



Points East

By: Ike Adams

I used to tell my now-adult children that, when I was growing up, that we used to be excited about Christmas on Blair Branch even when we were really sure that all we'd be getting under the tree was a three-pack of new underwear, a three-pack of socks and maybe a new pair of jeans if the weather had been good and the mines hadn't shut down because of bad coal-bald roads.

And to be perfectly honest, if you've been wearing the same three pairs of underwear all year and taking care of the laundry and you are a growing boy; there's some reason to be excited.

Postage stamps only cost three cents but my younger brothers and I would write our letters to Santa and stuff them into a single envelope addressed to the North Pole, C/O WTCW, Whitesburg, KY so that Don or Virginia Crosswaite could read them on the air.

And our letters were full of optimism.

We asked for shotguns and fishing tackle, even though the oldest (me) among us was only ten years old and I had known for most of that first decade that whatever Santa was going to bring was most likely al-

ready stashed in the trunk of Dad's old Chevy or under lock and key at Uncle Willie's house just down the road. But you never actually knew for sure and writing those letters was an easy way to let our parents know what we'd really like in a perfect world.

I can tell you for sure that we sat around the radio for two weeks every evening from 4:30 to 6:00 PM right up til Christmas Eve and nobody—not a single letter writer—ever once requested socks and underwear or even requested socks and underwear for Christmas.

One year I wrote in for a full size western saddle. "It does not have to be as fancy as Roy Rogers' as long as it straps down good on a real big horse."

Of course, I signed this letter with the faithful pledge to leave a bottle of RC and a Jumbo Pie under the tree in case Santa or anybody in his entourage might be hungry after climbing down the chimney at our place. Royal Crown (RC) Cola Bottling Company and the folks at Rambo Bread, who made Jumbo Pies, were big sponsors of WTCW's "Letters to Santa" and we knew, practically from the time we left the womb, that if you wanted your letter read on the air,

you'd better end it by promising to leave some of the sponsors' products under the tree. As a consequence, RC sold more bottles of cola in December than it did in the other 11 months combined. Thank God; it aged well because sometimes it didn't get consumed until the 4th of July next year.

So they read the letter on the air and Mrs. Crosswaite, in a rare fit of editorializing, wondered why any kid in the head of Blair Branch (we always included directions to our house in the letter) could possibly need a saddle and she actually giggled about whether or not we already had Trigger in the barn.

I was humiliated on the spot and ostracized by classmates the next day.

What we had was old Dock, a BIG Percheron work horse who weighed in at 1,600 pounds, and thought he was a lap-dog. We rode him bareback with just a bridle and the bridle was just for show because he would go anywhere you asked him with gentle commands of "gee" "haws" "what" "gitup" etc. Old Dock did as much in raising my brother Keith and me as our parents. He taught us how to plow. He knew precisely how a bull-tongue, double-shovel, nine-cut cultivator, or turning plow should be running in the soil and he'd turn

around and stare you down if you were not handling the implement to suit him. Set the disks incorrectly on a harrow or over-load a sled and you got the same treatment.

So I wrote back to WTCW that very night and I told them that I had the best horse in the whole world and I wouldn't take a million dollars for him (and that was back when a million dollars was real money) and that they could kiss my hind end because I wouldn't be writing back ever again and they could keep their damned old saddle. They never read that letter on the air.

Old Dock died of old age in the summer of 1969 when I was a junior at Pikeville College. As best we know he was between 29 and 31 years old. He never had a saddle and he never really needed one.

In the meantime, I am coming up on 54 years. I really like those WigWam wood socks that are firm fitting with finished heels and toes even if they do cost a bit much and I wear X-Large in long johns these days. Either one will do unless you have time to shop for a good, solid Homer hump in the key of E or D.

And if you're buying me briches, I'd really rather have corduroys than jeans.

Stroke Prevention

Presented By: Dr. George W. Griffith

Strokes have decreased for several decades now, bringing it from a very common malady to a couple generations ago, to a much less common problem now in spite of longer life experiences.

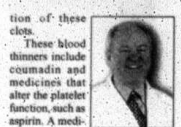
The first big step in preventing strokes came with treating hypertension. An elevated blood pressure is one of the biggest risk factors. In the last couple years, we have been able to show that even treating blood pressure, we considered normal a few years ago could reduce strokes by up to 36%. A person should have his blood pressure checked at least once a year.

An irregular heart beat called atrial fibrillation contributes to strokes because small clots form in the heart which can travel to the brain and block the circulation. Atrial fibrillation can be prevented in many cases by controlling high blood pressure and if it does occur, anticoagulants work well to prevent the formation of these clots.

These blood thinners include coumadin and medicines that alter the platelet function, such as aspirin. A medicine called ticlopidine has shown benefits that are even greater than aspirin's benefits. Even newer medicines are showing promise of being more effective and having fewer side effects.

Another treatment with proven benefits is surgically unblocking the arteries of the neck. To determine if a person is a candidate for this type of surgery, special tests of the arteries and a consult with a vascular surgeon are required.

Finally, stopping smoking is one of the most important ways you can take charge in the battle to prevent strokes.



Dr. George W. Griffith

Mount Vernon Signal

Publication Number 366-000
Periodical Postage Paid in Mt. Vernon, Ky. 40456
606-256-2244

Published every Thursday since November, 1887. Offices in the Mt. Vernon Signal Building on Main Street in Mt. Vernon, Ky. 40456. Postmaster: send address changes to P.O. Box 185, Mt. Vernon, Kentucky 40456.

James Anderson, Jr., Publisher Emeritus; Richard F. Anderson, Editor
Pierline M. Anderson, Managing Editor
Pamper Berger, Advertising Manager; Jessica Lawson, Circulation Manager

SUBSCRIPTION RATES
In County: \$16.75 Yr. Out-of-County In State: \$21.75 Yr.
Out-of-State \$30.00 Yr.
e-mail address: mvsignal@sun-spot.com

Family Dollar Store

Mt. Vernon Lions Club President David DeBoard met with Santa Claus recently. He has agreed to come to the Family Dollar Store to take pictures with the children of Rockcastle County on Thursday, Dec. 19th, from 8:30 pm to 8:00 pm (\$2 per picture). All the Lions Club members urge all parents to bring their children to support the Lions Club. All proceeds go to get glasses for children.

We Join You In Prayer and Celebration

Christmas is a time to reflect on our blessings, and we're honored to count your friendship among ours.

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