

# *The Huntsville Historical Review*

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## **What Happened to the Huntsville Jaycees?**

*By John H. Allen and John H. Ofenloch*

Part 1 was an overview of the Jaycees and how they got started in the U.S., in Alabama, and in Huntsville. Also covered were the Jaycees from 1950 to 1960. Part 2 covers the Jaycees activities from 1961 to 1981 and includes the establishment of the Research Institute at UAH, the missile park (which evolved into the U.S. Space & Rocket Center), and the Northeast Alabama State Fair. Part 3 will cover the Jaycees from 1982 until their demise in the late 2000s, and why that demise came about.

### **Part 2**

Much of the following information was gleaned from notes written by a Jaycee committee organized by Jim Duncan.

#### **1961-62, Mike Henry and John Wiggins, Presidents**

Huntsville won the Giesenbier Award this year (awarded annually for the best job in developing the whole person through the whole chapter). This is the 2nd time for us to win this award. Huntsville had a population of 79,000 and a club membership of 106.

Warren Crow served as state president. Gus Weisler, Huntsville, served as state editor, and John Wiggins served as state parliamentarian. Ray Lawrence also served as state vice president. Locally, Clyde Fleming served as external VP, and Dave Leonard as internal VP.

Mike Henry was elected in July 1961, but was transferred out of Huntsville in September 1961. John Wiggins was elected by the Board to fill the remainder of that term.

At the first meeting, it was announced that the goal of emphasizing and directing efforts would be toward four areas:

- 1. Membership Retention**

- 2. Establishment of the Research Institute** as part of the University of Ala-Huntsville. The primary job was to sell the rest of the state on this plan in order to get the state to approve a \$6 million bond issue in a referendum. The Jaycees were asked to set up a speaker's bureau to cover the entire state. Eugene McLain chaired the project, and Jaycees responded in their usual great way. Our efforts were recognized as a significant contribution to the success of the total city effort.

- 3. Build a Missile Park.** Our idea was to gather a collection of the Army's and NEA's surplus spacecraft and missiles, and also from both Army and NASA for surplus hardware and mock-ups. The Huntsville city council consented to let us have approximately two acres of land on Memorial Parkway adjacent to the golf course. One missile was erected there. A storm shelter was also constructed, and one of the Jaycees even moved in with his family for a week.

About the same time there was a state Jaycee meeting taking place and the Huntsville Jaycees got a motion passed that the Alabama Jaycees supported a missile museum. The state membership picked up the cause and the Legislature passed an act, which resulted in the Alabama Space and Rocket Center. Dr. Wernher Von Braun named his communications director, Ed Buckbee, to be in charge.

4. **Establish a Fair.** For years we had been talking about that "One big money-making project." During Arnold Hornbuckle's administration, a study was made, and from that study we were convinced that Jaycee sponsorship of a Fair was the answer. After a lot of work by a number of dedicated Jaycees, the date for the first Jaycee county fair was set: Labor Day 1962. David (Dea) Thomas was chairman No. 1, appointed February 1962. The frustrations, disappointments, exhaustions, and exhilarations of that effort are another story all in itself.

We had approved an \$18,000 budget for the fair, however, no Huntsville bank would loan us the money, but a bank in Decatur would. For seed money, on July 24, 1962, a note was signed by 12 Huntsville Jaycees for \$1,012 to sponsor this first Jaycee county fair. When it was over, a small profit was made, and this note was paid in full on October 1, 1962. This was

the beginning of the Northeast Alabama State Fair, which was popular for many years. The money derived from this project over the years financed assistance to thousands of disadvantaged and handicapped children in the Huntsville community.

Mike Henry produced the first "Planned Action" for 1961—62.

Eugene McLain hosted a weekly "Jaycees Present" TV program on which issues of interest to the city were discussed with guests.

The Jaycee sale of Halloween candy was still one of our better money-making projects this year.

A city-wide survey was made to see what Huntsvillians thought of their city. The results were summarized and published. We also sponsored a concert by the Birmingham Symphony, held our Teen-age Road-E-O, Junior Tennis, Junior Champ, and Junior Golf programs this year.

A quote from John Wiggins: *"You are to be congratulated on attempting to accomplish such a tremendous task such as a Fair. I think it is a great idea; it's too bad it hasn't been done sooner. I happen to still have agendas and notes on all of my meetings, so I will give you the benefit of what I can make out of them. They bring back some wonderful memories."*

## **1962-63, Ray Lawrence, President**

Ray Lawrence took office July 1962 just two months prior to the first Jaycee county fair. We fenced off the 14 acres surrounding the Madison County coliseum, which provided for the entire fair as well as parking. David Thomas, our first Fair Chairman, made a trip to Chicago and attended a meeting of the carnival operators, who we were later to do business with.

Before our Jaycee fair this year, there had been a small county fair held annually for 30 years at the old fairgrounds on University Avenue where Red Lobster Restaurant is today. A private individual put on that fair, which was to end with our fair, located just west of Huntsville at the coliseum. Back in those days, we had no fair vice president or a fair board, nor did we have Johnny's United Shows on our small midway. As a matter of fact, our first fair, September 1962 (week of Labor Day), was a small operation with only a few rides and a few Jaycees with their heads through a hole for people to throw eggs at. We did make enough money to pay off our note. Tents were used as there were no buildings other than the shell of the coliseum, which was open at both ends.

Our Underprivileged Children's Christmas Party dates back to the 1960's and continued until the Jaycees went out of business years later.

This program provided clothes, toys, and a visit with Santa and included lunch. It started by asking the schools to provide names of children who they believed would not have a fun holiday season. When duplicate entries were received, we started getting a list from Christmas Charities, which helped cull out the children who were receiving multiple invitations from several charitable organizations.

The event started with the kids being fitted with jackets, jeans, tops, and socks. After that, some sort of entertainment was provided, then lunch, and then Santa came to give out wrapped gifts and candy. This flow stayed pretty constant throughout the years. The event became so successful that we had to start limiting the kids to under age 9. In 1979 the Jaycees provided garments for 408 children. In 1982 the

Jaycees gave out 340 sets of clothes and the budget was \$5,000.

The process was modified after an arrangement with K-Mart, wherein each child showed up at K-Mart with a Jaycee member to shop on their own. They still had to get the clothes, but they got to pick out what they liked. It was the same with the toys. Each child had a budget to spend.

In the later years, with K-Mart, the children were bused to a movie theatre and then to a school cafeteria for lunch and Santa.

Like other programs the funding depended a lot on the profits from the Fair. Budgets for some years were as follows: 1977 \$7,000; 1982 \$5,000; 1985 \$1,525; 1986 \$2,500; 1995 \$2,500; 1996 \$2,500; 1997 \$7,000; 1998 \$3,000.

Our Safety Project, in which we installed seatbelts in cars, made more than \$2,000 this year. We also had our other annual projects, such as the Halloween candy sale, and the annual Christmas party for underprivileged children in our area.

Exceptional Children's Day at the Fair- This was a program started by the Jaycees in the late 1960s in coordination with the carnival owners to provide a day of entertainment for the special-needs children of the area. This program was held every year during fair time until the military relocated its Army School, making their escorts no longer available for the children. The number of children varied from year to year. For example, in 1972 there were about 400 children, and in 1988 it grew to 650 children. In 1993 more than 900 children were entertained. Thus, an equivalent number of soldiers were required. Over the years the number of children became fewer. In 1995 the number of children was 550, which then resulted

in 350 soldiers and 150 other adults to help escort the guests.

Eight “special” schools provided children for this Jaycee event, including special education centers for the city and county schools, Madison County Health Center, Riverton Special Education, and the Lurleen B. Wallace Center in Decatur.

The children were taken on the carnival rides by the military escorts, allowed to play the games, and all were fed a lunch of hot dogs, chips, and soft drinks. The event required coordination and support of many services such as MedFlight, Madison Co. Rescue squad, and the Alabama National Guard.

Here are the Jaycees out-of-pocket expenses for this program: 1982 \$250, 1985 \$150, 1986 \$250, 1996 \$600, 1998 \$700.

This was one of the most rewarding programs that the Jaycees conducted, and it was difficult to end the program.

### **1963-64, David L. Thomas, President**

This year saw the largest membership increase in the history of the Jaycees. We increased from 80 to 250 members.

During this year the Alabama Jaycees dedicated their new state headquarters in Anniston.

W.L. (Chief) Waters served as internal vice president and Bill King served as external vice president. Charles Younger served as the second fair chairman. The state convention was held in Birmingham and David Thomas made the nominating speech for Bill Buffaloes, who was elected to serve the next year (1964-65) as president of the Alabama Jaycees. Bill was from



Florence. The summer conference was held in Anniston and the winter conference in Mobile.

We began work this year on extending our first chapter, establishing the Grant Jaycees.

By this time, we had fenced the 14 acres surrounding the coliseum. We also changed the septic tank into a sewer system, with Jaycees digging the sewer.

We had no special membership programs, but with the fair just getting started and with Chief Waters doing an outstanding job under the internal programming of the club, it just became popular for young men to be a Jaycee.

We were still meeting at the Russell Erskine, and we sponsored an Alabama pageant, the Miss Teenage America, with the winner going on to the U.S. pageant as Alabama's representative. We supported many legislative movements and many community development projects this year.

The Russell Erskine Hotel ballroom was packed with members, standing-room-only, at each Jaycee meeting. A quote from David Thomas: "One of the promises I made in my campaign for president was that if elected and if the fair was voted in, the Halloween Candy Sale would cease." However, the candy sale continued for many years after.

David Thomas received one of the four awards for outstanding local presidents in the State. We also won an award for membership (Ways and Means Award) for our fair, and Huntsville was voted the No. 2 club in the state, bested only by Anniston.

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### **Some project definitions:**

- Leadership In Action – to provide two self-development for new and experienced Jaycees to promote individual self-confidence.
  - Speak-up – to aid the individual Jaycee in speaking in public more effectively.
  - Spoke – to assist the first-year member in participating in club activities.
  - Spark Plug – to encourage the Jaycee who has been a member for more than one year to remain active.
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### **1964-65, W.L. (CHIEF) Waters, President**

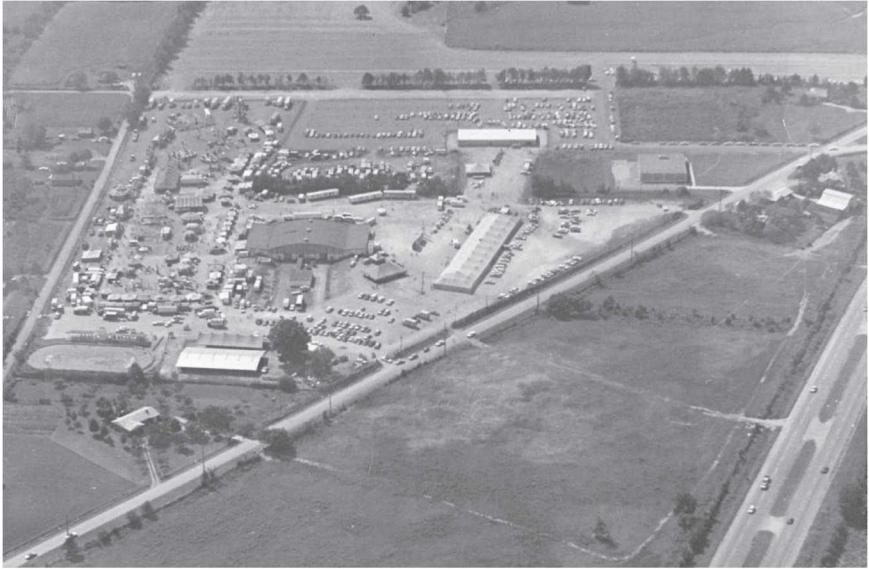
During the 1964-65 National Convention in Buffalo, New York, the organization's name was changed from United States Junior Chamber of Commerce to the United States Jaycees.

