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# the Randolph Bulletin

Serving the Heart of North Carolina



We take a look into the beginning of Zack White Leather Company.  
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Look Inside to See the Latest Sales from Your Local Hardware Store!

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## Zack White Leather Company

*by W.T. Cox*



Almost every small town has at least one store, shop, or restaurant that is unique. It may be a family bakery that has existed for generations or a clothing store that sells designer creations made by the owner. Whatever the type, these remarkable one-of-a-kind businesses give us our rich culture and history and make exploring small towns an adventure. One such place in Ramseur is a business called Zack White Leather Company. Once you enter the doors of their modern building located at 809 Moffitt Street, it is like a step back in time. The smell of leather, rich and strong, floods the shop. You are welcomed by a friendly black Labrador retriever named Jasmine who is the official store greeter. Shelves are lined with dyes and finishes of all sorts and behind the long glass counter are racks of small drawers filled with hundreds of different tools used for carving and stamping leather. Further into the store are high shelves filled with piles of tanned hides. Hanging from the stores' second level are huge hides of hair on cow, goat, elk, and bison that are hung from the railing, giving the store a rustic appeal. To the novice, the huge variety of leather hides is quite overwhelming. Only in a very few places in the entire country can you find such a variety of leather hides for sale. How did a company like this find its way to a small town like Ramseur?

Zack White Leather Company has been a Ramseur business since it was moved here back in 1984 from its original location in Raleigh. Until 2003, the business was located at the corner of Liberty and Main streets in downtown Ramseur. For many years it was a central attraction for the downtown with a Civil War cannon mounted on top of the building. In 2003, the business moved to its current location on Moffitt Street alongside Cox Home Center, which is owned by the same owners. The history of a store like Zack White is interesting as well as the man for whom the business draws its name.

The leather findings business is an old business that has its beginnings in the shoe trade. The Company originally was referred to as a "findings company." The term "findings", which is also used in the jewelry trade, originated in Europe many years ago when craftsmen had difficulty locating the items they needed. These people became known as "finders" and the material they found was referred to as "findings", which is a convenient way to cover a wide variety of items. Today, with the availability of the internet, almost everyone has the ability to search for items they are needing and companies calling themselves finders are a relic of the past. At one time the leather industry was the largest industry in America, with US Leather being the largest corporation in 1901. Even as late as the 1960's, there were dozens of shoe repair shops and leather stores scattered in every county. Zack White Leather Co used to employ a salesman that had designated routes and serviced stores from the Tidewater region of Virginia to Charleston, SC, and up to the piedmont section of North Carolina. Back then, companies stayed in their own "territories." Zack White had the eastern portion of NC, and other companies had their own territories. Southern Leather concentrated in SC and up to the Charlotte area, JH Cook & Sons had the western part of NC and Acme General the southern part of Virginia.

Today, with the advent of the internet, the days of having a "territory" are over. The days of traveling salesmen are over and the Company markets their products through several websites which makes their products and services available to a broad range of customers. Zack White Leather Co ships products both domestic and international. Zack White Leather Company is one of only a handful of companies still in existence where you can purchase the wide variety of items used in the craft, tack, shoe, and leather trades, and the products are actually stocked where customers can come in and browse the inventory. The store is so unique, that people will travel hundreds of miles just to visit the store. In one case, a customer brought his whole family from Maine down to Asheboro, and while the wife and kids toured the NC Zoo, the father and son spent the day at Zack White shopping. Customers are considered "local" if they live within a 300-mile radius of the store and many choose to drive the distance so they can feel and examine the leather before purchase. Many customers will tell you they come to the store so they can talk with Zack and learn from his knowledge of the trade or get his advice on what purchase to make. Actually, Zack has long been gone from the business that bears his name.



Zack White was employed by this company when he got out of high school and was transferred to their Raleigh branch in 1939. He began as a salesman and traveled one of the established routes that ran to Wilmington down to Charleston. Back then a salesman was required to pay his own way when on the road. Back before WW11, hotel bills and meals for a week's travel averaged less than \$15.00. Small town hotels usually were no more than \$1.25 a night and the most expensive meal you could buy was a T-bone steak, which cost 75 cents, with a 5 cent tip (10 cents if you were a big spender), Zack was able to save up enough money to purchase the business. In 1954, Zack took a gamble and built a new building next to the train track on Wake Forest Road in Raleigh. The road soon became a major business highway and Zack's leather business prospered. It was not long before styles and trends began to change to more of a "throw-away" economy, and people repaired their shoes less and less. So to keep up with the ever-changing market, Zack diversified into the leathercraft trade and began stocking and selling tack items along with high-end briefcases to the executives in Raleigh. As the shoe business continued to decline, the business continued to diversify and when Zack reached the age of 70, he sold out to one of his longtime customers who moved the business to Ramseur in 1984. Zack was a former president of the National Association of Shoe Finders and on their board of directors for several years. The business continued to use the Zack White name because of the established reputation and recognition it had within the leather industry and the loyal following of crafters who chose to purchase their products from the company.

