



Points East

By:
Ike Adams

James M Crase wouldn't even look at you if you called him Jim or plain old James. The name is "James M. no period, Crase, and thank you for noticing the distinction," he would say to anyone who called him anything else.

Not that they did all that often because James M lived in the only house up a little hollow that he called Host Owl so close to the Rockcastle and Lincoln County line in Kentucky that the state surveyors were never quite sure where to place him.

"I get tax bills from Lincoln and I write back and tell em I live in Rockcastle once in awhile and they write back and tell me to please pardon the error. Then I get tax bills from Rockcastle and I tell em I live in Lincoln and they write back and say please pardon the error. One year I think I live in Rockcastle and the next I think I live in Lincoln but I'm never plain blank sure until the tax bill comes. A man's memory is a funny thing," he would say with the epiphany of perplexity frowning his scowl.

I got acquainted with James M because I asked my mother, Wayne Stewart, where might be able to buy some home-made butter when I first moved down to the flatlands from Letcher County in the early seventies.

"I don't know that James M actually makes any butter but he has a milking cow or two and he is trying to reinvent the churn. I don't know that I'd eat either if he brought it in but he comes into the mill in Brodhead every once in awhile and shows me diagrams of his churn. He also buys a lot of dog food so don't get out of the car unless you are invited." Wayne told me after driving me up on Host Owl a couple of times and not catching James M at home.

So one day I was in the country and I couldn't find Wayne at the store nor Bill James (then President of The (then) Bank of Mount Vernon) and I decided to head out to James M's. Wayne had previously taken me there in a big 4-wheel drive Ford pickup with nearly two feet of ground clearance and I was in a '73 Chevy Chevelle that left tail pipe marks in a heavy fur.

Getting to James M's house required fording Buck Creek, a stream popular with white water canoeists, twice, but I pulled up into his yard with exhaust assembly still intact.

The residence consisted of an unpainted but exceptionally neat and well-kept batten board cottage maybe 15 feet square, with a weedless, picture-perfect lawn and veg-

etable garden covering maybe an acre. An old push cycle mower sat at the corner of the house and appeared well and recently used. Another two acres of pasture housed a small barn/shed built of the same material as the house. It was fenced with tightly strung barbed wire on weathered least post.

Tall, mature, hardwood forest surrounded the enclave. No sooner had I turned off the motor than a Lassie-like collie came bounding from the front door and James M, himself was at his exuberant heels. The collie wanted to be friends. James M was not so immediately inclined.

"Who are you and what the \$%*!% etc. etc. are you doing trespassing on my property?"

"I came to buy butter." Silence. Deadly quiet silence. It was July and even the grasshoppers found it was too late to do besides rub their legs together.

"Butter????????????????? You want \$%*!% + \$5 + \$5 butter???? He was absolutely aghast.

"Cow butter," I said and I was not nearly as intimidated as James M. I wanted me to be because the collie was rubbing up against my leg and sticking out his paw to shake hands. James M grimaced in spite of himself. "I don't sell butter but get on out and come on in and maybe I'll see if you deserve some. Grub-hoe don't make too many mistakes."

James M spent that afternoon confiding to me that he'd just as soon let many people know where he was but that he had plenty of friends and family that checked in on him. He bought a lot of dog food, he told me, at Wayne's because it made the cows give better milk and his ultimate goal in life was to invent a churn that would run off a rocking chair on the same principle as a steam engine.

"What a man needs to do is learn to churn butter while relaxing and I've just about got it figured out," James M Crase used to say. "And when I do, my name will be right up there with Henry Ford's."

James M died in the late seventies. At least I went back one spring a year or two later and he and the cows and the fresh country eggs I used to buy from him were no longer available. Grub-hoe didn't come bounding down the rutted lane to greet me. The yard and the field were grown over with horse weeds and tall polk berries.

James M (without a period) Crase is gone now. So is the last good but-

ter I will ever eat and the dream of churning it without an ounce of intended effort. Still, I believe that the steady, methodical splash of a clapper into a gallon or so of clabber pow-

ered by the rhythmic rocking of James M's favorite chair is something that would have made America a much greater place than the one we know. I can certainly vouch for the butter.

Sweet and Sour

By Zi Graves



Windows

During a siege of depression about the latest problem I have to face of having to underpin my house because of termite damage before the job can be finished of repairing the damage from the fire and smoke of last fall's accident, was the straw that broke my will to go on, I was ready to give up. The day the contractors came to do the finishing touches and leave me with a beautifully repaired and ready to live in home again a flaw was found in the wall covering which turned out to be the house is settling from an invasion of termites and was causing the walls to buckle. My always ready to soothe depression hit full force. I lost control of reasoning and cried, "I simply can't take anymore, let them eat it up."

After a day of crying and groveling in self pity I had a talk and prayer with my Pastor, Rev. Romans and neighbor, Bea before I was willing to "take my problems to the Lord and leave them there." That is what I did.

My solace in times like this is writing. So, I grabbed a pen and paper and began to count my blessings.

My first thought was of the many happy hours Polly and I spent together when we were planning the kitchen being built on our farm home. Mat was doing the planning and building of three more rooms onto the original four rooms we had built in 1937 and I had the job of designing the kitchen. She used the graph paper and imagination of where and how the equipment would be placed and I, the one who would be using it, decided on colors, height of counters and how many lazy susans were needed. This was one of the happiest times in my life. My husband using his skill as carpenter and cabinet maker with our daughter, Polly, working beside us with her child, Chad, playing along side of Grandpa and getting his lessons in doing things the right way.