Huntsville had grown to a population of 123,000. Bill King served the club as Internal vice president and Bill Sefton served as External vice president. We had 160 Jaycees, and eight Spoke nominees this year.

The state convention was held in Montgomery. Bill Gray, Huntsville, served as state vice president.

The fair was growing. We closed the ends of the coliseum this year. The coliseum was originally built by the County Commissioners for farmers to show their cattle. When we enclosed the building, people in the community began using it for other activities, such as wrestling. John Wiggins was fair chairman. We still did not have Johnny's United Shows at our fair

because he was a member of the Alabama Fairs Association and couldn't support us until a fair was well-established in a town.



The Jaycee fair was first located where Madison Square Mall was later built.

We had the first Jaycee meeting this year in the basement of the West Clinton Street School. The school board had vacated the building. We painted walls and hung signs, then held our board meetings there.

We hosted the winter conference this year. This was the time of the record-breaking 14-inch snow. Consequently, we had only about 50 Jaycees at the conference. Headquarters was at the Carriage Inn and very little business transpired. Jim Lovell, the astronaut, attended, and we carried him for a ride in the snow in a jeep.

By this time, we had reached such a large membership that the board thought we should have

two clubs in Huntsville. But after lengthy discussions time after time, we never did anything about this.

We extended Grant this year (helped them establish their own Jaycees). This was the first extension for Huntsville. We also worked on extending Gurley, which was to be extended several years later. A quote from Chief Waters: "Grant had a square-dance with fiddlers for their charter and installation night. An old boy that I knew wanted me to try some of his moonshine. When I told him that I didn't want to try it, it angered him, and he wanted to fight me. I finally told him that I would try it just to keep from fighting. We went outside to his car to get the moonshine. But when he opened the trunk, I took off running. He chased me for thirty minutes or so, but he finally passed out. I was never so glad or tired in my life. No, I '11 never forget the installation and charter night of the Grant Jaycees as long as I live."

For our Good Government Awards Banquet, U.S. Senator Strom Thurman of South Carolina, attended and participated in a debate. This was a very successful banquet, with approximately 300 people in attendance.

## **1965-66, Bill King, President**

A committee of Huntsville Jaycees was instrumental in implementing the idea of industrial diversification for the Huntsville area during this year.

The population of Huntsville was 123,000. Current Jaycee membership was 270. A membership drive contest was held from July to December between past presidents of the club, which resulted in an addition of 25 new members. Twenty-four qualified for Spark Plug.

Bill Smith served as internal vice president and Howard Bozeman served as external vice president. Dixie Institute was held in Birmingham on September 3, 1965. Huntsville had two delegates there. John Bracey served as Fair chairman.

The Needy Children's Christmas Party was the Outstanding Civic Club Council project-of-the-year. For this project, the Jaycees won out over 11 other nominees.

In November 1965, the Jaycees adopted a project that was long-range, and required many man hours. On March 20, 1966, after extensive groundwork, this project was presented by a Jaycee committee to the Huntsville city council. The city council gave its unanimous approval of the project and offered its assistance. With this approval, the Jaycees sank their teeth into the greatest community development project the club had ever attempted. This project was the South Brahan Springs Park. Up until 1966, the east side of Brahan Spring was a shallow lake with a cracked dam on south end. The woods were thick with underbrush and the shore of the lake was not accessible to the public.

The Huntsville Jaycees negotiated with the U.S. Army Reserve, and with permission from the Huntsville Builders Association, work began. The lake was cleared and fixed up along the shoreline, and an overhanging pavilion at the lake shore was constructed. Prior to this the Jaycees had gotten permission to develop Safety City near Drake Avenue, adjacent to Brahan Spring Park. Safety City had a budget in 1971 of \$80,000. So it seemed natural to help develop the rest of the park land. In 1972 the land was cleared. Once the land was cleared the

Jaycees decided to sponsor hydro-plane races at the lake.

The Power Boat Club was solicited, and they accepted readily. So the first boat races were held at the lake in May 1973. With a budget of \$4,500, nine classes of boats participated in the races. The second year we tried to expand the races, however lack of advertisers made this very expensive to promote. With a great deal of determination, we persevered. We purchased thousands of pounds of grass seed, planted it and landscaped. Jaycees had started with nothing but an over-grown thicket, a swamp, and a lake surrounded with beer cans and trash. Jaycees brought in heavy equipment and with the help of a local contractor and Company "C" of the 926<sup>th</sup> U.S. Army Reserve Engineering Battalion, cleared the grounds, built a street, a parking lot, and 25 concrete picnic tables. Plans were made to eventually install streetlights.

City Attorney and Jaycee, Charles Younger, approached the County Commission in October 1965 and told them that unless the Coliseum site was enlarged within a year, the Jaycees would have to find another location for their annual fair. He said he believed the fair was already accommodating the maximum number of persons on the 14.2-acre tract and that the potential drawing power of the fair was at least three times greater. Tracing the progress of the Jaycee fair during its four years at the coliseum, he noted at this meeting that the profits had increased from \$500 the first year to \$11,000 in 1965, and said that profits this year might have exceeded \$20,000 had it not been for the rainout on Saturday night, which he said was figured to be a \$10.000 night.

We had an Arnold Palmer golf exhibition this year. We sold tickets to this exhibition at the Huntsville Golf Course at the Old Airport (now John Hunt Park). We thought that having Arnold Palmer here would draw a lot of people, but the project did not make any money.

### **1966-67, Howard Bozeman, President**

Population of Huntsville was 123,000. Jaycee membership was 200. Internal vice president was Bob Orand. External vice president was James A. Long. Bill King served as state vice president. Ted Wilson served as state director. He was elected April 18, 1967. Bill King was the recipient of the Distinguished Service Award on January 18, 1967. Bill later went on to become an Alabama State Senator.

We had the pro-golfers back. We had Arnold Palmer and another pro from Tennessee, but no money was made from this event, so this was the last year to have this project.

The blue storage building, near the cattle barn was built by the Jaycees at the fairgrounds. Fair chairman was G.W. Hogeland.

The newly organized committee of Jaycees worked very hard on the Industrial Diversification Project for the Huntsville area. We had a shortage of physicians in town. We started a project to invite young doctors to visit in our city. When they came, we would take them around town and show them the city, and we were successful in getting some of them to relocate to Huntsville.

We also went to Huntsville Industrial Expansion Committee (HIC) and told them we had a Jaycee committee that would go out and find industries, not related to the missile industry, to locate in our area.

But incredibly, we were rebuffed. We were told that they did not want any industries other than the ones related to missiles. But a few years later, when Arsenal projects began slowing down, they at last saw the need for diversified industries.

Sometime after 1966-67, the city asked the Jaycees to assist when a company wondered if people were available for work here. We set up a seven-day project at the unemployment office to collect names of people looking for work, preferably in the electronics manufacturing industry. The company said it needed 500 workers. But we got 27,000 applications. Ironically, that company decided not to relocate here. However, our data paid off when the giant Automatic Electric Company came here soon after.

We won the Man-Mile Award at the state convention in Mobile. We were seven blocks from Jaycee headquarters in Mobile. Our club had always been close friends with the Mobile Jaycees. But that changed when our president got up to receive the plaque and said, "We should have gotten the Man-Mile Award for being the farthest from headquarters." This did not set well with our Mobile host chapter. It turned out that we had the best hospitality room anyway, and convention attendees came all of the seven blocks to have some of our "missile juice" and fine hospitality. Missile juice was our way of encouraging other Jaycees to come visit our hospitality room. In those days several chapters had a beverage they featured in their headquarters.

Decatur had "boat fuel," which was probably pure white lightning. Opp had their "rattlesnake juice" and always had plastic cages with rattle snakes in them. We had missile juice, which started with a three-gallon clay pot. The formula was one 1 ½ gallons of gin and



vodka, two cans of orange and grapefruit juice, one bottle of grape juice and one block of dry ice. As the ice dissolved the smoke would roll over the edge of the clay pot. The author once went into the liquor store in Montgomery before customers were allowed to touch the bottles. I asked for three large bottles of the cheapest gin and vodka they had, and the clerk asked me if I was from Huntsville and was I making missile juice! Turns out his son was in the Montgomery Jaycees and had told him about our drink.

### **1967—68, Bob Orand, President**

Huntsville Jaycee, John Putman, was recognized as one of the Ten Outstanding Young Men of America.

Population of Huntsville was 150,000. Jaycee membership in May 1968 was 230. Membership at the end of June that same year had grown to 250.

Bob Harvey served as president of the Alabama Jaycees. Huntsville, while state and district representatives were Ted Wilson, District 4; state VP, Bob O'Neill; state chairman of Chapter Management and Leadership Training, Pat Kelly; state chairman of Governmental Affairs, Tom Moxley; member of State Industrial Committee, Howard Bozemen; and James Brannon, Spoke Chairman, Region No. 2. Dorman Schrimsher won the 1st Walt Wiesman Award this year.

The summer conference was in Birmingham on August 18-20, 1967. The winter conference was in Montgomery. Fair vice president was John Bracey. This is the first year for the Jaycees to have a fair VP with a separate group of directors. The fair had a total income of \$64,344, with expenses of \$54,222, with a profit of \$10,121. Dorman Schrimsher served as

internal vice president and Sidney Saucier was external vice president of the club. We extended Gurley Jaycees this year.

This was the first year at the fair for the dunk-booth, which was designed by Bob Orand. Dorman Schrimsher became the first Jaycee to sit on the dunk-booth chair.

Another new project was Operation Red Dot. This program consisted of mainly marketing. The goal was to put a 4-inch red vinyl dot on the windows of those rooms that had children sleeping inside. These would serve as a bright visual for the fire department. These stickers were handed out on street intersections, in stores and anywhere people would pick them up.

### **1968-69 - Dorman Schrimsher, President**

Population of Huntsville was 173,285. Club membership was 226. State Convention was in Mobile. During 1969 there were 60 Chapters in the state organization and the state budget had increased to \$18,000.

