

# Aged Morehead Recluse Has Been Missing Since Labor Day

Two searching parties and a court of inquiry have failed to find any trace of an aged Morehead recluse who has been missing 31 days.

The missing man is John Henry Alfrey, past 70 years of age, who lived alone in a small house in Thomas Addition. He was last seen September 2.

Sheriff Carl Jones said his investigation disclosed that Alfrey visited his daughter, Mrs. Peachy Wallace, who lives near the Clack Mountain clay mines on Labor Day.

Mrs. Wallace said her father left her home about 10 o'clock that morning, saying he was going into the nearby woods to "kill a groundhog." It is believed that Alfrey carried an old pistol.

The terrain in the area is the

most rugged in Rowan County with many high cliffs.

Sheriff Jones said the mystery became more acute since Alfrey couldn't have walked far because of physical handicaps.

He is also without one arm, this being amputated many years ago.

Sheriff Jones took 15 men to the clay mine area last Wednesday but they didn't find any trace of the missing man. Then, on Sunday the Sheriff summoned 75 men who combed the mountains around the Wallace home without avail.

Yesterday, County Judge W. T. McClain called a court of inquiry in an effort to unearth any clue as to what happened to Alfrey.

Neighbors said that Alfrey spent most of his time resting

in the shade of trees just off U. S. 60 where the Thomas Addition begins.

No one knew of any enemies he might have had, Jones said.

The Sheriff added: "Circumstances indicated that the man wandered off when he went to kill a groundhog and possibly fell over one of the rock ledges which have sheer drops upwards of a hundred feet. But, he couldn't have gone far and we have searched the area carefully."

Jones said the clay mine country also has many snakes, particularly rattlers.

State Police and other officials have been alerted. Officers are operating on the theory that somebody picked up the recluse in an automobile and he may be staying in some home in a remote section of the county.

# John Henry Alfrey Still Missing

## Searching Parties, Court Of Inquiry Provide No Clue To Disappearance

The little Thomas Addition frame house in which John Henry Alfrey, a recluse, has made his home for many years continues to stand vacant and neighbors do not see the lazy curling of smoke from the chimney early each morning to which they have become accustomed.

Vacant also is the spot where Thomas Addition joins U. S. 60 where Alfrey used to sit for hours. It was from this vantage point that the man, over 70 years old, watched the traffic and world go by.

John Henry Alfrey has simply disappeared. There is no clue to his whereabouts.

Alfrey visited his daughter, Mrs. Peachy Wallace, in the Clack Mountain clay area Labor Day. At 10 o'clock in the morning he went out with a rusty pistol to kill a groundhog. That was the last time he was seen.

Terrain in the section is the most rugged in Rowan County. Two large searching parties have failed to find a trace of the missing man. Sheriff Carl Jones said he couldn't have gone far because of physical infirmities. The recluse also has one arm amputated.

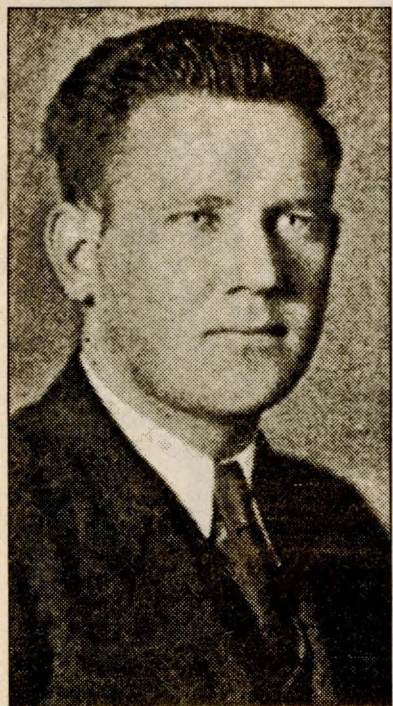
County Judge Bill McClain called a court of inquiry Wednesday but witnesses could furnish no lead on the disappearance. The man apparently had no enemies.

State Police and the Sheriff's Office thought last week Alfrey might have been picked up by a friend in a car and was living in some remote part of the county. But, they believe now that this hope is gone.

"We just don't know what happened to him," County Judge McClain said.

Jones said he thought further search parties in the Clack Mountain area would be fruitless "because we have covered it like a fine-tooth comb."

Alfrey's neighbors in Thomas Addition said it is very depressing every time they pass the house where the near-hermit lived and prepared his own meals.



