

BLAND COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Least we forget the hardships of our families and the troops abroad.

The Empty Stocking .

This is a narrative from an oral history interview by Jessica DeHart with her grandmother and great aunt.

Bataan Death March.

A conversation with Josh Havens about his great uncle Everett Harless and his survival as a Japanese Prisoner of War.

“The times they are a changing.”

Thanksgiving and Hog Killing

By Sue Ellen Tate

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

The Bland County Historical Society has had a great year and we look forward to an even better year in 2027.

The Society is increasing memberships and growing financially. Remember we only grow with your assistance of donations, memberships and purchases of our merchandise.

We are excited to offer our new ornament just before Thanksgiving. It is a salute to the 100th year of the Bland County Fair. The ornament will be for sale in the BCHS Office and online and cost $25.00. Get a perfect Christmas gift, one with meaning, for your family and friends. Please join the Bland County Historical Society to preserve our wonderful county history!! Please don't forget our 15 month calendar for 2026-2027 which celebrates the 100th year of the Bland County Fair. What a great gift for only $15.00 and add the ornament for $25.00!!

The office will close December 12, 2026 and reopen April 10, 2027 with our quarterly membership program. We will be available by phone at 276-613-5350, info@blandcountyhistoc.org or at our facebook page Bland Historical Society.

Rachel Havens President Pro Tem



The Bland County Historical Society would like to invite its members and the public to the Third Membership Meeting on December 19, 2026 @ 1:00PM. The meeting will be held at the Edith Bolling Wilson Birthplace Museum located at 145 East Main Street, Wytheville, VA. Ms. Betsy Ely will portray Edith Bolling Wilson and will present the topic "From Wytheville to the White House". Ms. Ely will be dressed in period costume and will present historical information about the First Lady. The Edith Bolling Wilson Birthplace Museum is the only First Lady Museum in Virginia and only one of 8 sites in the nation dedicated to sharing information and stories of American's First Ladies.Please join us for this historic event.

The Empty Stocking



This is a heartwarming story of Pauline and Scott Hutchinson and the Christmas of 1944. The two were a happily married couple with a house full of children. They were just a regular family from Bland County. They lived in a log cabin that Scott had built from trees cut down from Wolf Creek Mountain. They was nothing out of the ordinary about them until Scott was called away to Europe to fight the Nazis in World War II.
Scott served his country bravely, but as any GI, he really desired to be at home in his cabin with his family. His family desired his return home too. Pauline and the children's sadness were brought out when the Christmas of '44 came around. It was hard for the family celebrate whilst their patriarch was fighting the evil Nazis.



On December 25, 1944, Pauline had just awakened, still in her nightgown, when her sister, Dot, came for a visit. Pauline had her sister take a picture of her, holding a picture of her beloved husband and an empty stocking.

Dec 25th, 1944
"This is really a honey. When Dot and them came down early in the afternoon.m. to see the kids things I hadn't dressed and had on my robe. I had her make this picture of me. It's suppose to represent how much I missed you on Xmas a.m. The picture, the empty sock and expression, I did miss you more than you can know."

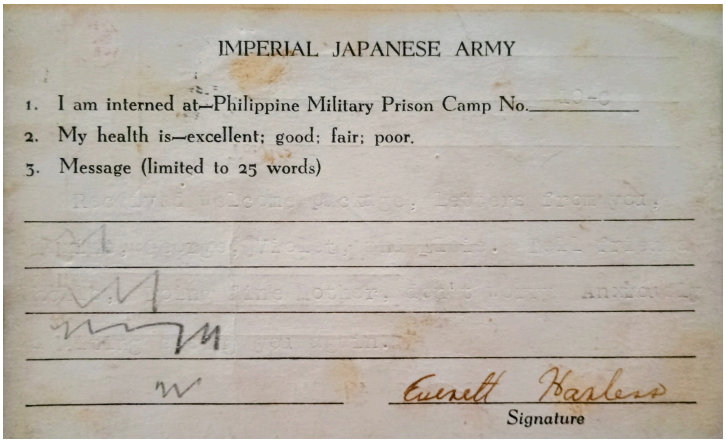


At the beginning of 1945 the terrible war was finally coming to an end. This Christmas would be a much happier tale. With the Axis defeated and Europe rebuilding,

Scott was finally able to return home. This Christmas was a truly joyous one.

The family had so much to be thankful for the following Christmas. Scott had safely returned home to his loving wife, Pauline, and his two adoring daughters Peggy and Bobbie Jo. The happiness that had once filled the Hutchinson family home, had finally returned.

Interview by Jessica DeHart with her Grandmother.



IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY

1. I am interned at—Philippine Military Prison Camp No. 10-0
2. My health is—excellent; good; fair; poor.
3. Message (limited to 25 words)

Received welcome package, letters from you, Pauline, George, Violet and Iris. Tell friends hello, doing fine. Mother, don't worry, anxiously waiting to see you.

