

Dru Pippin

Memoirs

On the following pages are Ozark stories, observations, jokes, and philosophical musings (which Dru called "hilosophy") recorded by Dru Pippin during 1975-1976. The transcriptions of the audio tapes were a collaborative effort by Dru's nephew, William Eckert, and Terry Primas. More to come in the next issue of the Gazette.

Annual Float Trip

As far back as I can remember, my father and Uncle William Bradford and two or three of my father's close friends from the city camped out on the Gasconade River for at least a week every summer. When I learned to swim and paddle a boat, I was always included. I got to fish and paddle about but my main job was to keep the free range stock, especially the hogs, from getting into the camp and our supplies. We had a rule: anyone complaining about the food had to wash the dishes. One morning, Dr. White said, "Whoever made this coffee got that water from the lower side of the boat", which was reserved for washing and so on. He said it tasted like soap and quickly realized what his criticism meant for he then said in a loud voice, "And that's exactly the way I like it."

Uncle William, with his key winding Waltham watch that he carried through the Civil War, a spacious tackle box with various sizes and colors of corks and bobbers, and trot line staging, home made lead sinkers and hooks galore of all sizes, a cord stringer or two, and a big reel in a drawstring sack was the extent of his tackle. There was always a can of oil, a small bottle of Sloan's liniment, and a bottle of Early Riser's pills in it. In the top layer of the box was a plug of fresh chew, store bought chewing tobacco, and a can containing slippery elm bark, cut in pieces about an inch long and a half inch wide. Years ago, the local doctor told him to cut his tabacca chewing down to at least three chews a day. This he followed religiously. But after the morning chew, he would refresh it from time to time with pieces of the slippery elm until the time for the noon day chew, and so on until the evening chew, and then on 'til bedtime. When bark of the elm tree was right, he would take draw knife and take sufficient new growth bark from the tree until it was time to skin it again. He hung these slabs of bark in the smoke house and at odd times cut up a supply in the proper size. I guess about the only ones using slippery elm today are

Part Two (Part One 2009 OSG)

those sneaky baseball pitchers who slip in a spit ball every once in a while. This might be a good way to quit chewing, too.

Fish Basket

Have any of you ever seen a fish basket? Most of you who were born and raised in rural Ozarks have, I know. Well, to enlighten you, a fish basket is really a fish trap. Depending on the length and size needed, the maker would fashion three or more hoops from green wood that would bend easily. One end was slatted with green split saplings at about an inch or inch and a half or two inch intervals. Such slats were placed across and around the hoops and across the end so as to completely make a trap similar to what a banana crate looks like today. Water could pass through the openings in the trap. Anything too small to keep could readily escape. Inside the front hoop and pointing inward at an angle toward the rear of the trap and pointed so as to leave an opening of about three inches were sharply pointed slats. A fish could swim into the basket as the slats would give as the body might rub the slats. But once inside, the fish could not swim out against the sharp ends of the stakes that faced him and the small hole that they made. The principle was the same as you see in the glass minnow trap used today. A sack of corn meal, sometimes wheat bran and shorts were mixed with the corn meal, and placed in a gunny sack inside the trap. This was the bait. The trap was placed in deep water with the open end downstream. A few rocks were placed inside the trap to hold its position and a hidden wire was attached to the trap and the other end to a tree made the whereabouts of the trap unknown to anyone except God and the trapper. They are illegal, sure, but they were not many years ago but they are now. There was a time when every farmer on the river had a trap and he kept his table well supplied with fresh fish. Most of them were carp and suckers and red horse, catfish, and drum, and they caught every once in while a big bass. It's illegal now because fish were being caught and sold for profit.