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**From appliances to horse collars**

Following WW II, there was a shortage of steel based appliances. Parney was always looking for merchandise to sell. One soft summer Saturday night Parney and some of the local loafers were sitting in front of his store before closing. A large one-ton truck with a heaping load of horse collars stopped at the stop light in front of his store. Parney ran out and engaged the man in conversation. It seemed the stranger, on his way to Virginia, had bought a truck load of horse collars at an Army cavalry surplus center at Fort Campbell. Parney negotiated with the stranger and bought the whole truck for 25 cents each and stored them in his barn near where he later built his home. Everyone in Morehead was laughing at Parney and his horse collars. However, Parney had the last laugh. It was some 15 years later, horse collars used to frame mirrors, became the rage in home decorations throughout the land. This writer lived in Florida during part of that time when horse collar mirrors became a "fad." They were priced between \$25-50, and Parney had the last laugh. He laughed all the way to the bank.

George Hill who worked for Parney for eight years before going into business for himself at the local Western Auto recalled, it was at a time electricity was being installed throughout rural Rowan County. Parney would literally follow the red REA trucks throughout rural Rowan County and as soon as electricity was turned on at a house, he would sell them electrical

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**Sold and rented furniture and appliances**

This writer and his wife were still in college when we were married. Our first refrigerator was a Hot Point purchased from Parney as a wedding present from my Dad. He paid weekly payments (\$5 per week) until it was paid off. A year later when our first child was only a few weeks old, Janis was pushing her in a stroller in front of Parney's store. She stopped to admire a playpen displayed in the window. Parney saw her looking at it and when she got home, it was on our front porch. She called Parney and said she wouldn't need that for another six or eight months and he said you don't make payments until you start using it. One year later we made the first payments and he didn't even have a record of selling it to us or the purchase price. He just took our word for it.

With the end of WW II, millions of GIs were going to college under the GI Bill which paid for their tuition, books and provided a monthly stipend to the veterans. Morehead State Teachers College was one of those institutions that provided housing for married GIs, but no furniture. During that time, Parney went into the furniture rental business. Many of those GIs went to college on Parney's furniture at a monthly rental rate. It worked well for the students and Parney. Hundreds of students rented furniture or bought furniture from Parney and paid what they could when they could, and some of those students recalled it took them years to pay for their furniture.

In the days when soft drinks came in glass bottles and required a 5 cent deposit on each bottle, Parney was known to drive throughout Rowan County on Sunday morning and pick up pop bottles. He would store them in his barn

full of bottles, enough to pay for a new Cadillac.

Parney was aggressive in his marketing techniques. He was even known to conduct auctions in front of his store and on the street. Paul Jackson remembered driving by one time and had to stop at the stop light. Parney was outside with a hacksaw in his hand asking people passing by how much will you give me for this? He yelled at Paul, how much? Paul said, 50 cents and Parney said, "sold."

Although Parney had a reputation for being frugal, Walter Carr said that many times he would approach Mr. Martindale on community fund drives and he always pulled out his checkbook and said, "How much?" Parney was an avid Morehead College football fan and Walter would drive Parney's Cadillac to their road games. Parney always paid for their tickets and their meals usually at the best restaurants. On one road trip to Eastern in the annual battle for the "hog rifle," they arrived at the game without tickets and stadium was sold out. There were scalpers selling tickets and Walter was trying to get Parney to buy tickets from one of the scalpers, but Parney suggested they wait until after the kick-off and the price would come down.

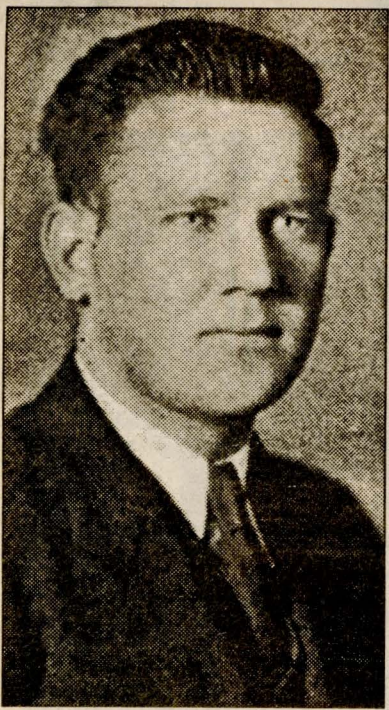
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Parney loved children and was the subject of a song about him. County Attorney Willie Roberts, one of four boys in his family, recalled them singing a parody of the song, "Here comes Peter Cottontail hopping down the bunny trail." The children changed the words to say, "Here comes Parney Martindale, hopping down the Midland Trail, hippity-hopping on his merry way."

