

Slipper's Soliloquies

By Fred Slipper

As I was growing up in Hamilton I feel I had a normal first five years. My playmates were children that lived close by and we didn't get very far from our own back yards. It was quite an experience to meet new people when I started the first grade, as some of them came from as far away as five miles, and they came on a school bus!! How exciting that seemed, and often I wished I lived "out in the country," instead of just a block from the school yard.

After a couple of years in school the novelty of friends that lived outside of the city limits of Hamilton wore off, and I began to explore places other than my own back yard. I began to hear of a place called "The Siding" and this had a wonderful sound. However, it was quite some distance from town, as in those days kids under 10 years old never dreamed of having a bike.

As the shortest distance to the siding was through the school yard and over the railway tracks (which in those days had two or three trains a day) my Mom wouldn't let me go that way until I was older. Actually, the main hazard of the short cut was a long, narrow plank walk that first went over some pretty swampy ground and finally over the end of a mill pond, so for a little guy it wasn't too safe.

But once I got to the siding, the wonders began! The round house was there, where the logging engines were kept, and what a thrill it was to actually be that close to them. One of my best friends was Neal Dameron, and we went from the first grade through high school together. Neal's Dad was Poly Dameron, and he was the logging superintendent, so Neal and I could pretty much prowl around where ever we wanted to.

I remember the men working in the shop were good to us, and once in a while we would get to ride on the engines when they were switching them around the siding. Usually when I got to visit the Damerons at the siding I would get to stay all night and this was always a big event, too. Neal in turn would stay "in town" at our house, and I imagine he got just as much kick out of this as I did staying at his home.

There were other school kids in my class that lived in the area of the siding, and most of their Dads were loggers. So as I entered the third grade, or around that time, I began to hear the word "Tarheel", and I wondered just what that meant. I'll tell you more about this in my next article.

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A few issues ago I wrote about the dogs I had during my childhood days in Hamilton, and I mentioned I knew I had four dogs during that time, but I could only remember the names of three, Pal, Rex and Mickey.

A couple of weeks after my article appeared a lady came into the Courier-Times office, but I wasn't there, so she told June, our front office lady, she had something for me, but wanted it to be a surprise. She told June to just tell me someone had been in, and would be back later, but not to tell me what surprise she had.

So I anxiously waited for her to return and when she did come in, she coyly wouldn't tell me who she was. After a few minutes she did tell me, and it was Georgia Hoy! Or now, Georgia Stewart, as she had married another old Hamilton friend, Albert Stewart, who passed away a few years ago.

Guess what she had for me? She had a sack with her, and in it was an old style photograph album like we used to keep in the old days, with the black pages, and inscriptions written in white ink. There on one of the pages was the following picture, with her mother's hand writing, "Frederick and Jack".



Immediately I recalled the missing

name of my first dog, Jack. As you can see by the photo I must have been about 5 years old, and Jack was a very prized possession. As I recounted in my original story about my dogs, all of them met an untimely end; one poisoned, and three run over by cars, as I recall.

My wife, Jinny, has a good explanation why I couldn't recall the name "Jack". She feels maybe psychologically I was so upset about losing my first pet dog that my mind just shut the name out and all of these years it has been blanked from my memory. This could very well be.

Now to get back to Georgia (Hoy) Stewart. Georgia's dad was the minister in Hamilton, and we used to play together. Georgia recalled our birthdays are the same month, May, and I believe she said hers was the fifth of May, and mine is the fourteenth. She says she well remembers arguing with me that she was older than I was, but I always said, no, you aren't, because mine is the 14th, and yours is only the 5th! Georgia said after a while she gave up arguing with me, and let me have my way. Maybe this was because she was a lady, and I was a man...

Georgia and I did some figuring, and came up with the astounding fact that we hadn't seen each other for about 60 years — no wonder I didn't remember her when she first came in. I was interested in what had transpired during her life time, and she told me she had recently retired from the Sedro-Woolley school after teaching for many years.

I was looking thru some old copies of the Courier, and ran across something that will interest Georgia. But I'm not going to tell what it is here — wait until she reads this, and now I'll let her be curious. So when your curiosity gets the best of you, Georgia, come on in and I'll show you what I found, and we can have another good visit.