

# Survivor's Notebook

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## FALL BEGINS, AND ...

**T**HAT MAGIC which swept through my part of Georgia in the autumns of the forties is still functioning, but I am not there now. For twenty years it tickled my fancy and stimulated me to an appreciation of life that few other events could match. It was my great good fortune to live in an area where every season would spend its time unhampered and in full fashion before its role was finished.

The coming of Spring, with its bright flowers, green leaves, and endlessly cheerful birds was a welcome relief from the drab days of winter, and Summer brought freedom from schooldays plus the delights of clear streams, abundant fruit and romps across fields and woodlands. It was only in September, however, that magic was suddenly in the air.

Leaves on the pecan trees were just beginning to turn brown when a new school year began, and it would be several weeks before autumn's entry—then one morning I would awaken to a chill in my room and after dancing barefoot across the hallway, I would find a fire crackling in the fireplace of our dining room. There was a chill in the air and ... listen! Crows have set up their sentinels in the pecan groves—raucous cawing will ebb and flow for weeks before the shiny black birds move on. The temptation of a walk in the woods is too powerful to resist, so I don a heavy shirt, call my faithful little Boston Terrier, “Man,” and off we go for two hours on a Saturday morning—soaking up the crisp air and noticing the colorful leaves that decorate a variety of trees on our way. Here and there we pick up the scent of smoke from burning leaves newly raked; Fall is here at last!

The harvest would be sadly misplaced if it did not occur in the Fall. There is something about a sunset at harvest time that renews the spirit of weary workers and the twilight's coolness gives welcome relief from the heat of the day. A worker who sees his sheet of cotton weigh in at 350 pounds steps higher on his way home.

The brilliant harvest moon cannot be equaled for the way it illuminates a field of stacked peanuts or shocked corn. I have found no thrill to equal that of strolling through the woods and fields on an October night, often to the sound of Black and Tan hounds on the trail of raccoon, opossum, or a wily fox. The magic is working at full force; the earth and its creatures are alive and afoot!

The entire school building blossoms with jack-o-lanterns, witches, black cats, ghosts and goblins—and the Halloween Carnival on Friday night brings out a capacity crowd to take part in cakewalks, fishponds, apple-bobbing, and the traditional games of Halloween.

Before you know it, it's time to go “over the river and through the woods” to celebrate with a feast at Grandma's house. Families gather for a holiday celebration that lasts for several days. In the fields, most of the harvest is done, with cotton fields now bare except for stalks waiting to be cut. Peanuts have been thrashed and hauled to a peanut mill; cotton has been picked, ginned and sold, and the last of the corn stands ready to be gathered and stored in the cribs or ground into feed for the livestock.

The days are now shorter, and nights are cold. A supply of wood has been cut and hauled to the woodpile. Cane has been harvested and the juice cooked to make syrup. Activity on the farm has switched from the fields to work in and around the barns and storage houses. The year is winding down—down to Christmas and to the beginning of Winter. Life is good.

