

Excerpts from Bob Edmonds' books

In Willington, Rob and Sammie Perryman were merely a pair of gleeful and thoughtless younglings of nature, full of careless eagerness, who would romp bare-foot among the cool dirt rows of their Uncle Sam Cowan's orchard rummaging themselves peaches, pears, figs, apples, and plums from the laden sagging boughs – all the ripe earth's easy prodigal beauty theirs to snatch and enjoy without question. They also moved everywhere accompanied by a gang of hunting dogs, rambling across the fields, through the woods, and along the creeks and rivers.

As a young lad, Sammie Perryman enjoyed visiting an old woman called Kizi who lived in a little gray cabin way back in the woods near Willington. Folks in the community said she was a witch and could cast spells. Kizi was very frail, slightly stooped, wrinkled, hard of eye, dark as the inside of a cave, and she dressed in ragged clothes. She carried her few coins in a little leather pouch tied to her clothing.

One spring day, Sammie told Kizi about their crop of baby chicks just hatched out on the farm. Kizi told him, "If you would plant baby chicks in the ground they would grow faster." When his Grandmother Jennie Cowan got home from her shop in the evening, she found twenty little chicks planted in a neat row all the way up to their little necks. Sammie did not plant any more chicks and that evening he had to stand to eat!

Sammie relished the opportunity to accompany the Willington men on fishing expeditions to the Savannah River. On one trip when he was no more than six or seven while standing on a high bluff above the river, Nump Cason offered to teach the youngster to swim. Sammie nodded he would like to learn. Albeit Cason's teaching technique consisted simply of picking up Sammie and throwing him into the deep water. When Sammie hit the water, he was still clutching a handful of Nump's chest hair. He learned to swim.

Rob Perryman was the instigator of many a youthful adventure with his younger brother Sammie. He was also the mischievous one. Once he kept Sammie in a tree all day by frightening him with the story that there were lions in the cotton fields near the woods.

Rob was mechanically inclined while yet a youngster. On an occasion, Rob was working on an automobile crank starter using the washstand on the back porch for a workbench while Sammie, barely at arm's length, pestered him with questions and comments at every move. Rob's mischievous nature kicked in. He deliberately dropped the starter wires onto the wet area around the washstand where his brother was standing and gave the starter a quick crank. The electric shock landed Sammie on the ground in the yard. Little brother didn't annoy Rob any more that day.

While still in his teens, Robert Perryman's mechanical aptitude, along with Uncle Sam Cowan's never-ceasing confidence in him, took the older brother to Plum Branch, some 20 miles south of Willington where he landed a job with W. F. Rush & Company, which had a repair shop and Ford dealership. Robert got in on the ground floor of the automobile evolution. He applied himself and earned a high degree of proficiency in the trade of auto mechanics.

The early automobile transmissions with two speeds forward and one in reverse that Robert Perryman repaired in the Plum Branch shop were ruggedly built in keeping with the conditions. These were manipulated by foot pedals, as in the case of the Ford copperhead and Model T, and by the so-called "sliding gears" for other popular models and makes. Also, the simple four-cylinder engine operated well at low engine speeds and gave the good pulling power needed for the dirt roads widespread in that era.

In 1928 the famous Ford Model A represented a more modernized form of automobile. It was lower, faster, and ran well on paved roads that were beginning to be built across the country by then. Still, it retained enough of the Model T characteristics so that it could traverse dirt roads adequately well.

The automobiles of the 1920s and 30s, held up remarkably well. The high, wooden-spoke wheels and great ground clearance proved perfect for knifing through the muddy, slick ruts and for rolling over large stones and low tree stumps that dotted some of the roads of the day.

In Plum Branch, Robert Perryman met Bessie Holway, a dainty little miss of twenty summers. Rev. Lau-

ren Gardner united them in marriage on November 24, 1922.

Sammie Perryman, the younger brother, worked on his Uncle Sam Cowan's farm "from the time he was big enough to work," as the uncle wrote in later years.

When Sammie was but thirteen years old, Sam Cowan hired him to work in his general store in Willington at \$30 per month. Sam raised Sammie to \$35 in 1917, \$50 in 1918, \$75 in 1919, and in 1920 cut him a deal whereby Sammie owned half interest in the store stock.

A devastating fire destroyed the Cowan General Store on a windy March Day in 1921. Now seventeen, Sammie went back to work on the Cowan farm. That season the boll weevil wiped out 70% of the cotton crop.

