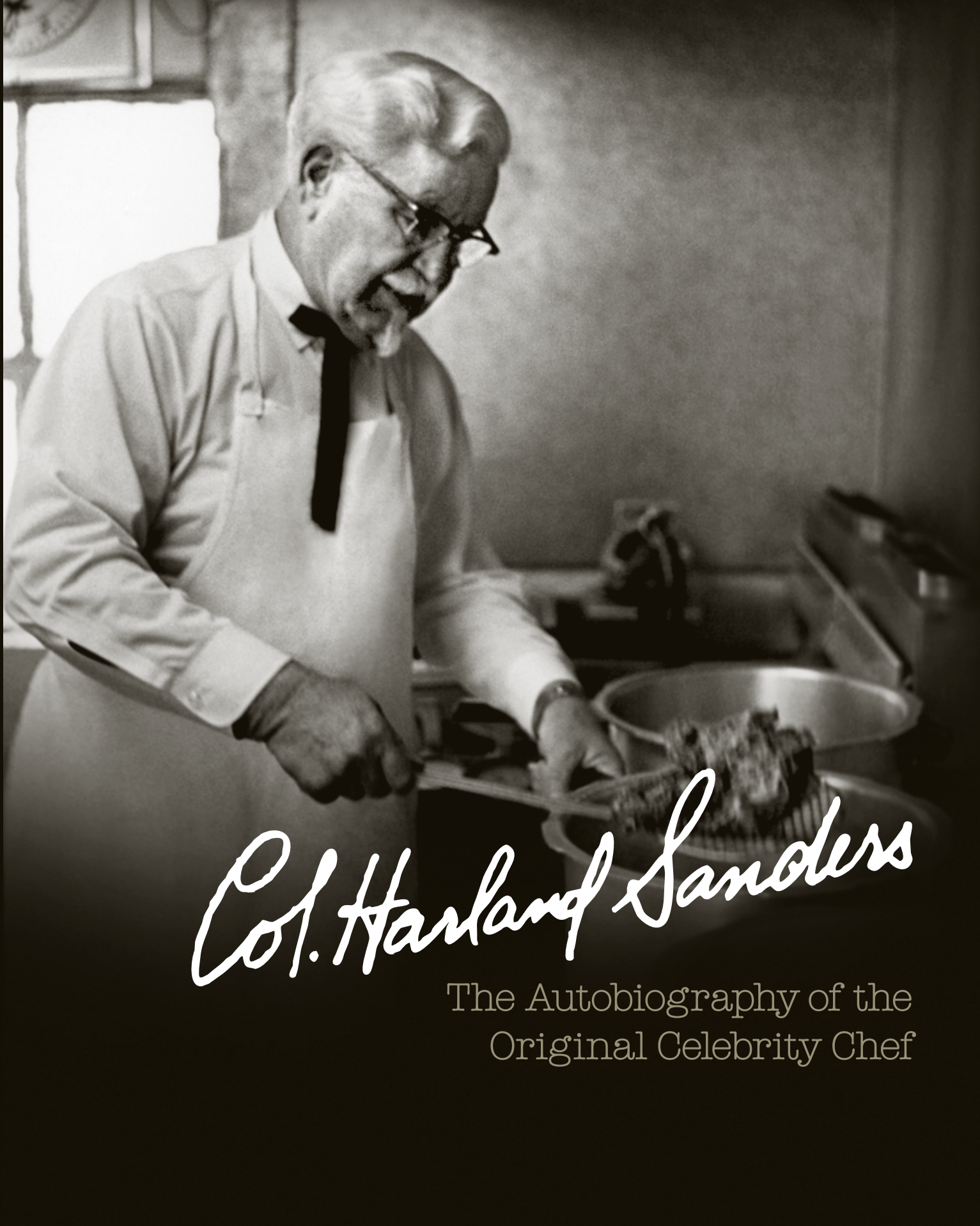


*Col. Harland Sanders*

The Autobiography of the Original Celebrity Chef



# *Col. Harland Sanders*

The Autobiography of the  
Original Celebrity Chef



Harland Sanders seven months.