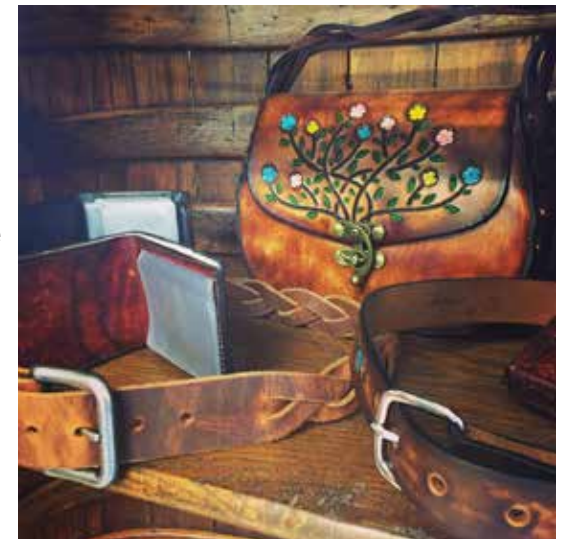


To reach a more diversified customer base, the business started to manufacture a line of belts and finished goods. Today, the manufacturing and production part of the business supplies products to a wide variety of businesses that, in turn, sell in retail stores or at craft shows. They produce many "confined" products for other companies that sell the products through their own name or trademark. You may purchase a belt or leather item for other stores and never know that it was originally manufactured in Ramseur. The main retail line currently sold by Zack White Leather Company is "Maxwell-Leigh Creations." This line of belts, handbags, and fashion items are sold primarily over the internet through Etsy and in select stores and are advertised in trade publications and magazines such as Our State. They also produce a line of canine collars and leashes under five different style brands and are the official dealer for Cobra Leather Working Equipment for the southeast US.

The increase in retail customers that visit the store can also be attributed to the wide range of craft items that are offered. Handmade jewelry and pottery items by WT Cox are available for sale. Customers can have custom knife sheaths or holsters made to order,

also repair services are offered for a wide variety of leather items, including ladies' handbags. The company also sells a huge variety of motorcycle apparel, including vests, chaps, jackets, and accessories. The MC apparel is not manufactured by the company, but many items can be ordered custom-made. The backlog for custom make items can be several months, but the wait is usually worth it.

Zack White Leather Co. illustrates the unique, one-of-a-kind experience that can be had when exploring small towns. The personal attention and unique products that visitors witness when visiting the store are just some examples of the hidden treasures that await travelers who take the time to explore the small towns of North Carolina. There is no better place to start exploring than right here in Randolph County.



## Yellow Checkered Shirt

by WT Cox

Today as I was getting ready for church, the shirt I put on triggered a memory and I began reminiscing about my childhood. I was privileged to have grown up around my grandparents when I was young. We lived just across the road from their farm, and my dad worked with his father in the lumber & construction business, so we saw them almost every day. My grandad was a quiet, stately man who I admired greatly. I spent as much time as I could with him. During the summer he would let me help with the chores around the farm. I helped him feed his hogs during the evenings and sometimes he would let me ride with him to downtown Ramseur to have grain ground into feed and pick up supplies. When we got to the milling company in downtown Ramseur, he would back up the side dock. The owner, Mr. Shoemaker would greet us at the side door and we would shovel our pickup load of corn and wheat into the large abyss that was in the floor of Mr. Shoemakers' milling company. The hum of the grinding was always mesmerizing to me, and I shuttered to think of what would happen if an animal accidentally were to fall into that pit. It was just an open hole in the floor that was covered by a wooden trap door when not in use. Once you opened the door, a metal shoot would direct anything thrown into the pit to grinders that would turn it into fine feed or flour. Mr. Shoemaker would then wrap a burlap sack around the mouth of the funnel that came down inside the store and with a quick pull of a lever, fills up a 100 lb sack of feed and quickly tie it with his special knot. It was then loaded onto the customer's truck. My job was to shovel the grain into the pit and then pull the bags to the front of the building where my grandfather would be waiting to load them onto his truck. Most of the time the feed we had milled wound up into hog feed. Each year, Granddad would grow out several hundred hogs to "top hogs" (when they got to around 200 lbs) and then take them to the sale in Siler City. He gave me one of his flock for my efforts every year that I helped him.



