

Robie Hensley

Story # 2

The van engine sputtered then died – out of gas! Steve said, “oh no, I’m due at the airport in 15 minutes to meet a prospective buyer that is coming to look at an airplane that I have for sale!” What to do? The nearest service station is two miles away. Steve rarely ever had a dependable car, he usually had an assortment of “junker” cars. His main interest was airplanes, which he always kept in top mechanical condition. Cars weren’t a priority with Steve, except to get him to and from the airport. The sky was Steve’s favorite environment. The dilemma that day the van died required one of his resourceful expertise solutions. Steve remembered that the van had a gas tank that was dented on the bottom due to rough terrain or off-the-road travel.

Steve knew that when the engine quit from lack of fuel, there was still a few gallons of gas in the bottom of the dented tank that couldn’t be pumped up to the fuel line. The van had quit that day, right as he crossed the river bridge. He coasted, then pulled off the road beside an old log house near the edge of the bridge. That old three-story log house is an historical landmark in Chuckey, and the old man that lived there at the time was Lucias Helton. Lucias’s favorite pastime was sitting on his front porch in the warm sun, watching cars drive by all day. Steve looked over toward Lucias and yelled, “got any gas Lucias?” Lucias didn’t budge, just hollered, “nope, not nary a drop.” Steve already had a solution in mind as he reached inside the van and pulled out an empty plastic milk jug and headed off toward the creek. He filled the milk jug with water from the creek, walked back to the van and emptied it into the gas tank. Steve knew that since gas would float on top of water, and there was a big dent in the tank holding a “reserve” of gas, all he had to do was raise the level of fluid inside the tank so that gas would fill the fuel lines.

Lucias stared in disbelief as Steve poured that water in the van, started it, and drove away. As Steve later told that story over and over again, he said he would never forget the look on the old mans face as he drove away, mouth open, wondering what kind of fortune he could make on that magic creek water. Even years later, Steve delighted in waving at Lucias each time he passed that old log house at the river, and you can bet that Lucias never forgot Steve either.