The Colonel greets well-wishers during his 90th birthday party in September 1980.

Published by KFC Corporation  
1441 Gardiner Lane  
Louisville, Kentucky 40213  
United States of America

First edition, 2012

Copyright © KFC Corporation, 2012

ISBN: 978-0-9855439-0-7

Sanders, Colonel Harland  
The Autobiography of the Original Celebrity Chef

Printed in New Zealand  
Set in Amasis MT, American Typewriter and Mural Script  
Designed by Redcactus Design Limited, Auckland, New Zealand  
Food Photography by Babiche Martens  
Food Styling by Fiona Smith

KFC, Kentucky Fried Chicken, the image of Colonel Sanders and related marks are registered trademarks of KFC Corporation. All rights reserved.

All other trademarks referenced in this book are the property of their respective owners.

Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this publication may be reproduced, sorted in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise), without the prior written permission of KFC Corporation. You may not sell this book or otherwise use it for commercial purposes.

The scanning, uploading, and/or distribution of this book via the Internet or via any other means without the permission of the publisher is illegal and punishable by law. Please download only authorized electronic editions and do not participate in or encourage electronic piracy of copyrightable materials.

# Col. Harland Sanders

The Autobiography of the  
Original Celebrity Chef

# Contents

## The Story...

Foreword – By Pete Harman	4
Introduction – A Life in Recipes	8
Chapter 1 – The Rising: Baking Bread and Beyond	10
Chapter 2 – A Culinary Education	21
Chapter 3 – From Lawyer to Mechanic, a Jack of all Trades	26
Chapter 4 – What Came First: The Chicken	35
Chapter 5 – A Country Ham Primer	45
Chapter 6 – A Leap into the World of High Finance	50
Chapter 7 – High ‘Steaks’ and the Motel Business	55
Chapter 8 – Hard Times and Grounded Dreams	58
Chapter 9 – Magic in Multiples: Franchising Takes Off	65
Chapter 10 – Gaining Momentum: Business Blooms	72
Chapter 11 – Passing the Torch	80
Chapter 12 – New Leadership, New Goals	83
Chapter 13 – Trendsetting and the Take-Away Bucket	89
Chapter 14 – Hard Work: The Fountain of Youth	92
Chapter 15 – Community Service: Giving Your Best	94
Chapter 16 – From Humble Beginnings, a Legacy	99

# The Food...

<b>Appetizers</b>	109
Hot Biscuits, French Fried Parsnips and Cauliflower, Corn Fritters, Corn Chowder, Hush Puppies, Mint Julep.	
<b>Sides</b>	121
Candied Sweet Potatoes, Onion Pie, Transparent Squash, Cranberry Conserve, Fried Tomatoes, Bread Stuffing.	
<b>Breakfast</b>	133
Coffee – the way we used to make it on the farm, Butter Thin Pancakes, Light Bread, Extra Special Scrambled Eggs, The Colonel's Special Omelet, Potato Pancakes.	
<b>Main</b>	143
Roast Turkey, Roast Beef, Meat Loaf, Scalloped Potatoes, Chicken Brunswick Stew, Apple-Stuffed Pork Chops, Mulligan Stew.	
<b>Desserts</b>	157
Baked Apple Dumplings, Pecan Pie, Chocolate Pie, Lemon Sponge Pie, Special Brown Betty, Sand Tarts, Oatmeal Cake, Upside Down Peach Cobbler.	
<b>Conversion Reference Guide</b>	173
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	176

## FOREWORD BY PETE HARMAN

On September 9, 1890, a legend was born in Henryville, Indiana. His name was Harland Sanders, but for those of us that knew him, and for the millions around the world that know of him, he's simply, the Colonel. His humble beginnings and varied career path laid the foundation for a life that symbolizes the American Dream.

