

Logan Banner, Oct. 18, 1979

Recollections - Dellus Pritchard

neighbors

by dwight williamson

Dellus Pritchard of 423½ Stratton St. is an almost perfect example of the typical Logan Countian of that past era now referred to by most "old timers" as the "good ole days."

Like most elderly Logan Countians who have lived the majority of their lives in and around Logan, Dellus is what many of his friends term as a hard working, stubborn gentleman made that way by the trying times of a past filled with hard work and few leisures.

Though he now has trouble with his vision and he doesn't get out as much as he used to, Dellus still keeps up with the ever changing times by constantly reading and by paying close attention to the television set.

But it is his accurate memories of the Logan County that he knew as a young man that makes him such an interesting person to talk to.

Since his family first moved to Logan County in 1912 Dellus has led a hard working but interesting life. And it was his father whom he says got him started working at an early age.

"When I was just a young boy, my dad used to take me into the mines where I worked with him from daylight until dark without pay," recalled Dellus.

"I remember one time when I was working with my dad in the mines and his boss came up and started talking to me," Dellus said. "He asked me if I could read and write and I told him I could. Well, he asked me to read a scale that was nearby and I did. He then asked me if I would be interested in working at a job on the tippie and I said yes.

"He offered me \$1 a day and I said that I would take it because that was more than I was making with my dad."

"You mean you're not paying this boy anything for working with you," the boss asked my dad.

"Why no," answered dad. "I give him 25 cents worth of candy every pay day."

From that tippie job in Tennessee, Dellus later worked in Logan as a plumber, a theater projectionist at the old Middelburg Theater, where he also served as advertising director, a cab driver and then later, as a pressman at the Logan Banner where he worked from 1946 to 1970 before retiring.

It was his days driving a cab that seemed to bring back the most memories.

"It was during the mine war of the early 1920s that I used to drive the men up to Blair Mountain where the big showdown between the union organizers and the rest of the miners was," recalled Dellus.

"There used to be different shifts of men that served as lookouts for the union organizers that came from Kanawha County and I used to drive them up there on their different shifts.

"I remember one time during the night that I took some men up on Blair Mountain without any lights. "I didn't have a bit of trouble getting up there and everything was was real quite.

"But just as I started to turn around at the top of the mountain and come back, all hell broke loose. There was shooting everywhere."

Laughing to himself, Dellus continued. "Well come to find out, the shooting all started when this one man who had been drinking pretty heavy stumbled over a log and fired both barrells of his shotgun. He almost got us all killed."

Dellus remembered too the time when a certain hollow near Peach Creek was always heavily guarded by men with machine guns.

"They were afraid that the union organizers would try to come through that holler that led from the Coal River in Boone County," he explained. "I tell you it was dangerous. If you stuck your head up too high you were liable to get your hat blown off."

Dellus said he remembered hearing about the big battle over at Sharples.

"They say that there were a lot of men arrested over there and taken to the Logan County jail that never were heard of again," Dellus said. "They were supposed to have been killed.

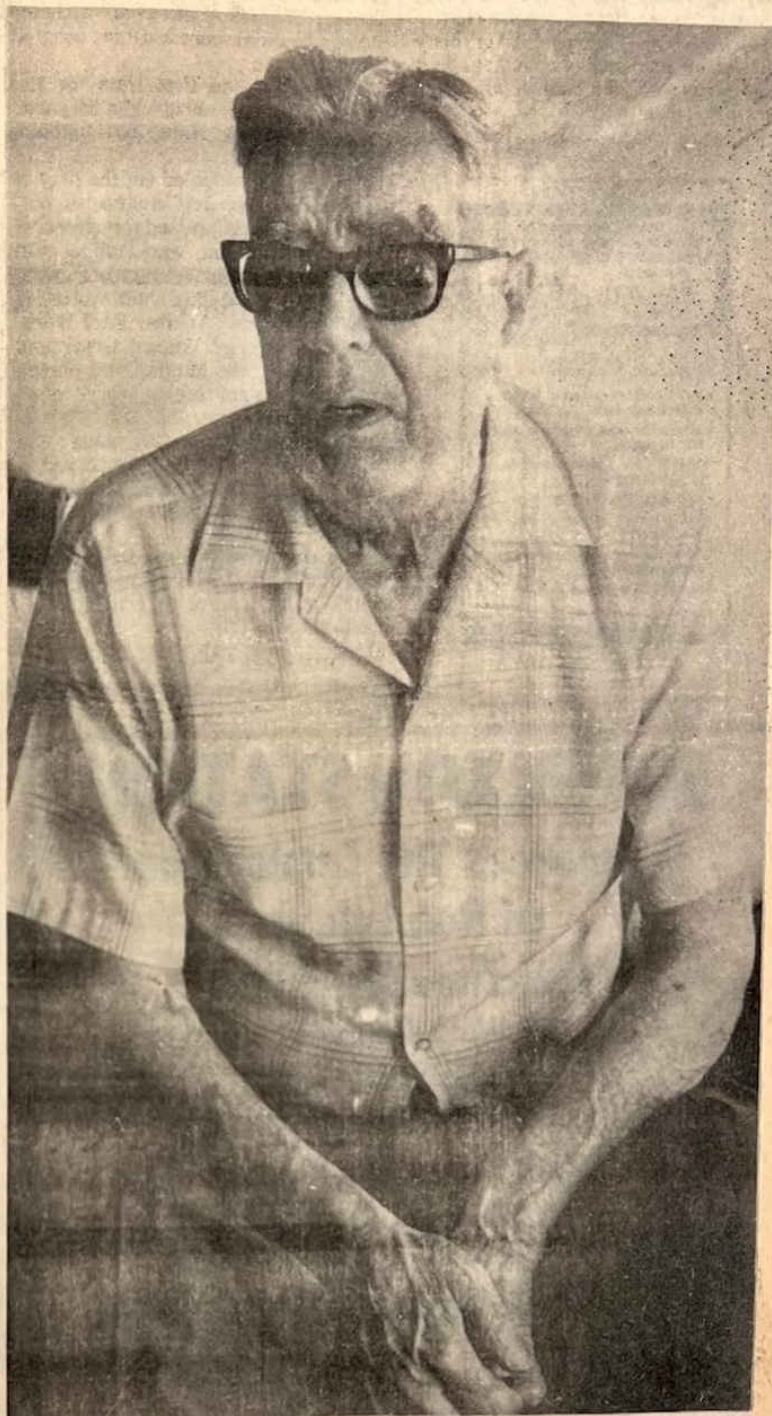
"That was when Don Chafin was sheriff and he ran the whole county. The men had to do what Don wanted because he had some mean deputies at just about every mine in the county."

"Devil Ance Hatfield's son Tennis later became sheriff and I used to buy moonshine off of him all the time," said Dellus.

Dellus, who along with his wife Pauline, has raised four children, has lived in the same apartment building in Logan for the past 44 years.

"There used to be more barber shops in this town than they were people," he laughed. "But now just about all you have is hair stylists."

"I don't get too many haircuts anymore," grunted Dellus as he settled down to a comfortable seat where he prepared to watch the final game of the World Series.



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