W

Everett Harless
Signature

A conversation with Josh Havens:

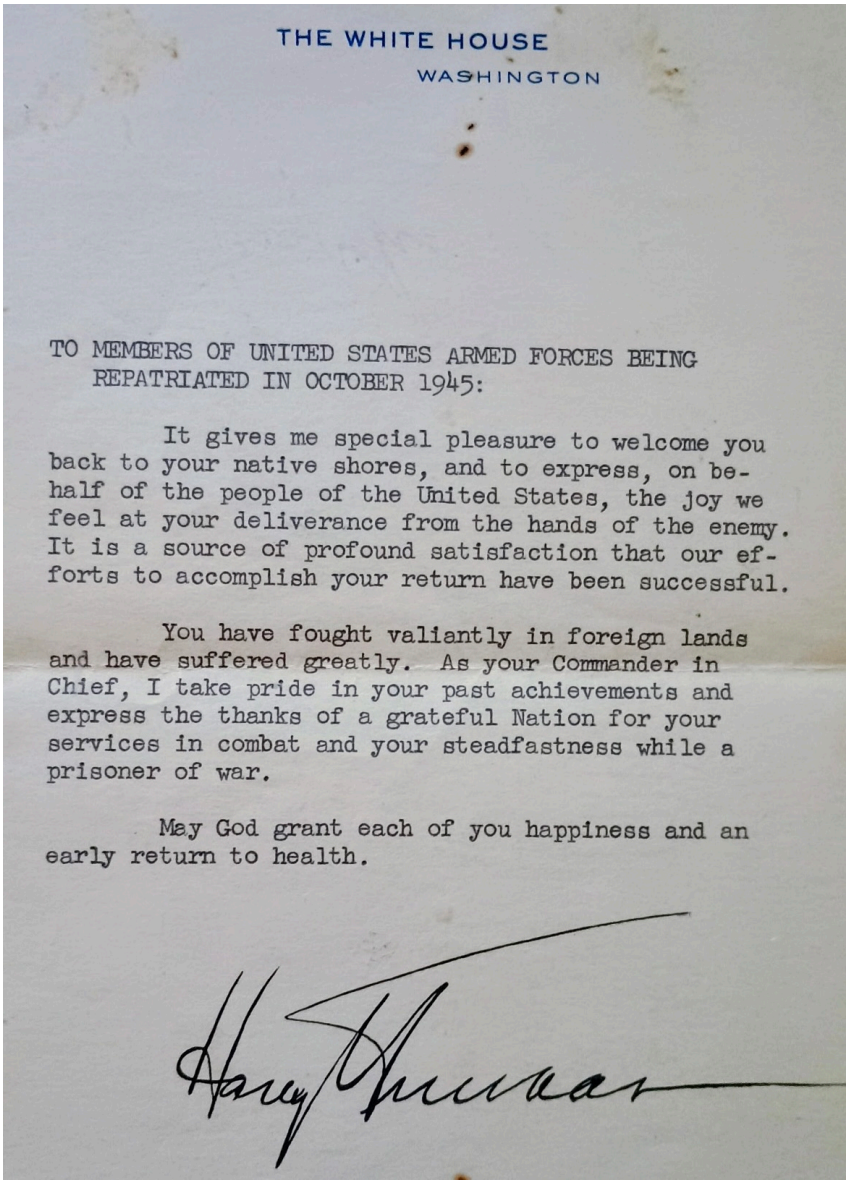
"Uncle Everett Harless was my great uncle and I grew up around him. He grew up in the wilderness and he was my grandpa Glenn's older brother and he was in the Bataan Death March and a POW for 50 months. He worked in a steel mill in Tokyo and he later died in Martinsville as a result of a timber accident."

His family received a letter from the Japanese Imperial Army attesting to his treatment and health . The ink has faded but the type writer imprints are legible and read as follows.

"Received welcome package, letter from you, Pauline, George, Violet and Iris. Tell friends hello, doing fine. Mother, don't worry, anxiously waiting to see you." Everette Harless. Top right corner says Prison vamp 10-0

"I am sure my Uncle George joined the 1st Marine division so he could be in Japan after his brother was there."

The home later received a letter from the President of the United States.



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

TO MEMBERS OF UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES BEING REPATRIATED IN OCTOBER 1945:

It gives me special pleasure to welcome you back to your native shores, and to express, on behalf of the people of the United States, the joy we feel at your deliverance from the hands of the enemy. It is a source of profound satisfaction that our efforts to accomplish your return have been successful.

You have fought valiantly in foreign lands and have suffered greatly. As your Commander in Chief, I take pride in your past achievements and express the thanks of a grateful Nation for your services in combat and your steadfastness while a prisoner of war.

May God grant each of you happiness and an early return to health.

Harry Truman

A Thanksgiving Tradition

Perhaps many of you have memories of Thanksgiving that include a hog killing day. Although common in rural communities like Bland County in the past, there are few doing the hard work today. Fewer people are raising their own hogs today and now there are processing plants doing this all day, backbreaking work. Years ago Thanksgiving time was the best time to slaughter their hogs and put up meat for the coming year. It was cold enough to chill the meat and family members were available, more hands always make less work!

Sometimes if a large number of hogs were involved, the men would start a fire the night before and in the morning heat up a large tub of water to dunk the hogs once killed. If fewer animals were involved, they would start the fire early in the morning. After killing the animals they would dunk them in the water and then hang each one to cool. This sometime involved a tractor to lift the hogs in and out of the waster.

While the hogs were cooling, the family and friends gathered and would eat their Thanksgiving Day meal or some other large dinner before starting the next step.

After dinner it was back to work beginning with scraping the hair off the animal and the butchering it. One of my sources told me that the work was divided up depending on the skills of the person and that it was not unusual to have 5 or 6 working side by side on each animal. As work continued through the afternoon lots of leftover biscuits would lot sent down while tenderloin was fried by the fire, a special treat.

At the end of the long day the meat was divided up to take home. Although some people canned meat or smoked at home, after the canneries were established here many people worked around opening days to finish processing them there. After all this hard work think about the clean up involved at the end of the day!

For this article I spoke to several local people who remembered this family event well and said they did not miss the long hard day. However, it provided lots of good meat in the coming year as well as some community building and some good stories.

Sue Ellen Tate

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