The Colonel's life was a life of ups and downs, and probably more downs than ups in his earlier years. His dream of success, like most great entrepreneurs, centered around the values of hard work, honesty, loyalty, recognition, giving back, and most of all, passion. He was passionate about hospitality, he was passionate about delicious home-cooked meals, and more than anything he was passionate about his Original Recipe, the secret blend of 11 herbs and spices.

The Colonel perfected his secret recipe in 1939, and his restaurant in Corbin, Kentucky, became known as the place to stop for a great, home-cooked meal. In 1952, I was fortunate to become his first franchisee. What I thought was a business deal turned out to be a lifelong friendship. It started with the Colonel insisting that he prepare a chicken dinner for my wife and me in our Salt Lake City restaurant. Of course, the dinner was fabulous! His passion for both hospitality and his recipe led us to paint our windows the next day with signs that read, "Now serving Kentucky Fried Chicken." That was the beginning of a 60-plus year campaign to spread his brand so that everyone in the country, and later the world, could enjoy his recipe. It was also the beginning of what he taught me about the restaurant industry.

KFC continued to grow over the years, and at the age of 74 the Colonel realized that in order to spread his recipe around the world, it was time to let others take his business to the next level. He sold his Company to a group that shared his passion for growing the business, but he remained an active spokesperson for many years after. I know the Colonel would be proud to know that today, KFC is the world's largest chicken restaurant company with 17,000 restaurants that are still preparing delicious chicken by hand in the kitchen, just the way he did decades ago.



Sadly for all of us, the Colonel passed away on December 16, 1980 at the age of 90. We lost a great leader, a great visionary, an American success story, and I lost a great friend. But we all have something to learn from his life and lessons. While his secret recipe for preparing chicken is locked up in a vault, his recipe for success is right here in this book for all to see. His legacy continues.





*The Story...*



# INTRODUCTION

## A Life in Recipes

This book, written in 1966, is about a man's life and the food he's cooked, eaten and served. That man is me. The food I've liked, the work I've done and the way I think are all the same things. It's not such a farfetched idea. A lot of learned men think people really are the food they've eaten.

I've read hundreds of cookbooks. Most of those cookbooks don't even tell you how to get a steak ready, how to bake biscuits or an apple pie. The food I've liked in my time is American country cookin'. But in this book I'm going to try something new. I'm going to tell how I grew up and at the same time tell you how you can have the kind of food I grew up on.

[Buy zynga chips](#)

When I tell you how to get food ready for eating, I won't use just a cold mathematical formula to help you put it on your table. I'll be telling you how to prepare it like a man who's talking to you right over your kitchen stove. My list of American country food you won't find in fancy cookbooks.

I've dug into my own favorite recipes and I've also come up with a few of the most delicious dishes this country has ever invented – after I've figured them out in my own way. There won't be hundreds of them, but even a few are worth more than all the imported recipes with unpronounceable names put together.

For some reason, unless a dish is all dolled up with sauces and has a fancy name, most cooks won't give it a second look. I'm making room in these pages for real old-time American country and farm cooking before it's forgotten.

You won't find sherried quail or Charlotte Russe in these pages. But there will be cornbread stuffing, light bread, hot biscuits with honey butter, chicken pot pie, hushpuppies, fried tomatoes, potato pancakes, pecan pie (and the flaky crust that goes with it), baked apple dumplings and a whole lot of other just plain American country cooking.

I was a farm boy myself, so I lean toward farm cooking. I've built a multimillion-dollar business with my food. To me, my recipes are priceless.

This is a new kind of book. It's the story of a man's life and the story of the food he's cooked and eaten running right along with it.

In my life story, I may tell you roughly how to make a certain dish and why I've liked it; but somewhere in the recipes I've included, you'll find exact instructions about how to prepare that food.

The way I see it, if you've bought this book, you've bought yourself a bargain – my food, seasoned with the stories from a lifetime.

