

# Mr. Guy Bennett - My New Acquaintance

By Cindy Sandelin



**Mr. Bennett and his old Model A - both are still in top condition.**

Mr. Bennett is a delightful man whom I have lived across the street from for over twelve years. During a radio show on the KBCR "Steamboat Talks to Steamboat" program, I was asked what Mr. Bennett's first name was. I found that I was unable to answer. In fact, I actually knew very little about my long-time neighbor. One thing I was certain of, however, was that Mr. Bennett would be a perfect personality for a story in the next Three Wire Winter, Inc. magazine.

I set up an interview, found that his name was Guy Bennett, and listened while his history unfolded. Born in Beda, Kentucky, on March 13, 1898, Mr. Bennett started moving around the country at an early age.

"I went to my first school there at Beda — in a little school house — and then we moved on to the county seat — Hartford, Kentucky. Later we moved to Beaver Dam, which is maybe three or four miles from Hartford. Then we moved to a coal mining town three miles south of Beaver Dam called MacHenry, Kentucky. All the coal

mines at MacHenry had been worked out or had quit, I don't know which.

"When the trains ran on coal, they'd get their coal there at MacHenry. They had a big tipple along the railroad and the train would pull in there and take coal. My dad ran a blacksmith shop there, and I was his helper — his triphammer. They have a triphammer now that does the work. When you have a piece of iron that you want to shape, you get it hot, stick it under the triphammer and put your foot on it. The triphammer does the rest. I had to do my work with an old sledgehammer, though, because we didn't have a triphammer.

"One day some fellows who were digging wells around the country came in with an iron rod that they were going to use in drilling. It was three inches in diameter, and they wanted us to weld it. Dad said, 'Yeah, I'll weld it, but it's going to cost you.' We got everything ready and one morning put her in the forge, got her hot, and brought her out. I hammered on that thing till I thought I'd fall over, but we did a good job.



**Mr. Guy Bennett in Tucson, Arizona - his favorite wintertime spot.....**

Those fellows had tried to get blacksmiths down at Hartford to do the job, but nobody would tackle it. It was too large a job.”

Mr. Bennett began his life in Kentucky, moved to Colorado for a short time, went back to Kentucky, moved on to Florida for awhile, and then back to Colorado to make a permanent home.

“I was a victim of the asthma. I sat up all night, couldn’t lay down. I went to the doctor next morning and I said, ‘Doctor, what do you think about me trying the high altitude?’ He said, ‘It won’t hurt to try. I could doctor you here for the rest of your life and my life and never cure you. There’s so many different kinds of asthma and so many different kinds of cures, that I might never cure you.’

“So, I made my first trip to Colorado in 1948 in an old Model T car. I had a bunch of white-leggin’ laying hens that I sold to get gasoline for that Model T. I headed West and when I got this side of Kansas City, that asthma cleared up. I still have touches of asthma quite often, but not like I did back there.

“I drove through Denver in that old Model T

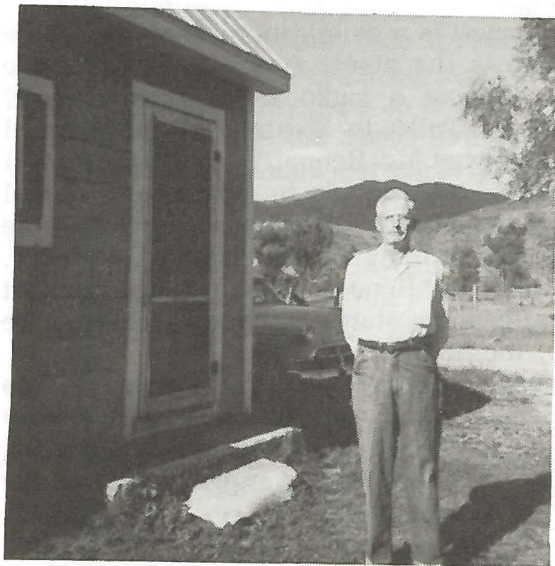
when Denver was a hundred thousand population. I came through Denver and drove up to Brighton, north of Denver there. There was a sign up on the road, ‘Pickle Pickers Wanted’. They had a little building there where they gave you some sacks to put the cucumbers in. There were some other fellows who came in there the same time I did. We got our sacks and went out into the cucumber field. I picked maybe a couple gallons of pickles and I saw that I couldn’t make my eats on what they were paying me.

