

THE GREATEST MUD PIES

By John S. Halbert

When I was about nine or ten years old, in the early-to-mid-1950's, living in Sheffield, Alabama our neighborhood was close to the edge of town. That gave us plenty of space to have hide-and-seek games that seemed to go on for hours and hours---usually after dark. Daytime found us engaged in major-league dirt-clod battles, climbing trees, and swinging over a big ravine on vines. It's a wonder we stayed as healthy as we did. I can recall only one broken arm suffered by someone enjoying our hijinks, and I can't even recollect now which arm it was on which kid.

And there were the mud pies. Right behind our house was the Church of Christ Parsonage, and the preacher's daughter and I were pretty good friends. Her name was Toni, and she later went on to become a big-time beauty queen downstate, but that's jumping ahead of things. As kids we spent many of our summer days "baking" mud pies in the backyard. There was a hackberry tree out back and some of the most delicious-looking red clay you ever saw that we dug out of our backyards. So it was just natural to fashion "Hackberry Mud Pies", freshly baked by the sun.

I don't remember ever actually trying to *eat* any of our creations, but they sure looked good.

Sometimes--even today---when I'm checking out of a restaurant and there is a display of pies in a glass case underneath the cash register, I'll look over to see if these creations look as good as those Toni and I had made..

They usually don't.