



# ROCKCASTLE MEMORIES

BY DAVID J. GRIFFIN

*Fun with Slide Rules – as told by a former science nerd*

When I was a student at Mt. Vernon High School (MVHS) – 1959 to 1962 – my interests were centered toward the math and science classes that were available. Both of these fields of study were relatively easy for me to understand. I had developed an interest during my years in elementary school.

Some of my favorite teachers were found in the math and science departments of the school. I took every class that they taught during my four years at MVHS. Who could ever forget sitting in class under the direction of Dorothy and Bill Landrum, "Tuck" Baker, or Coach Berry?

When I entered the University of Kentucky (UK) in the summer of 1962, I declared that my major and minor would be Biology and Chemistry. To attain a degree in these subjects required that I also take several math classes including: College Algebra, Trigonometry, and Calculus. In all three of these math classes and in most of my chemistry classes, the professors demanded that each student purchase and become acquainted with operating a slide rule. Until that time, I had never seen nor used one so the idea was foreign to me. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the slide rule was the symbol of the math and science student in the same way that a stethoscope symbolized the medical profession.

In case you're not familiar with the item, allow me to introduce you to the use and functions of a slide rule. It is a mechanical analog device, used primarily for multiplication and division of very large numbers. It is also used for certain functions such as roots, logarithms and trigonometry. Before the advent of the pocket calculator, it was the most commonly used calculation tool in science and mathematics.

William Oughtred and John Napier collectively developed the slide rule in approximately 1620. The devices became common in the United States around 1881. Its use continued to

grow and became extremely popular in the US during the 50's. It lasted until 1974, when the electronic scientific calculator made the slide rule obsolete.

I think it is interesting that Wernher von Braun brought two 1930's vintage Nestler slide rules with him when he moved to the US after World War II to work on the American space program. Throughout his life, he never used any other pocket calculating devices. Aluminum Pickett brand slide rules were carried on five Apollo space missions, including to the moon.

My chemistry professor at UK expressively instructed us to purchase a specific Pickett, ten-inch rule for his class. Almost every male student had a black leather holster fastened to his belt as he strolled across campus toward the Chemistry/Physics building. I remember walking into Kennedy Book Store at UK to purchase my own Pickett rule. In those days, the cost was in the neighborhood of \$55, and the leather holster was an additional \$5 – an exorbitant price for the time. During the first week of my chemistry class, we spent most of the time learning how to use the mechanical calculator. A few of the students dropped the class because they could not master calculating very large numbers using the new rule.

When I began my own teaching career at Campbellsville High School in 1965, I purchased enough basic slide rules so that all of my students could master its use in my chemistry classes. I even had a three-foot, wall-mounted wooden slide rule hanging over my blackboard in order to be able to demonstrate its use to the entire class at one time. Little did I realize that its importance was going to end in a very few years.

By the mid-70s, my chemistry classes were using the Texas Instrument TI-30 pocket electronic calculators, and teachers had to explain their use just as we had done with slide rules earlier. The new calculators increased the significant

(Cont. to A4)

# Points East

By Ike Adams



Less than healthy teeth is a problem that afflicts both sides of my family. Both of my parents had full sets of dentures by the time they were 45 years of age. The dental profession, such as it existed in eastern Kentucky in their youth, simply gave up on saving their teeth.

Without going into great detail, Mom had extremely soft teeth that made her extremely prone to cavities and tooth decay no matter how much care she took. Dad's teeth were so brittle that he was regularly breaking off pieces of them. Finally their dentist simply told them that that there wasn't much left to put a filling in.

Determined that I would not suffer such a fate, Mom made sure I used only the best of fluoride tooth paste and the importance of brushing and flossing was drummed into my brothers me far more strongly than any Bible-based religion. I was trotted into Dr. Lee Moore's office, and later Dr. Back's on a regular basis for cleanings and fillings.

Still, by the time I was a freshman in high school, I'd broken my two upper front teeth to the point they couldn't be repaired. As far as I know, I was the only kid in my high school class with a partial plate.

But I got through college and into the early part of my career with just those two falsies as I began accumulating a mouthful of amalgam. Over the years I've never once gone in for a routine cleaning that didn't result in one to three or more follow-up s for fillings.

The extractions, always one at a time, began when I was about 35 and it's been downhill ever since. The upper partial grew from one to six teeth. A lower now has five. But, since last Christmas, two more uppers have broken off beyond repair and my dentist and I decided that it was time to start thinking about extracting the last of my upper teeth and going for a full plate of dentures.

