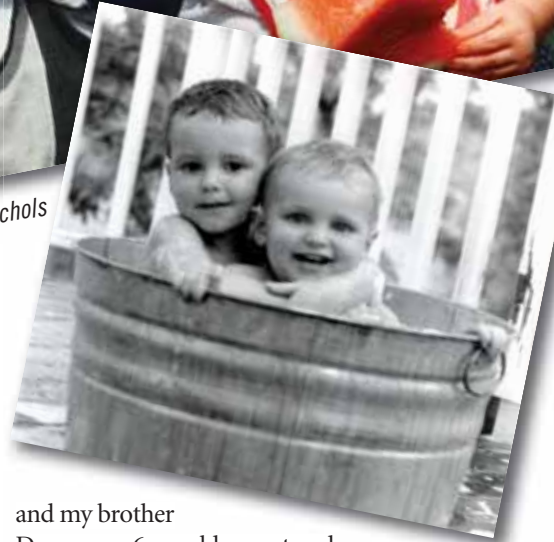


Landon and Luke Nichols



In the good old summertime

The blackberry patch, the drive-in movie, Vacation Bible School, down by the river, and other memories of summers gone by



My little sister, Ruthanna, and I think our summers are old-fashioned.

Blackberries, bugs and the brook

I'm only 10 years old, but my summers are old-fashioned. Every summer Mama, my little sister and I pick blackberries to sell. My grandma said that when she was little they used to put kerosene around their belly buttons to protect them from red bugs. We aren't bothered by them because we wear long sleeves and leggings. One summer when we were picking blackberries on a steep hill, Mama fell but she didn't get hurt. But we laughed!

In summer we also walk through the woods to the brook where we've seen rabbits, deer and even smelled and heard a skunk. This might seem boring to some kids, but I love my old-fashioned summers.

Lydia Horne, Marshville, Pee Dee EMC

Summers on the farm

The summers of the late 1950s and 1960s were wonderful to me as a child. I was raised with Christian values and in a Christian home, and I thank my parents for this. We farmed and raised our own meat and vegetables. My mom had me in 4-H where I learned to can, cook and sew. My dad had me involved with dairy cattle, and I would show my cows at the fair. We raised tobacco

and my brother

Danny, age 6, would go out and put the harness on the old mule, Kate, and then walk down the road to the tobacco field before daylight. My brother Tony was smaller, and while we would hoe tobacco he would get gone and we would find him asleep in the terrace between the tobacco rows with a yellow hard hat on and his red rubber boots.

The summer days were full of hard work, but Mom and Dad always made sure we had a vacation. We would go to White Lake or Myrtle Beach, but we could not stay over three days. We had to get back to the farm.

We always had fresh watermelon from the farm to eat on hot days, and we never wore shoes. I would fuss over bath time because I had it in my head that we should just take a bath on Saturdays. We loved playing in the dirt and making mud pies and green moss houses out in the woods. We would stay gone all day.

We passed those memories down to the grandchildren (above) whose grandmother is Carolyn Nichols and their grandfather, Grady V. Nichols, a Surry-Yadkin EMC board member since 1975.

Sherry Brindle, Mt. Airy, Surry-Yadkin EMC

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Thanks to everyone who sent in stories

and pictures of old-fashioned North Carolina summers. We received more than 200 and wish we could publish more. You can see more on our Web site. Next month we'll publish descriptions and photos of your "dream house." [Deadline was March 15.] For more themes and the rules of our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series, see page 17.



United Presbyterian Church Vacation Bible School, June 12–19, 1955.

Vacation Bible School on summer wee ays

When I think of an old-fashioned summer I think of Vacation Bible School, picnics at the lake, trips to the beach and those spiny, pickling cucumbers.

The rural church where I grew up would have Vacation Bible School Monday through Friday from 9 to 11 a.m. It was necessary to have it soon after school dismissed for the summer so that when tobacco harvesting time came along we were free to work. Although my community continues to be a rural farm area, most women hold public jobs as opposed to the 50s and 60s when most moms stayed home with their children. Therefore, these days Bible School is usually held at night or on Saturday.

We did have one job during Bible School week—the dreadful, back-breaking task of picking cucumbers. As much as we hated it, we knew if we didn't pick those cukes there would be no extra money for church camp or trips to the lake and beach. Yes, Vacation Bible School was a special week for us. The Bible lessons, the crafts and those delicious marshmallow-crackers and lemonade have definitely left fond memories of summers in the old days.

Judy Barefoot Lee, Newton Grove South River EMC

The Midway Drive-In Theater

When I was a kid, a favorite summertime treat was going to the Midway Drive-In Theater situated between High Point and Thomasville. We would all pile into my daddy's '51 Ford and set out

at dusk. I remember the lady at the ticket window would have fantastically colored hair—sometimes pink, sometimes blue—which really fascinated me.

We always arrived with enough daylight left for me and my brother and sisters to run up under the gigantic screen and play on the swings and merry-go-round. If it had rained, there would be a great big mud hole half way around the merry-go-round which we would drag our bare feet through as we spun around.

I remember the excitement when it would get just dark enough and the first images would flicker on. We would run back to the car to watch the cartoons and advertisements shown before the movie. My brother and I would be allowed to sit outside on one of the cement islands that held the pole and speakers and have a speaker all to ourselves.