I well remember an experience I had. My father and Jack Gorman were in one boat, Ed Dewey and his son in another, and Ed Clemens and me in another. We were on a day's float and we drew straws for who would go first,

(Text continued on Page 56)

Dru Pippin

a profile

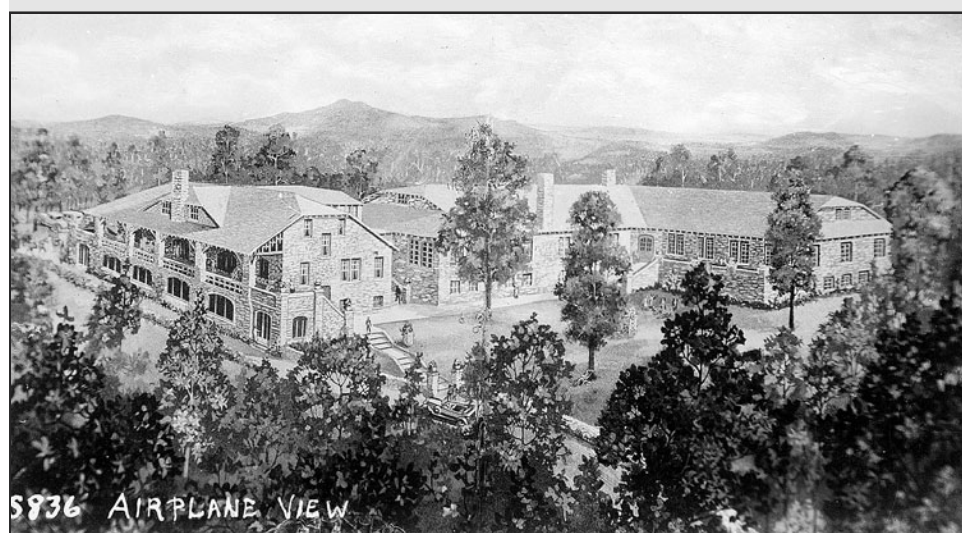
by William Eckert

Dru L. Pippin was born April 13, 1899 in Pulaski County, Missouri, son of Bland Nixon Pippin and Nancy May Vaughn. The Pippin family had settled in the Pulaski County area in the late 1840s, having come from Tennessee and Alabama. Dru was named after area doctors Drura Claiburn and Lavega Tice. His father was a professor of Dentistry at Washington University in St. Louis and Dru grew up in large part in St. Louis. Dru caught the so-called Spanish Flu and moved to Waynesville to recover. He attended the University of Missouri at Columbia and met and married Eva Luther. Dr. Pippin, who had a great love of the Ozarks and the outdoors, purchased property near Bartlett Spring and built a resort there named "Pippin Place". Dru and Eva took over management of Pippin Place and ran it until Dru closed it in the late Sixties. While Eva stayed at Pippin Place, Dru also had an insurance agency in Waynesville. In 1947 Dru was appointed to the Missouri Conservation Commission and served until 1959. He



Dru and his younger sister Lauramae strike a comic pose on the porch at Pippin Place in the 1940s. Photo courtesy of William Eckert.

served another term from 1961 to 1964. Dru was very active in the effort to make Fort Leonard Wood a permanent installation. Dru had two children, Dan and Nancy. Dan was captain of the United States Olympic Basketball team in 1952 and won a gold medal. Eva died in 1962 and Dru later married Wilda Miller. After Dru closed Pippin Place, he and Wilda moved to a small house in Waynesville where he died in 1981 and Wilda in 1980. Dru's father was always fascinated with the unique aspects of Ozark culture, such as the stories and the dialect, and Dru followed in his footsteps. In the 1970s he was asked to record some oral history memorializing his own observations of Ozark culture, customs, stories, and dialect and he recorded some 10 hours, most of which are available at Ft. Leonard Wood.

