Drug Store

If we had a few pennies we would go to the drug store and purchase some penny candy. For a whole nickel, you could get a small bag full of candy, and if you had a dime, you could get something from the soda fountain.

The drug store with its soda fountain was a busy place. Just about everyone in town ended up at the old-fashioned soda fountain. They would drop in for a malt or soda and get caught up with what was happening in town.

Some would ask the pharmacist to fill a prescription or to get something to soothe their ailment. I didn’t pay much attention to the medicine; my focus was strictly on the candy.

My favorite candy was a Slo-Poke; the preferred of all my siblings was anything with caramel. Unfortunately, caramel candy always got lodged in my teeth. This is probably why I had to have one of my permanent teeth pulled by the time I was in third grade.

Another of my other favorite candies was marshmallow Circus Peanuts.

Growing up, at least through 5th grade, I don’t recall any members of our family ever going to a dentist. It seemed like we were always dealing with toothaches. Suffering from a toothache and experiencing the intensity of the pain involved is no small matter for a child. Even a mild toothache can be a continual bother. And left untreated could prevent you from eating, sleeping, talking and going about your normal play.

I remember one time going to stay on the farm with Grandma Wigton. Getting up one morning, I noticed that she looked very strange when she talked. It dawned on me that she was missing her teeth. I asked, “Grandma, what happened to your teeth?” She responded, “Look over there” pointing to a glass of water setting on her dresser. I rushed over to take a look and sure enough, in the glass was her teeth. This was the
first time I had seen false teeth. From then on, we were always asking Grandma to take out her false teeth and talk. She made a real game out of it as we all tried to mimic her.

For elderly people born before the 1940s, regular trips to the dentist weren't common. Dental disease was widespread, and in a time before fluoride, floss and dental implants, many people had dentures at a relatively early age. It wasn’t until in elementary school that I realized my own mother also had false teeth. She must have done a very good job of keeping this from us, or we were so busy playing that we never noticed.

During those early years, brushing our teeth was not a family ritual like it was with our own children, Todd and Tiffany and all of our grandchildren. Dad was the most faithful at brushing his teeth; he used baking soda. The rest of us hated it which accounted for all the toothaches. We must have had toothpaste, but I seldom used it. And of course, I was the one that had the most tooth challenges.

Unlike today, there was no opportunity to get in the car and head to the nearest dentist, who for us, meant traveling to Marshall; plus, I don’t think we had any extra money to see a dentist. Rather than going to the dentist my mother would take a clove and place it on the tooth, which seemed to work. If we continued to complain, Mother treated the tooth with some type of medicine that she kept in a small bottle. She would open the bottle and place a few drops of whatever was in the bottle on a small piece of cotton and place it on our aching tooth. After a few minutes the pain went away. And, over the course of years, one of my permanent teeth had to be removed – no opportunity for a nerve-throbbing root canal, gold or silver caps, which happened years later.

One day, I got a toothache and asked for some of the medicine for my tooth. Mother said she was sorry but it was all gone. I complained to my mom so much that Dad yelled at me, "If you don’t stop crying, I will pull that tooth with my pliers." I knew that my Dad always meant what he said, so I stopped winning and endured the pain. The next morning, my parents packed up all the kids and we went to Marshall to have the tooth pulled. Having a permanent tooth pulled was a major event. It was much worse than all our attempts combined at tying a string on a door knob to help pull out a baby tooth or tying a string to Dad’s small sledge hammer and dropping it down the basement stairway.

When my gums would become inflamed, Mother had me rinse my mouth with a mixture of warm salt water. It was the same home-remedy we all used whenever we had a sore throat – gargling with salt water, yuck. If two of us had sore throats at the same time, we would challenge each other to see who could gargle with the greatest concentration of salt water.
Having experienced teeth issues as a child, I was determined to provide the best dental care possible for my family. Todd and Tiffany were very free from dental challenges except for having the muscle between Tiffany’s two front teeth removed so that the space could be closed with braces. Tiffany had no cavities at age four. Our grandson, Daxon had to have four crowns on his baby teeth by age four due to the decay from antibiotic therapy.

Todd lost his first baby tooth at age 3 he was very excited. He exclaimed, “Now my pregnant teeth can come in.” He received fifty cents from the Tooth Fairy.

**Reflection.** Modern medicine has come a long ways since the early 50’s when the synthesis of the Penicillin sparked the golden era of antibiotics. Likewise, the Polio vaccine was developed in 1953. Although there have been many other advancements in treatment of illness, it is God’s will that each of us walk in health and wholeness. Pastor Billy Joe Daugherty answers the question, “Is it God’s will to heal?”