My thoughts were directed to those days while I was dressing for church. We have a new pastor, and his preaching has caused me to actually enjoy going to church again. I was up early so to get dressed and be there on time. Now my wardrobe is sort of limited. I have never been one to buy a lot of clothes. In fact, I rarely ever throw away anything. That becomes a problem when you grow in places that you don't want. For some reason, my neck seems to be (well, it actually is) much larger than it was years ago, so my old shirts just don't fit anymore. They don't button like they used to either. When I try to fasten the top button to put on a tie, it feels like I am being choked. I do have a few shirts that have a large enough neck that they are comfortable, but most of these are not what I would call "fashionable." I had put one of these shirts on this Sunday, and as I looked in the mirror, my mind went back to those days with my Granddad and Mr. Shoemaker. While we would grind our own grain for hog feed, Granddaddy would purchase his chicken feed at the store. After we loaded up the bags of feed we had ground, he would go through the stacks of chicken feed and pick out several with patterned designs on the bags. Back then, access to a clothing store was limited to an occasional trip to town or mail order from the Sears and Roebuck catalog. Companies would pack their feed in patterned cloth bags that rural women could re-use for dresses, aprons, and table cloths, or whatever they chose to make from them. These feed sacks came in a variety of colors and designs, and when we returned from town with our load, my grandmother would come out and inspect what we had brought. "Now that one will make a nice tablecloth (or something)" she would say "You be careful with it and don't tear it up." Granddaddy would nod, as to say "don't worry." The shirt I had chosen for church was a yellow checkered one, and it reminded me of those feed sacks and the anticipation of my grandmother getting something new.

Simple things, for a much simpler time. People seemed to be much happier back then.

Thankful for memories.  
(336) 824-4488

[www.randolphbulletin.com](http://www.randolphbulletin.com)

[info@randolphbulletin.com](mailto:info@randolphbulletin.com)

# The Legend of the Wabash Cannonball

*by Mary Murkin*

PREFACE: One of the most famous train songs of our American folklore is that of the Wabash Cannonball. This song debuted in the late 19th century as anonymous hobos made up verses about this mythical train and shared them with all of their brethren. The geographic run of this train was from St. Louis to Detroit—all along the Rock Island line. It is suggested that this mythical train—the Wabash Cannonball—was a “death coach” that appeared when a hobo died and carried his soul to his reward (aka Gloryland). As a hobo’s life is ending, they hear the train whistle blowing as the Wabash Cannonball approaches for them to board one last time and take their final ride.

## Tadpole and Hap

Bob “Tadpole” Garland held his hands close to the open top of the fire barrel. While warming his cold old bones, his mind wandered back to his early days as a young train-hopping hobo. He smiled as he remembered his old three-legged dog, Hap. Hap was a very old dog now and had been missing for several days. Tadpole suspected that Hap went deep into this hobo jungle to pass away quietly.

Hap was appropriately named for being such a haphazard little dog that liked to chase each train that rumbled through this hobo jungle. It was during one of these train chases that Hap lost his right rear leg. He ventured just one inch too close to the tracks on one of his runs.

In olden days, a hobo jungle was considered to be an outdoor waiting room for any of the train-traveling hobos who needed a break from miles and miles of the steady clickety-clack of the big steel wheels of an old boxcar. It was also a great layover spot to wait to change trains or directions of travel.

One evening when Tadpole had hopped off of a train in a hobo jungle in a quiet little town in central Illinois, he decided to take a walk around the town. What he found would greatly change his life for the better. As he ambled east along Lincoln Street, he noticed a rustic old sign at the end of a long curvy lane. The sign said “Anglers’ Pond.”

As Tadpole walked along the lane to the back of the property, he spied what looked like a charred little cabin. As he got close to the little house, he could tell that it had been burned many years ago—but not burned down!

Tadpole decided to push the door open and take a look around in the dim little cabin. It took a few seconds for his eyes to adjust to the dark room. Once Tadpole could see around the room, he realized that this was his new “sometimes home.”

Anglers’ Pond was an old-time fishing club for area folk who liked to fish from the dock or out on the lake with a non-motorized boat. It was a sleepy little club in a sleepy little town.

Several weeks after Tadpole took up residence in his new “sometimes home,” he heard a sad sound coming from his front stoop. He opened the door and saw the saddest little pup he’d ever seen. He lifted up the small dog and carried him into the cabin. Once he set the dog down, the little fella began dashing about the room. He was so rambunctious that he knocked over the stack of wood that Tadpole had gathered for keeping warm at night. It was immediately after this that Tadpole gave his furry new companion the spunky name of Haphazard—Hap for short.

Seldom did a hobo’s accoutrements consist of much more than the clothes on his back and a few treasures in his pockets.



However, now that Tadpole had a “sometimes home” and a trusty companion in Hap, he began to acquire some worldly possessions--the same as a man who actually has some roots put down somewhere. One of the biggest worldly possessions that Tadpole had acquired (besides his “sometimes home”) was a very old, trusty bicycle. He was so lucky to be walking down Lincoln Street when a kind old gentleman was rolling the bike to the curb on garbage day and leaned it against his garbage can. Taped to the seat of this old bicycle was a note that read, “To someone who is able to ride this, as I no longer can.” As the old man walked toward his house, he turned around just in time to see Tadpole read the note and clasp his hands together as if in prayer and then place himself carefully on the bicycle seat. Tadpole tipped his hat to the kind old gentleman, who, in turn, smiled and waved back.