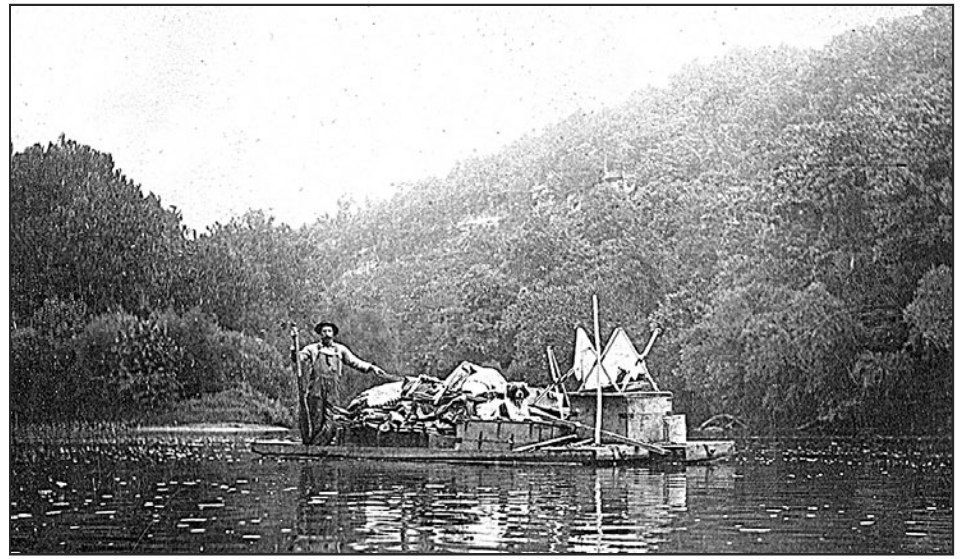


Pippin Place, four miles from Waynesville on the Gasconade River. Courtesy of Terry Primas.

Gasconade Float Trip - 1910



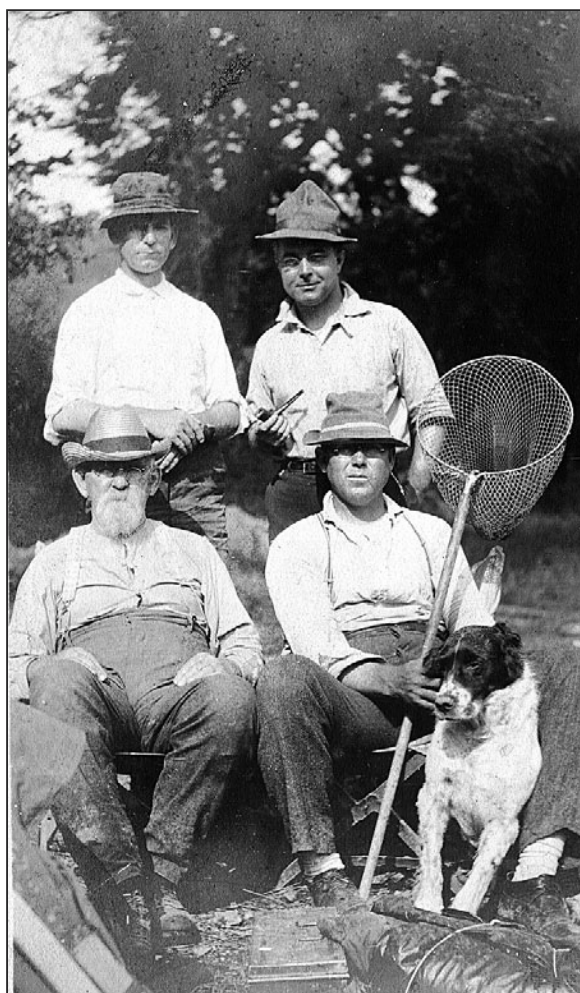
"Off For A 10 Days Float. (Mouth of Roubidoux) August 10, 1910"



"Witt & Sport in Farris Eddy." This is the commissary boat, loaded with supplies.



"August 15, 1910. A Mornings Catch." Bland Pippin holds up his stringer for a photograph.



"Fishermen." Back l-r, Dr. Bland Pippin, unknown. Front l-r, William Bradford, Dr. White.