Most people don’t question God’s ability to heal, but they aren’t confident of His willingness to heal. The Son of God came to reveal the nature of God, the Father, which is to provide healing to those who believe.

He made provision for the healing of his children. This is one of the benefits of having a loving heavenly Father who cares for you and your every need.

The Word of God says,

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases* (Psalm 103:2-3).

The Bible further states,

*Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all* (Isaiah 53:4-6).

In the New Testament Peter writes,

*Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed* (1Peter 2:24).

How can you receive your healing? First of all, understand that it is not God who is the author of sickness and disease. Acts 10:38 says,
How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were opposed by the devil, for God was with him.

Second, believe that God wants you to be in health.

Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers (3 John 2).

Third, understand that what Jesus did when He walked on earth, He still wants to do today – heal everyone. “Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

Finally, pray the prayer of faith. Simply ask in faith, and believe for your healing. (See Mark 11:22-24.)

Pop Bottles

Money was very hard to come by in those days. Tommy and I would spend much of our time looking for old pop bottles that we could sell for a few pennies. One day while walking down Front Street, we noticed that the owner of the gas station in Russell had stacks of old pop bottles in boxes in the back of his station. We also noticed that there was a window just above the cases of empty pop bottles.

Since there was no pop in the bottles, we felt that if we could get these empty bottles we could take them over to the grocery store and trade them in for cash. A bottle of Coke cost around 10 cents and the bottle could be sold for a penny.

We snuck around to the back of the gas station. When the attendant went out to service vehicles, we lifted up the back window; I climbed in through the window and helped myself to a dozen or so empty pop bottles, handing them out the window to Tommy. We had 7Up, Coke and Pepsi bottles stuck in all of our pockets and stacked in our arms. We proceeded to take them over to the grocery store and turn them in for cash. Then, it was on to the drug store to buy some candy.

The gas station attendant must not have missed the bottles. If he had missed them, it would have been very easy for him to go down the street to the grocery store and see who had sold a dozen or so bottles.

Pea Shooters

One day Tommy and I purchased a couple pea shooters. We had a lot of fun hiding behind trees and corners of buildings and shooting at one another, much as kids
do today with airsoft guns. The art of shooting a pea through a plastic straw with precision was a learned skill. Tommy and I would refine our shooting skills by spending countless hours target practicing in the backyard.

A whole bag of peas from Mom’s cupboard would last all day. One day we ran out of peas and went over to the neighbors and asked to borrow some peas; we told them that our mom was making pea soup and had run out of peas. This was a likely story that worked for several houses in the neighborhood. I wonder what they must have thought about our moms when after a few weeks, they had not replaced the peas, which was expected.

The trick was to place a whole mouth full of peas in your mouth and then blow them out in rapid fire like an automatic rifle. My brother Don would try to do what his older brother could do and ended up swallowing a mouth full of peas.

Firing at one another soon got old; so, we looked for some other way to entertain ourselves. Whose idea it was is still debatable; we found ourselves down by Highway 23 where we would lay in the grass and shoot our pea shooters at cars as they passed by. From here we proceeded to climb on top of the roof of a gas station near the road; as cars came down the road we would shoot peas up in the air, expecting them to land on the top of cars stopping to be serviced. Periodically, we would sneak a peek over the top of the wall on the roof, aim at a car, shoot a volley of peas up in the air, and then duck down behind the wall so no one would see us.

One time a disgruntled man got in his car and circled the neighborhood looking for someone with pea shooters. If I remember correctly, we did not come down off the roof until much later in the evening, fearing that we might get caught.

Tommy and I did everything together, sometimes including my younger brother, Don. We often staged it just right, so he was the one to get into trouble with Mom and Dad. In retrospect, it is amazing that our mothers gave us so much leeway. I am not certain how many people lived in Russell. The population of the 2000 census showed 371 people. I guess our mothers were never concerned about us, knowing that we would always show up when it was time for lunch or dinner.
Reflection. Although we thought we had gotten by with not being caught, the Bible tells us that one day everyone is going to stand before God and give an account of what they have done.

You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat. It is written: "As surely as I live,” says the Lord, “every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.” So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God (Romans 14:10-12).

Regardless if we believe in God or not, the Bible says we will all stand before Him. Nevertheless, if we are saved or not, we will stand before God and answer directly to Him for everything we have done.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad (2 Corinthians. 5:10).

The best thing to do is to deal with our sins now, so we will not be held accountable for them when we appear before God. 1 John 1:9, says,

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

When we do this, Hebrews 8:12 says,

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.