The first of five consecutive Blue-Chip Awards was won this year, leading to a Gold Chip Award in 1972. Lee Jones was internal vice president and H.R. Burch was external vice president. On the state level, Ted Wilson served as U.S. Jaycee director for Region 2, Jim Brannon served as district VP and H.R. Burch served as state editor. We also had six Huntsville Jaycees serving as state chairmen.

The property at the Madison County coliseum was not large enough to support the growth of the Fair, so the Jaycee's John Ofenloch negotiated with Viola Anderson for 14 acres she owned adjacent to the western border of the county property.

The steel exhibit building was constructed this year. It was not to be called the Bond Building until three years later when a Huntsville Jaycee, Larry Bond, who was very active in fair work, was killed in a motorcycle accident during the candy sale. The building was dedicated to him and renamed the Bond Building. This was to become the third building on the fairgrounds. The small, blue building was there, plus, there was a cattle building, which was built by the county in conjunction with the coliseum for cattle shows. The candy sale has been mentioned several times but the door-to-door candy sale was held for many years. Originally started to help fund the fair, it became its own fund-raising entity. The idea was to sell candy for Halloween door-to-door throughout the city. As it turned out, getting area chairmen and city maps was also the beginning of training for political door knocking. After an evening of sales we got back together to discuss the persons opening their doors. I heard one Jaycee asking someone to buy two bags of candy for \$2. When the person asked about buying only one bag, the Jaycee replied that we didn't like to sell them that way. We usually sold about 300 cases with 12 to a case. That gave us a profit of \$1,700.

The Local Officers Training Seminar (L.O.T.S.) meeting for North Alabama was held in Huntsville July 28, 1968, at the Sheraton Inn. The summer conference was held in Tuscaloosa August 1968, and the winter conference was held in Montgomery the first weekend of February 1969. The state April board meeting was in Gadsden, the state convention was in Mobile, and national convention was in Louisville, Kentucky.

The annual budget for the club was \$74,000 with projected expenses of \$53,931, with an expected net

profit of \$20,068. The fair budget this year was \$54,000.

This year, we signed the first five-year contract for Johnny's United Shows to bring his big carnival to our Fair. Up until now, he had been coming on a yearly-to-year basis.

Our money-making projects for the year were: baseball dunk, bell ring (high striker) to use at the fair (we sold it after the fair this year), record game, boat regatta at Braham Springs, Halloween candy sale, membership smokers, teenage driving rodeo, and of course, the fair itself.

We won many awards at the state convention this year. Dorman Schrimsher was named outstanding local president in the state, and we were named the No. 1 club in the Alabama Jaycees this year. Sonny Wilson served as the fair vice president this year.

### **1969-70, Leon Crawford, President**

Population of Huntsville - 173,285 and club membership was 250. Huntsville Jaycees Blue Chipped again this year, and the state convention was held in Montgomery.

Hall Bryant served as internal vice president and Bruce Weddle served as external vice president. Ival Secrest, who served as fair vice president, moved out of town, so Jerry Whelchel assumed the duties.

The annual budget was \$70,800. The summer conference was held in Dothan, and the winter conference was in Tuscaloosa. Montgomery hosted the state convention May 22-24, 1970.

This year the Jaycees sponsored a pool party, a Junior Miss Pageant, a bowling league, a New Year's Eve Ball (that was tux only) at the Carriage Inn, a Boy Scout troop, the Space Walk Scout Trail, a youth

tutoring service project, a juvenile assistance league, and a soap box derby (which was held on what is now I-565). The soap box derby track came down the hill on Chapman Mountain. We blocked off Highway 72 west-bound and the track ran down toward Oakwood Ave. There were other annual projects.

We had a goal of reaching 210 total members by December 1969, and yet, we had 250 members by the end of the fiscal year.

H.R. Burch served as state editor again this year, and Sid Saucier served as state vice president of District No. 4. Other local Jaycees serving the state organization were: Jim Jones, Human Development and Environmental Improvement as state program director; and Jim Brannon, chapter growth and management state director.

Huntsville Jaycees also had the following state chairmen: Ed Green, good government and outstanding American awards; Marty Wachtel, state photography; and Tom Miller, assistant state director.

State committee members were: Leon Crawford and Joe Taylor. Leon Crawford and H.R. Burch were state metro chapter representatives.

We won many awards at the state convention, plus, we Blue-Chipped again this year.

## **1970-71, H.R. Burch, President**

During 1970, the Alabama Jaycees had a tremendous growth in members. The State membership reached a high of 7,200 members, consisting of 135 chapters, with a State budget of \$43,700. In June 1970, the Alabama Jaycees marched No. 1 in the Parade of States in St. Louis under the leadership of state president Frank Parsons,

celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the United States Jaycees.

The state convention was held in Birmingham and we won five Alabama Jaycee sweepstakes awards, plus three other U.S. Jaycee awards. **In 1970-71 the Huntsville Jaycees were named the No. 2 club in the nation!**

Huntsville won the Giessenbier Award for the third time. The other years were 1959-60 and 1961-62. A decision was made this year to purchase 20 more acres of land and an exhibit building for the fair.

At the 26<sup>th</sup> JCI World Congress, the Huntsville Jaycees won two of the United States Jaycees awards. We were the recipients of the Raymond V. Delrosario Award for the most outstanding fund-raising project (which was our 1970 Northeast Alabama State Fair), and the Doctor Hosea Reta Ponce Award, for the most outstanding project in the field of health with particular reference to children (this was our rubella program).

Don Horne served as 1970-71 state president following Frank Parsons. Sid Saucier, Huntsville, was U.S. Jaycee director of Region 2, and Jim Jones, Huntsville, was state v.p. of District 4. Ed Greene was external vice president and Tom Miller was internal vice president of our club, and Jimmy Durham served as the fair vice president.

### **1971-72, Sidney Saucier, President**

Population of Huntsville was 137,000. Membership of our club was 324 members. This was the fourth consecutive year for the Huntsville Jaycees to Blue Chip. Internal vice president was Ed Greene, external

vice president was David Worley, and John Ofenloch served as fair manager .

Jaycee JOBS '70 was implemental during this year. The program brought more than \$200,000 into Huntsville for employment opportunities. Started in 1971, JOBS '70 was a program undertaken by the Huntsville Jaycees and funded through the joint efforts of the National Alliance of Businessmen and the United States program. The JOBS '70 program enabled companies to hire and fully train disadvantaged persons for productive jobs, upgrade current employees for more responsible and higher-skilled jobs, or train employees for new occupations for which there was a shortage of skills.

Simply stated, the program was one between an employer and the Government, wherein the employer agreed to hire and train a specified number of disadvantaged persons and the Government agreed to reimburse the employer for all extraordinary costs incurred for the training and supportive services. The Jaycees agreed to assist the new employee in making a successful adjustment including what is expected concerning proper work habits, personal grooming and specific work situation being considered. Also, discussed were rights and responsibilities, transportation to work and dependability. Several sessions were held with the applicants to discuss these issues. Also included were basic (or remedial) reading, writing, mathematics, and communication skills. Other opportunities included special counseling, medical and dental services (if needed for job requirements), child care assistance, and transportation assistance.

Local businesses were contacted and asked to sign the Consortium Agreement. The first proposal had

difficulty getting started due to the cumbersome nature of the Federal Agencies. The Atlanta rep, without cause, first accused the Triana mayor of being in the program only to make money. The National average for overhead for this program was \$300 per client, which included training seminars on how to dress and conduct one's self in an interview. The government rep said he would pay only \$200. Since the Jaycees were non-profit, they agreed to take the \$200 and cover the other costs as required. (One may wonder who got the other \$100 per employee). The first proposal was submitted April 29, 1972. The turn-around was promised in four weeks, however, it was six weeks before approval was received. These proposals included commitments from industry that they would accept a certain number of candidates. But because of the delay, several companies backed out of their commitments. The first proposal included 85 jobs but the Department of Labor approved only 50.

The second proposal was for 65 jobs during June 1972, including 30 Huntsville companies. This proposal again took several months to approve. In fact, the Jaycees went to the mayor for help to move this forward. Looking back, things haven't changed much. Of the candidates, 54 jobs were approved, and after 18 months, 57 percent of the workers still had jobs. The program trained the candidates as mentioned above, but in addition, provided 50 percent of their salary for the first six months. This was the main incentive for the program, which was designed to get people into the workforce.

Also this year, a White Paper on water pollution in Alabama produced a National Jaycee award for the Huntsville club.



Huntsville won five sweepstakes awards at the Alabama state convention in Mobile, and two U.S. Jaycee awards at the national convention. We also won the Giessenbier Award, while Henry Oldham won the state Speak-Up Award. The annual budget was \$48,768, with an income of \$89,365, with a budgeted expense of \$63,625.00 for the fair, with a fair budgeted profit of \$25,740.

An international night, with the Council of International Visitors, was held this year. Other activities included the Junior Golf Tournament, the Jaycee Soap Box Derby, and the 1972 Quarter Midget Races (national championships were all held in Huntsville this year). We also sponsored the Punt, Pass, and Kick competition, and two Boy Scout troops. The Children's fishing rodeo, Merit Scholarship competition, and boat races at Brahan Spring were also held.

### **1972-73, John Ofenloch, President**

This was the fifth year of Blue Chip which meant that the Huntsville Jaycees had achieved its membership and growth goals for five years in a row. This achievement merited the Gold Chip Award. It was the first time a large, metro club had ever done this. The annual state convention was held at a motel in downtown Montgomery, which had an open lobby and a fountain outside. The Huntsville Library has an article from the Montgomery newspaper telling the story about a couple walking near the fountain when suddenly gold bubbles began coming out of the fountain. Someone had put liquid soap and gold dye into the fountain.



GETTING TO BE A HABIT WITH HUNTSVILLE JAYCEES  
...Oldham, Button, Hennessee and Ofenloch

## City Jaycees tops in state again

At the fair we offered a new petting zoo venue with young animals. But we realized we were missing some ducks. A few hours later some ducks showed up in a car with two Jaycees wearing wet pants. The next day the Jaycee president had to call the UAH president and ask permission to borrow some ducks from the pond. These were the ducks already in our pens.

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The Jaycee Kidney Foundation was founded after we discovered there were road blocks every Saturday where drivers were asked for donations to pay for people to travel to Birmingham or Nashville for kidney dialysis.

The Jaycees, under the leadership of Walt Hennesse, spent months studying the problem. They learned that kidney disease was the fourth biggest killer of Americans, and that no organization in Alabama was concentrating on the problem.

The Jaycees went to Birmingham and convinced a young nephrologist, Dr. Richard Finch, to move to Huntsville and set up a kidney dialysis treatment center at Huntsville Hospital with three artificial kidney machines.

Soon, this treatment center became a viable organization of regional impact, including ten counties, so the name was changed North Alabama Kidney Foundation.