So, over the last two weeks, I have had no upper teeth. Nor am I going to for at least another month. I have, however, figured out why so many kids become juvenile delinquents. They have to spend the first two or so years of their lives eating so-called baby food. Other than applesauce, and even it could use some work on the tasteful front, baby food, by and large, is not something that little or big humans should be forced to eat.

There has to be a way to make this stuff taste like something other than a word I'm not allowed to use in the paper. No wonder they cry so much and slap the spoon out of the hand that's trying to feed them. And no wonder so many of them stop trusting and commence defying their parents when they reach puberty.

All of which is to say that eating baby food proved not to be a viable alternative to the nutritional needs of my toothless state of being. I also quickly learned that man is not designed to live on bananas alone.

Because of other health issues, I have been medically advised, over the last 5 years or so, to make my diet consist mostly of fresh, raw or very lightly cooked fruits and vegetables. I eat far more raw apples, peaches, pears, strawberries, pineapples, grapes, plums, bananas, bell peppers, celery, carrots, tomatoes, onions, lettuce, cabbage and other greens than anyone I know along with cornbread, sourdough bread and three or four helpings of meat a week.

I had figured I'd survive on baby food, tomato soup,

mashed bananas and the like until I have new teeth but my stomach and, for that matter, the rest of my body quickly rebelled. But I have found a solution.

Over the last two weeks the food processor, a device I had only used previously to make cole slaw and sauer kraut, has become the most used implement in our kitchen.

Read the produce list, just above, again. Over the last ten days, every single item on that list has found itself being chopped or ground into something easily swallowed. I'm now at the point that I don't even think about chewing.

In fact, if it was not for my occasional, obsessive

(Cont. to A4)

# Strange... But True?

by: Tonya J. Cook



*The Miraculous Power of the Spear of Destiny*

In keeping with the theme of the stigmata, the bleeding of the palms, feet, and sometimes the forehead and side of the afflicted, which are also known as the "Holy Wounds", we will take a look at the "Spear of Destiny". It is also known as the "Holy Lance", "Holy Spear", the "Lance of Longinus", or the "Spear of Longinus". It is said to be the spear noted in the Gospel of John that pierced the side of Christ, and to have magical powers.

According to the "Encyclopedia of Occultism & Parapsychology" and Houston Steward Chamberlain, a British-born political philosopher, whoever claims this spear and understands its occult significance holds

the destiny of the world. Some of its former owners were Constantine the Great, Justinian, Charles Martel, Charlemagne, and various German emperors...all "men of destiny".

The first mention of this spear is in John 19:34. During the Crucifixion of Christ a Roman soldier, "Longinus" by tradition stabbed Christ in the side to make sure He was dead. This is noted in the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus. At some point he has gained sainthood and is now "Saint Longinus".

There are four relics that claim to be the Holy Lance or at least to be parts of it. Rome, Vienna, Armenia, and Antioch all claim the holy relic.

The Holy Lance in Rome is located beneath the dome of Saint Peter's Basilica, although the Catholic Church claims no authenticity to the relic. In the year 615, Jerusalem was captured by Persian forces and the point of the lance went through various hands before ending up in France, but disappeared during the French Revolution. The larger portion wasn't seen after 615 in Jerusalem, but some speculate it was relocated to Constantinople. It was reportedly seen there as late as 1430. IN the mid-18th century, Pope Benedict XIV stated that he had seen drawings and the larger piece and smaller piece formed one blade. The relic has been at St. Peter's Basilica since.

Next week we'll continue... (Cont. to A4)

# Our Readers Write

## Enjoy Blast from the Past...

Dear Editor,  
Wanted to let you know how much we enjoyed the Blast from the Past pictures and articles. I especially loved the Mt. Vernon Red Devils basketball article. I am an alumni but had no idea of Mt. Vernon's success on the basketball court. Seeing that picture of the gym really took me back. When Mr. Owens' book is published I want a copy.

Thanks,  
George Hacker  
Independence, KY

## Never leave your pet alone in car...

Dear Editor,  
With warmer weather upon us now, I ask you to please remind pet owners to never leave their pet alone in a parked vehicle. Even on what seems like a relatively mild day the temperature inside a car can reach over 100 degrees quickly.

The ASPCA website states,

"No Parking! Never leave your animals alone in a parked vehicle. "On a hot day, a parked car can be-

come a furnace in no time-even with the windows open-which could lead to fatal heat stroke," says Dr. Louise Murray, Vice President of ASPCA Bergh Memorial Animal Hospital. Also, leaving pets unattended in cars in extreme weather is illegal in several states."

The internet is a treasure trove of information about pet health and safety. Your veterinarian should also be able to advise on warmer weather issues.

Cathy Longhurst  
Mount Vernon, KY

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