The Martindale's later built a larger furniture store on East Main Street and built new home near the university. For several years after Parney moved into his new home, left some bare light bulbs hanging down. Since the house was still considered no yet finished, even though he there, it was not added t

the land and his home is now the home of Morehead State University's president. The county purchased his furniture store and it is now the new Rowan County Courthouse.

But, as is the case so many times, wealth acquired by one person in this world is often left to strangers to spend. That was the case with the Martindale fortune.



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## Local Trivia

### Early History

■ Over fifteen hundred from Rowan County served in WW II. In addition, 560 former MSC students served in that conflict. Of those 560, 125 were officers.

## Section D

# History

THE MOREHEAD NEWS, JUNE 9, 2006

## About the Author



Dr. Jack Ellis is a retired Morehead State University Library director and a retired minister.

# Morehead Memories:

## People & Places

### Uncle Pete: weather forecaster and tall tale teller

By JACK ELLIS  
Special to The Morehead News

This writer has kept a file of local colorful characters I have known with the intention of writing about some of them. Those include the legendary Licking River Man Roll Alfrey, absent-minded MSC Psychology Professor Rex L. Hoke, "Lay Low" Bradley, local "lush" and occasional jailbird, Professor Neville Fencil, economics professor extraordinaire at MSC, and Pat McGarey, kindhearted local restaurant and poolroom operator. Pat was a soft touch for those down and out as well as poor college students who were hungry. Also, Uncle Pete Honaker who was the local "seer" and teller of tall tales.

Recently, I "inherited" Margaret Cornette Morris' scrapbook collection going back more than one hundred years. Since this writer has been in that Cornette-Caudill family for well over a half a century (my wife was a Caudill), I had heard many of these stories. But the factual information included in this collection helped make this article about Uncle Pete Honaker possible.

### Early weather forecast-

### ing important to farmers and fishermen

In the days before the science of meteorology came into being there was usually in every community one person who claimed to be able to predict the weather. The oldest continuous publication in the United States is the Farmers Almanac, which began publication in the 1700s. It predicted the weather and told of the best days to plant specific crops and even the best days to catch fish based upon certain phases of the moon and other natural signs. For hundreds of years farmers planted and harvested by the old Farmers Almanac, usually with some success. But it was not always right and there was usually one person in every community who claimed they were more accurate in predicting the weather than the Almanac.

### Weather forecasting needed to be more reliable

Predicting the weather has been important to almost every activity of human endeavor, more recently due to the prevalence of hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods. However, in the past that was especially true for all the branches of military serv-

ice. During WW II, the Navy, Air and Ground forces relied heavily on being able to know a few days in advance what the weather would be. The whole success of D-Day, June 6, 1944, when the Allies crossed the English Channel and landed thousands of troops in France was based upon favorable weather conditions. But during that era the science of meteorology was crude and often unreliable. (As it

still is!)

Captain Ted Crosthwaite, former Superintendent of Rowan County Schools (1945-1951), was in the meteorology section of the Army during the D-Day landings. As a part of his military career, Ted had been sent to "Cal Tech" and he received a degree in meteorology. He often laughed and told this writer he could have done about as well predicting the weather by flipping a coin. (Have they improved any?)

Uncle Pete predicted weather with a goose bone

Uncle Pete Honaker was one of the many characters around Morehead that added what today's media would call "local color". He was born in Bath County in 1847 and would have been 9 years old when Rowan County was established, and he died in Morehead in 1942 at the age of 95. When this writer remembers him, he lived on South Hargis in Morehead. Although his wife had died, Uncle Pete lived with his two sons Lee George and "Junk". "Junk" had one son, App (short for Appalachian), who was an outstanding football player for the Vikings in the 1930s. Lee George later moved to California. Uncle Pete was interviewed every fall and asked for his prediction on the severity of the coming winter. He said he foretold the weather with a goose bone, but he would never explain how that method worked.