Momma always packed a big brown grocery sack with homemade hot dogs wrapped in waxed paper. Sometimes we got to have Cokes on ice from the concession stand. There was nothing like sitting out there in the dark with the warm summer air, a cold, sweating paper cup, and one of Momma's hot dogs with chili. I don't really remember any of the movies we saw.

When my husband and I were dating and then newly married, we would still go to the Midway Drive-In. I once tried packing a sack of homemade hot dogs, wrapped them in waxed paper and everything. It was not the same.

Pam Thayer, Trinity, EnergyUnited

Fishing the Pamlico

I grew up in Lowland, Pamlico County. My dad would say, "It's at the end of the world and across the bridge. There's one way in and one way out!" This is a community where fishing was and is a way of life for most of my family. In the early 1970s, Dad (Benny Charles Leary) and Mom (Sharon) would have their friends, Coy and Swannie Turner, from Pink Hill, come to spend the weekend—a weekend full of fishing, laughing and eating.

Dad would gather all the fishing poles, bait, drinks and pork skins. They would head out in the boat from the docks of Oyster Creek Landing, and he would take them to the hot spots to fish. He would say, "You have to think like a fish and a crab." I guess it was true because he always knew where to go for the best catch. Aunt Swannie could fish in white pants and come home clean. Her husband, Coy, was always eager and ready to remove her caught fish and re-bait her hook. Most of the time Coy would let his hook just dangle in the water and not pay a lot of attention to it. Usually by the end of the day he would catch the biggest fish.

My mom and Swannie would cook an awesome meal, and they would sit around the table an hour or so talking and laughing. Some napping, too!

Times have changed. My father and Uncle Coy have passed away, and Mom and Swannie only see each other occasionally.

This is in memory of Benny Charles Leary and Coy Turner who knew how to catch some nice-sized fish.

Aimee Leary Rowe, Lowland, Tideland EMC



From left: Coy and Swannie Turner with my dad after a good day of fishing in the 1970s.



My mom, Evelyn Smith Kelly, diving at the creek in this picture from 1939.



Hauling nets on the Outer Banks years ago.

The cool water of Rockfish Creek

I grew up in the 1950s and 1960s in Raeford, spending many hot summer days at “The Creek,” a place with special charm all its own. It was Rockfish Creek, and it was black swamp water that looked like strong tea. It was cold as ice, and it moved swiftly. The creek was the gathering place for young people as far back as the 1930s and maybe even before. I remember picnics and sunbathing on the white sandy beach that gradually sloped down to the water’s edge. We took turns swinging from a rope and dropping off into the bone chilling water. Roots along the banks were platforms for jumping and diving.

On a sweltering summer day nothing felt better than to head to the creek to cool off. The sandy road which led there was walking distance from town. Today the same road is paved with asphalt and lined with beautiful homes. A fenced in area with goats blocks off the beach and the access to the once very busy place to be on a hot summer day—The Creek.

Shirley Knapp Brutko, Kings Mountain, Rutherford EMC

The precious box fan

Recently I was in Wal-Mart and purchased an \$11 box fan. Once I got home, I immediately commenced to showing off this jewel. I call it a jewel because of the fond memories it gives

me once its power is turned on.

My grandmother lived in a two-story farmhouse in Macon. I remember so well the sound and the breeze of the box fans she had placed throughout the house. On hot summer nights the fan would sing me a lullaby to sleep. After a hot summer morning working in the garden, my grandmother and I would shell butter beans and shuck corn in front of a box fan. So you can imagine the old and new stories that were told during this rich time.

I know I sound silly to some calling a box fan a jewel, but to me my \$11 purchase is worth a million dollars of great memories.


Jessica Saunders, Macon, Halifax EMC

The sandy side of heaven

My dad was a teacher with summers off, and those weeks were the best part of the year in a glorious place that was still relatively undiscovered. Back

then summer meant Nags Head on the Outer Banks, or at least six weeks of it.

It was a carefree time of adventure. You could swim in the ocean any time, fish from the surf, walk to the pier with friends, or catch all the crabs you could eat if you knew the right spot. Jockey’s Ridge was Mount Olympus, and you were a god. You could see all the way to Africa, or at least you thought so. The best part was the ride down the steepest slope on a big piece of cardboard. At the other end of the spectrum, you could find clams with your toes in the sandy bottom of the shallow sound. You could explore the Nags Head Woods, find an old graveyard, or go to Oregon Inlet in the late afternoon when the fishing boats returned with their catch from the Gulf Stream.

Nags Head was the sandy side of heaven. 

Sally N. Haines, Swansboro, Carteret-Craven Electric

send us your best **EARN \$50**

Here are the themes in our “Nothing Could Be Finer” series. Send us your stories and pictures about these themes. If yours is chosen for publication, we’ll send you \$50. You don’t have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

June 2009

Dumb Exercises

Send stories of those exercise routines or machines that really didn’t do any good.

Deadline: April 15

July 2009

Summer Recipes

Recipes using summer foods.

Deadline: May 15

August 2009

Advice From Parents

As a parent, how would you like to see your local schools operated?

Deadline: June 15

1. Approximately 200 words or less.
2. One entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos should be a minimum of 1200 by 800 pixels.
4. E-mailed or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay \$50 for each submission published. We retain reprint rights.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can’t pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don’t agree to this.)
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