

MEMORIES FROM THE KING FRONT PORCH

Our front porch stretched all the way across the front of our farmhouse, located near Steprock, a rural community in the far northern part of White County, in north central Arkansas.

My father, Paul King, always felt that front porches were to be used for fun and relaxing in the evening, a gathering place. A man of strong opinions and high ideals, I remember that he would often comment that some folks having nothing more constructive to do could spend most of the day, if not all day long, *polishing their porch* (sitting on the porch and swing, polishing the boards with their backsides).

My memories of friends drifting by to share a watermelon, a pan of fresh 'parched' (roasted in the shells) peanuts, or some other treat in the early 1930s, are still quite vivid.

Those were peaceful and quiet evening times back then. There were no tractor-trailers loaded with chickens, grain, or logs, with their roaring motors. About the only 'night noises' we heard were the arguments of the katydids, the croaking of the frogs, or the incessant calls of the whip-poor-wills.

On especially bright moonlit nights, 'Uncle' Dave King and his four boys would come over after their day's work was done. The boys would be dressed in white shirts, starched and ironed no less. Each of them usually carried a musical instrument. Uncle Dave had his fiddle, and the rest of the troupe carried guitars, banjos, and other tools of a tune weaver's trade. You could tell that they enjoyed so much just sitting on the edge of the porch and making music. They were very, very good, all of them. It was obvious that each of them possessed GOD given talent. Not one of them had ever taken any formal lessons. They just did what came naturally, for them, and played one tune after another.

I'm sure you can imagine how the sound would carry across the countryside in the quiet early evening air, with no competing background noises, other than that coming from the 'country critters'. It would carry so well, in fact, that other neighbors would begin drifting over to the house too. Daddy would pass chairs to them so they could join the rest of the folks sittin' on the porch. As they joined in the fellowship, they would pat their feet on the porch floor to the beat of the music, making it all the more wonderful.

Uncle Dave always liked the fast fiddling hoedown type of music, tunes like "Boil Dem Cabbage Down", "Old Joe Clark", and "Cripple Creek". Then he would switch ever so smoothly into slower paced songs like "Suwanee River", "Beautiful Dreamer", "The Church in the Wildwood", and "Angel Band". Each of the boys would also have a 'special'. We often heard "Old Time Religion", "Oh Susanna", "Wildwood Flower", "Keep on the Sunny Side", and many, many others.

These are such pleasant memories, but as I recall them I begin to get a little sad when I realize that I'm the only person still alive that regularly attended one of those gatherings on the King Front Porch in those days of long ago.

(March 20, 2003) **Averil Beaver**