

## Homer and Louise Anderson



***Homer and Louise Anderson at their farm***

may never realize the benefits and satisfaction of what hard work and togetherness can accomplish. A lot of things have changed since the Andersons were children but through their early memories, we get a glimpse of what life was like in the days of their youth.

---

Louise was born on January 27, 1922, one of fourteen children born to Albert and Ollie Fitzgerald Farris, ten of which survived. Albert was an immigrant from Syria who came to the United States in 1910 and began a peddling trade, going door to door selling all types of merchandise. From that humble beginning, Albert carved out a niche for himself, opening a general store that was very familiar to all those living near the village of Montebello. Louise remembers her mother and most of her siblings helping in the business, waiting on customers and delivering goods to nearly everyone in the community. One side of the country store contained

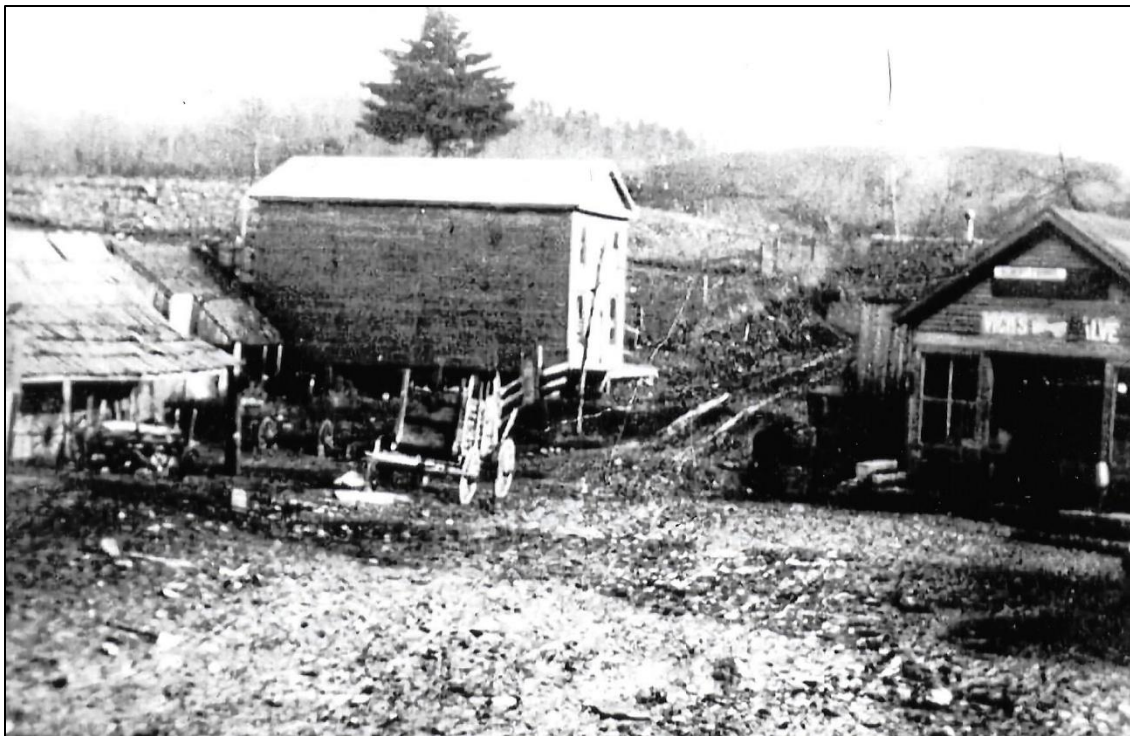
I'm not sure of the exact date I met Homer and Louise Anderson but I knew them well enough to videotape their wedding in 1988 and be part of that memorable celebration along with their family and longtime friends. Later I had the privilege of interviewing them both about being born and raised in the hamlet of Montebello and find out more about their early lives growing up there.

Both Andersons knew firsthand what being a general merchandise storekeeper entailed since Louise's parents owned and operated Farris's Store, a stone's throw away from where she and Homer made their home. Homer's first wife, Pauline Robertson's family ran a country store where Homer worked as a young man and eventually took over the business and operated it until he retired in 1981.

Although Homer and Louise passed away in 1913 and 1916 respectively, their life stories will live on to inspire younger generations who

groceries and the other, dry goods such as shoes and hardware. The stately Farris homeplace still stands on a steep hill before approaching the village itself.