Uncle Pete added more to the local color by his reputation for telling tall tales. On one occasion he was hauling a wagonload of logs to the sawmill in Owingsville. He was using a three-span team consisting of five mules and one horse. As they attempted to climb the steep Owingsville Hill, the horse laid down and refused to pull. Uncle

Pete told "Junk", "I'll take care of that lazy horse." So he dug a hole under the horse's hip and stuck a huge firecracker in the hole and lit the fuse. When the firecracker exploded the old horse jumped up, shook himself, pawed a few times, snorted, passed some gas, and you've never seen such pulling in all your life. That horse never did lay down again pulling a load.

Uncle Pete thought his house needed a new coat of paint. He went to Owingsville to buy one of the latest colors of paint. When he came back, he and his son "Junk" painted the white two-story house a *air* color. As they waited for the paint to dry, they drove their old car to have a beer while the paint dried. When he returned home, the paint had dried and they drove right into the side of the house. Uncle Pete said the next day they drove all the way to Owingsville to buy a can of black paint and painted a stripe around the house so they could find it.

### Tall tales continue

Colorful Uncle Pete was a night watchman at the Spoke Factory for many years. He always carried a 12-gauge single barrel shotgun with the barrel bent at about a 45-degree

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*Reflections of Rowan County*

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*True Stories From Eastern Kentucky*

**PATRIOTS AND HEROES:**  
*Eastern Ky. Soldiers of WWII.*

**ALPHA M. HUTCHINSON:**  
*The Biography of A Man and His Community*



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See HISTORY on D-2

angle. When asked why his gun was bent, this was what he said, "Those fellows around here are pretty sneaky and hide around the corner, and I bent it so I could shoot around the corner." This writer used to be one of those "sneaky" children who used to play in that old abandoned spoke factory on what is now West First Street. But I don't recall seeing Uncle Pete.

Lee George and Uncle Pete made a trip to see the Gulf of Mexico and when they came back Pete said, "Everyone thinks the Gulf of Mexico is all water, but me and Lee George rode all over it on horseback."

Lee George moved to California and went into the watch repair business and Uncle Pete said he sent him a boxcar load of main springs. Later on Uncle Pete said, "Lee George just lacked \$1.98 being a millionaire." After spending a winter in northern Minnesota in the log war, Uncle Pete came back to Morehead and said, "Why, it got so cold up there that sound froze. When the people were talking you couldn't hear a word they said. It was really quiet. But when spring came and it thawed, you never heard such jabbering in all your life. I'm glad to be back where you can talk all winter." Aren't we all?

1. ~~Farley~~ ~~Moby~~  
Paton Stoney gave  
him a hamburger  
Every day -

---

Therese used all a  
the ketchup with  
Poo ~~used~~  
Tobacco Juice

---

John Bradley  
took Cheryl -  
gave her keys to  
rent herself in  
July -

Saw her pass for  
quarter + left  
Stoney was  
very unclean

Pat McGarry -  
Gave Harlan Mabry,  
Hamburgert Fumes Fumes  
every Day. IT IS ALL  
IN THE KETCHUP -  
PAT GAVE HIM TOBASCO  
SAUCE

---

PAT FELT WITHIN STUDENTS  
LOAN & TRAM MONEY -  
YEARS AFTER HE DIED  
MARY LOU WOULD GET  
LETTERS FROM FORMER  
STUDENTS - HE HAD  
LOAN HER MONEY TOO.

Lou Lou BRADLEY,

UNCLE PETE HONAKER

CHARACTERS I HAVE KNOWN

~~UNCLE PETE HOHAKEN~~

1. LAYLOW BRADLEY - SOLD HIS SPANTS FOR A QUARTER  
LET HIMSELF INTO JAIL EVERY SAT NIGHT

2. PHIL MCGURRY, BOON GUY

3. UNCLE PETE HOHAKEN - WESTERN MAN

4. Neville Finkel MSU PROFESSOR

5. DR PERL HOKE - MSU PSYCHOLOGY PROF.

6. ROLL NEPBY - Fisherman extraordinaire

7. ON ARROW \_\_\_\_\_

8. JOHN HENRY ALFORD



**MOREHEAD MEMORIES: PEOPLE AND PLACES**  
**UNCLE PETE: WEATHER FORECASTER & TALL TALE TELLER**  
**BY**

**JACK D. ELLIS**

Fair weather cometh out of the north. (Job 37:32) "We spend our lives as a tale that is told." (Psalm 90:19)

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EARLY WEATHER FORECASTING IMPORTANT TO FARMERS & FISHERMEN.