“I told one of the other fellows to hold his sack, and I put the cucumbers I’d picked into his sack. I put all the rest of the sacks that they’d given me into one sack, and I took them back to the shed. I asked the fellow in there where he wanted ’em. He said, ‘Set ’em down there. I’ll get to you in a few minutes.’ In a few minutes he got over there, opened that sack, looked in it, and there wasn’t nothing but sacks in there.” Mr. Bennett chuckled, remembering the man’s puzzled look. “I said, ‘I can’t make a living at this.’ Then I started out on the road again.

“I got over to Longmont, some way or another, and got a job stacking hay for one day. The fellows, they just tried to cover me up with that hay, instead of placing it around. Well, I got \$5 out of that deal.

“The next day I went to Fort Collins. There was a sign there that said ‘Last Chance For Gas.’

I knew it was quite a stretch ahead of me. I asked the filling station man, ‘Could you tell me where I could get a job?’ He said, ‘I sure can. I’ve just been off taking gasoline to a farmer and



**.....and in Steamboat - his favorite summertime spot.**

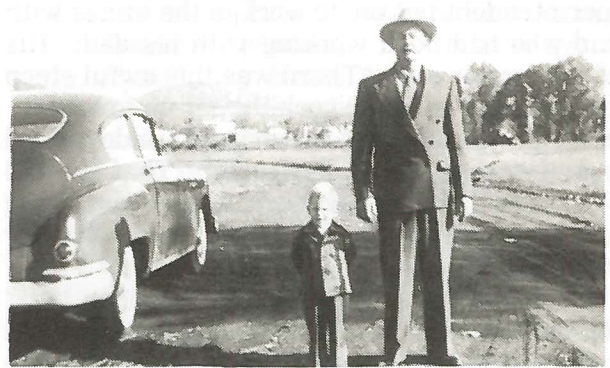
he asked me to send him a hand. You go 12 miles north and 12 miles east, and you'll be right at his house.' I went out there, got me a job with that fellow, and stayed with him until we'd harvested all his wheat. He sat down one day and wrote me out a recommendation saying that I'd worked for him a year and I was a good hand.

"When I got through there, I dropped down in the valley and got a job in the sugar beets. I went in to a fellow's place and asked him if he was going to need any help. He said yes, but he didn't want to pay me what I wanted. I gave him that recommendation that that fellow had written. He said, 'Yeah. I'll give you a job and pay you what you want.' I stayed 'till the sugar beets froze in."

After Mr. Bennett finished in the sugar beets, he headed to Nebraska and got a job picking corn for two days. He was on his way back to Kentucky, so he didn't stay in this part of the country long after that.

"I got homesick for Kentucky. I drove that Model T back to Kentucky, stayed a few days, and then drove to Florida. I stayed down there through the winter and then I came back to Colorado.

"The year before, on my way to Kentucky, I'd worked in the ol' Russell mines, north of Denver there. I'd been a radical union man. Any trouble would come up and I'd be in there a fightin' for the boys. When I came back from Florida, I



**Mr. Bennett with one of his grandchildren.**

asked for a job at the Russell mines. They wouldn't give me a job because I'd been so radical the year before.

"I went down to the southern part of the state and was working on the railroad when I picked up a newspaper that'd been thrown out of a train. Some place in New Mexico wanted miners. So, after my railroad job was done, I went down there to the coal mines. I and the fellow who went down there with me, decided that we didn't want to work in those mines. They were too gassy. We stayed there one night and then we pulled out.

"My friend and I were going to catch a freight train out of a little town by the mines. He waited there while I went to Santa Fe to get my check from the railroad. When I got back, he'd already caught a train. I caught the next train and caught up with him because his train had side-tracked for something. We got on the next train and rode between two boxcars over Raton Pass one night on our way back to Colorado. We were in a pretty dangerous place, but we stayed there until we got to Trinidad. I went on to Denver and wrote a friend of mine in Oak Creek, asking if there were any jobs. He had been at the Russell mines the year before, too, and he said, 'Come on up. They're hiring anything that comes along.'

"I caught the train to Oak Creek but when I got here, they'd quit hiring. I'd get up in the morning and walk down the canyon for three miles in 20 or 30 below zero weather, asking for a job. I stopped at Keystone and asked for a job. The boss there asked, 'Are you a blacksmith?' When I said, 'Yes, sir,' he said, 'Well, we need a blacksmith, but I don't know whether the superintendent's hired one or not. Tell you what I'll do. I'll give you a job and if the superintendent brings a man up tomorrow, I'll



**July, 1963, photo of Mr. Bennett and a great granddaughter, Julie Krista.**

give you a job in the mines. You come to work tomorrow.'