The finished job was the pride of our life. The kitchen Polly and I had designed and Mat built was perfect. Two windows above the sink looked out over the lawn where a small lilac bush, a gift from my own father shortly before he died had been planted and beyond that the orchard that supplied us with more fruit than we could use and was a favorite place for the cardinals, robins and blue birds to serenade us from. Another window was placed above the lowered counter where I could easily roll dough, bake or mix a cake with the beaters at eye level. The counters in the baking area had been designed

a few inches lower than the rest to make cooking enjoyable, not a dreaded chore. Out of this window I could see the back lawn where a clothesline, attached to a corner of the wash house, (now Polly and Chuck's retreat) and a post close to the back railing of the spring, was often filled with clothes flapping in the wind. Beyond this scene, one looked into the forest of trees in every stage of growth. In the back yard was two of three fully grown oaks that had been more saplings when we moved there.

Not too many years ago a swing hung from one of the limbs where my dear friend, Mable Taylor, and I used to swing. Oh yes, we were too old to pump, but not too old to enjoy being pushed as high as we could go. It was from this window I watch the trees react to the different winds that blew. Some would get quite agitated when a storm was brewing, almost like kids at play, their limbs striking out then suddenly flipping back in place. Most of the time though they were quiet, well behaved youngsters allowing soft breezes to ruffle their leaves and promising more shade when they got a little bigger. But there was one big cast of rain or wind, this tree would flip to one side then cautiously spring back to full height and repeat the side to the other side. I became mesmerized when I watched the constant movement and thought of ocean waves slapping on the beach.

I love windows located so we can enjoy the world outside while we go about our household duties inside. The window in the old kitchen faced out on the same view I just described but at a different angle. The early morning sunshine came in through the front door and crept into the kitchen where a corner of the table was exposed and that is where I began writing for the Signal. I loved the warmth of the sun on my shoulders and the sight of the shadow on the trees out there. The kitchen windows there, (in the old part were above the sink where I could see the garden, barn and cattle going in and out of it.)

The dining room windows in the

new dining room were large double ones where Mat and I could sit after dinner and watch the squirrels run across the wooden fence and an occasional fox slip through the orchard, without fear of being harassed by the dog.

Buddy, nor being shot, for we were not hunters and Buddy, in some mysterious way had adopted our appreciation of wild life and would quietly lie beneath the window and watch them come and go. From this window I watched the seasons come and go and the beauty of each one was different. Springtime, every tree would be loaded with blossoms, and since there was a variety of apple trees, there were multi colors of blossoms. In the summertime, the tree would be loaded with apples in different stages of maturity, some till green and others red or yellow. Autumn, my favorite time of year, was when the leaves turned and apples fully ripened, showed their true colors. Bright red, dark red, yellow, sometimes I wonder if they didn't borrow a few left over colors from the leaves of the forest. The two big windows were frames for nature's beautiful beauty. Then came winter when the world was covered with white. When the snow lodged in the tree and migratory birds settled down to put on a show of color and song it seemed we were watching a beauty contest between the cardinals and blue birds. One morning we looked out to find a fresh snow had fallen and the branches of the apple trees were bending under the weight of the snow. That in itself was beautiful but soon a flock of bright red cardinals began settling on a branch followed by the rest of the flock that also settled on a branch till the whole tree seemed to be speckled with bright red dots. That was a sight I had never seen before, but the next thing was even more astonishing. A large blue bird sailed in and took possession of the next tree and soon it was also covered with birds only this time they were blue. This was another picture I would have liked to framed. If no one has ever seen two big trees weighted down with snow then covered with the combination I have just described you have surely missed one of nature's wonders. Aren't windows wonderful? To be able to sit by one and see such beauty that it causes one to stop and utter a prayer of thanks to the Creator of all things great and small makes us more aware of the ingenuity of man that invented the glass windows.

One more memory of a window I loved and is now, like so many things in my life, been replaced by what

many people call progress, is the one in my present kitchen. Do any of my readers remember the many times I have talked about the trees in my yard between my kitchen and the street

below the house? The beauty I watched take shape in the spring when the leaves were young, the full shade beneath them when the sun was high in the summer, the gorgeous beauty of leaves when they began to change color in the fall and how squirrels played in them summer and winter, and how the big lawn between them and my house was always a reminder of the fields around the house on the farm? Well, big business with its constant desire for ways to make more money and no thought of saving a big of natural beauty for the sake of those who still appreciate it has cut all those trees and erected a wall in front of the window and a drive around the building where cars can park or drive through what I suppose will be a drive through to a window where those with more money than they can easily handle turn it over to others to take care of. No I do have something different to look at. It is a blank wall.

I really appreciated a visit with Mat's nephew, Boyd Graves and wife, Joann, who surprised me Sunday evening when they dropped by for a few minutes to chat and stayed long enough to tell about all the exciting things going on around the old home place where he was raised. It made me want to simply go and sit on their porch and listen to the sounds of night I have all but forgotten. When I married Mat I vowed to myself that "this family would be my family" and so they really are and prove it every time one stops by to see how things are with me. This is probably the best time I may ever here to say, "Thank you, kids." Adults now, for your love and attention to Aunt Zi. I love all of you.

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