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WEATHER FORECASTING NEEDS TO BE MORE RELIABLE

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TALL TALES CONTINUE

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Lee George moved to California and went into the watch repair business and Uncle Pete said he sent him a boxcar load of main springs Later on Uncle Pete said, "Lee George just lacked \$1.98 being a millionaire." After spending a winter in northern Minnesota in the log war, Uncle Pete came back to Morehead and said, "Why it got so cold up there that sound ~~s~~ froze. When the people were talking and you couldn't <sup>hear</sup> have a word they said. It was really quiet. But when spring came and it ~~was~~ thawed ~~out~~, you never heard such jabbering in all your life. I'm glad to be back where you can talk all winter." Aren't we all?

## Local Trivia

### Early History

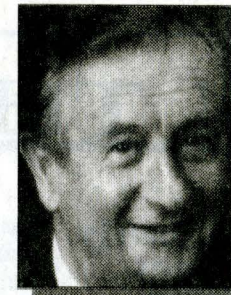
■ Over fifteen hundred from Rowan County served in WW II. In addition, 560 former MSC students served in that conflict. Of those 560, 125 were officers.

# History

Section D

THE MOREHEAD NEWS, JUNE 9, 2006

## About the Author



Dr. Jack Ellis is a retired Morehead State University Library director and a retired minister.

# Morehead Memories:

## People & Places

### Uncle Pete: weather forecaster and tall tale teller

By JACK ELLIS  
Special to The Morehead News

This writer has kept a file of local colorful characters I have known with the intention of writing about some of them. Those include the legendary Licking River Man Roll Alfrey, absent-minded MSC Psychology Professor Rex L. Hoke, "Lay Low" Bradley, local "lush" and occasional jailbird, Professor Neville Fencil, economics professor extraordinaire at MSC, and Pat McGarey, kindhearted local restaurant and poolroom operator. Pat was a soft touch for those down and out as well as poor college students who were hungry. Also, Uncle Pete Honaker who was the local "seer" and teller of tall tales.

Recently, I "inherited" Margaret Cornette Morris' scrapbook collection going back more than one hundred years. Since this writer has been in that Cornette-Caudill family for well over a half a century (my wife was a Caudill), I had heard many of these stories. But the factual information included in this collection helped make this article about Uncle Pete Honaker possible.

Early weather forecast-

### ing important to farmers and fishermen

In the days before the science of meteorology came into being there was usually in every community one person who claimed to be able to predict the weather. The oldest continuous publication in the United States is the Farmers Almanac, which began publication in the 1700s. It predicted the weather and told of the best days to plant specific crops and even the best days to catch fish based upon certain phases of the moon and other natural signs. For hundreds of years farmers planted and harvested by the old Farmers Almanac, usually with some success. But it was not always right and there was usually one person in every community who claimed they were more accurate in predicting the weather than the Almanac.

### Weather forecasting needed to be more reliable

Predicting the weather has been important to almost every activity of human endeavor, more recently due to the prevalence of hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods. However, in the past that was especially true for all the branches of military serv-

ice. During WW II, the Navy, Air and Ground forces relied heavily on being able to know a few days in advance what the weather would be. The whole success of D-Day, June 6, 1944, when the Allies crossed the English Channel and landed thousands of troops in France was based upon favorable weather conditions. But during that era the science of meteorology was crude and often unreliable. (As it

still is!)

Captain Ted Crosthwaite, former Superintendent of Rowan County Schools (1945-1951), was in the meteorology section of the Army during the D-Day landings. As a part of his military career, Ted had been sent to "Cal Tech" and he received a degree in meteorology. He often laughed and told this writer he could have done about as well predicting the weather by flipping a coin. (Have they improved any?)