Days and weeks faded into years as Tadpole and Hap would busy themselves fishing, cooking, visiting with area townsfolk, and riding the rails whenever the urge hit them to see other parts of this fine country.

People in this little town in central Illinois came to know and like Tadpole and Hap. Many of the townsfolk wondered what Tadpole’s “story” was and how he came to be a train-hopping hobo. The rumors and speculations were diverse. They ranged from him being a wounded war veteran to being a millionaire who couldn’t take the rat race of that life anymore and left it all behind. Never did anyone press Tadpole for an explanation. Tadpole was such a part of this little neighborhood that people used to take notice of when he and Hap would be off riding for a couple of weeks at a time.

As the years went by, Tadpole’s time away became fewer and fewer. Tadpole used to say, “Hopping on and off those boxcars isn’t getting any easier.” But what Tadpole and Hap still enjoyed doing was going down to the nearby hobo jungle at train times to visit with any of the younger fellas who were still riding the rails and would love sharing their adventures with Tadpole as they sat around a campfire and drank hot coffee.

On this particularly cool evening, as Tadpole held his hands over the fire barrel, turning them this way and that, he smiled while listening to three new arrivals tell about what was happening up in Chicago. It made Tadpole remember the exciting days of hearing about Al Capone and other gangsters who held a lot of influence over the railroads in those early days.

It was during this storytelling time that Tadpole started to realize that he wasn’t feeling very well. It was just a shortness of breath he was feeling. As the three traveling visitors were about to venture into the town to look for something to eat, they asked Tadpole if he’d like to join them. Tadpole declined their offer and called after them with a smile, “I believe I have a train to catch.”

Just after this exchange, Tadpole felt his legs give way and he slumped down to the ground and leaned against a tree. He heard a train whistle blowing and saw the light getting closer. As the train came into hobo jungle, Tadpole looked up and saw the door on the last boxcar was wide open and he could hear a familiar noise. He realized that the noise he heard was Hap barking and wagging his tail and welcoming him aboard the Wabash Cannonball. Tadpole was going for one last train ride. He was going home.

*Author’s note: Back in my hometown of Bloomington, Illinois, I lived about two blocks from a hobo jungle and there really was a hobo of this description named Bob Garland. The cabin, the bike, the dog, the fishing club are all actual things from my childhood memories. The rest of these details were just arranged to make for an interesting little story. Thank you for your time! ~~Mary*

## Where Is the Mirror?

*by Debra Vernon*

By the time you read this, Christmas 2021 will have come and gone. More than likely, the latest and greatest toy you bought for your child(ren) has already been cast aside, as they create imaginary forts and dungeons out of the cardboard boxes their gifts came in.

I bet you spent a great deal of time preparing lots of food for consumption by family and friends. You cannot go wrong with food! It is a universal need that bonds hearts and souls around a table. And, more than likely, there were Christmas decorations inside and outside, along with the requisite Christmas tree. I confess, putting up those decorations seems a lot more fun than taking them down. Especially when it comes to that tree! I have an artificial one and trying to get that thing to fit back in the box it came in is practically impossible. It is like trying to get my chunky self into that swimsuit I wrote about a few months ago: stuff busting out in every direction!

One of the long-standing jokes between my daughter and me during the Christmas season has to do with a gift I purchased for her probably 10 years ago. Young women always want to look their best before leaving the house, and she is no different. Although there was a large mirror in her bathroom, I decided I would purchase a full-length mirror to hang on the back of her bedroom door. This would provide an opportunity for her to check out the “total effect” of her wardrobe and makeup selections. I knew it would be a hit, and not hit my wallet too hard either. So, I purchased it a few weeks before the big day and hid it until Christmas Eve.

That night, I circled through all the hiding spots I had stashed gifts in. Even in her early 20's, that girl would rummage while I was away at work, so I had several secret caches to hide stuff in. I had gathered the goods and placed them near the tree. I then remembered I had purchased the mirror. I went to the usual hiding places; no mirror. I searched in the “not so usual” hiding places; no mirror. I tore the house up (quietly) looking for the mirror; no mirror. Where was the mirror?

Exhaustion finally ended my search for the evening. I figured I would recall the location by the next morning, and all would be well. Christmas morning came and went, and I still could not find the mirror. Now, I could understand if this were a small trinket of some kind, easily tucked away in a drawer or closet. But this mirror was probably fifteen inches wide, and about 4 feet long. You cannot just tuck that away somewhere unless that somewhere is a pretty big spot! And I am the one who hid it! Why could I not remember where I put it? I do recall thinking at the time that it was a good spot she would not think to look in. Too bad I would not think to look there again myself.

