

“I remember an old cemetery; they called it the ‘Muddy Lane.’ Somebody went down that road on a horse, and this woman got up in front of him on that horse and rode all the way down that lane. When they got down to the end of it (the lane), she just disappeared.”

“I heard Uncle John tell this. (He) said it was around there close to that cemetery. He started across the creek on a foot log. He stepped up on the foot log on one side, and this woman stepped up on the foot log on the other side. He stepped back so she could come on across, and she stepped back. So he just decided, ‘Well, I’ll just go on across.’ When he got out in the middle, there she was right in the middle, and he just went off in the creek. (He) said he didn’t know where she went.”

“When I was a little bitty kid, when we had to go outside (to use the bathroom), we’d just go outside and squat down in the door. My brother went out with me. He seen a big dog, he said, (as) high as a calf, and he shoved that door to. He couldn’t get me to come back in right then, and I was out in the yard screaming and hollering, and he was inside holding the door. I never did know what that was, but somebody else had claimed that they had seen a big dog like that down the road. We never did know what that was. I never did really see no ghosts or none of that stuff like that, ‘cause I never did believe it.”

Nighttime was not only a time for ghosts, but also a time for music. With no electricity for television or radio, recreation was homegrown. Her father’s banjo was a regular nighttime fixture in Mrs. Rector’s childhood.

“(Daddy) used to pick a banjo at night or play a fiddle. He could do either one. That’s about the only kind of music we had. We didn’t sing much. Daddy’d just get that old banjo up and pick it. A lot of nights in the wintertime when it was cold, we’d pop popcorn. He’d pick the banjo while we was popping popcorn. We’d get a big ole dishpan full.”

Today, fields are plowed, sown, and harvested by machine. Bluegrass is now the poplar fad, and no longer merely an Appalachian custom. Times have changed, and people have changed with them. Only the memories remain. Like the present, the past was made of good times and bad times, and no one can say whether life has changed for the better or for worse. But time has a way of making bad times seem better, and life is always nicer when one is looking back.

Marie Godwin