### Read more about Rowan County's 150 history in one of Jack D. Ellis' books

**KENTUCKY MEMORIES:**  
*Reflections of Rowan County*

**MOREHEAD MEMORIES:**  
*True Stories From Eastern Kentucky*

**PATRIOTS AND HEROES:**  
*Eastern Ky. Soldiers of WWII.*

**ALPHA M. HUTCHINSON:**  
*The Biography of A Man and His Community*



Dr. Jack D. Ellis  
552 W. Sun St.  
Morehead, KY 40351

Uncle Pete predicted weather with a goose bone

Uncle Pete Honaker was one of the many characters around Morehead that added what today's media would call "local color". He was born in Bath County in 1847 and would have been 9 years old when Rowan County was established, and he died in Morehead in 1942 at the age of 95. When this writer remembers him, he lived on South Hargis in Morehead. Although his wife had died, Uncle Pete lived with his two sons Lee George and "Junk". "Junk" had one son, App (short for Appalachian), who was an outstanding football player for the Vikings in the 1930s. Lee George later moved to California. Uncle Pete was interviewed every fall and asked for his prediction on the severity of the coming winter. He said he foretold the weather with a goose bone, but he would never explain how that method worked.

Uncle Pete added more to the local color by his reputation for telling tall tales. On one occasion he was hauling a wagonload of logs to the sawmill in Owingsville. He was using a three-span team consisting of five mules and one horse. As they attempted to climb the steep Owingsville Hill, the horse laid down and refused to pull. Uncle

Pete told "Junk", "I'll take care of that lazy horse." So he dug a hole under the horse's hip and stuck a huge firecracker in the hole and lit the fuse. When the firecracker exploded the old horse jumped up, shook himself, pawed a few times, snorted, passed some gas, and you've never seen such pulling in all your life. That horse never did lay down again pulling a load.

Uncle Pete thought his house needed a new coat of paint. He went to Owingsville to buy one of the latest colors of paint. When he came back, he and his son "Junk" painted the white two-story house a color. As they waited for the paint to dry, they drove their old car to have a beer while the paint dried. When he returned home, the paint had dried and they drove right into the side of the house. Uncle Pete said the next day they drove all the way to Owingsville to buy a can of black paint and painted a stripe around the house so they could find it.

### Tall tales continue

Colorful Uncle Pete was a night watchman at the Spoke Factory for many years. He always carried a 12-gauge single barrel shotgun with the barrel bent at about a 45-degree

See HISTORY on D-2

## History From D-1

angle. When asked why his gun was bent, this was what he said, "Those fellows around here are pretty sneaky and hide around the corner, and I bent it so I could shoot around the corner." This writer used to be one of those "sneaky" children who used to play in that old abandoned spoke factory on what is now West First Street. But I don't recall seeing Uncle Pete.

Lee George and Uncle Pete made a trip to see the Gulf of Mexico and when they came back Pete said, "Everyone thinks the Gulf of Mexico is all water, but me and Lee George rode all over it on horseback."

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# Morehead Memories:

People &  
Places



## About the Author

Dr. Jack Ellis is a retired Morehead State University Library director and a retired minister.

## Parney's Parade of Progress, II

By JACK D. ELLIS  
Special to The Morehead News

"A man heapeth riches and knoweth not who shall gather them." (Proverbs: 39:6)

About 1936, neighbor Lindsay Caudill left his house one morning and looked across the street at the Martindale residency. To his amazement, there were three goats tethered in Parney's yard. Since he knew Parney had been back down to his home in Mississippi, he stopped at the Amos 'n Andy and asked about the goats. Parney said he brought them back from Mississippi in the back of his Cadillac. The only problem was keeping them from eating the upholstery in the care, and he was planning to use them to keep his grass mowed.

**Business expands**

Parney and Liz soon expanded the Amos 'n Andy Restaurant. He rented a pool room and bowling alley from Dan Caudill. It was the first bowling alley in Morehead and local boys were hired as pin setter. Bowling was a popular pastime and several leagues were formed. Also, an all-star bowling team competed against surrounding towns. But the Martindales soon sold the Amos 'n Andy, the pool room and bowling alley and went into the furniture business.

In 1939, Parney bought land from Cap Burdeck and built a new building on Main Street next door to the Battson Building. Walter Carr recalled it was the first business building in Morehead with terrazzo floors. It was there the Martindales went into the furniture, hardware and appliance business. But World War II

See *PROGRESS* on C-3



MSTC 1934 football: front row, Addington, Hackney, Reid, J. Evans, Wilson, Rowland, Hammond, second row, Allais Kufall, P. Combs, Holliday, Brashear, J. Reynolds, Martindale, Clayton, Sparks, back row, W. Reynolds, Wyant, O. Evans, P. Combs, Downing, coach; Sheridan, Mocabee, Ryan, Coconaugh, Maggard.

See C-3 for information on Jack Ellis' latest book