I checked the usual spots again, along with closets and under all beds. I even checked between the mattress and box spring of the bed in the spare bedroom; no mirror. Our house has a hip roof, so there really is not an attic, but I climbed on a ladder and lifted the hatch to look up there too; no mirror. I called family members to see if perhaps I had asked them to store it at their house; no mirror. Where was the mirror?

She got married and moved out not long after that Christmas. And believe it or not, the mirror has not been located all these many years later. Each year we ask ourselves, “where is the mirror” and laugh and ponder where it may be. We have searched places too small or too obscure to be the hiding spot, but we are optimistic it will be found one day! But by this time, I suspect we may never locate it. And do you know what? That is okay. I mean, it has become a cherished family tradition; searching for the elusive missing mirror. Not exactly a Hallmark movie moment, but hey, our family is a bit off-kilter anyhow, you know?

So, the next time you put something in a place where you are SURE you will remember it, think of me. You too may find yourself wondering; where is the mirror?

# OBITUARIES

Courtesy of Loflin Funeral Home and Cremation Service of Ramseur.

We at the Randolph Bulletin send out our thoughts and prayers to the families who recently lost loved ones.

## Clyde Richard Ore

Clyde Richard Ore, 82, of Staley, died Friday, December 31, 2021 at Randolph Hospice House in Asheboro.

## Salena Wilder

Salena Cole Wilder, 55, of Ramseur, died Tuesday, December 28, 2021 at Atrium Health WFB High Point Medical Center in High Point.

## Roland "Butch" Brady

Roland "Butch" Brady, 81, of Asheboro, died Sunday, December 26, 2021 at Randolph Hospice House in Asheboro.

## Harlin Cain

Harlin Lee Cain, 82, of Fayetteville, formerly of Randleman, died Sunday, December 19, 2021 at Cape Fear Valley Medical Center in Fayetteville.

## Teresita Hernandez

Teresita Gonzalez Hernandez, 77, of Siler City, died Saturday, December 18, 2021 at Randolph Hospice House in Asheboro.

## Michael Nooe

Michael Aaron Nooe, 51, of Ramseur, died Thursday, December 16, 2021 at Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital in Greensboro.

## Thomas Edwards

Thomas Ray Edwards, 78, of Staley, died Tuesday, December 14, 2021 at Randolph Hospice House in Asheboro.

## John Burrow

John Thomas Burrow, 64, of Asheboro, went to Heaven to be with his Savior on Monday, December 13, 2021.

## Karen Henley

Karen Seawell Henley, 62, of High Falls, died Thursday, December 9, 2021 at FirstHealth Moore Regional Hospital in Pinehurst.

## Delores Ann Chriscoe

Delores Ann Sanders Chriscoe, 69, of Asheboro, died Wednesday, December 8, 2021 at Randolph Health in Asheboro.

## Ronald "Ronnie" Rogers

Ronald "Ronnie" Lee Rogers, 74, of Staley, died Wednesday, December 8, 2021 at Siler City Center.

## Laquita Hadley

Laquita Vronah Hadley, 47, of Asheboro, died on Wednesday, December 8, 2021 at Randolph Health in Asheboro.

## Roxanne Callahan

Roxanne Marie Callahan, 48, of Asheboro, died Tuesday, December 7, 2021 at her residence.

## Darrel Ray Leonard

Darrel Ray Leonard, 63, of Ramseur, died Monday, December 6, 2021.

## Mary Ann Parnell

Mary Ann Ayers Parnell, 73, of Ramseur, died Saturday, December 4, 2021 at Randolph Hospice House in Asheboro.

## Margie Asbill

Marjorie Garner Asbill, 74, of Seagrove, died Wednesday, December 1, 2021 at Randolph Health in Asheboro.

## Joshua Cox

Joshua Ray Cox, 28, of Asheboro, died Wednesday, December 1, 2021 at his residence.

## Johnny Floyd Hughes

Johnny Floyd Hughes, 83, of Ramseur, died Wednesday, December 1, 2021 at Randolph Hospice House in Asheboro.

## James Byrd, Sr.

James Oliver Byrd, Sr., 75, of Asheboro, died Tuesday, November 30, 2021 at Woodland Hill Care & Rehabilitation in Asheboro.

## Wanda Lambeth

Wanda Coulson Lambeth, 81, of Asheboro, died Monday, November 29, 2021 at SECU Jim & Betsy Bryan UNC Hospice Home in Pittsboro.

## Barbara Walker

Barbara Jane Albright Walker, 78, of Ramseur, passed away Monday, November 29, 2021 at her residence.

## Shirley Duncan

Shirley Bailey Duncan, 66, of Siler City, died Saturday, November 27, 2021.

## Thelma Ratliff

Thelma Matney Ratliff, 89, of Ramseur, died Saturday, November 27, 2021 at Randolph Hospice House in Asheboro.