Spring 1922 offered little hope as Willington teetered at doom's door. In March, Sammie's mother closed her store and took Marguerite Burnette (Sammie's half-sister) to join her husband in Atlanta, Georgia, where he had secured employment.

In the last days of that Indian summer as Sammie Perryman harvested crops, often until a heavy moon hung low and orange over the excitingly colorful countryside, he began to wonder about life beyond the noisy clash of freight trains shuttling through Willington by Uncle Sam's farm. Perhaps the Scottish migratory urge was stirring in his soul.

That fall the Cowan farm as well as neighboring farms harvested a tenth of the cotton crop gathered in 1920. Such yields negated any hope for profit.

Now poorer than two years before, Sammie Perryman made the first big decision in his young life; he resolved to strike out on his own. He secured a letter of recommendation from Bank of Willington Vice President Robert L. Ariail, which read, "Samuel Perryman is nineteen years old and has lived in Willington all his life. It gives me pleasure to say that he is a splendid young man of fine Christian character, reliable, honest and energetic, therefore, I recommend him to any in need of help."

Armed with the letter and a few dollars in his pocket, Samuel Perryman made a beeline to Atlanta. One of the prospective businesses at which Sam asked for work in Atlanta was John Connell's Grocery. Sam presented himself as "an experienced grocery clerk." He must have made a favorable impression; Connell hired him as a butcher.

Minutes into the new job, Connell told Sam to answer the telephone. Sam put the receiver to his mouth and the mouthpiece to his ear. He struggled with the phone a while before Connell answered it. A lady on the phone wanted some porterhouse steaks, tapioca, and Petti john.

The telephone had not been a fixture in Uncle Sam's store. And that was the first time Sam heard there was anything to a cow but hindquarters, forequarters, and the middle. He didn't know anything about porterhouse, had never heard of tapioca, and never did find out about Petti john. But he did learn to cut meat and the two men became life-long friends.

Next, Sam took a job as a photographer's helper for Ben Franklin Press, an Atlanta firm, which printed brochures and school annuals. The company president, Sam later remembered, dressed him up in knickers, golf socks, sport shoes, and fancy shirts and had him sitting up straight, drinking tomato juice, and mingling with rich young folks at summer camps – this country lad who had been mostly accustomed to dealing with farm mules, hired hands, and hunting dogs. Sam adjusted though and learned.

Sam's résumé eventually included barbering, news butch on the train from Atlanta to Louisville, and clerking in a dry goods store.

At last Sam Perryman discovered his niche. He ventured into the printing business and became one of the best multicolor pressmen in the Southeast, printing everything from school textbooks to posters for Barnum and Bailey.

His printing skills carried Sam to jobs in San Francisco, Chicago, New Orleans, and a number of cities in the Mid-West.

Finally, Sam settled down in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. By 1929, he held down a job as cylinder pressman by day and attended night classes in school. He continued to further his academic education and attended technical schools to improve his printing skills.

From *Destiny of the Scots-Irish*.



- Tom Poland photo

Across the Savannah

The Great dividing line

By Tom Poland

A Southern Writer

Yet another dud weather storm forecast teaches me something. When the next Ice Age arrives, its frozen sheet will grind to a halt where I-20 crosses the Southeast. (Assuming civilization lasts that long.) Winter forecasts prove over and over that I-20 forms a great dividing line as snow goes. Like some bully holding candy out to a kid then snatching it back, snow teases those along the shadow of I-20.



Winter after winter, radar reveals blue, pink, and white blotches rolling north of I-20. Below it? Green blotches of rain. Southerners who live along or south of that band of asphalt can forget snow. It's a latitude thing.

No snow. That delights folks who hate snow. It disheartens Southerners who yearn for the white stuff. As Izzy, that lame name for a winter storm, churned through, I looked for flakes. Nothing. Then I noticed ice coating pine needles. Great. While those north of the dividing line enjoy snow we to the south get raw cold rain and possibly a destructive ice storm.

Over and over, dud winter forecasts build us up, then let us down. When winter radar and forecasts set snow to swirling in the heads of children and a few adults, me among them, I think of good things. One, the way snow softens and smoothes the landscape. Second, how snow revives childhood memories. I'd wake up on a morning when bluish light seeped through windows. Pulling back the curtain, there it was – that crystalline miracle. Fresh snow meant a walk through woods. With boughs crusted white, creaking branches sporting a white meringue, the woods seemed magical.