The Jaycees also spearheaded state legislation to allow drivers to note they are organ donors on the backs of their drivers' licenses.

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We had an all-time high membership of 420 members. The state convention was held in Montgomery. Huntsville won seven sweepstakes awards and three United States Jaycee awards. We also won the Giessenbier Award, while Henry Oldham won the Outstanding Spoke Award. Henry was the only Jaycee to have won Speak-Up and Spoke awards in the State Competition. This year was when Larry Bond was killed on his motorcycle on Mastin Lake Road after broad siding a car crossing the street to turn into a fast-food restaurant.

The budget for the year was \$203,160 and some of the fundraisers included the Halloween candy sale, New Years Eve ball, boat race, and football raffle. The fair had a budgeted income of \$95,000, with a profit of \$26,005. Maury Gerson served the club as internal

vice president, Charlie Button as external vice president and Mike Maples as fair vice president.

Walt Hennessee, Sidney Saucier and Oliver Cathy served as state committee chairman.

### **1973-74, Mike Maples, President**

Tommy Isbell served as internal vice president, Crawford Howard as external and Joe Taylor as fair vice president. This was the year we purchased another 20 acres adjacent to our other property. The property was bought from Mary Nicholson. The 20 acres were turned from a cotton field into a lighted parking lot for the fair.

Our kidney dialysis clinic was opened at Huntsville Hospital. Since the dialysis machines cost \$22,000 each and the Huntsville Jaycees were committed to this project, the name was changed to the North Alabama Kidney Foundation to attract more donations. As stated earlier this became a major help to those in North Alabama requiring dialysis, who had been driving to Nashville or Birmingham for the treatment.

Our meeting place had outgrown the Russell Erskine Hotel and the meals were becoming too costly. So the meetings were moved to the Ramada Inn on the west side of South Memorial Parkway.

Our club won nine state awards, and nationwide, we were recognized with 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place awards for our programs. Some of the State awards were for our Picnic for Special People and for our youth tutoring project.

## **1974-75, Walt Hennessee, President**

This year resulted in Huntsville hosting the state convention at the new Von Braun Center in the East Hall. Some 1,200 state Jaycees attended, and it was the first major convention at the VBC. The Jaycees wives helped make the vanity curtains for the three tired head table.

This year saw much controversy at the fair. During the press conference the Jaycee president was asked about a dog track in North Alabama. He stated that he thought it would be fine. The newspaper wrote that the Huntsville Jaycees were pushing for a dog track. Then the Ku Klux Klan booked a booth at the fair, something that may have been normal in a smaller town, but not here. The KKK was bought out of their contract for a booth. I recall that it cost a fair amount of money to persuade them to leave. Until the controversy died down some local preachers were telling their congregations to stay away from the fair.

The order for the Halloween candy got mixed up and instead of getting our usual 200 cases, we got 2,000 cases. This was problematic, but we sold candy all-year long. It was a good thing Kraft caramels last a long time.

Despite these problems, the Kidney Foundation was expanded with more dialysis machines.

## **1975-76, Henry Oldham, President**

We had another great year with six state awards, including the Giessenbier and five United States awards for our projects. The club budget was \$205,094, with a fair budget of \$103,700. The fair profit was \$28,829. Internal v.p. was John Tyson;

external, Charlie Button; and fair manager, Alan Forney.

**1976 NORTHEAST ALABAMA STATE FAIR  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**



MIKE  
WIESMAN  
OPERATIONS

BOB  
HEWITT  
SECRETARY

ART  
WIKLE  
PROMOTIONS

STEVE  
FURIN  
EXHIBITS

JOHN  
OFENLOCH  
EXEC.  
SECRETARY

Up until this time, all residents had to go to the courthouse to get their auto license plates. The JCs proposed, and the county accepted, a plan for the Jaycees to sell plates at two shopping malls in Huntsville, one in the north and one in the south part of the city. With the population growing, the lines everyday became unbearable. A few Jaycees came up with an idea to sell the tags at remote locations. The License Director thought it was a great idea, but said he didn't have the budget to hire extra personnel.

Thus, the Jaycees opened two remote locations in the two malls, which remained open later than the office downtown. Every morning the Jaycees had to go to

the courthouse downtown to reconcile the tag sales, turn in the money, and get a new supply of tags. This project, started in 1975, was needed for only a few years until the county was able to fund remote locations. In 1975, some 14,000 tags were sold by the Jaycees at the remote locations, saving citizens a trip to the courthouse. Steve Furin and Jerry Long chaired this event.

Because of numerous area storms, Huntsvillians have always been weather aware, so the Jaycees decided to provide weather radios at a reduced cost. In 1975 Huntsville community leaders decided there was a need for a National Weather Service transmitter in the city. As usual, the Huntsville Jaycees became involved in the activity and started a movement to build a transmitter in the local area. The first meeting with the city was held on March 4, 1975. It was estimated that construction of a cinder-block building to house the transmitter would cost about \$30,000. Several venues were pursued including federal grants, Community Development money and door-to-door donations. After several years of planning and solicitations the weather station was completed. The next few years were spent with the Jaycees selling weather radios to the public

### **1976-77, Charlie Button, President**

The population of Huntsville was 145,000 and the club membership was at 223. Tommy Isbell was internal VP, Allen Green was external VP, and Nickie Purser served as fair manager. This year we hosted the Congress of Outstanding Young Huntsvillians.

Kim Keller served as state mainstream chairman, Spencer Glasgow as state editor, Henry Oldham as holiday safety, and John Ofenloch as state Blue

Chip/Gold Chip chair. The state awards consisted of three sweepstakes and four US Jaycee awards. The kidney dialysis unit had grown to occupy most of the main floor of the old Fifth Avenue Hospital with 51 patients.

During his year as president, Charlie Button was the first president to become unemployed while in office and as a result became the first full-time president of the Huntsville Jaycees. IBM had given him an option to move to Gaithersburg, Maryland, or lose his job. Charlie opted to stay in Huntsville.

### **1977-78, Allen Green, President**

Population of Huntsville was 145,000 and John Meyer served as external VP Roger Beard was internal VP, and Larry Ring served as fair VP. During this era some people did not want to deal with a fair vice president, so we changed the title to fair manager.

This year the JCs completed a comprehensive survey, in cooperation with the Junior League of Huntsville, on group-care services for children, including those neglected and abused. A final report was published and a workshop was held involving the local community. Some of the nation's foremost authorities on child group care attended.

A building fund was established with an appropriation of \$900. The budget for the children's Christmas party was increased to \$7,000, and the fair realized a record profit of \$53,000.

Numerous state awards were received for first place, including: the fair, fundraising, planned action, publications, license plate sales, governmental involvement, and the children's Christmas party. Sixteen single projects were submitted for judging and



12 won first place. Frank Childs received the Gov. Lurleen B. Wallace Award as the most outstanding JC in service to the mental health field.

### **1978-79, Jim Duncan, President**

Internal VP was John Cooper, external VP was Barry Bryan, and the fair manager was Steve Furin. The state convention was held in Huntsville. Our Jaycee club was awarded more than 30 state awards, winning out over all the clubs in Alabama. This was the year of the first blind-Easter-egg hunt. The purpose of this project was to provide an opportunity for the blind and deaf children of this area to experience a tradition previously reserved for the sighted.

The first and obvious issue was to find Easter eggs that emitted a sound so the children could find them. Many other issues had to be resolved for this project. The project began in October 1978 and ended April 8, 1979, with the egg hunt. Children were contacted from the School for the Deaf and Blind in Talladega, along with the Vocational Rehabilitation Agency for local blind children.

Beeper Easter eggs were designed by an engineer here in Huntsville who said he would build them for \$10.00 each. Another vendor was located who agreed to supply additional eggs. The orders were placed for 20 eggs from the developer and 100 eggs from a corporation named Delta T. On the day before the event, Delta T said they could deliver only 50 eggs, but the inventor, Irv Sainker, provided 30 eggs. Actually, Delta T Inc. could provide only 31 eggs.

Hamburgers, hot dogs and chips were also provided to the children and their escorts. The beeping eggs were replaced in the baskets with chocolate eggs and the beepers saved for next year.

The Talladega school brought 48 blind children, 13 of which were also deaf. The Vocational Rehab Center invited 16 families; several came and participated. The publicity was fantastic. Even national news commentator Paul Harvey talked about it on his radio show. His news transcript read: *“An Easter egg hunt for blind children in Huntsville, Alabama. The Jaycees equipped each egg with a small battery and a beeper that sounded like a chirping chick. Some 55 blind youngsters hunted out the eggs by sound and reportedly had a thoroughly delightful day.”*

The egg hunt was held and for several years to follow. The budget for 1979 was \$600.

The Fair budget was written with an expected profit of \$29,000. But with great planning and wonderful weather the actual profit came to \$62,186.

### **1979-80, Barry Bryan, President**

Some of the Jaycee information became difficult to find from this year forward. Ernest Kauffman was fair manager.

### **1980-81, Ernest Kaufman II, President**

Paul Grieb was elected fair manager

### **The saga of relocating the fair**

In 1981 the Nashville land development company, CBL, began asking about the purchase of our fairgrounds land, along with the county land, for the purpose of developing a shopping center at the intersection of University Ave. and Rideout Road. CBL made the purchases. Their development became Madison Square Mall and, more recently, Mid City. The JC's decided to relocate the fairgrounds

somewhere north of the city. The land purchased included two parcels. The first was a 70-acre plot that was not in the city limits, but adjacent to the limits, fronting on Mastin Lake Road to the south, Stringfield Road to the north, and the city limits along James Dawson Elementary School on the east. A second parcel of 12 acres was purchased within the city and adjacent to the 70-acre parcel for the purpose of developing a park for the neighborhood, with space for the annual week-long fair. The theory was that the residents would be happy to have a park near their homes. Land clearing and construction started soon after. Further history is offered below by James Overbeek.

After bidding the original park project on the new Mastin Lake Road site, it was awarded to Commercial Steel Builders, Inc. (CSBI). But the project was eventually shut down by the Northwest Huntsville Civic Association. The shut-down started formally, I believe, with the Jaycee presentation at the Mastin Lake Elementary School one night. The slide presentation was led by Paul Grieb. I was up front to help answer questions and there were several other JCs on stage for specific purposes but I can't remember everyone (I guess about 6 JCs Were on the stage). The cafeteria of the school was full to capacity, thanks in part to a rallying call by Jim Putnam, who may have used this opportunity to leverage himself to become a member of the Huntsville city council. The attendees were mostly angry citizens from the surrounding neighborhoods. Apparently none of them wanted carnival workers to set up camp for a fair in their neighborhood for a week every year. I wasn't involved in the behind-the-scenes discussions prior to the presentation. I'm guessing that someone from the

city recommended that we give the presentation to the community due to some phone calls they got about the construction adjacent to the school. As best I can remember, the project for the new building was already awarded and under construction. CSBI had taken down the Bond Building at our old site and moved the major structural elements to their exterior storage yard near their office, constructed an access to the site at Mastin Lake Road, surveyed the building pad location, built the pad, and started foundation work. I think they even poured the building slab concrete on top of a four-inch layer of gravel, covered with a vapor barrier. Pipes were installed for sewage to a point five feet outside of the building perimeter, and conduits to a point about five feet outside of the exterior building walls for eventual connection to the city grid.

