

Holler Life - We Ain't Poor

By DAVID CHALTAS

It was the picture that triggered my memory. It could have well been the house that I grew up in. For some reason I felt a kinship and bond with the image. It reminded me of my childhood and growing up in the holler of Eastern Kentucky.

Oh for those days of yesteryear. How many recall sweeping the yard, feeding the chickens and hogs? Can you recall carrying coal up the path and chopping wood? Do you remember walking out of the holler to fetch some staples? Have you ever placed paper in the cracks of the floor to keep out the winter wind? Have you ever eaten powdered eggs, commodity cheese or peanut butter? Those were the days and I wouldn't trade them for a rich man's pocket lined with gold.

Yes, those days were hard, yet they were filled with character building tasks that have been eroded over the years. I recall and embrace the good, bad, and ugly of those years with pride. For I would not be who I am if I had not experienced the memories that for so long I took for granted.

When mother and I moved from the little two room log cabin that was nestled deep in the woods around Red Oak, Michigan, we moved into a bird box house. It only had four rooms. There was fireplaces in the living room and bedroom. The kitchen had a flu and an old kitchen cabinet in a corner with a built-in flour sifter. A maple table with fold down leaves was there and a metal table with plastic on the chairs' padding. There was a brick flu in a corner and the soot had fallen all over the floor. The floor was eight to ten-inch boards made of rough lumber. Over the years, people had worn the roughness off of it. There was dirty wallpaper



on the walls and the kitchen window filled with seasoned cobwebs.

The other room was probably 8x10 in size and had a metal twin bed in it. I used that old bed for years. The living room possessed no furniture but it did have a large old grate. The walls had newspapers pasted on some type of board. It looked like sheet rock but consisted of an almost wood-like texture. There was a worn-out rug, and someone had painted around it. Papers were crammed between the cracks of the planks to keep out the cold air in the winter. Mother and I always did the same as we 'winterized' the house. The windows had plastic curtains on them and the slightest breeze sent them sailing!

The bedroom was a mirror image of the living room, with a fireplace in it as well. The chimney was made of mud and rock and a solid stone was used as the hearths. There was a closet in the area my mother chose for her bedroom. There was no running water or a bathroom. An old outhouse sat next to the chicken coup just past an old shed full of lumber. The house design was a product of the early 1900s if not earlier. Across the branch was a hog lot that my uncle fixed up later and put some hogs in it. I was given the chore of feeding them rag weeds and paid the sum of twenty-five cents a week for my labor (Excerpt from Where's My Pony?; Chaltas, David).

I recall when the power company came and connected our electricity. It was just before Christmas. The lights hung from the ceiling and mother's bedroom had a round white receptacle attached to the ceiling. The only plugs were on the ceiling light hanging from the center of the rooms and we had to run extension cords to plug in lamps.

Those were the days and I am proud to say that those experiences sharpened the blade of my life. I yield to known in my love for holler living and to this day, I live on that old farm in the left hand fork. I offer a poem I penned that has been published in one of my books. It is entitled, We Ain't Poor.

Plastic curtains on our winders.
Old truck with rusted fenders.
Drawing water from the well.
Carried inside in a pail.

Wringer washer on the porch.
Heating water with a torch.
Outhouse over yonder hill.
Dusk calls of the whippoor-will.

Cutting ragweed to feed the hogs.
Chopping wood from dried out logs.
Putting lumber in the shed.
Sleeping on a feather bed.

Going to fetch a spring chicken.
If I don't, might catch a lickin!
Listening to uncles snore.
Walking to the country store.

Waiting on squirrel hunting season,
Before the frost and the freezing.
Take the broom and sweep the yard.
Cat head biscuits made with lard.

Having to take a sponge bath.
Listening to elders laugh.
Carrying coal up the hill.
Taking husked corn to the mill.

Uncles playing a tune or two,
While sipping on their home brew.
Chasing fireflies after dark.
Listening to our hound dog bark.

Greeting neighbors that you meet.
With no brogans on your feet.
Waiting in the creek or branch.
Going to an old barn dance.

Memories of yesterday.
When we all went outside to play.
Came back home in time to eat.
Gravy, chicken, and hog meat.

Times were hard but there was love,
And many blessings from above.
It wasn't then but now it's funny,
Ain't poor: just got no money!

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6:00-7:00
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7:00-9:00
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6:00 to 9:00

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APRIL 25th & 26th IN HARLAN COUNTY KENTUCKY

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Harlan County Public Schools

Kindergarten and Preschool Registration
For the 2025 – 2026 school year

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|----------|------------------------|--------------|----------|----------------------|--------------|
| April 14 | JACES | 8:30 – 12:30 | April 21 | Black Mtn Elementary | 8:30 – 12:30 |
| April 15 | Evarts Elementary | 8:30 – 12:30 | April 22 | Cawood Elementary | 8:30 – 12:30 |
| April 16 | Green Hills Elementary | 8:30 – 12:30 | April 23 | Wallins Elementary | 8:30 – 12:30 |
| April 17 | Cumberland Elementary | 8:30 – 12:30 | April 24 | Rosspoint Elementary | 8:30 – 12:30 |

Any child who becomes 5-years-old on or before August 1, 2025, is eligible for kindergarten enrollment. Any child turning 5-years-old after August 2, 2025 may submit a written request to the Harlan County Board prior to September 1 for consideration of early entry. Please contact school principal for petition process. Children who become 6-years-old on or before August 1 must be enrolled in either kindergarten or a primary program for the 2025 - 2026 school year.

Preschool K-4 registration is open to children who turn 4 on or before August 1, 2025, eligible for free lunch and qualify for the at-risk preschool program. Applications will be taken at this time.

Three (3) year olds may attend K-4 if they have a disability.

Head Start Registration is open to any child who is 3 or 4 years old on or before August 1, 2025. Applications will be taken.

Please note screenings for the Harlan County Schools Childhood Development Center will be held at each school on the dates listed above.

To Enroll:

1. Child must be five- (5) years-old on or before August 1, 2025 for kindergarten or three- (3) or four- (4) years-old by August 1, 2025 for preschool or Head Start
2. Child must present a certified birth certificate.
3. Child must have a Social Security card.
4. Child will need a physical examination, a current immunization certificate, and eye exam.
5. All adults must present a valid i.d. at the screening. Limit two (2) adults per child.

In conjunction with registration, all children will be screened in the areas of motor skills, concepts, language, vision and hearing. This screening will help teachers to determine the individual needs of the students.

The screening is free of charge and is offered as a service by the Harlan County Board of Education and Head Start to all children attending preschool or kindergarten in the Harlan County Schools and Head Start centers.

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