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336-824-4488.

Options are available if you would like to have a picture and/or longer obituaries for your loved one.  
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## Growing up in Randolph County.

*by WT Cox*

Memories are precious things. They enable us to keep a part of our life experiences with us as we grow old. As I recall events from my youth growing up here in Randolph County, some events seem just as real today as they did many years ago. We have memories of life events and of pets that we have had over the years, but the most significant memories are the ones of people we have known. These are the memories that we hold most dear.

When I grew up in the '50s and '60s, Ramseur was a different place. It was certainly more rural, but the people were different too. People knew their neighbors and seemed to care about each other more back then. I remember my grandmother cooking pies and meals for neighbors who lived on our road or in the neighborhood. Most everyone around us went to the same church... Parks Crossroads or Jordan Memorial. Whenever a neighbor had an illness or life event, the whole neighborhood would come together. Now, most people cannot name neighbors who live across their street or even next door. Where we lived was in the country, and our "neighborhood" consisted of a couple of miles of dirt roads and farm families who stayed in touch with each other. This was especially true during the harvest season. Some of our closest neighbors grew tobacco, which back then was a very labor-intensive crop. Neighbors who farmed would come together and help each other during planting and harvest time. Priming the leaves was the hardest part of growing tobacco, and this was the first "real" job I had growing up.

I always was one to look for ways to make money. My dad used to let me plant pumpkins and green beans that I sold to Harvel's Grocery in Ramseur. Mr. Harvel was a kind man and always willing to take my produce. I think daddy was just glad to have me working with him and it kept me occupied while he worked in his garden. I mowed both our and my grandparent's yards every week, but never got paid money for that. The concept of an "allowance" was not something ever considered in our household. If I was to have money of my own, I had to find ways to earn it. I picked blackberries in the summer and sold them to neighbors in Town for 15 cents a quart, or 50 cents a gallon. My socks always smelled like the kerosene that I used to keep the chiggers off me. I rode my bike once a week to Alton Cox's, who lived about a mile up the road mowed his yards around his house and barn for \$1.25 a week. That was "big" money back then. He also would pay me 50 cents a day to put feed into the feeders of his chicken house.

When tobacco harvest season came, all the neighbors were busy working in the fields and looking for help. I got my big chance to help after being asked in church one Sunday morning if I wanted another "job". Tommy Conrad was needing help with tobacco and the

first priming was going to be that Monday. I eagerly accepted the challenge and was told to meet at their tobacco barn around 5 AM. While I had been around tobacco the last year, I had never primed before. I knew it paid good money and was hard work, and I was determined to be the best primer ever and hopefully earn those high wages I had heard about. It was rumored that some experienced primers actually got as much as \$2 an hour for their work. That was almost too good to believe. Tommy told me he would start me out at 75 cents an hour and see how well I did, but I would have to wait to be paid until the end of the season when they sold their crop. That was fine with me and still more money than I had ever earned before, so I gladly accepted and promised to be at his barn bright and early on Monday. He also told me to make sure I wore a long sleeve shirt and pants. I thought he was just kidding with me. I had never primed before and I knew the summer days were hot. When working out in the heat, surely no one would wear long sleeves. I showed up on time, but in shorts and a tee-shirt. The "old" men at the barn just smiled at me and said "OK, let's get at it". There were several of us "primers" who headed out to the field behind two old mules that were each hitched to two long wooden sleds. I overheard one of the guys ask Tommy why he did not use a tractor to pull the sleds like his neighbor down the road did. Tommy replied, "now why would I do that? You have to leave out a couple rows of tobacco for the tractor and with mules, I can plant more per acre. Besides, they can turn sharper than a tractor too".

I was excited about my new job. Determined to be the best primer there, I eagerly listened to the instructions on how to "prime". The bottom leaves were the biggest, and of course the closest to the ground, so you had to work bent over all the time. I was young and small, so that was not a problem.. Actually having to look at the ground all the time gave me an opportunity to look for Indian arrowheads while I worked... another bonus. Tommy told me to grab the first three or four leaves. "Just twist your hand around the stalk and the leaves will pop right off. Then you put them under your arm and after you get all you can hold, then lay them in the sled, with the ends facing out." That seemed simple, I thought. Soon, I discovered that Tommy was not kidding with me when he said to wear long sleeves. The cold, tobacco leaves were wet with dew and the sticky resin made the leaves stick to my skin when I unloaded an arm full. I did not have time to look for arrowheads because the mule kept the sleds in front of everyone and I was always trying to "catch up" with the person in the row next to me. When we got to the end of the first row, I was the last one to finish. Some of the "old" men were already way down the next row before I finished my first one. I soon realized that priming was not