At that time the area where the store was located was called Statonville, named after a family by the same name who lived there. Louise said what she remembers most about growing up were the people. “This mountain was just full of people,” she recalled. “Bob Booth was the community farrier and Beauregard Harvey made coffins when someone died. There was a large cannery that was run by R. D. Allen, where folks could preserve their garden produce in tin cans. My grandparents, Wade and nelly Fitzgerald, ran a grist mill at the site of our present home, where they ground cornmeal and buckwheat flour. My grandfather was also the village blacksmith.”



**Early photo of what was then Statonville**

“We had four churches near our home; Mount Paran Baptist Church where I have been a member since I joined and was baptized at fourteen years of age; a small Dunkard church; South Mountain (Haines) Chapel; and Pogue’s Chapel out on Fork Mountain. There were one-room schoolhouses at Noral’s Flat and Fork Mountain but most of us kids went to the four-room Montebello School, which had eight grades. Both of our families used to board a lot of the teachers who taught there.”

Homer and Louise were sweethearts during their teen years but both ended up marrying different people. Louise, at age seventeen, eloped to Reedsville, North Carolina, with Everett Campbell, whose family lived in the Beech Grove community. The newlyweds lived with Everett’s family for seven years before moving into their own home in the Rockfish Valley. The Campbells had three children; Everett Jr., Bruce, and Shirley and when the three were grown,

Louise went to work at the Del Monte Frozen Foods Corp., where she retired from. After her husband passed away in 1972 Louise continued to live at their Rockfish Valley home but mad a special move back to Montebello in 1988, which we'll talk about later.

Homer was born on October 22, 1915, the only son of Jacob Yost and Lottie Catherine Hite Anderson. His sister, Hettie, came fifteen months later. Before he was born, Homer's parents lived out on Fork Mountain, but when Lottie was due with her son, the couple moved in with her parents, who at that time lived up the hollow from Aubrey Bradley's home. Later on, the Andersons built a home close to the Hites. As a young boy, Homer attended the Clark's Hollow School which was located off of Fork Mountain Road.



**Early photo of the teacher and students at the Clark's Hollow School**

After Homer's paternal grandfather Alfred died, his maternal grandmother Lula Haney Hite married Henry Painter, and Jacob moved his family to a farmhouse closer to the Painters to help Henry with the farm work. Homer was eight years of age when they moved to what he referred to as his homeplace. Although his father was primarily a farmer, he was also the community barber and set up shop, complete with a barber chair, in back of the grocery store that Homer would later purchase. Homer said he never paid for a haircut until after his father died. He remembered how all the young men would come on Saturday afternoons to get their hair cut for the price of a dollar.

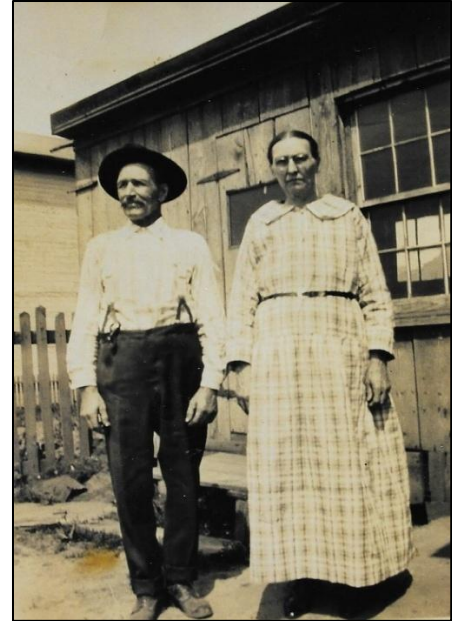
Homer wistfully recalled how back then, everyone made time to visit one another, especially during the holidays. From the first of December to the end of January, people would make the rounds to visit every person in the Montebello area. He remembers going to Louise's parent's house and eating his first cabbage rolls, which he thought "were the best things I had ever tasted!"



***Lottie and Jacob Anderson with their children, Homer and Hettie***

The Farris family had one of the first radios, and folks would congregate on Saturday nights to listen to the Grand Ole Opry while eating cookies and cider Ollie Farris had prepared. Or perhaps they would have an autumn wood chopping, during which the men would cut firewood all day and have a dance later that night. They would go over to Aubrey Layton's home, who lived where the current firehouse is now located, and move all his furniture out in the yard so they could have a big, empty room to dance in. The musicians would stand one corner to play while someone else would do the calling for the Virginia reel or a square dance. Carl and Lonnie Ramsey would play guitars along with Johnny Floyd and Downy Snead who played fiddles. Homer's dad, Jacob, and his brother, Mangus, both played the banjo and Homer said his dad, who always believed in having a good time, played the banjo so well that he won the prize of a five-dollar gold piece in a music contest over in Shipman.