One of Dr. Bland Pippin's annual float trips on the Gasconade that Dru mentioned on the previous page was documented by one of the participants with his Kodak. Most of the snapshots had a caption written on them. The float trip began at the junction of the Roubidoux Creek with the Gasconade River on August 10, 1910. The fishermen ended their trip where the Mossy Spring branch enters the Gasconade on August 19. The sportsmen must have fished hard, sampling every shoal and eddy. The ten day float trip covered only 20.6 miles. Of the eleven participants on the float trip, we can identify only four: Bland Pippin; William Bradford, who raised Dr. Pippin when he was orphaned; "Witt", the cook; Sport, the dog; and Dr. White, a friend of Pippin's who was also a dentist in St. Louis. The mouth of the Roubidoux, the starting point, is about 2.5 miles below Bartlett Mill Spring branch, which Dr. Pippin purchased in 1911 and constructed the first section of what would become the well-known resort Pippin Place in 1914. Dru sold Pippin Place in 1969, at the age of 70. The complex burned in the 1980s.



"No More Minnows To Get." This camping location is unknown. Another picture of a gravel bar camp is identified as "Mosquito Camp, Cow Ford, August 11."



"Loading Up - Going Home. Aug. 19, 1910" The take-out at Mossy Spring was about an eight mile wagon trip over rough roads to Waynesville.

second, and third in the day's float. Well, Ed and I drew third place. At noon the first boat had a bass that would weigh about three pounds and some smaller ones. The second boat had a few small ones and Ed and I had not had a strike all morning. At noon we accused them of combing each bank and throwing rocks at the other. Well, since we had a bet on for the one catching the biggest fish, it looked like a sure bet for the first boat. We drew straws again, however, for positions and again we were number three. We tried to make a deal but no, we had to go last. About four o'clock that afternoon, I cast my fly and let it sink and, as I retrieved it, I felt a snag. It wasn't a fish and unable to dislodge it, I simply jumped in the water and swam out to the end of the line and discovered that the hook was around a wire. I knew what it was cause I'd seen them before. I discovered a fish basket. Ed and I pulled the wire and out came the basket which was fairly alive with fish. They were all carp and red horse, one goggle-eye, and one bass that would weigh a little less than three pounds. It was a shade more than the ones our friends had at noon. I put a hook through the lip of the fish and put him on the stringer, along with the one goggle-eye and turned the fish back into the water and

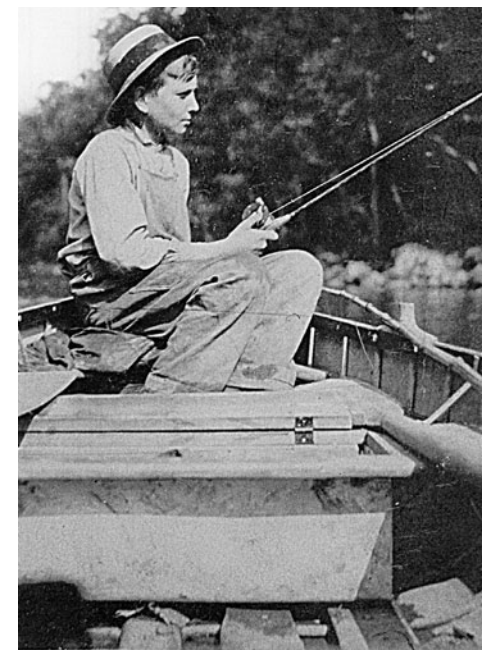
left the basket on a gravel bar to dry and be picked up by the Conservation agent or the owner, whoever got there first. I swore Ed in as my accomplice and partner in crime and before we got to the boat landing at Pippin Place, I had carefully stuffed every lead sinker that I had and that Ed had in his tackle box down the gullet of that big bass. If you ever saw a nine month pregnant bass, this one had all the telltale signs. When we were together, our competitors readily admitted our fish to be the heavier and paid off. We outweighed the fish by about a quarter pound. It was our turn to tell them how poorly they fished after having undisturbed water all day, no one to skim off the cream of the hungry fish. Everything went well until Willie, the second string cook, in cleaning the bass stuck his knife in our fish and out fell this assortment of heavy lead. Result: many many hearty laughs, refund of the wagered money, and a friendship that existed as long as they lived. And all I have left of these gentlemen are happy memories.

Fish Dams

It has always been the custom in the Ozarks for families and friends to get together, especially on a Sunday, and in olden days when a circuit rider preacher was in the neighborhood.