Then we got an alarming message. The City Engineer told us in a private meeting, "Don't even think about tapping into the city sewer or I will shut down the construction." Technically, engineering-wise, there wasn't a problem with tapping into the nearest manhole near our property.

There was now an obvious political problem with our project, as most of us found out only about a week before the night of the JC presentation to the NWH Civic Association. Most of the Jaycees thought we were doing something good for the community (very naïve weren't we?). The site committee found the land, the membership voted in favor of it, and we were proceeding forward. I'm not sure, but I doubt if the community was notified in advance of the purchase. Prior to laying out the design of the site, I was shown the land parcel and took the bumpy tour led by Mickie or Clark, I think, but my memory is fuzzy on that. I'm

sure that I received a hard copy drawing of the site, which had property-line information and, I believe topo lines, a creek, major tree lines, road rights-of-way, and utilities on it adjacent to the site.

Because of the neighborhood pressure, the JC's went to the city and asked for help. The city offered use of the land at the old airport, which later became John Hunt Park.

Construction of the Fairgrounds on the northwest Mastin Lake Road property was halted in July 1983.

**This ends part 2 of 3 parts.** Part 3, in the next issue, covers the Jaycees activities from 1982 to 2000s, its demise, and why that demise happened.



### **About the authors:**

*John H. Allen is a long-time resident of Huntsville and is a former president of both the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society and the Tennessee Valley Civil War Round Table. He once chaired the committee that created the Tree Commission, the Tree Ordinance, the Urban Forester position, and the Landscape Ordinance for commercial parking lots. He is the retired training manager of the Amana facility in Fayetteville, Tenn.*

*John H. Ofenloch, is a retired engineer and held executive management positions at both Brown Engineering and Intergraph Corporation. He was once president of the Huntsville Jaycees. He is a past president of the Kiwanis Club of Huntsville, was chairman of the board of the American Red Cross here,*

*and was on the board of Huntsville Utilities. Most recently, he was president of LearningQuest.*

Edited by Donna Pratt

## **The Man That Defied the Klan**

*By William H. Hampton*



Louis Miller

When Louis Miller, owner of the Tennessee Poultry and Hide Company, arrived at work one morning sometime in the 1920s, his attention was riveted by a crude handwritten notice nailed to the front door. "GET OUT OF TOWN. [signed] KU KLUX KLAN."

He was angered when he read the scrap of paper. He thought America was going to be different. Many years later Miller told his son, Buddy, how he felt after he read the notice: "I was mad as hell. I had traveled half way around the world to find a place where I could live in freedom, and I'll be damned if I was going to let those sons of b\_\_\_\_s run me out of Huntsville!"

Miller had immigrated to the United States in 1913. "Ever since I could think, I wanted to leave Russia and come to America," he would tell his children in later years. In the Czar's Russia, Jews were periodically attacked by anti-Semitic thugs who stole property, burned homes and businesses, and vented their hate by murdering Jews. Louis only had a 7th grade education by the time he arrived in New York because anti-Jewish quotas in Minsk schools prevented him during some years from attending class.

Miller later said that the most beautiful sight he had ever seen was the Statue of Liberty as the ship which brought him to the United States pulled into the

harbor of New York. The statue represented a dream that he had ever since he was "old enough to think." He wanted to come to this country, and now he was here. Freedom from quotas and murdering gangs. Here he was in America!

His father had been a Melamed in Minsk, Russia--a teacher who taught young boys Hebrew. It was an honorable profession, but very poorly paid. Just before Louis left Minsk to come to America, his father said to him: "We have a lot of famous Rabbis and people well known in our family. If you change your name as most people do when they go to America, nobody will know who you are."

Label Mishkind--that was Louis Miller's name at birth--promised his dad that he wouldn't change his name in America. As it turned out, Label could not keep his promise. He stayed with his older brother in Brooklyn who had previously Americanized his own name to "Miller" when he first came to this country. Before Label could speak English people had already started calling him "Louis Miller" because of his Brother. After some time, Label Mishkind legally changed his name to Louis Miller because he was called that anyway.

By day Louis worked for his brother who owned a small candy store, and by night he went to school to learn English and take citizenship classes.

Patiently, he studied, worked and saved his money, determined to become an American citizen. He had already fulfilled the dream for which generations of his family had prayed--he was in a country where an individual was judged on merit, and where an individual was free to practice his own religious beliefs.

After a few years in New York, Louis ventured out to Paris, Tennessee, to visit a sister who lived there. His



first exposure to southern culture came as somewhat of a shock. He later told the story of how people he passed in the railroad station would smile and say, "Good morning, how are you." As he walked down the street complete strangers greeted him in a friendly manner.

This was quite unusual, but certainly pleasant.

Miller chuckled in later years as he remembered his feelings, "I must look like somebody they know, otherwise they wouldn't be speaking to me. In New York people who lived next door rarely spoke to one another, much less to complete strangers."

After Miller realized it had not been a case of mistaken identity, but rather that the South was simply a friendlier place than New York, he decided to settle here. Traveling down to Decatur, Alabama, he quickly found a job, and sent his brother a telegram asking him to pack up his stuff and send it south.

Hard work and attention to detail made Miller a valued employee. When his boss purchased another company in Huntsville, in 1918, he asked Miller to manage it for him. The company, named the Tennessee Poultry and Hide Company, dealt in items such as poultry, hides, eggs, furs, wild roots, scrap iron, and wiping rags. The store quickly became an asset to the community and began to prosper. For many of the rural farmers it proved to be a blessing in the off seasons when they were unable to farm. Whole families would gather ginseng and run trap lines. Miller bought these items from the farmers, often providing the only income they had during the winter months.

The community soon learned that Miller was a fair man, paying fair prices and keeping his word. In time, his reputation literally became the business, a fact

that his employer probably realized when he agreed to sell the company to Miller. Louis Miller joined the local Temple, became active in community affairs and was an outspoken advocate of the individual right to freedom. Unfortunately, he was so outspoken he soon came to the attention of the local Ku Klux Klan.

Huntsville's original Klan had been founded in 1867 as a means to combat the consequences of Reconstruction. In 1872, after a Congressional hearing held in Huntsville exposed a long history of Klan brutalities, the Klan disbanded. A few decades later it rose again in the early 1900's, partly in response to the release of the film, "Birth of a Nation".

By 1920 the Klan had become a powerful organization in Huntsville. Businessmen felt they had to belong in order to do business, and politicians felt they had to belong in order to do politics. Even if you did not agree with the Klan, the local wisdom was that it was better to keep your mouth shut. In a perverse way it should be noted that the local Klan did not discriminate--they hated everyone equally: blacks, Jews, foreigners, and northerners.

Miller fit most of the above criteria, a fact that did not escape the Klan's attention. Louis Miller hated the Klan, and he publicly took issue with them. He simply could not understand how, in this country, a group of bigoted nightriders could intimidate a whole community. In his anger at the Klan he said in public more than a few times that, one day, he was going to buy those Klan robes and tear them up into wiping rags.

Miller's threats infuriated the Klan who soon put out word that he was a marked man. After finding the Klan eviction notice on his door, Miller sent word to the Klan leaders that if they came after him, he would

be ready for them. At five-foot-four he was not physically a very imposing man, and he wasn't really a very good shot, either. However, at that time there was a shooting gallery next door to the Tennessee Poultry and Hide Company.

Every day Louis went in to the gallery, plunked down his money, and practiced shooting with rifles and pistols. After a while he became a superb marksman, a fact he made sure that everyone knew. He also made sure that the Klan knew that if they came after him, they might get him, but they were likely to lose some of their own in the struggle.

Still, despite his bravado, he realized the danger. He constantly kept a gun close by at work and at home. His orders to his wife were: "if anybody knocks at night when I am not at home, don't open the door." Not knowing when the Klan might come after him, when Miller answered the door in the evening, he greeted visitors with a rifle or pistol in hand.

The citizens of Huntsville likely expected a bloody confrontation, but, for no apparent reason, the Klan abruptly stopped its harassment of Miller. It would be years before he discovered why. Miller had a few friends and business acquaintances who were also members of the Klan, and it was one of them who eventually told him the whole story.

The Huntsville Klan had put Louis Miller on trial in absentia at a special Klan meeting called for that purpose. Louis was charged with speaking in public against the Klan. Among other specific examples, he was charged with threatening repeatedly in public to tear Klan robes into wiping rags.

The trial was a major event in the local Klan community. Both a prosecuting attorney and a defense attorney were designated. The man who eventually told

Louis the story offered to serve as defense attorney. Klan members in the hall were the jury.

When it came time during the trial for the defense attorney to say his piece, he argued, "I've known Louis Miller for a number of years. In fact I've known him ever since he came to Huntsville. He left Russia to find a place of freedom--I know that because he told me. Yes, he is in disagreement with the Klan. Louis Miller has a right to speak against us just as any other American does. He even has the right to speak against his government, but he is speaking against the Klan. I don't find that to be anything he should be put on trial for. I don't think it is wrong."

During his summation the defense attorney made his point as strongly as he could: "I joined the Klan because I thought it was a worthwhile organization but, I'm submitting my resignation from the Klan tonight, because I don't feel like it is the kind of organization I need to belong to." He did resign, and eventually he told Louis about the trial.

In part because one solitary person had dared to oppose the Klan, it began to lose public support. Members drifted away and in a few years the Huntsville Klan had almost disappeared.

The story might have ended there if it had not been for a phone call Miller received in the early 1930's. "Louie, are you still dealing in wiping rags?" Miller, thinking it was just another business call in an already hectic day replied, "Yes, if the price is right."

The caller went on to explain the purpose of the call. "I've been renting a meeting hall to the Ku Klux Klan, but they haven't been active for a couple of years and they haven't been paying any rent. I'm going to have to rent it to somebody else, but I've got a bunch of their old robes on the floor in a pile in the meeting hall, and

I was wondering if you would be interested in buying them."

Years earlier he had threatened many times to tear Klan robes into wiping rags, but he never really thought he would live to see that day. He could barely control his excitement. "Where are you now?" asked Miller. The caller replied, "I'm at the meeting hall," and gave Louis the address. The rag buyer was already grabbing for his hat and coat as he yelled into the phone, "Don't you leave. I'll be there in ten minutes. I'll buy them from you. I'll buy them ALL from you."

On the short trip to the now defunct meeting hall he began having second thoughts about the price. He thought to himself, "I want to buy them, but there's only so much I can pay for them to make them into wiping rags." But then he thought about what was really important to him. "It doesn't make any difference," he reasoned with himself, "no matter what he wants for them, I'm going to pay that. I'm going to get them. I'm going to do what I said I was going to do."