only a hard job, it was one that took some skill to do right and quick. The sticky leaves were already beginning to cling to my arms, and I soon realized the big mistake I had made in not listening to Tommy's advice. I did my best to keep up, and some of the men would encourage me along the way with things like "come on boy, you can do it." I was determined to prove I was just as good as them, but actually it took everything I could muster just to keep up. After what seem like an eternity, it was time for a "break". We got a drink of cold water from a long ladle that was dipped into a bucket. Everyone drank from the same ladle, which I thought was strange, but the water was welcomed after what seemed like hours priming (actually it probably was just an hour or two). After a few minutes rest, it was back to priming. The mules responded to commands such as Gee and Haw... they seemed to know exactly how far to stay ahead and when to stop. The white sandy soil was ideal for sleds and when one sled was full, it would be pulled to the side of the field and another one hitched up. One mule was used to pull the sleds to the barns, that were located down the dirt road to a lead to the home and barns. Most rural roads back then were dirt. The sandy soil of eastern Randolph County was ideal for tobacco farming and Randolph County had the largest amount of dirt roads in the State. It was not un-common to see farmers pulling their crops down these roads during harvest season.

I remember one time when we had finished a field, and the mules were both hitched to two sleds, full of freshly primed tobacco leaves. We were headed to the barn when disaster struck. Already bone-tired from a day of priming, everyone was glad to be finished, when suddenly one of the mules began kicking and snorting. The mule took off running and the two sleds were turned on their sides, with greenish golden tobacco leaves scattered all over the road. One sled busted apart when the mule turned the corner and the other was in pieces by the time the mule stopped at the barn. "What happened", someone shouted. "Bee" Tommy said. "Must have gotten stung by a bee." We began gathering up the leaves of tobacco that littered the roadside placing them into another sled. When I got to the barn, I expected to see Tommy beat the mule for the damage it had done, but instead, he was brushing him and giving him water. He calmed the animal down, realizing it was frightened and had not done anything wrong. "You have to take care of your animals," he said. "They have feelings too."

It is strange what things you remember. I had not spoken to Tommy since his wife Patsy died. I knew they were close. I had just seen him a few weeks ago when he came to church with his sister. Tommy had lost his eyesight. He recognized people by their voice. It was hard to believe he died so quickly.

I know that there is a lot of more important things people remember about Tommy Conrad, but for me, I will always remember him giving me my first "real" job... and of course those mules.

## Thomas "Tommy" Edward Conrad



Ramseur- Thomas "Tommy" Edward Conrad, 77, passed away Monday, December 27, 2021 at Randolph Hospice. Born June 14, 1944 in Randolph County, he was the son of the late Clarence Reid Conrad, and Maude Johnson Conrad.

Tommy was preceded in death by his parents; his wife of almost 56 years Patsy Spencer Conrad; and son, Spencer Reid Conrad. He is survived by daughter, Donna Conrad Long and her husband Reggie of Robbins; grandchildren, Colton Long and his wife Mary of Robbins, Chesley Cox and her husband Ethan of Troy, Carter Long of Robbins and Steffenie Porvaznik and her husband Mike of Raleigh; great-grandchildren, Reid Thomas Long, Wyatt Samuel Cox, and Gibson Stone Long; brother, Kenneth Conrad of Naples, FL; sisters, Cathy Johnson and her husband Gene of Asheboro and Sherri Needham and her husband Barry of Ramseur; and sisters in law, Jane Geringer of Asheboro, and Sandra Baucom and her husband Larry of Asheboro.

A graveside service was held at 2:00 pm, Sunday, January 2, 2022, at Parks Crossroads Christian Church, 2057 Parks Crossroads Church Rd, Ramseur, NC 27316 with Reverend Randy Kelley, Reverend Ransom Love, and Reverend Todd Nance officiating. The family wishes to thank Randolph Hospice House for their care of Tommy in his final days. In lieu of flowers, the family wishes for donations to be made in Tommy's honor to Randolph Hospice or Parks Crossroads Christian Church.





We want to see your kids' arts and crafts! Submit them to [info@randolphbulletin.com](mailto:info@randolphbulletin.com), and they may be shown in future Randolph Bulletin issues.



**Joke of the Day:** A five year old boy went for a week-end trip with his grandparents. On the way home, they stopped at a country restaurant for lunch. The little boy left the table to use the restroom by himself. A moment later he returned with a confused look on his face. He says, "Grandpa, am I a rooster or a hen?"

**Joke of the Day:** Waiter: "How do you like your steak, sir?"  
Me: "Like winning an argument with my wife."  
Waiter: "Rare it is!"

**Joke of the Day:** Boy 1: "How did you get that bruise on your arm?"  
Boy 2: "I ate some Easter candy."

Boy 1: "Eating Easter candy won't give you a bruise."  
Boy 2: "It will if it's your big brother's candy!"

