

From the Cradle to the Grave
Our Legacy of Love and Hope
Mr. Holsey Nelson Jan. 6, 1926 – Jan. 11, 2004

From Jan. 6, 1926 to Jan. 11, 2004, millions of things changed during the life of Somerville native Holsey Nelson. One thing that did not change, however, was his attitude in life and love of cooking.

Nelson had two brothers and a sister, along with his 12 children and 43 grandchildren. One of his younger brothers, Bill Nelson, 72, recalled his brother's love for different things in life.

“When we grew up, we used to always work together and hunt together and always go to church together,” he said. “Holsey liked to hunt a lot and then enjoyed cooking.”

While talking with Bill Nelson along with his wife of 50 years, Velma, the two got into a friendly exchange of whose salmon was better: Holsey's or Velma's.

“Bill, you don't have to eat mine if it's not good enough for you,” she said with a laugh.

Holsey served during World War II with the Navy doing, among other things, one of the things he did best: cook. Bill said his brother cooked on the ships in Europe throughout the war. Serving the country was one of the attributes given to Holsey and his brothers through their father Robert.

“All the Nelson boys always worked hard and were smarter than everyone else,” Velma said. “Their daddy always had them up early in the morning doing something.”

She said this even rubbed off on her after she met her husband long ago when they were sharecropping on opposite sides of the fence.

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“Bill just felt sorry for me being in a family of 14, so he took me with him,” she said. “That’s how I got to know Holsey and he was just a nice and friendly man. He would always help you out any way he could.”

Bill remembered always working hard alongside his older brother throughout their lives, something Velma discovered in a shocking way one day.

“Holsey’s dad would always have the kids up early in the morning rain or shine,” she said. “Didn’t even matter if it was pouring outside – he’d have you up doing something, so I figured that out real quick and got (back to her) home. But the Nelsons probably made me the hardest working woman in my family.”

Even on a weeknight when the temperature is close to 80 degrees, the 72-year-old Nelson can be found hard at work: outside late into the night chopping wood for work and for his family.

“All the Nelson boys are like Holsey and Bill,” Velma said. “Nice and smart and always as sweet as can be.”