visit places they had never been.

The 50s have been referred to as the heyday of car culture. There were many to choose from as car manufacturers were in fierce competition to develop new models to catch the attention of prospective buyers. The 50s saw a tremendous increase in the number of cars in Biscoe and, in many ways, these vehicles changed our lifestyles.

The 50s saw two rival sports cars come into existence- the Ford Thunderbird and the Chevrolet Corvette. I wonder if there was any high school student of the 50s who did not dream of owning a Corvette or a Thunderbird. The following is a list of the costs of cars of the 50s:

- 1951 Nash Rambler -----\$1,732.00
- 1953 Kaiser Manhattan--\$2,650.00
- 1956 Cadillac Series 62--\$4,711.00
- 1957 Chevrolet Bel Air--\$2,238.00
- 1957 Ford Thunderbird--\$3,408.00
- 1959 Chevrolet Corvette-\$3,650.00.

Cars had a great influence on our lives in the 50s and made us a more mobile society. The proliferation of cars and people interested in traveling brought about many roadside businesses, including McDonalds, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Howard Johnson, and Holiday Inn. Our lives were changed forever

as we adhered to the Chevrolet ad, "See the USA in your Chevrolet!" This all began in the 50s.

For citizens of Biscoe the 50s brought about many changes, and one of these changes was an increase in leisure time. People also had some extra money to use for entertainment when leisure time was available. One thing that had a major impact on our time was television, as 85% of households in America had televisions by the end of the decade. Some of the most watched TV programs were:

- Texaco Star Theater
- Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts
- I Love Lucy
- The \$64,000 Question
- Gunsmoke
- Milton Berle
- The Red Skelton Show
- Dragnet
- Soap Operas
- The Honeymooners
- Amos and Andy
- Ozzie and Harriet
- Perry Mason
- Alfred Hitchcock Presents
- Quiz and Game Shows
- Howdy Doody Time
- Mickey Mouse Club

Even though some of the effects of television can be negative on the lives of people, television began to have a major impact on lives of people in the 50s.

Another way people used their leisure time was to travel. The 50s brought about a more mobile society. The vast increase in cars and family income resulted in more travel. Biscoe residents began to go to the beaches and mountains for vacations and to visit relatives in distant places. Traveling to nearby cities for shopping and entertainment was a new trend of the 50s.

Religious life played an important role in Biscoe in the 50s. As in the rest of rural, southern America, Biscoe churches were entirely segregated in the 50s and have remained mostly so even today. For African-Americans, Biscoe

had three churches in the 50s, Mount Moriah, Alley Grove, and Hoods Chapel. These churches were a source of pride for the members and gathering places for community affairs, as well as religious activities. Meetings dealing with social concerns and community issues were held in these churches. The main churches existing in Biscoe for the white population during the 50s were First Baptist, Page Memorial Methodist, Biscoe Presbyterian, Main Street Baptist, and Biscoe Christian. The First Baptist moved from a facility beside the Pure Oil Station on North 220 to one they constructed on East Main Street in the early 50s. Also, Biscoe Presbyterian built an educational building during this time. Citizens of Biscoe have always shown a strong interest in the importance of spiritual life and churches were positive influences in our community.

Montgomery County School system during the 50s was segregated. African-American elementary students attended Brutonville Elementary School located in Candor and African-American high school students attended Peabody High School in Troy. Much of the African-American leadership came from students who graduated from Peabody High School. Peabody was noted for having an outstanding basketball team.

White students from the Biscoe area attended the grades 1-12 school in Biscoe. This school was the oldest state-supported high school in North Carolina and had a rich tradition of excellence in academics. The 50s were great years for public school students, and I feel blessed that I was a high school student during that time, especially at Biscoe High School.

The school experienced quite an event in the fall of 1950 as Halloween brought some activities that will always be remembered about our school. These activities made the front page of the Greensboro Daily News and will be a memory of townspeople and students always. Some over-zealous pranksters trashed the school and placed a cow and mule inside the school building. The school was in such a mess that school was cancelled the following day. Some buildings in town also received some decorations. The Kanoy Service Station had a farm wagon atop its pitched roof. I remember, as a college student, when people discovered that I was from Biscoe, being asked about that Halloween. Some people are proud of that night while others are ashamed; however it is a part of our history.

Biscoe High School was small, but it was a great school in the 50s. Its academic standards were high, and the education that students received

prepared them well for the future. Whether they entered college, the military, or the work force, Biscoe High graduates were worthy competitors. Biscoe High School also had a very rich tradition of having outstanding athletic teams and many highly skilled athletes were in attendance at "dear old Biscoe" during the 50s. G.B. Lamm was the principal of Biscoe School during the early part of the 50s. I think he was a great educational leader, and he did much to provide the academic and administrative leadership for our school. He was followed by L. M. Yates and then Roy Shirlen.

The school was a center for social activities and events such as Glee Club concerts, and junior and senior plays were well attended by students and citizens of the community. Our school had a very strong agricultural department and developed much leadership in students with tool judging, animal judging, parliamentary procedure teams, as well as crop and seed judging teams. Biscoe School also had debate teams. Students participated in the "I Speak for Democracy" and world peace speaking contests. Juniors and seniors who were academically eligible were in the Beta Club. Biscoe School excelled in music and had one of the top Glee Clubs in the state. Under the direction of Mrs. Hazel T. Armstrong, the Glee Club had such an outstanding reputation that most of the high school students wanted to be members. Another great educational experience, and one that stands out in the memories of former students, was the five day trip to Washington, D. C.