Along with the seemingly endless amount of physical work that a farm entails, young people still had their fun. There were applebutter boilings, corn shuckings, picnics on Spy Rock, and fishing for native trout in the deep pools at Crabtree Falls. Homer told of the time he and his father contracted a load of extract wood for Louise's parents, and with his share of the money, Homer bought a pair of sixteen-inch high-top boots, a .22 rifle, and a pair of riding breeches. "Now you talk about one sassy dude... that was me in those riding pants", laughed Homer.



**Mangus Anderson, playing his banjo**    **Grandparents; Alfred & Mulvina Anderson**

Like many young men, Homer lived at home until he married. When he and Pauline Robertson tied the knot on August 1, 1936, he was already working in her father's grocery store. For years, Pauline's father was the postmaster of Montebello, sorting mail in Beauregard Harvey's old coffin house. When the Bradley family, who at that time owned the grocery, decided to sell out, the Robertsons bought the store and incorporated the post office inside. After marriage, the couple lived with Pauline's family for a few years before getting a place of their own. Later, they tore down the old cannery and built a large brick home on the site which still stands.



**The Andersons in the 1940s**



**The USS Hornet, the aircraft carrier Homer served on**



***Homer and Pauline on an early outing with his parents, Jacob and Lottie Anderson***

The Andersons had four happy years together in Montebello before Homer registered for the draft on October 16, 1940. He was inducted in the United States Navy and served aboard the USS Hornet aircraft carrier during World War II as a gunner during the Jimmy Doolittle raid against Tokyo, Japan four months after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1942. He was discharged from the Navy in November of 1945 after honorably serving his country.

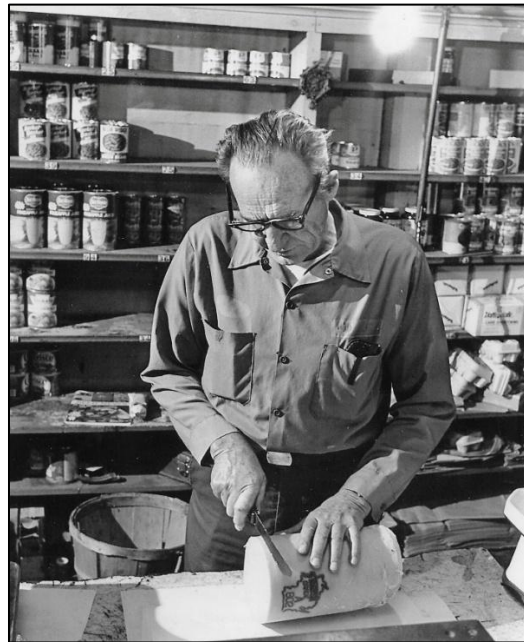
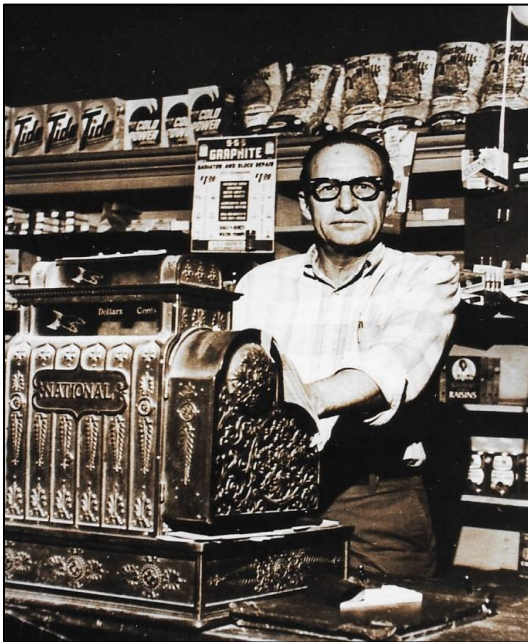
When Homer returned from the war, he continued to work in Pauline's parent's store, and after Mr. Robertson's health failed, Homer bought the business in 1951 and renamed it Anderson's Grocery. He remembered people coming in to buy their winter supplies; one-hundred-pound bags of pinto and cranberry beans and a hundred pounds each of flour and cornmeal. Homer said at that time the average cost for staples for a family for the entire winter was under twenty dollars.