So Louis Miller, Jewish dealer in wiping rags, soon showed up at the former Klan meeting hall to buy a pile of Klan robes. With little dickering, the deal was struck. They shook hands with Louis telling the seller, "I'll send two or three men to the hall in about an hour to pick up the robes. I'll send you a check today."

If people were wondering what a Jewish dealer wanted with Klan robes, they soon discovered the answer. Every morning Miller would have an employee push a pallet loaded with Klan robes out to the space between the sidewalk and the street. They would remain there all day, every day, as a reminder to people of what the robes really were--simply a pile of discarded rags.

Miller often sat in his office watching the reactions of people as they walked by. The robes were in a pile, but you could tell what they were because all of them bore various embroidered Klan emblems. Some passers-by would stare. Some would do a double-take. Some people simply hung their heads and pretended not to see the pile.

After displaying the robes for a couple of months, a friend of Miller's called. "Louie," the friend said, " I know that you said you were going to buy these robes and make them into wiping rags, and I know you've had a lot of fun displaying them. But, you know, I was a member of the Klan. Don't you think you've had enough fun with those robes now?"

Miller responded to his friend's question with a question of his own: "Let me ask you this; are you asking me, or are you telling me?" His friend gently replied, "I'm asking you." Louis said, "Well, OK, but if you were "telling" me, those damn things would stay on display for years! But we'll take them in and I'll do what I said I'd do with them."

One day, shortly after he agreed to stop displaying the robes, Louis received a call from a widow woman who was a friend of his and who had heard about the robes. "Louie," she asked, " what are you going to do with the embroidered emblems?" "Well, I guess I'll have to take those off before we make them into wiping rags." The robes were made out of first class white cotton, and they would make a premium grade of wiping rag.

The widow woman then explained her proposition. "If you send those uniforms out to my house, I'll take the emblems off them, and all you'll have to do is wash them and tear them up into wiping rags. I won't charge you anything, but I want the emblems." Miller quickly

agreed to the deal and had an employee take the robes out to her house.

One day, long after Louis got the robes back without the emblems, and long after all the Klan robes had been torn into wiping rags, Louis got a call from his friend, the widow woman. "Come by the house sometime and I'll show you what I did with the emblems."

Sometime later Miller was standing in the ladies house, in awe of her creation. Transforming symbols of hate into a thing of beauty, she had sewn a gorgeous patchwork quilt out of the emblems. The biggest emblem was in the middle, surrounded by the next biggest emblems, and those surrounded by the next biggest in swirling, colorful profusion to the very edges of the quilt.

Louis stared at the women's extraordinary creation and said, half to himself, "you know, I never thought to do that."

\* \* \*

The daughter of the widow woman now has that quilt, and she still lives in Huntsville. Louis Miller, the young man who emigrated from Russia in search of freedom, died in 1966. The Tennessee Poultry and Hide Company is now known as L. Miller & Son, Inc., and is operated by Louis' son, Buddy, and Buddy's son, Sol.



***Reference:***

Klan Rags: A True Story of Jewish Defiance in 1920s Alabama by Lawrence D. Weiss, published September 14, 2013, Kennyhill Publishing Company



## **Joseph Wheeler, Soldier, Congressman, Servant to His Country**

*By Marjorie Ann Reeves*

Joseph Wheeler was not only a general in three wars, he was a successful businessman, author, congressman, inventor, and so much more. Joseph was a Georgia boy, born in Augusta, Georgia, on September 10, 1836, the youngest of four children. His father was a successful businessman until the Country's financial crisis and the loss of his wife hit him. Senior Wheeler took his children to relatives in Connecticut where Joseph stayed through his primary education. Even though he spent his youth with relatives in Connecticut, he still considered himself a Georgian. After he finished school in Connecticut, Joseph went to live with his older sister in New York City. His sister was married to a successful businessman who encouraged Joseph to enter the business world. Joseph preferred the military and found a Senator Wheeler to write a letter to get him into West Point.

Barely making the height requirement to get into West Point, standing only five feet and five inches tall and weighed 120 pounds, his size bought him the nickname "Little Joe." He graduated from West Point placing 19<sup>th</sup> out of 22 cadets. Commissioned Second Lieutenant in the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment of Dragoons, he attended the Army Cavalry School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. He said he chose the cavalry because



Episcopal  
Academy  
Cheshire, CT,  
school picture  
1855

the horse made him look taller. John Dyer wrote in his book "Fightin Joe" that Wheeler "graduated near the foot of his class and yet was the only one to gain national prominence. Making his poorest grades in cavalry tactics, he became a renowned cavalry leader."

After graduation in 1860, he was sent to the Regiment of Mounted Rifles stationed in New Mexico Territory where he picked up another nickname. Attacks by hostile Native Americans were ongoing in the territory. Wheeler was assigned escort duty for a wagon train heading to Fort Craig from Hannibal, Missouri. He was with an ambulance carrying a mother and new born baby when the wagon came under attack by Apaches, Wheeler and the wagon driver shot their muskets and then Wheeler charged into the band blazing away with his Colt pistol until the Apaches fled. From then on, he was called "Fighting Joe."

When Georgia seceded from the Union on January 19, 1861, Joe followed his chosen state and resigned from the U.S. Army. He believed in State Rights and the war could have been avoided by a respectful adherence to the Constitution. Joe's brother, William who was two years older than Joe, wrote to Georgia's governor for Joe to be appointed in a cavalry officer's service. Fighting Joe was given a lieutenant slot in the Georgia militia and then in the Confederate Army. Joe's brother, William Wheeler, joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment GA Infantry and died in Virginia in 1861. Joe lost his only brother in the War Between the States.



Gen Wheeler

Lieutenant Wheeler started with constructing coastal defenses at Pensacola Bay. He was soon noticed by General Bragg while helping build forts, batteries, and training recruits. When others couldn't get along with General Bragg, Wheeler's unassuming manner along with his professional conduct won Bragg's trust. When Bragg became commander of the Army of Tennessee, Wheeler rode with him. Bragg promoted him to Colonel and gave him his first command of the 19<sup>th</sup> Alabama Infantry Regiment. They showed their bravery in the Battle of Shiloh while losing one-third of the men. General James Chalmers praised Joe's bravery in his report. "Seen Joe fighting on foot right in the middle of his men. Joe also carried the flag at one point."

When the tide turned against the Confederates on the second day of the battle, Wheeler was given command of the rear guard covering the army's retreat. His tactics covering the retreat was hit and run, hit and run, which he learned from the western Indians. His command expended to include the 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> Alabama and the 4<sup>th</sup> Mississippi when he transferred to General Hardee in the Army of Mississippi commanding the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Brigade for several months. He proved himself a cavalry leader in raids in Tennessee and Kentucky. He became known for his extremely effective cavalry functions in covering the front and flanks of retreating army, intelligence gathering, and delaying enemy advances. He was appointed Brigade General of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps of the Army of Tennessee. Wheeler's troops covered a rearguard action for the Battles of Perryville, Stones River, Chickamauga, and many others. With his command of 5,000 cavalymen, they ran raids against Union supply lines, destroying railroad bridges, and hundreds of supply wagons while keeping actions

against Union Forces. He was continuously in the field riding twenty-five miles a day.



General  
Forrest

Within a year, Joe had earned his second star as Major General; in May 1863. While in the field, he published a manual, *Cavalry Tactics*, which proved valuable for systemizing cavalries operations. But he was unfortunate to run into General Forrest's temper during an attack on a Federal base at Dover, Tennessee an attack that Forrest was against and lost a lot of his men.

*"Tell Bragg that I will be in my coffin before I will fight again under your*

*command."* General Bragg fixed the feud in the Tullahoma Campaign by separating them. He placed Wheeler on the right flank and Forrest screened the left flank. General Scales wrote, *"General Forrest resented being displaced by a man half his age who repeatedly demonstrated a lack of discipline and understanding of the larger picture."*

During the raids on the Union, Wheeler and his men inflicted 2,000 enemy casualties, destroyed 1,000 supply wagons, hundreds of draft animals, burned five bridges, and tore up hundreds of miles of railroad track causing an estimated damage of over \$1 million. In the end, Wheeler lost too many men to continue and cut short his plans for more cavalry raids. He also captured the Union ships: *Charter*, *Trio*, *Parthenia*, *Hastings*, and destroyed the *Slidell*.

Wheeler was in command of the only effective Confederate formation to oppose Sherman as he marched through Georgia and continued through South Carolina. By this time, discipline was too lax to keep his men in line and the civilians of Georgia

complained about Wheeler's men as much as they did Sherman's. Georgia's Governor Brown complained that Wheeler's men were no more than a band of horse thieves. Wheeler's defense was that *"the last five months my command has been without wagons or cooking utensils. With orders to subsist on the country, its food has been limited to bread baked upon boards and stones and meat broiled upon sticks."* The men had not received any pay for the past year and had no uniforms. They marched sixteen miles a day to fight Sherman's army.

Wheeler's soldiers defeated Union Brigade General Kilpatrick at the Battle of Aiken in South Carolina. The success of the Confederates prevented the destruction of Aiken, Augusta, and Graniteville Mill. As a cavalry officer at 26, Wheeler and his men received the thanks of the Confederate Congress for their service and from South Carolina for defending Aiken.

Fighting Joe Wheeler commanded in 127 battles and 500 skirmishes. He had 16 horses shot out from under him, 36 staff officers shot at his side with 8 killed. Fighting Joe became Chief of Cavalry of the Army of Tennessee by the age of 26. After General Stuart's death in May of 1864, Fighting Joe became the highest-ranking cavalry officer in the Confederate Army. He covered more states than any other commander.

He was described as a serious, mild-mannered man, who when pushed, would fight with amazing fury. General Wheeler's rise seems due, not as much to brilliance, as to his ability to take an order and then stay on the job day and night until it was executed. He seemed to have trouble establishing rapport with his troops due to the fact he spoke a cool, military

language to men who needed fiery rhetoric and vigorous encouragement.

General Hardee wrote of Wheeler to President Davis, *"I have not met anyone in this war more devoted to the cause, or anyone more zealous, conscientious, or faithful in the discharge of his duties."*

President Davis said, *"He displays a dash and a consummate skill which justly entitles him to a prominent place on the roll of the world's greatest cavalry leaders."*

General Lee stated after the war: *"The two ablest cavalry officers which were developed by the war were General J.E.B. Stuart of Virginia and General Joseph Wheeler of the Army of Tennessee."*

*"No officer since the commencement of the war has been more exposed to the missiles of death",* said one of Wheeler's officers.

