

## Nelson, Loraine Carter: If Threshers Spent The Night <sup>[1]</sup>

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### Loraine Carter Nelson: If Threshers Spent The Night

by David Cecelski. "[Listening to History](#) <sup>[2]</sup>," *News & Observer*. Published 4/13/2008. Copyrighted.  
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Loraine Carter Nelson recently sent me a lovely memoir recalling her childhood growing up with eight brothers and sisters in the Blue Ridge Mountains. That was near the village of Democrat, 17 miles north of Asheville, on the Buncombe-Madison county line. Now 75 and living in Raleigh, Mrs. Nelson graciously permitted me to share excerpts from her reminiscences of farm life in the 1930s.

**In Loraine Carter Nelson's words:**

We were raised on a cattle farm. Papa would go to the livestock market and buy steers mostly (but a few heifers) in the spring and range them on the mountain pastures until fall. Not only did we raise cattle, we raised sheep, too. We kept a s  
Papa bought a mill too. The mill was built by Solomon Carter, a forefather, four generations back, in 1800. There was a nameplate over the big double doors of the mill that read "Carter Milling Company, Est. 1800." Papa walked to Democrat.  
Even though we always had a car, we walked everywhere that was less than about three miles' distance. On Sundays, we walked to Antioch Baptist Church on Sugar Creek.

Sometime, they would have me play the piano (by ear). I played with a strong beat and rhythm, and pretty fast. I liked to play the hymns that had 4/4 time.

The young people attended BYPU (Baptist Young People's Union) on Sunday night. The young men walked the young ladies home after service (not me, I was too little). But that always held more excitement, romance and magic for me than  
Cline Roberts was the most romantic young man I ever saw ever (including movies). I was in grade school and would have to sit on the school bus in front of the high school to wait for them to decide when they wanted to leave.

I saw Cline -- a little rakish looking, a little dangerous looking, white shirt sleeves rolled up high to show muscles, a straw hat cocked sideways on his head, a bus driver! -- catch his pretty girl and force her back against the wall to kiss her. My

**The threshers**

Every summer, I looked forward to the arrival of the threshing machine. It was something to behold. The threshing machine provided many things: threshed wheat, temporary employment, entertainment and socializing and a chance for the yc  
The threshing machine was pulled by four horses, sat up real tall, so tall that it had two ropes attached to each side for a strong person to throw his weight and strength on to keep the threshing machine from tipping over; and it was red, some  
The threshing machine had all sorts of dials and controls and was the most complicated thing I ever saw in my life, until many years later.

But the other exciting part was that any farm being serviced by the threshers always provided a hot noontime meal. There could be as many as five or six extra people to feed. So the BIG pots were got out to cook in. It also meant gathering a  
Then there'd be whatever meat you had, most likely three or four chickens or pork or maybe home-canned beef or some of all three, and cakes and pies to finish off on. All of this cooked on a big Home Comfort wood stove (no electricity).

Then, the best part of all, if the threshers had to spend the night, they would see who could tell the biggest whoppers. Some of them were pretty good storytellers.

There were no Cline Roberts types who ever came.

**Avoiding sin**

We were kept from sinning by not playing ball on Sunday and not thinking of going to a picture show. Cigarettes were TABOO. (However, our money crop was tobacco.) There were no cards in our house or a pair of dice. There was absolutel  
Mama also allowed no slang words to be used by us. No gee, golly, heck, etc. Neither were we to say pregnant or any word that referred to private parts of the human body.

It's a wonder that she had any grandchildren, we were brought up so strictly, with sex so taboo. Yet she was pregnant 12 times and raised nine children.

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