*Col. Harland Sanders*



# CHAPTER 1

## The Rising: Baking Bread and Beyond

The best way to begin is by telling how I made my first loaf of light bread. Papa died when I was five years old. My little brother was three. Sister was born three months after Papa died in 1895. Mama sewed for the neighbors for our cash money. That left me to do the cookin' for three children. When I was seven, I got so I could make light bread. I made the yeast, set the sponge, made the dough, baked off the bread. When I was done I had the prettiest loaf of light bread you ever saw.

Lots of people have never heard of light bread. Homemade light bread is kind of hard to explain. First of all, it's kneaded bread. You start with yeast. Then you make that yeast into a sponge of very thin dough. You work that dough into your flour. Then you proof it and you punch it down once and let it come back up again. On the second comeback you make it into a loaf and let it rise in the pan. After that you bake it.

The length of time it takes that uncooked loaf to rise depends on the temperature of your room. In winter, we would put it behind the kitchen stove. Even with the aid of that warmth it might take half a day to rise. Usually we started the dough first thing in the morning. We were ready to bake it by nightfall.

I've sat up many a night until 11 or 11:30 so I could get the heel of the loaf for my share. To me, that was my favorite part of the loaf.

I've smelled a lot of fancy smells since, many a memorable aroma, but the smell of homemade light bread while it's being baked is still tops in my memory. Mama would cut the heel off the loaf and butter it. When I had nice buttered hot bread – well, that was living.

The year I baked my first light bread, Mama worked in Henryville for a while. Henryville was about three miles from our farm. She went to work there Mondays peeling tomatoes. She stayed with her brother in town while we three kids waited for her back on the farm. She came back Saturdays and spent the weekend with us.

One day while Mama was away I thought I'd try making light bread the way I'd seen her make it lots of times. When I was done baking it I thought it was beautiful. I'd never seen a loaf that Mama baked look any better.

I grabbed up that loaf and with my five-year-old brother and my little two-year-old sister, we trudged three miles across the fields to the highway to reach Henryville so I could show Mama my wonderful loaf of bread. My brother and I took turns carrying our sister piggyback. One of us would carry her part way while the other carried my loaf of fresh baked bread; then we'd switch and the other would carry the bread instead of our baby sister. It felt like she weighed a ton but somehow we made it.

[zynga chips paypal](#)

When we reached the peelers' line where all the women were sitting there peeling tomatoes, I got more kisses on account of my loaf of bread than any seven-year-old kid has ever gotten before or since.

I learned to make bread by watching Mama as she boiled potatoes. She'd take some of the potato water and mash up one of the potatoes in it real fine. That was her first step. Then she'd put some of the liquid she'd saved from her previous batch of light bread sponge (that was the yeast) into that.

When it got to working and bubbling so it looked alive, she'd work that into what she called "the sponge." She always had a little liquid yeast left over from her previous batch. Nevertheless, she always boiled a fresh potato again every time she did it. That was her "starter."

When she had her sponge, she'd work the sponge into the dough. Then she proofed the dough and punched it down and made it into loaves. After it rose the second time, she'd put that into the pan. After that, it was ready to bake. She did her baking in an old wood-burning stove. We called it a range.

In those days children did a lot of things youngsters don't do anymore. Take thrashing, for example. When the boys were thrashing wheat, we carried 160-pound sacks from the thrashing machine to the stock pile with our teeth. When I tell people that today, I can see that they don't believe me.

But it's the truth. I guess it's because I carried wheat like that, that I have such a strong neck right now.

But as I say, country boys dealt with a whole lot of things then that city boys never knew anything about. We had to cut the wood for our kitchen stove ourselves. About 40 acres of our farm was in a wooded lot, so we had plenty of wood to cut.

And even when she wasn't away peeling tomatoes, she was away doing sewing. Only yesterday I passed the house where she did that.