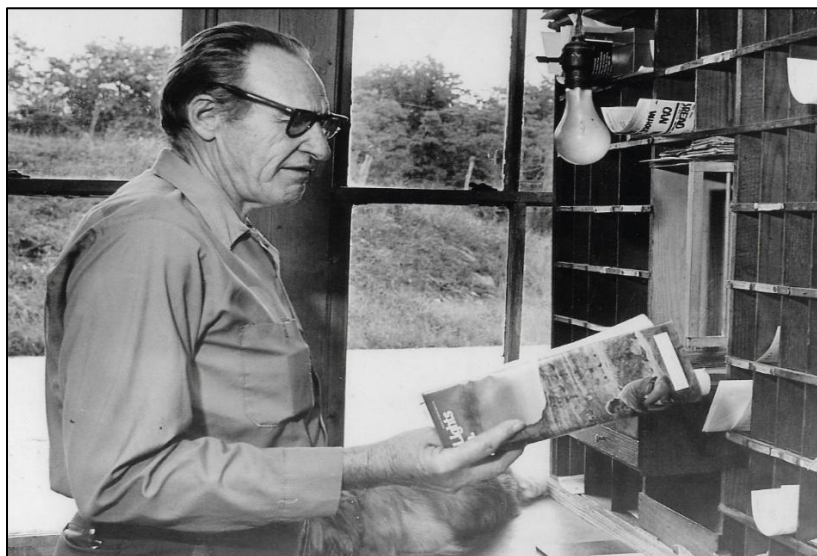
***Homer working at his country grocery store in the early days***

The store itself had a long bench in front of large pot-bellied woodstove, and on days when the weather was bad, men would congregate on the bench to swap stories. The “regulars” were Frank Humphreys, Taylor Whitesell, Pomp and Willis Layton, John Fitzgerald, Aubrey Bradley, and John Campbell, to name a few. Homer said, “If that bench could talk, it could make me a millionaire today. You never heard such talks in your life! Why, these men killed bears so big they couldn’t drag them out of the woods with a tractor. And they caught fish so big they had to erect derricks to lift them out of the water.”

Homer closed the doors of Anderson’s Grocery when he retired in 1981 and he said he misses it and the people to this day.



***Homer ringing up a purchase and cutting a round of cheese***



***Sorting the daily mail and inserting it in people’s mailboxes***

Pauline's health gradually failed, and she passed away in June of 1988. In August of the same year, a ninetieth birthday party was being planned for Louise's mother at Coyner Springs Park, and Louise asked her mother if there was anybody from Montebello that she would like to invite. When Ollie mentioned her fondness for Homer, who was now a widower, Louise didn't want to call and invite him, for the simple reason she thought he might think she was after him in some way. What she didn't know was that Homer wasn't even aware that Louise had been a widow for sixteen years. She tried talking her sisters into calling but they encouraged her to be the one to talk to him. At the same time, Homer was mourning the loss of Pauline and he acutely remembered sitting at his kitchen table saying, "Lord, if this is all you've got left for me, then I wish you'd just take me home." In the end, Louise made the call and Homer accepted. When he arrived at the birthday party, he went straight to Louise to say hello, and put his arm around her. "That was it," said Homer. It was at that moment they both knew that their earlier teenage romance would somehow be rekindled, they would marry and spend the rest of their lives together.

October 29, 1988 was a beautiful day; perfect for an autumn wedding ceremony. After a three-month courtship, the beaming couple exchanged vows at Mount Paran Baptist Church in a celebration that included their combined families and many dear friends. Homer was smiling ear to ear, handsome in his white tuxedo and not looking his age of seventy-three. Louise was beautiful in a vintage-looking wedding dress and, like her bridegroom, all smiles. Homer said, "I never had as much fun in my life as I did at our wedding!" Louise added, "I feel that the good Lord brought us together after so many years."





**Mount Paran Baptist Church where Homer and Louise were married**

After a honeymoon at the Peaks of Otter, the Andersons came back to Montebello to live in the brick home Homer had built many years before. They were a real team, doing everything together as a farm couple right from the start, including cutting firewood, putting up fences, and feeding the cows. Louise laughed and said she was the “gate-opener” when Homer cranks up his tractor and goes out to feed.



The Anderson’s celebrated twenty-five years of marriage and they reflected on the irony of marrying and being so happy after all the years between. Homer summed it up with a twinkle in his eyes, saying, “We’ve had a lot of happy years together, sure enough!”





*The Andersons inside the old country grocery after it had closed its doors*



*Anderson's Grocery before and after it closed in 1981*

*Special thanks to Shirley Wade (Louise's daughter), Lowell Humphreys and Stephanie Bryant of Montebello for all their help and providing information for this article.*

## Early photos from the Anderson family album



*Pistols at the ready! Top: brothers, Jacob Yost, John Byron, Alexander Sandy Anderson, and J. H. Snead. Sitting: O.B. Campbell, and H. H. Hatter*



*Photo left: Unknown man, Jacob Anderson center, Thruel Snead on right*  
*Photo right: Homer's uncle Mangus, wife Nellie, baby Hela and Helen*