"I went to work the next day and the superintendent put me to work in the mines with a kid who had been working with his dad. His dad had gotten sick. There was this awful steep place where you had to push the car up to load it. I went to work and dug that high place down and made it easy to push cars through. That kid told me, 'I wish I'd have been working with you a long time ago. We pushed ourselves to death over that hump.'

"I started out at Keystone as a miner but I later worked there as a blacksmith, too. I sharpened the miners' picks and worked in the machine shop. I also worked in other coal mines — Haybro and Arrowhead. I did some hard work there at Haybro.

"After I worked in the mines, I went into the army - when I was 44 years old. I was stationed in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and it was ok but I'd been working in the mines at Oak Creek and in Kentucky and I was stiff. When those big shots got out there and got us to making moves, they could see I was stiff. They kept me six months and five days and turned me loose with an honorable discharge. Another reason they took me out was because of my asthma. I spent a month in the hospital having tests run on me before they turned me loose.

"There were two other fellows who were 44 or 45 years old. One was from a mining town up in Wyoming and the other was a gambler from up by Leadville. He'd clean house on payday. He'd get everyone's money, and then he'd loan the guys money until the next payday. He made a killing at it. They passed a law that all over 36 or so had to go, so I'm sure those guys got out of the army.

"I had a good sergeant there. He had come up the hard way - from a private right on up. Christmastime came and Sergeant Bass went to the captain to see if he could go see his wife - north of Ft. Bragg about a hundred miles. The ol' captain said no. Bass came back in the barracks a' stompin' the floor. He said, 'The ol' man says no but I say yes!' Out he pulled to see his wife on Christmas. When he came back, they busted him down to Buck Private.

"One day we went out to throw hand grenades. They'd put some of these 'louies' in Bass' place, that'd come up through the college. They didn't know beans, and they didn't know how to throw those hand grenades. They came over to Bass



**Suited up for the army.**

and they said, 'Private Bass, will you show these boys how to throw hand grenades?' I wouldn't have thought he'd do it, but he did. He went and showed 'em.

"When I was in the hospital getting checked on one morning, who showed up for breakfast but ol' Bass? I said, 'Bass, what in the world are you doing here in the hospital?' He said, 'Listen. I'm going to get out of this outfit and I know just how to do it, too!' Bass never liked that ol' captain ever since he didn't let him go home for Christmas. He got out, I'm sure.

"Bill, one of the other men my age down in North Carolina, went out on a bivouac. That's when you go out and sleep three or four nights. You don't have much food or anything. It was wet and nasty out. Bill came in on the weekend and he wouldn't eat any supper. He just caught a bus and got him some whiskey. He came back to the barracks, came over, and sat down on the bunk.

" 'Bennett,' he said. 'You know, a person isn't really up to par until he's about 2 / 3 shot.' I said, 'Ah, Bill. What are you talking about?' He said, 'I'll prove it to you. You've heard people say they didn't like it because it was raining, they didn't like it because the sun was too hot, and this thing.



**Relaxing next to his pot-bellied stove.**

You never heard a man who was half shot grumbling about anything.' I said, 'Well, I guess you've got something there.' "

Throughout his life, Mr. Guy Bennett has held a wide variety of jobs and has done a wide variety of activities, not to mention travelling to many parts of the country. Of all the jobs he's had, which one did he like the most?

"I believe I liked blacksmithing best. I worked in the mines more years than I was a blacksmith, but I was brought up under my dad as a blacksmith. That was back in the horse and buggy days so I repaired a lot of buggy wheels. I'd do my job on them, Dad would put the tires and stuff on, and then I'd bolt 'em up.

"I'd strike for my dad because we didn't have a triphammer. Striking is when you've got a big piece of iron and you want to draw it out to a point or some other shape, you take a sledge hammer. You hit one lick and the other person (Dad) hit the next. A triphammer is the machine that's got one hammer going up and down BANG BANG BANG. You stick your iron in there just where you want it and the triphammer does the work.

"In Kentucky I worked in the mines and in a mine shop, too. I sharpened the bits that cut down into the coal. They had 20 mules there that pulled the coal. I kept them shod and I sharpened the miners' picks.

"Then, when I came to Colorado, I worked in the shop at the Keystone mine for awhile. I had my blacksmith tools shipped up and I've got them in my shop now. I used to go over there

every year, pick up a rod, and weld it - just to see if I could still keep up. I didn't go last year, though.