The family she sewed for had eight or nine girls and each fall they all had to have four or five school dresses made. So Mama would sew over there for three or four weeks – sometimes more than a month. She also made boys' suits by hand. I never owned a store-bought suit until I was 13 or 14. She used a foot-pedal sewing machine. That was the main way she made her money.

\* \* \*

Papa died when he was 29. I can hardly remember him. I recall only a couple of things. I'd hand up lathes to him when he was building our house there on the farm while he was getting the wall ready to plaster.

One day, Papa came home in the middle of the day and went to bed. Mama told us children to be quiet, that Papa wasn't feeling well. For what seemed like a long time, Papa had a fever. The doctor came twice. Then one day the doctor took Mama into the kitchen and talked quietly. I got scared because Mama started to cry and I'd never seen her cry. We lost Papa that day.

I got my first job when I was ten years old. I was hired by Charlie Norris, a farmer. His place was about two miles cross country from where I lived. I was to be paid two dollars a month plus board.

Although I was only ten, I was a pretty big chunk of a boy. When I went to work, Charlie Norris put me in his wood lot clearing new ground for him with an axe and a saw. There were bluebirds and red squirrels and other things that attracted a boy's interest and I didn't clear as much ground as I ought to have cleared.





At the end of that first month Charlie Norris fired me. I went home, gave Mama my two dollars and I told her what had happened.

She really lit into me. I'll never forget the lecture she gave me. She asked me what I was ever going to amount to. "Here you are, my oldest son," she said. "Your father's dead and you're the only one I can look to for help with the other children. And you're no account. You can't even hold a job at two dollars a month."

I didn't cry. I just felt confounded, small and full of remorse that I had done such a thing and that I had disappointed her. Right then and there I made up my mind that if I ever got a job again, I'd put in enough hours and do enough work to give anybody who hired me satisfaction. Like I say, I was only 10, but Mama pounded it into my head. The only way, she said, I could get work and hang onto it was by giving the best there was in me. After that I never shirked a day in my life.

Next summer, I went to work for Henry Monk. He lived six or eight miles from us. Henry was a German farmer. I had never eaten cornbread at home but when I went to work for him he even had cornbread for breakfast. In addition to cornbread for breakfast we had cottage cheese with sour molasses.

When I was working for him he'd put a team with a plough ahead of me. I'd be the second team. There was another man behind me with a plough. Every time those men went around a field I went around with them. It was rough but I stayed on the job.

#### **THIS PAGE**

Harland (aged 7) stands next to his mother Margaret, with his brother Clarence (5) and sister Catherine (2), circa 1897.

In the end, Henry Monk said I was the greatest hand he'd ever had.

The way I looked at it, I was redeeming myself with my mother. Henry Monk paid me four dollars a month. I worked for him all that year. We started plowing each morning as soon as we could see the sun coming up. When the sun went down behind the tops of the trees we unhitched our horses. We fed them, went up to the house, ate our supper, then came back down to the cow barn to milk. I milked 16 cows. It was 10 o'clock at night before we got our milking done. Afterward we strained the milk, put it away and washed out our milk buckets.

The next morning we'd get up at 4 o'clock, groom the horses, harness them, feed them and go back to the house and eat breakfast. Then we'd milk the cows again. When the horses were done feeding, we'd get them out into a field and we'd work until the sun went down. It made for a long day.

That summer I not only redeemed myself with my mother but in spite of the long hours I put in, I learned to love work. Once you get used to it, there's great pleasure in it.

I've never believed in holding back or stinting on anything I've ever done and I've only had two rules: Do all you can, and do it the best you can. It's the only way you ever get the feeling of accomplishing something.

Henry Monk had a wife and daughter. They did our cooking. There is a theory that people on farms eat better than people in towns. That is true. And people who live on farms just naturally eat more. We worked harder so we demanded more food. We ate family style. We all helped ourselves from the same bowls. I even got so I liked cottage cheese with sour molasses.

