

Wayne Williams tribute to Mark Cathey, Asheville Citizen-Times, March 27, 1949

Dear Mr. Geremonte:

In your column recently you invited those who knew the late Mark Cathey, son of the Smokies and premier trout fisherman of Western North Carolina, to send in some items of interest concerning him. Hence these lines.

A native of the Smokies myself and brought up in Bryson City, his home town, I knew Mark ever since I was a boy, and we were personal friends. Many a day we whipped the trout streams together; together we hunted bears and turkeys; we slept before many a campfire, and sometimes on a bed of leaves. On more than one occasion I was a guest in his home up on Indian Creek, some five miles from town.

Others, including my friend Jim Gasque, have written of his skill with a fishing rod, but I want to say a few words about the character of the man.

Mark was one of the most original and unique characters I ever knew. He possessed that indefinable thing called personality. He was colorful – that's the word. Physically, he was lean and lank, but not tall, and withal as tough as a mountain hickory. He was the nervous, wiry type. He had piercing eyes. Perhaps his voice was the most unique feature of his make-up. He spoke in a musical mountain drawl. It was a voice one could never forget. To hear him tell a hunting or fishing yarn was delightfully entertaining.

Mark was a gentleman, one of Nature's noblemen. He had character. His living was straight, like his shooting. He was honest as the day is long. He had an innate courtesy and refinement about him. There was nothing of the coarse and common in his nature. He was not "a mountain white."

Mark never took unto himself a wife. His brothers and sisters married and moved away, but he remained with his [widowed mother](#) and took care of her and the home. His devotion to her was beautiful. He resembled her closely in his physical features and mannerisms. After her death, he made his home with his sister, [Mrs. Charlie Beck](#).

His passing from the scenes of men was sudden and dramatic – and if I may say so, fitting and appropriate. In his old age his heart was impaired, and his physician warned him against climbing and over-exertion. But one autumn afternoon, he took his gun in hand and fared forth in search of squirrels. Night came on and Mark did not return. The searching party found his body lying at the foot of a tree. Thus even in death, Mark was a character. He would not have wished it otherwise.

Note: Wayne Williams was the son of [Rev. O.P. Williams](#) and [Artie Grant](#). He, his father and brother Claud accompanied Mark Cathey and Sam Hunnicutt on several hunts that Sam wrote about. Wayne Williams also the first known native mountaineer to publish an article about the area that is now the Great Smoky Mountains National Park: *After Bruin in the Great Smokies*, Asheville Citizen, Nov. 10, 1922. It was also published in National Sportsman magazine in March 1923.