General Wheeler was captured close to Atlanta while he was on his way to cover President Davis' escape through Georgia from Richmond. Davis' party was captured a few days later. All were put on the same boat to Fort Monroe. Clement Clay and Alexander Stephens only had coats and shawls to cover themselves on the boat. General Wheeler sent his blanket to them and he slept on the open deck of the boat. During the day he walked baby Winnie Davis around the boat while her mother, Varina Davis, rested. Virginia Clay wrote, *"An episode of that trip in connection with General Wheeler fixed itself indelibly in my mind. I was in conversation with this hero on one occasion, during which he leaned against the side of the boat in a half-recumbent position. Presently a young officer, rude in the display of 'his brief authority,' approached us, and rapping General Wheeler sharply with his sword, said, 'It is against the rule to lean on*

*the guard-rail!"* To my amazement, our hero, who had fought so nobly against his peers and whose name alone had been a menace to his foes, merely touched his hat and said quietly, *"I did not know the rule, sir, or I would not have infringed it."* I was thrilled with admiration. *"General!"* I exclaimed, *"You have taught me a lesson in self-control and courtesy I can never forget!"*

Wheeler was at Fort Monroe for a month then transferred to Fort Delaware for a month serving it in solitary confinement until his release. No charges were ever brought against Wheeler and when he was released, he was very malnourished. He had written to his father that the food was worse than bad. He walked his way home making it back to his father's home in Augusta, Georgia, where he found his father and one sister destitute.

While  
recovering,  
Wheeler was  
summoned to  
Nashville to  
testify at  
Captain  
Champ  
Ferguson's  
trial. Ferguson  
was under



**Lucy, Annie, Thomas, Julia, Ella, Carrie,  
General Wheeler and Daniela, and Joseph Jr.**

General  
Wheeler's  
command

while chasing General Sherman through Georgia. Wheeler testified that Ferguson was indeed a Confederate officer. It didn't matter, the Union hung

Ferguson anyway. While in a Nashville hotel, Wheeler was attacked by former Union Colonel Blackburn and Captain Morton Quinn of the 4<sup>th</sup> TN Mounted Infantry. They claimed Wheeler had threatened to hang every member of the 4<sup>th</sup> TN Mounted Infantry. Wheeler escaped with severe lacerations about his face and head. The Federals looked into the claim and found no foundation for it. The former Union officers were not charged for beating a malnourished ex-Confederate.

Wheeler's next move was to New Orleans. His New York brother-in-law bought a hardware and carriage business in New Orleans and gave the unemployed ex-Confederate a job as manager. He was able to go back to Alabama and convince Daniella Jones Sherrod to marry him. During the war, Joseph Wheeler's command landed on Daniella Jones Sherrod's father's plantation camping for two weeks after the Chickamauga campaign in 1863. Daniella was a widow by the age of 20 and a staunch supporter of the Confederacy. He found his future wife during the war but since Fighting Joe was so busy chasing yankees, they didn't get married until 1866. She said she was attracted to Joe's sad eyes. They produced seven children: Thomas, Lucy, Annie, Julia, Ella, Joseph Jr., and Carrie Wheeler. One daughter dying in her childhood and the youngest son drowned after serving with his father in the Spanish-American War. There were only two daughters that married making no lineage with the Wheeler name.

After they were married, Joe took Daniella to New Orleans where they stayed for three years where Wheeler was a successful businessman and able to buy a partnership in the company but Daniella's father wanted her back near him. Her father bought the plantation next to him, Pond Spring, and



encouraged them to come home and run the plantation. He paid \$1 an acre for 17,600 acres of the Sherrod land. Joe and Daniella came back and took over running the acreage. He rented out land to share-choppers and built buildings on the property to support the people who worked on the Wheeler estate such as a company store and a blacksmith shop. Things were going well until Daniella's older brother's need to control took over.

Tom Jones was working as the manager for Pond Spring instead of working on his father's plantation. Dandridge Gailey was working as the blacksmith on Wheeler's property and renting a house on Wheeler's land. Gailey thought he was friends with the Wheelers and all was good. One day Gailey checked the accounting book in the company store and saw that he was charged more than he thought he owed. Instead of talking to Joseph Wheeler or anyone to clear it up, he went home and complained about Wheeler to his family, relatives, and friends. Tom Jones heard the criticism and reported to Wheeler telling him he needs to fire Gailey.

Without talking to Gailey to see what the problem was, Wheeler fired him. It made Gailey even more furious and he increased grumbling about how Wheeler is misusing him and all the wrongs Wheeler has done to him. The next day Gailey came to pick up his tools and finds Jones had already hired a new blacksmith and the tool shed had a new lock on it. That was the last straw. Gailey went home to get his old rusty pistol. Jones is there waiting for him when Gailey returns. A pistol fight ensues and Gailey is killed and his oldest son wounded. Wheeler and Jones are both arrested for murder. Wheeler is able to show that he had nothing to do with the murder and the

charge against Wheeler was dropped. Wheeler had his law license in Louisiana and passed the bar in Alabama to be able to defend his brother-in-law. Jones' charge was reduced to self-defense leaving the Gailey family with no justice.

After reconstruction, Wheeler ran for U.S. Congress as the Democratic Representative of Alabama's Eight District and served for twenty years. Because of the murder, Courtland, Red Bank, and Hillsboro would not vote for Wheeler for years. Still, he worked to unite the North and South once again and pushed for economic policies to help



William H. Council

rebuild the South. He had an ongoing friendship and correspondence with William H. Council, Huntsville's leading Black Educator. Wheeler pushed to *"have a small donation of Alabama land to that state for the use of this college would double its capacity for the good."* With Congressman Wheeler's help, Agricultural and Mechanical (A&M) College for negroes at Normal near Huntsville, Alabama, was given a Federal Land-Grant Fund provided by the act of Congress in 1890.

Wheeler served as Chairman of Committee on Expenditures in the Department of the Treasury, and Committee on Territories, Ways and Means Committee and others. The Scottsboro Citizen Newspaper on July 14, 1894, wrote, *"He stands high with the members of Congress and is regarded as one of the most valuable members of the House. He seems to be general favorite with all the members of the cabinet, the Army and Navy officers, and no man in congress seems to have more*

*friends or is more popular than the distinguished member from the 8<sup>th</sup> District of Alabama.”* The St. Louis Globe wrote, *“General Joe Wheeler is the most popular hero in Washington. The ladies keep his desk covered with flowers, the bicyclists turn out for him on the highway, and he is one of the few men in public life at the capital who is always sure of a seat in the trolley cars.”* He produced more bills than the average member of Congress. He put bills through for soldiers to receive pensions for the Mexican war, the Indian wars, for Union and Confederate soldiers to receive pensions, a bill to repeal taxes and penalties on tobacco, advocated measures for benefit of farmers and laborers, and opposed protective tariffs.

It was written of Wheeler that *“people appreciate the fact that no congressman has ever kept so entirely in touch with the people, so as to be as he really is, the reflection of the people he represents, always keeping informed as to their wishes and interests, and drawing his inspirations of right and duty from the people themselves, the only pure fountain of truth and wisdom.”* *“He stands high with the members of Congress and is regarded as one of the most valuable members of the House.”* Huntsville Mercury newspaper wrote, *“His career in Washington was as brilliant as his career on the battle fields.”* *“In the north and South alike General Wheeler has for years been regarded as a leader of the times.”*

At the age of 62, he volunteered and served in the Spanish-American War with three of his children serving in the war with their father. He commanded Colonel Teddy Roosevelt and Lieutenant John Pershing. *“At about 9 am, Pershing was riding back and forth urging his men forward across the river. His troops were reluctant to ford the river as the shells and*

*bullets fell upon their positions. Pershing later recalled that remaining there under this deadly fire of exploding shrapnel and deadly volleys made the minutes seem like hours. During this confusion, he saw Wheeler calmly sitting on his horse in the middle of the river surveying the situation. Pershing rode up to Wheeler and saluted. An instant later, a shell landed nearby, drenching Pershing and Wheeler. Wheeler returned Pershing salute, raised an eyebrow, and commented on the lively shelling that was falling about their position."* President Teddy Roosevelt had warm praises for General Wheeler's service in Cuba and gave Wheeler credit for much of the success in that campaign.

An article in the *Augusta Chronicle* published February 27, 1898, stated, "General Joe Wheeler's standing offer of his military services to the War Department is not buncombe. He is a born soldier, a distinguished veteran and despite advanced years is as



U.S. Army uniform worn during the Spanish-American War.

*active as a cat. He is the best horseman in Washington."* One reporter wrote of Wheeler in 1898, "That the most terrible thing about him was his utter lack of any sense of humor." He never laughed.

The *Chronicle* ran an article on August 15, 1898, stating, "General Wheeler, who commanded our corps, has been as chipper as lively as a cricket from the beginning and although he had a touch of fever, he has been out every day. Being short of stature, he did climb a tree during

*the battles...funniest thing that ever occurred in military history - a commanding officer directing his troops in battle from a tree top - but there is nothing the matter*

*with Old Joe – from an officer who was there.” During a battle, Fighting Joe was sick with malaria but going to the front in an ambulance until he saw some disabled men. He put them in his wagon and continued on to the front on his horse. His men were encouraged by their leader’s act. General J. Ford Kent wrote, “Though ill and suffering, General Wheeler was so perfectly at home under fire that he inspired all of us with assurance.” He served as senior member of the commission which negotiated the surrender of Santiago and the Spanish Army in Cuba.*

After the Spanish-American war, he was sent to New York to command Camp Wikoff. The Commercial Advertiser of New York wrote on October 8, 1898,

### **ONE OF THE BRAVEST MEN IN THE ARMY, GEN. WHEELER.**

*An orderly of the Cavalry leader tells some stories of his coolness under fire-In the skirmish line at San Juan-A Target for sharpshooters, but not bothered. A little old man, very thin, with a gray beard and bushy eyebrows, wearing the field uniform of a United States army officer, came riding down to the Montauk Railway Station from Camp Wikoff the other day. Had it not been for his uniform and the fact that his mount was rather better than the ordinary cavalry horse, he might have been taken for a regimental chaplain or Commissary officer. But as he rode slowly along with a dejected air, even the most ignorant civilian could have guessed from the manner in which he was saluted and stared after that he was someone out of the ordinary. On his shoulder straps were the two stars, denoting the rank of major general.*

Who is that old man? Asked a civilian to a soldier who had just saluted and was standing at attention till the officer had passed him.

*Great Scott, man! Don't you know who that is? Was the reply. That's Gen. Wheeler! Fightin' Joe, you know!*

*Well, I wouldn't have thought it to look at him, said the civilian.*

*A sergeant of the First Regular Cavalry, when talking of the general the other day called him, 'a little chunk of animated grit. I've seen many brave men in my time, he said, but never did I see a man who was so utterly devoid of fear as the little general.*

The Philippine-American War started and he took command of the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade in Arthur MacArthur's 2<sup>nd</sup> Division. General McArthur ordered General Wheeler to take his men to a certain point telling him how to travel. General Wheeler disagreed with the path and suggested a different way which General McArthur stated the course Wheeler planned would delay the men two weeks. Fighting Joe dismounted, placed a sick soldier on his horse, took a gun from another sick soldier and shouted, "Come on boys!" going his path overtaking the cavalry and brought his men ready to fight.