\*\*\*

When I was 12 years old, Mama married again. She married a man up in northern Indiana. He was a gardener. Winters I came home, lived with Mama and went to school. We had no school buses. I walked about two-and-a-half miles to school each way. If there was snow, I plodded through it.

I lived with Mama and my step-daddy for only a year. Stepfathers are not usually very kind to their new wife's children and this one didn't take to us either. So I went out again into the world myself and worked on a farm another year or two. I was just 13 when I did that.

I worked on Sam Wilson's farm. I lived with him and went to school, too, doing farm work for him before and after school. I milked the cows and fed the stock for my board. Milking and feeding the livestock went on all the time.

That year I was promoted to seventh grade. I went to school for two weeks, then I lost out in a wrestling match with algebra. Somebody had mixed the alphabet with figures. After that I never could figure out what that algebra teacher was talking about so I quit school. The only thing I learned about algebra was that X equals the unknown quantity. Even today, I don't know what that unknown quantity is.

I wouldn't advise anybody to drop out that young today because times have changed. Even if you work hard you can't always make it the way I did with no education at all. Recently there was a big Kentucky Fried Chicken promotion held in Gainesville, Florida. One of our franchisees was a graduate of the University of Florida. He wanted to get me in the Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity, but they couldn't initiate me unless I was enrolled in a college. So they set up a special course for me. It was a three-day course in marketing. So while I was enrolled as a student there in Gainesville I got elected and initiated into the Pi Kappa Alpha. I guess I'm the only seventh-grade dropout in the country who ever belonged to a college fraternity.

After I dropped out of school, I painted carriages in Indianapolis at the Fairless Cart Works. Horse and buggies were still big business. Then, when I was 14, I left Indianapolis and went down to southern Indiana and worked on yet another farm there for a year. The following year I went to New Albany, Indiana, and got a job as a streetcar conductor. I had an uncle who'd been with the streetcar there for several years. He got me taken on. I was big and strong. I looked older than I was.

While I was on that job, a fellow got on my streetcar one night and asked me if I wanted to volunteer for the Army for a year and go to Cuba. He told me what the pay was and I thought it sounded pretty good, so I volunteered. I left in October.

I don't think they asked my age. If they did, I lied about it. Anyhow, I was accepted. I wasn't quite 16. I volunteered for a year in the quartermaster's corps. The agreement was if the Cuba trouble was settled inside of a year I could get a discharge. So I was only in the Army from October 6 until the following February.

All my life, it has helped me that I've been strong and husky. When I went to Cuba I got on a ship at Newport News. When I got off in Havana, seven days later, I weighed a lot less. I'd been seasick 24 hours a day all that time. I'd never been sick a day in my life but I feel seasick today just thinking about those seven days. I'm surprised I didn't die losing a lot of weight so suddenly. I'm told people have been known to die of seasickness. Right now I'd like to lose weight – although not that way!

\* \* \*

When I came back from Cuba the whole country was just like Teddy Roosevelt. We were all in a hurry to get some place. We all had new ideas. We figured they would lead us some place and we had very little time to lose.

If anything in those days had a future for a young man full of ambition, it was the country's railroads. A railroad engineer was a hero to all young men. He was what the jet pilot is today, or maybe the astronaut.

Like a lot of others, I was looking for a place to settle and a job with a future. To me a railroad was all those things. When I came back home from the Army in 1907, I landed in Sheffield, Alabama. I went to work there in the shops of the Southern Railroad as a blacksmith's helper. To me, a blacksmith's shop was the most fascinating place in the world. I loved to work the bellows and make the sparks fly. Boys today miss a lot; too much, if you ask me.

The blacksmith I worked for believed in working cool iron. He never got his iron up to a white heat. Without the benefit of blistering temperatures, the metal never got soft and pliable. I just had to pound thunder out of it and let me tell you, it pretty near wore me out.

The other helpers in the shop said the owner could go to hell for making us all work cold iron. I don't know why he insisted on it. There was no reason