

Reflections From a Nelson County Back Porch

By Lynn Coffey



The Coffey family back porch

The back porch; for those willing to take time out from a busy schedule and just sit quietly, it's the perfect place to listen to the sounds of nature as well as one's own heart. We happen to have a back porch that extends the entire length of our cabin that our large family say reminds them of an old folk's home because of the abundance of rocking chairs and gliders. From its vantage point, we cannot see anything but our hayfields and the woods bordering them.

In the warmer months it's where we have our morning coffee, watching the birds and talking about the day's schedule. Around noontime we take a break from our labors and have a sandwich and some sweet tea. We finish the day on one of the gliders, watching our horse graze in the pasture before we put him up for the night. Lightening bugs, like a staccato of blinking lights, appear on humid evenings while a chorus of frogs' serenade from the spring branch beyond. The spring where we get our water flows across the rear property line and picks up momentum as it tumbles down the mountain and turns into Campbell's Creek before emptying into the Tye River at the junction of Routes 814 and 56 in Tyro.

The porch also overlooks our vegetable garden and we shuck a lot of corn, snap beans and shell peas sitting on the shady steps on hot afternoons. The cats lay in the morning sun, soaking up the rays before moving to another spot as it slowly changes direction. We have an abundance of hummingbirds that usually come the first week of April and the tree and barn swallows follow soon after. The swallows all leave around September and I never put two-and-two together as to why we always have more flies in that particular month until I realized that's when the swallows, fly-catchers extraordinaire, fly to warmer climes.



Part of our vegetable garden

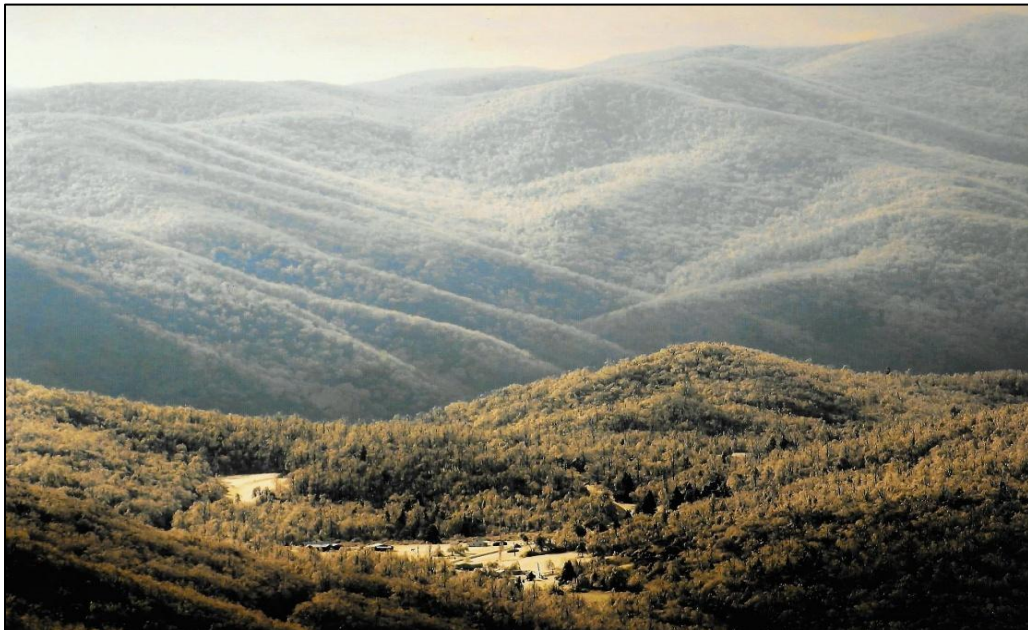


Sylvester catching some zzz's



Hummers at twilight

Deer come to the salt block we've placed near the spring branch and bring out their newborn fawns to romp in the grass. From the porch we've seen bear, coyotes, bobcats and once, an albino peacock. Where HE came from, we have no clue! As evening approaches, bats begin their nightly circuits of bug catching and owls start hooting back and forth to one another. On a sad note, we no longer hear the haunting song of the Whip-poor-will that began precisely at 9:05 each night and continued until the cobwebs of sleep overtook us. Was it the presence of more night stalking coyotes that drove the earth-sitting birds away? We may never know.



The vast mountains beyond our cabin, located in the center of clearing

We are surrounded by the mountains on every side but a girlfriend, who lives on Devil's Knob in Wintergreen, took a photograph of our cabin from the Blue Ridge Overlook and looking at it gave us pause because of the highly different perspective of the vast mountains beyond. Sometimes, what we *can't* see, is there all along.

Most of our storms come from the west and we can spot an approaching one if the dark clouds gather over a certain ridge and the wind picks up, turning the leaves backward. The porch is a great place to listen to the thunder and watch the lightning show before seeing the rain come tearing across the ridges, driving us indoors.

Telephone conversations and letter writing is always more pleasant if done from the



rocking chair that overlooks nothing but nature and the quietness it affords. When our granddaughter, Renea, was young, we were sitting on the porch glider shelling peas when out of the blue she said, “Grandma, do you know what I like the best about coming to your house?” Curious as to what she would say from her child’s eye-view of the world, I smiled when she said, “I can hear the birds sing!” What a revelation to hear a child comment on the quietness I take for granted every day. And because our property borders Blue Ridge Parkway land, it will remain quiet without the threat of development in the future.

Yes, the back porch is an important part of our everyday lives. It’s a great place to unwind after a hard day’s work of baling hay and sit peacefully with a drink in hand I call a “Farmer’s Cocktail”... a glass of water and two Advil!