"I like tinkering with tools. I've been trying to make a wheel run with weights for years. I used to like to work on cars but I don't so much anymore. When I made my lots over to my son, Larry, three or four years ago, I also made the Model A over to him. After I gave it to him, he worked the motor over - made it just like new. I told him I wanted to drive that car as long as I'm alive so Larry brings it up every year for me to drive to town to get my groceries. I enjoy driving it.

"I got that Model A along about '45 and I've kept it ever since. Bill, one of my boys, came up to Oak Creek and asked me if I needed a car. I told him I sure did. He said, 'I've got one I'll give you.' He'd bought it in Denver for \$100. I, later, picked up another Model A and gave it to him. When he was building his house, he didn't want to go into debt, so he sold it. He hasn't been in the Model A business since.

"Before my Model A, I had a Model T. I drove it out here, back to Kentucky, down in Florida, and back to Denver. I gave \$15 for it when I bought it and I sold it in Denver running like a Cadillac for \$15. I had had the motor worked over on it in Kansas when I harvested wheat there. I had gotten into Kansas before the harvest and I'd pulled into a filling station to take gas. I asked the fellow there if there was a blacksmith shop. He said no and asked me if I was a mechanic. 'We could work you in the garage here a few days



**A 1966 picture of Mr. Bennett and his Model A.**

until the harvest starts,' he said. 'Fine and dandy,' I said. I got this Model T worked over while I was there and it didn't cost but a little bit.

"I have a large supply of iron and Model A parts. My son, Larry, is a very good mechanic. He could use a piece every few days of that stuff I hauled in. I used to go to those farm auctions and sales. Farmers would be selling out and they'd have buckets of iron parts sittin' around. I'd bid 25c or 50c and I'd get a bucket of those parts. Then they started puttin' two or three buckets together and makin' it a four or five dollar bid. I didn't get as much iron then. I guess I've probably got \$2000 to \$3000 worth of parts over in my shed.

"I'd get parts down in Tucson, Arizona, too. They had a swap meet there at the dog track. They had a big parking lot there and they'd rent you a space for a dollar. The space was about twenty feet long and you could bring anything you had in there and put it up for sale. It was like a carnival and they had it every Saturday and Sunday. They set up a stand with a loudspeaker. If you wanted to locate anything in particular, you would go to that stand and the man would ask over the loudspeaker if anyone had that certain thing for sale. It was really interesting.

"I had a good buddy there in Tucson who went to the swap meets with me. He got me to eating cheese sandwiches for supper and I still keep it up. He was 85 then. He'd do all the cookin' and he wanted to do all the dish washin', but once in awhile I'd slip in and wash 'em."

At 80 himself, Mr. Bennett likes to do all his own cooking and dish washing. (When his cheese sandwiches get a little too done, he just shrugs and says that it'll make 'em taste good.) And during the day Mr. Bennett sells worms to

fishermen.

"One Fourth of July my son, Larry, and I were uptown. We'd found a lot of worms in this soil. I told Larry to go in and ask Buddy (Werner at the Storm Hut) if we could sell him some worms. Buddy said, 'Yeah, I'll buy worms from you all summer.' We came back out and I saw Louie Thomas standing in the door of his shop. I said, 'Larry, go down there to Louie and maybe you can sell him some worms.' Larry went and asked and Louie said, 'Yeah, I'll buy worms from you all summer.' We brought them some worms after the parade was over, and that started the worm business. Larry had always wanted to be a mechanic and he got a job two or three weeks later at a garage in Oak Creek. That left me with the worm job and I've been keeping it going ever since.

"I had a chicken lot right out there where I'd dumped my scraps. I could get worms there anytime and I also got them from under a rabbit pen I had out back. I sold the worms for 50c a hundred and the sporting goods stores got a dollar for a hundred. Two years ago I finally said to myself, 'I'll just sell them here at the house and raise the price to what they're getting up at the sporting goods stores.' In the winter I keep a bucket of worms in the middle room of the house. People want 'em for ice fishin'. I keep a couple hundred worms in there in a five gallon bucket. I dump the bucket every week, put in some scraps, see that it has the right moisture, and those worms just keep growing."

Not only did the worms keep growing, but while working with Mr. Bennett on this story, my understanding of and liking for this man grew. Now I think of Mr. Guy Bennett as my long-time neighbor and also as my friend.