They got together for basket dinners and maybe a fish fry, if fish were available in sufficient quantities. In the rivers where the current and the depth and the width of the stream were suitable, our forefathers constructed what was known to them as fish dams. They would cut a few loads of poles from twelve to fifteen feet long and about four to six inches in diameter. Then they would go to a narrow place in the river on a shoal and they'd scrape out a trench about three or four feet deep and bury the big ends of the poles in the gravel. They would allow the smaller end to stick upward, downstream, about two feet above the water level. These poles were placed so as to form a screen or baffle for anything going downstream. Such a construction was built across the width of the running water. Then the men folk and the teenagers would go above the trap, beat the water, and otherwise drive and scare all fish above to go downstream. As the fish approached the poles, people behind held a seine or a fine mesh wire or maybe toe sacks sewn end to end so as to prevent the fish from going back upstream. The result was the fish were suddenly exposed on the poles and were easily picked up by the people stationed there for that purpose. The only one I ever remember seeing

that might be considered as usable was one on the Gasconade River at the shoal just above the junction of the Gasconade and the Roubidoux Creek and they was below the second island from Pippin Place and was then known as Ellis Island because it was behind the old Ellis farm. I was told that this method of fishing was taught to our early settlers by the Indians who lived by the skill of the hunt. I can't think of a single thing I ever learned by myself. I learned it from someone else.



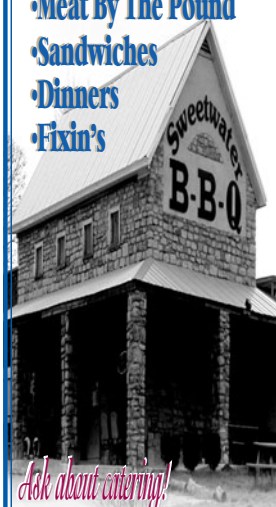
A young Dru Pippin fishing. Courtesy of William Eckert.