My boots crunched and squeaked as creatures of the woods revealed their trails. Dad and I tracked a rabbit. We found it still as stone melding into leaves of brown. Seeing it came as a shock. Raccoons and birds stenciled wintry patterns onto snow, that powdery wildlife preserve where animal prints reveal how alive the woods are.

Those memories retain their magic to this day. And it's good I have them because I-20 is a killjoy, a spoilsport, a wet blanket of cold rain. Were I a weatherman, I'd never predict snow south of I-20 in the classic Deep South. I'd strike a country twang and say, "Here's your forecast. No snow for those of you below I-20. You can wait a month of Sundays. No ways snow's gonna happen."

But here we are deep into January with February, the coldest month of all, yet to come. They're already predicting another winter "event" next weekend. Is there a chance we'll have snow? No. Whatever lame name the next weather event sports, I assure you it won't drop flakes south of I-20. It's the wrong latitude for snow. It's the wall that stops flakes in their tracks. It's the great dividing line.

I recall not one white Christmas. I remember at most a handful of decent snows. So, when I want to see snow down South I look forward to dogwood's blizzard of white. When all those ivory bracts tumble to the ground, it's a snow I can count on year after year, above and below the great dividing line. And best of all you can enjoy the show without getting cold. Dogwoods, the South's real snowstorm.

Kitty's Korner

By Kittye Craig - Jackson

What makes you worthwhile is who you are, not what you do. Where do we get the idea that what we do is more important than who we are? Could it come from the fact that we live in a culture in which people idolize other people just because they're on TV or in movies, football players or baseball players, famous or well-known? Could it be because people in our society tend to value those jobs that pay really well over the jobs that don't?

One of the most important things that I've learned to do over the years has been quite simple but not all that easy to do: to value myself based on how I treat other people and what I do to help other people rather than on what job I do or how much I'm paid. Let's face it – few of us are paid what we're really worth, and the very wealthy among us often are paid much, much more than they're really worth. In other words, money is rarely an accurate indicator of just how "worthwhile" we actually are.

What we do is usually referred to in terms of our jobs or professions. Sometimes we talk about mistakes we've made or problems we've had as "what we do." But we can refer to who we are as loving, caring, compassionate, forgiving, hopeful, positive, giving, and so many other things. If we're in a down time, we may be pessimistic or negative or demanding or unsympathetic, but we always have the choice to change those terms, even if we don't change what we do at all. We can do almost any job in the world and still maintain our inner peace and still get a great deal of satisfaction from it, for the peace and satisfaction are more a result of our attitudes than they are of the jobs themselves.

You are worthwhile. I am worthwhile. All we have to do is believe this truth for our lives to become more fulfilling and enjoyable. And as we come to believe it more and more, our actions will become more and more reflective of the true worth that abides in us all. Let's allow that worth to rise to the surface rather than keeping it deep inside of ourselves.

RED ROOSTER EMPORIUM
SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE!



118 South Main Street McCormick
864-852-9244
Monday - Saturday
10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

REED PROPANE GAS
"Your Locally Owned Propane Supplier"



117 N. Peachtree Street
Lincolnton, Georgia 30817
Ask About Our New Tank Set Special
Phone (706) 359-4501 • Toll Free (800) 994-4501
Kenneth Reed

Hugh Brown
Insurance Agency



112 Augusta Street
Serving McCormick County for over 70 years.
864-465-2106
Homes, Businesses, Autos, Bonds
Representing State Auto, Hartford, Dairyland, Allied and Foremost Insurance Companies. Call for a Quote

BROWN'S
MECHANICAL SERVICE, LLC



It's Heat Time!

Perry Brown
183 Price Mill Rd. • Parksville
Home: 864-333-2591 • Cell: 706-825-2032
AN INDEPENDENT LENNOX DEALER

Messenger deadline for all news articles and ads is NOON Monday.
Phone: 852-3311
Email: mccmess@wctel.net

McCormick Messenger
(USPS-335-040) is published weekly by McCormick Media, Inc. Subscription rates are \$29 in McCormick County and \$35 elsewhere, annually. Periodicals postage paid at McCormick, S.C. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: P.O. Box 1807, 120 S. Main St., McCormick, SC 29835. Email: mccmess@wctel.net