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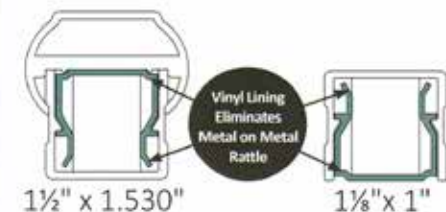
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Ronald Burgess



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Michael Caviness  
Paul Caviness  
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Rebecca Cox



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Vickie Cox  
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## Vegetable Beef Soup

Soup is always a good way to use up leftovers. For me, I may have some pintos, or white beans left over, or maybe green beans, but mostly, when I want some homemade soup, I make it from scratch. Well, "scratch" may not be the best way to describe my soup, but it works for me. I begin with selecting a large pot, sometimes I may use a crock pot, but when I do, I always seem to have more soup in that pot, so I have learned to use a large pot instead.

Go to your pantry and select the items you will be using... I suggest a can of the following (can is appx 14 ounces):

- cut green beans
- Lima beans
- pintos
- whole sweet corn
- tomato sauce
- 2 cans (or one 28 oz) diced tomatoes

Put into the pot and bring to a low simmer:

- add one cup of dices onions
- two cloves of garlic (two table spoons), diced
- one cup of chopped carrots
- one to two cups of chopped potatoes

Stir, and add:

- One teaspoon of garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon of oregano
- One table spoon of black pepper
- 2 teaspoons of salt
- One table spoon of crushed red pepper... or a couple of dried chili peppers

Add a helping of chopped beef (browned and seared) if you want vegetable beef. If no beef, then a can of beef broth will do..

Sometimes I will cut up a half sweet pepper and add it to the mix, or a half cup of chopped celery.. this is strictly optional.

--Add 8-10 small red (or white) potatoes... peeled and cut into small chunks (one large Irish potato will also do).

--Add a small can of tomato paste to thicken, or another 14 ounce can of diced tomatoes... I will usually use a can of my canned tomatoes from my garden.

--If you have a few fresh mushrooms in the fridge, now is a good time to use them. I suggest around 6 to 8 medium size, washed, sliced, and cut. This will add some more flavor to the soup. Almost anything can be added, but these items are my usual selection. If I have some corn on the cob in the fridge, then I will cut the corn off and add that too... it is all good!

Bring to a boil for 3-5 minutes, then reduce to a low simmer for at least one hour. This is about the time when I look at my creation and wonder what I can add to make it better... it already smells great. A couple bay leaves... rubbed to crust and grind always is a good choice... and so is a tad of molasses... but it has to be Grandma's.. that is the best commercially available. And while I am stirring, I will usually crush up another dried chili pepper and add it to the mix... what the heck, I only have me to please.

While it is boiling, stir every 30 seconds or so... you don't want to let it stick to the pot or it will affect the taste and be a booger to clean. This is an easy meal to fix, and it normally will last me two or three days. I always fix more than the two of us will eat.. but it will keep in the fridge for a week... and you can freeze it too. Just remember to wash your hands after crushing that last dried chili pepper... it is easy to forget until you wipe your face and feel the burn...LOL.





## Oyster “Stew”

This traditional Southern favorite is a favorite of mine... but not in the “traditional sense”. First off, I want to say that I absolutely love oysters: raw, steamed, and even fried. They are also good in a stew. Most Southern receipts have only three main ingredients: oysters, milk, and butter.

My parents used to love to fix Oyster Stew when it was cold outside.... I never felt the romance. They would eat the milk with crackers but leave the oysters. hello! What is the point of Oyster Stew if you leave out the oysters? Did I mention that I love oysters? Well, my “stew” is for oyster lovers. First, acquire yourself some good oysters... some farm-raised ones are as good as wild-caught...but you have to be careful to purchase oysters from reputable farms. I prefer select or larger oysters. You will need at least a pint... more is always good. A good pint should yield 20 select oysters. Get a good size gallon pot and put in 2/3 quart of milk... a half stick of butter (if you use margarine, then I recommend throwing away the whole batch)... add salt, black pepper... some crushed red pepper, or one whole dried chili pepper .. crushed ... a good sprinkle of Old Bay seasoning, some garlic salt... and the oysters... I usually drain off some of the “juice” and put them in a bowl.

In a saucepan, cut up a few small potatoes. I prefer small red potatoes.. peel and slice.. add chopped celery, a half chopped sweet onion, some sliced round carrots, and a dash of Tobasco sauce...bring this to a simmer just long enough to halfway cook the potatoes. Then put the oysters, with the “juice” into a saucepan and bring them back to a simmer. Let the oysters “swivel up” and then transfer to the stew pot. Once everything is in the stew pot, bring it back to a low simmer for 10 minutes. Be careful not to let the milk come to a boil. If you do, then it will start to stick at the bottom of the pot and will affect the taste. Be sure to Stir frequently. Then let stand at low heat for at least 10 minutes for the taste to thoroughly mix into the stew. Once it cools, it is ready to eat.. Get some oyster crackers.. they are a must...add black pepper to taste.



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