Appointed commander of Camp Wheeler in Huntsville after he came back from the war, he stayed at a residence on Monte Sano. During his stay the city of Huntsville presented a \$700 black Kentucky saddle horse to him on the Courthouse square. The *Democrat* ran an article on December 1, 1898: "*Huntsville's streets were crowded with enthusiastic citizens from all areas of the Eight Congressional District of Alabama.,*" Captain Milton Humes spoke for the citizens of Huntsville in presenting the horse and saddle to General Wheeler.

After the Philippine-American War, he retired as a Brigadier General in the U.S. Army in 1900. For the first time, he took the opportunity to visit Europe and Mexico. During all his war experiences, he authored several books and wrote throughout his life. He was a prolific writer. He invented a rifle rest and bayonet in 1902 which he received a patent but it was never produced.

In 1902, General Longstreet visited West Point and saw General Joe Wheeler dressed in his Federal Spanish-American War uniform. Longstreet said, "*Joe, I hope the Almighty God takes me before he does you, for I want to be within the gates of hell to hear Jubal Early cuss you in that blue uniform.*" Longstreet died two years before Wheeler.

General Joseph Wheeler died in January 1906 while visiting his sister in New York. He had pleurisy with complication of pneumonia. President Teddy Roosevelt arranged for Wheeler to be buried at Arlington. His bugler, who played for him in the War Between the States, played taps at his funeral. He had the Federal and Confederate flags draped over his coffin and was buried in Arlington Cemetery in January 1906.



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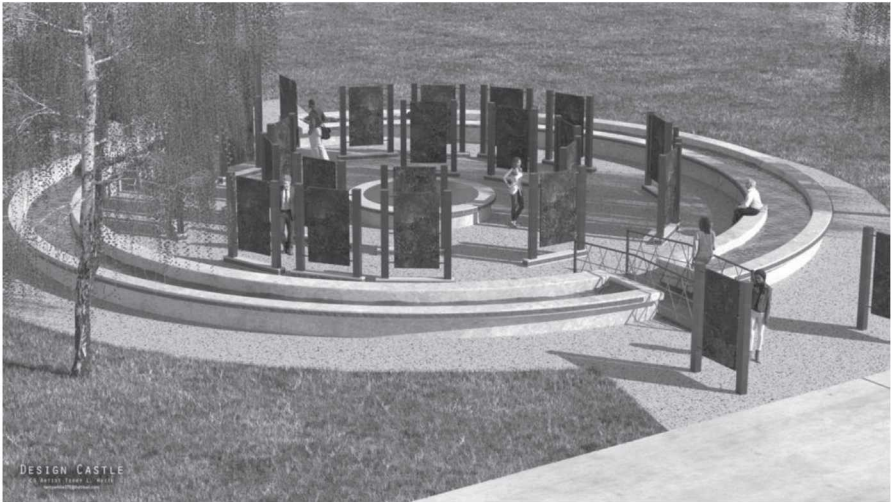
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## Echos From the Past

*Contributed by the Circle of Remembrance  
Organization*



*The Circle of Remembrance is a memorial dedicated to enslaved people of Madison County and will become a significant contribution to the Huntsville landscape upon completion of the Mill Creek Choice Neighborhood Project.*

In this issue of the Huntsville Historical Review representatives of the Circle of Remembrance organization recall notable African Americans that contributed unselfishly to the improvement of our community. *(Editor)*

### **Dr. Burgess Scruggs:**

Although born to enslaved parents in 1860, Burgess attended school in the basement of Lakeside Methodist Episcopal Church and later graduated from William H. Councill High School in Huntsville. He then continued his education at Central Tennessee medical College –

now Meharry College- where he received the Doctor of Medicine in 1879.

In addition to maintaining an outstanding medical practice, Dr. Scruggs was also very involved in the community. He served four terms as alderman between 1883-1899; was a member of the United States Board of Examiners and Board of Pensions, became president of the Black Fair Association, Trustee of the Rust Normal Institute and fundraiser for Huntsville's first African American public school.

Dr. Burgess Scruggs a former slave who became an outstanding professional and invaluable citizen earned the respect of both blacks and whites in the Huntsville community.

### **Dr. Harold Fanning Drake:**

Dr. Drake earned his medical degree at Meharry medical College and began his private practice in Huntsville, Alabama in 1948. He later joined the staff of Huntsville Hospital – as the first African American physician- and served as school physician for Oakwood College and Alabama A&M University. Dr. Drake made a tremendous impact in Huntsville and Madison County, assisting elderly patients at several nursing homes, establishing a Well-Baby Clinic in Triana, and serving as Medical Advisor for Family Planning, Head Start, and the Comprehensive Childcare Program of the Community Action Agency.

Dr. Drake was a physician known for his genuine love of people.

### **Dr. John Logan Cashin, Jr.;**

Dr. Cashin was born in 1928 to Grace Cashin, a school principal and Dr. John Logan Cashin, Sr. also a dentist; Cashin attended Alabama A&M High School,

spent two years at Fisk University and earned a DDS degree from Meharry Medical School in 1952.

Immediately after graduation, Cashin was drafted into the U. S. Army and became a first Lieutenant and Chief of Dental Services for soldiers.

Upon his return to civilian life, Cashin joined his father's dental practice and became active in the Civil Rights Movement of the 60's. He founded the National Democratic Party of Alabama to counter the efforts of the Alabama Democratic Party which was preventing African Americans from running for office and he ran for Mayor of Huntsville. In 1970 he ran for governor against George Wallace and received more than 16% of the votes. John Cashin died from kidney failure in 2011 but will forever be remembered as a driving force in political and economic gains for African Americans in Alabama.

### **Nurse Johnnie Loujean Dent;**

Nurse Johnnie Loujean Dent was born in 1907. After graduating from high school at 16, Loujean attended Tuskegee's John A. Andrew Memorial Training School for Nurses and earned her nursing degree in 1930.

Nurse Dent attended Case Western Reserve and worked briefly in Washington, DC before returning to Alabama as Public Health Care Nurse with the Alabama State Department of Health. She came to Huntsville in 1943 to help with an outbreak of Tuberculosis, and then was hired by the Madison County Health Department in 1946. Nurse Dent worked with Dr. Harold Fanning Drake to organize the Triana, Alabama Clinic to provide health care for expectant "negro" mothers and children.

Known for her commitment, care and charisma, Nurse Dent had a reputation for getting things done!

She trained more than 60 lay midwives and in 1973 was the first African-American nurse in Madison County and the State of Alabama to receive the Alabama State Nurse Association Nurse of the Year Award. In 1976 she received an Outstanding Service to Humanity award; in 1986 the Frederick S. Wolf Award for Professionalism in the Advancement of Public Health in Alabama, and in 1990 was awarded for Sixty Years of Community Service by the Community Action Agency in Huntsville. Nurse Dent passed away in 2008 leaving a legacy of excellence in the field of nursing.



# **Huntsville Madison County Historical Society 2022-2023 Officers**

**President:** Heather Adkins

**Vice President:** Arley McCormick

**2nd Vice President:** Vacant

**Treasurer:** Wayne Smith

**Recording Secretary:** Sharon Lang

**Corresponding Secretary:** Vacant

**Archivist:** Deane Dayton

**HOPE Coordinators:** Vacant

**Historical Review Editor:** Arley McCormick

**Head of Marker Committee:** Alex Luttrell

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## **The Huntsville Historical Review; Editorial Policy**

*The Huntsville Historical Review*, a biyearly journal sponsored by the Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society, is the primary voice for local historians to document Madison County history. This journal reflects the richness and diversity of Madison County and North Alabama and this editor will

endeavor to maintain the policy established by his predecessor with regard to the primary focus of the Review as well as material included in it. A casual examination of every community in the world reveals the character of its citizens and, if you look closely, voices from the past express their expectations for the future. Today is based upon our collective experience and the socialization of our ancestor's existence.

Although this publication focuses on local history, we cannot forget that what happens here has roots often connected by state, regional, national, and international events. In an effort to build on past traditions and continue the quality of our *Review*, an editorial policy will be implemented to guide contributors who wish to submit manuscripts, book reviews, or notes of historical significance to our community. The Historical Society wants you to submit articles for publication. We will assist you toward that goal.

Presentations to family and acquaintances become oral history. Publishing your story in the Review insures you and your story are immortal. You can contribute to our history through the *Huntsville Historical Review*.

### **Manuscript Preparation and Submission**

Please submit an electronic copy of your article or book review to [arleymccormick@comcast.net](mailto:arleymccormick@comcast.net) or send to:

Huntsville-Madison County  
Historical Society  
Box 666  
Huntsville, Alabama 35804

## **Review Content and Style**

- There is no limit on word count. The manuscript can be divided into parts published in separate volumes of the Review.
- In matters of form and style, a good guide is *The Chicago Manual of Style*.
- If you choose to include footnotes, the preferred citation method for full articles would be best.
- Manuscripts should be in Times New Roman 12-point font. Microsoft Word (not PDF)
- This is a guide and not intended to discourage the creative process nor constrain authors from contributing to the Review.

## **Book Reviews**

Please limit your book review to topics relevant to local, state, or southern history. A good review should clearly and concisely describe the nature, scope, and thesis of a book that would be relevant to Madison County history. Emphasis on local and regional history will be given in order to help readers expand and contextualize their knowledge. Your review should be helpful to the general reader interested in Madison County or North Alabama and these are good rules to follow when writing a book review:

- Your first obligation for a book review is to explain the subject of the book and the author's central thesis or main points.
- Your second obligation is to evaluate how successfully the author has made his/her point. Is the author's argument reasonable, logical, and consistent?

- Your third obligation is to set the book into a broader context. If you can, place the book into a wider context by looking at broader issues.
- Your fourth obligation is to render a judgment on the value of the book as a contribution to historical scholarship.

### **News and Notes Submissions**

Please limited to 250 words and include contact information. If you are making an inquiry or asking a question. The editor has the right to change or delete wording or information.

### **Little Reminders . . . Good Writing Rules**

- Write in the active voice and past tense.
- Cast your sentences in the positive.
- Topic sentences should be clear and straightforward statements of what the paragraph is about. Every sentence in a paragraph should work to explain the topic sentence.
- Write in the third person.

### **An Invitation to Membership**

Membership in the Society will give you an opportunity to express your interest and participate in preserving the history of Huntsville and Madison County. Enjoy the opportunity to be with other individuals who share your interest in our history by attending the Society's four meetings a year, each one featuring a speaker of local or regional note. A membership includes subscription to *The Huntsville Historical Review*.



If you know someone who may be interested in becoming a member, please share this application.

**Huntsville Historical Society Reviews on line:** HHC  
([huntsvillehistorycollection.org](http://huntsvillehistorycollection.org))

**Huntsville-Madison County  
Historical Society**

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