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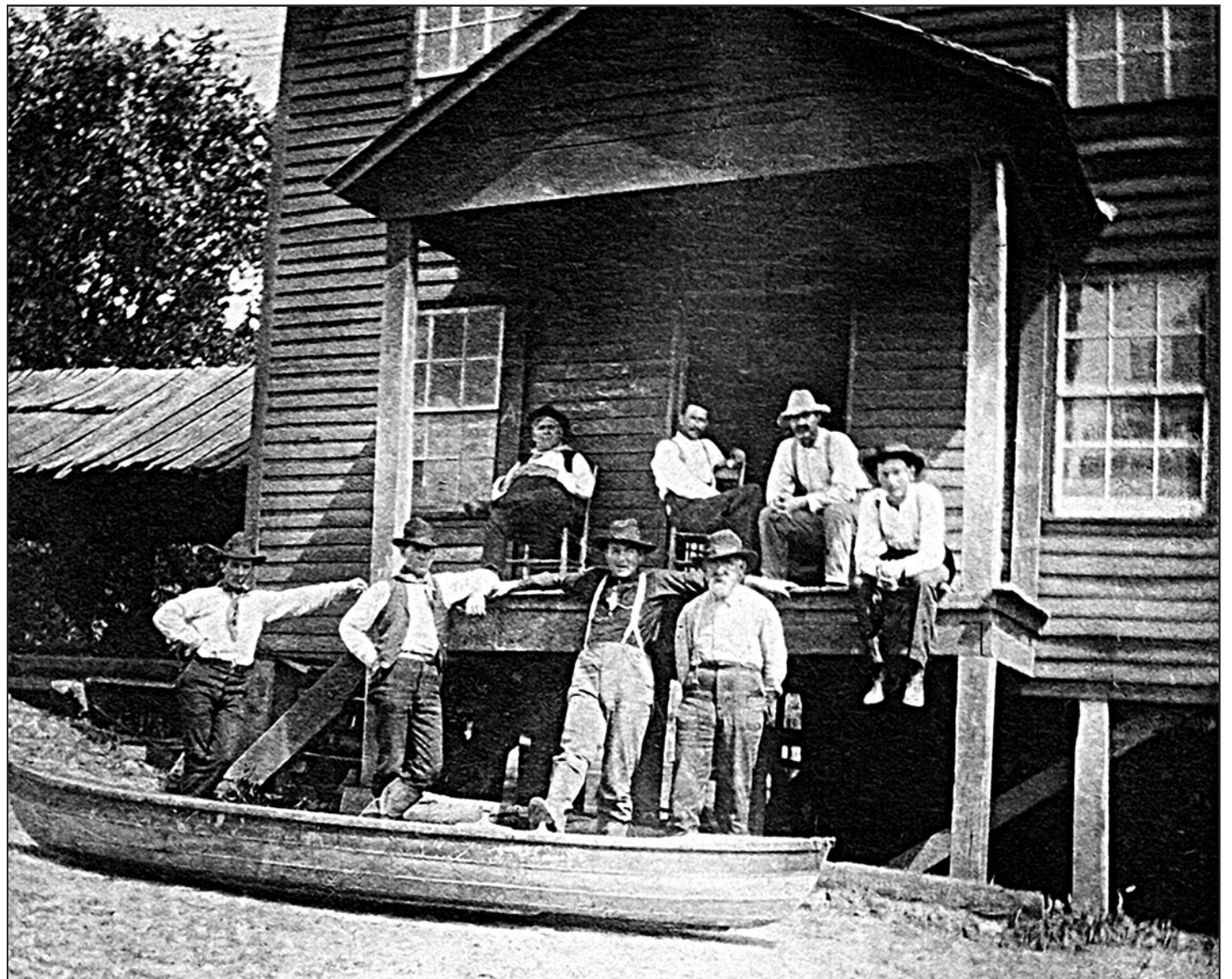
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Fishing friends sitting on the porch of the mill at Bartlett Spring: First row, far left is Dr. Bland Pippin; far right, first row is William Bradford; rest unknown. Solomon Bartlett purchased sixteen acres and a mill from Larkin Rufus Bates in 1857. Bates had settled the land in 1841 and built the original mill. Bartlett built another grist and sawmill in 1866. Pippin began acquiring nearby property and the mill in 1911. This view might be shortly afterward. In the summer, Dr. Pippin escaped the St. Louis city heat by vacationing in Pulaski County where he grew up.

William Bradford (1839-1934) and his wife Missiniah Tilley Bradford took in Bland Pippin and his siblings when they were orphaned and raised them. William Bradford, a Confederate veteran, had a profound effect on Bland Pippin and his son Dru. Dru said of Bradford, "He was and still is my idol, my first thought of what it takes to be a Christian, humanitarian, a close neighbor to man, and a father to the orphan. Affectionately known to everyone as Uncle William Bradford."

Photograph courtesy of William Eckert.

Dru Pippin's audio tapes were made available by the Post Museum at Fort Leonard Wood and the Missouri State Archives.



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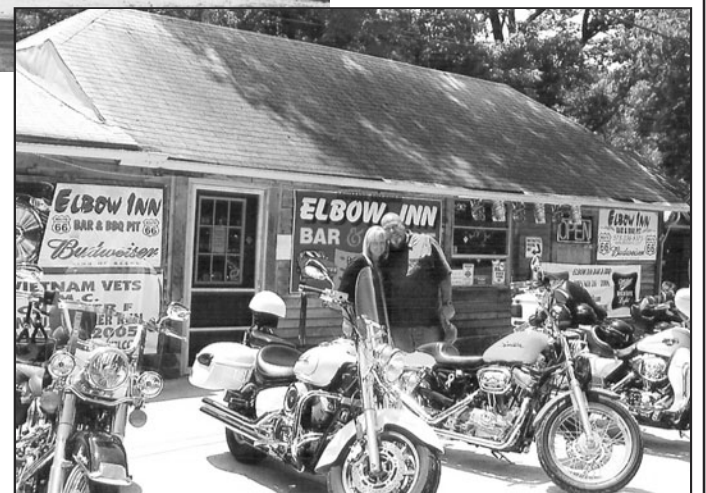
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