The style of dress for high school students in the 50s was unique. Girls wore skirts (well below the knees) and sweaters. Socks were rolled down to make a doughnut shape at the ankles. Jeans and slacks were not part of the daily wardrobe. Boys wore jeans (called dungarees) and khakis with plaid shirts as the popular choice.

Earlier I mentioned the outstanding athletic teams that represented Biscoe High School during this time. I want to honor those athletes by selecting two girls and one boy that I consider to be the outstanding athletes of the 50s. I realize that some might disagree with my choice, and I know this is subjective; however, these three people were outstanding athletes and honor students as well.

Girls had only one sport in which they played against other schools and that was basketball. Rules of girls' basketball have changed a great deal over the years and comparisons are difficult. The two girls I have selected excelled in

the game as was noted weekly in area newspapers. Sally Long, class of 1953, and Mary Dan Robinson, class of 1954, led their teams well.

Sally averaged over 20 points per game for four years and scored over 2500 points during her high school career. Sally was named to the All State team as a junior and had the distinction of being the only junior to be named.

Mary Dan also scored more than 2500 points during her high school career, and had the honor of scoring 968 points in one single season. That is a single season scoring record in Montgomery County. Mary Dan was an honorable mention All State player.

These two girls had comparable careers and they were representative of many fine athletes who played for Biscoe High School during the 50s.

During the first half of the 50s, the girls' basketball team had the distinction of being county champions for four years in a row and was named one of the sixteen best teams in North Carolina for three years in a row. That was an unbelievable accomplishment for a small high school such as Biscoe.

My choice for male athlete of the 50s is Howard McKinnon, class of 1952. Howard starred in three sports at Biscoe High and was also an honor student. He played outfield on the baseball team, quarterback on the football team, and center on the basketball team. Howard was a rangy 6 feet 4 inch high school player who was a superior athlete in basketball and football. I believe that he could have been an excellent quarterback in college football; however, he followed his first love—basketball and validated his athletic ability by becoming a starter his freshman year at Campbell College. He had outstanding careers at both Biscoe High and Campbell.

Howard had not only a high level of athletic ability, but he was an honor student, and was gifted with natural leadership abilities. He is certainly worthy of being named “male athlete of the 50s decade” and is a fine representative of the good male athletes who played for Biscoe High School during the 50s.

The 50s was the last full decade that Biscoe High existed. It was merged with Candor and Star High Schools and became East Montgomery High School in 1961. Biscoe High School was a great school and produced outstanding people who have been successful in various careers. To all the

students who attended Biscoe High School, I will close the school section of this history with the words of our beloved school song:

Here's to dear old Biscoe,  
Faithful and true.  
Here's to our banner of  
The white and blue.  
Here's to the men and women  
Who come and go,  
Singing the victory song  
Of old Biscoe!

During the decade of the 50s, three men served as mayors of Biscoe. Joseph C. Reece was mayor when the 50s arrived and served until 1953. Walter L. Jenkins was mayor from 1953 – 1959. Ed R. Burt, Jr. became the mayor in 1959. The following people served the town as commissioners for the town at various times during the 50s: C. R. Poole, W. I. Jenkins, Nelson Foushee, Oscar Stevens, Roy Garner, W. A. Lewis, E. R. Burt, Jr., Robert Asbill, D. W. Hurley, and W. C. Martin. Jr.

These civic-minded individuals served quite well and gave of their time and energy to provide the proper government for our town. I took the opportunity to read the minutes of the town council meeting during the 50s decade, and I came away with much respect for the service that the mayors and commissioners performed. The one thing that was prevalent throughout the decade was how much they were able to accomplish with such a limited budget. They spent the town's tax dollars very wisely. I was especially appreciative of the action the commissioners took in 1953 when they approved supplements of \$500.00 to give to some high school teachers. One interesting note was that the minutes of one town council meeting in the early 50s were written on the back of an envelope. Most of the business dealing with the town was the routine operation; however, I will list three major accomplishments during this ten year period. One was a significant improvement in water and sewer facilities. Bonds were approved in 1954 in the amount of \$160,000 to complete this task, and I think Charlie Miller, town manager, needs to be given credit for a great job in this improvement project. Town streets were also expanded during the 50s.

The other major addition to our town during the 50s was the organization of the Fire Department and the purchase of the town's first fire truck. The first fire station was located beside The Food Store. Biscoe has had a tradition of

having an outstanding volunteer fire department throughout the years, and we praise and honor these volunteers and their service to the community of Biscoe.

There are others who deserve recognition for their service during the 50s. Elwood Long, a resident of Biscoe, served as sheriff of Montgomery County from 1950 – 1958. He also served a stint in the 60s. J. Edgar Maness and James Burt served as members of the Montgomery County Board of Education during the 50s. Mr. Maness also served as a County Commissioner during the 50s.

To the many people who served on committees and various councils, or who worked on special projects during this decade of growth, the citizens of Biscoe extend their thanks. To members of the Lions Club and Biscoe Woman's Club we give thanks for all you did to make the 50s a fabulous time in Biscoe. I hope all the wonderful people who lived in the community of Biscoe during this decade remember it with fondness.

Dewey Jackson