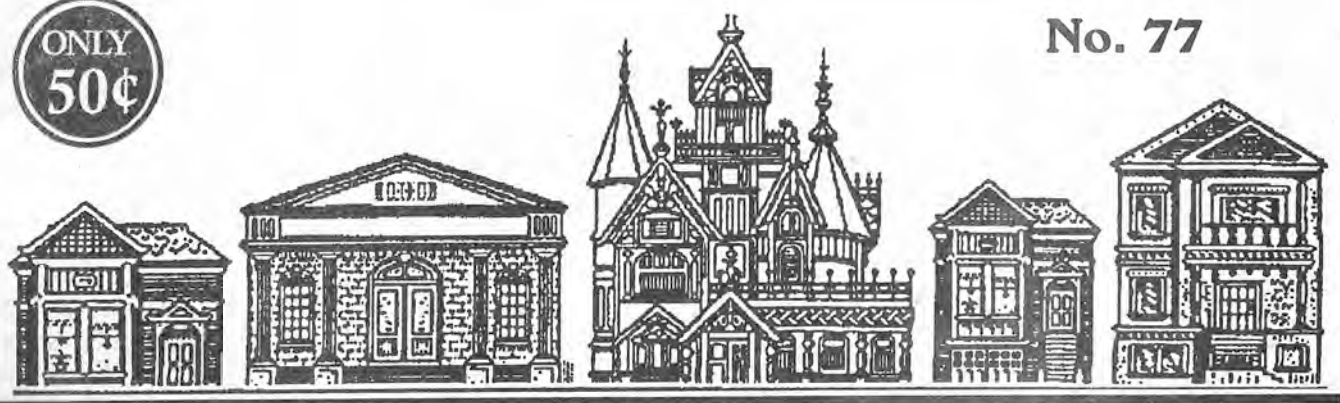


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No. 77



Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY



The Betty Wilson Story

Was she a cold blooded
murderess who hired a
hit man to kill her husband or
was she a victim of rhetoric and
reputation?

Also in this issue: The Confession of James White

MY STORY

by Betty Wilson

When I was first asked to write my story, I hesitated for a long time. Why, I asked myself, should I expose myself to more hurt and humiliation. I don't want anyone to pity me or feel sorry for me. I'm not a strong person but I can take care of myself.

But my friends have had to suffer in silence too long while the media distorted everything about me and my case. Even at my trial I was advised to remain silent for fear anything I said might be misconstrued. Maybe it's time to talk now.

So where do I start?

I was born on July 14, 1945 in East Gadsden, Alabama. My family was what I have always called, "typical lower middle class," with my father working as a policeman and my mother in a factory. I had three sisters, one of whom is my twin. Contrary to the books that have tried to portray my family as being somewhat dysfunctional, we should have been, but mother made up so completely for Daddy's absences and drunks that we never felt any lack of love or attention.

Shortly after graduating I married my high school sweetheart. Looking back over the years I realize now we were just kids. My husband was a good man but we both knew we had gotten married too young.

After we separated, in 1969, I rented an apartment at the Imperial Gardens. At that time it was a fashionable singles complex where everyone knew everyone, and partied almost every night.

Oh, I've heard the stories and read the books about me that talked about the wild partying, the drugs and the heavy drinking that went on there. Some of it was true, and I make no apologies for it. It was also the "liberated seventies" and we were all young and single, without a care in the world.

I still had to pay the bills though and I soon found a job at J.C. Penney's. After paying rent and making car payments there wasn't much left to live on, so I took a part time job at the Cosmopoli-

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THE MURDER

by Bob Carey

At almost exactly 9:30 on the evening of May 22, 1992, Huntsville police were notified by the 911 dispatcher of a possibly burglary in progress, with an injured victim at the scene. The location was Boulder Circle, an affluent neighborhood nestled among the mountains overlooking Huntsville.

Within minutes of arriving on the scene, police discovered the body of a male, identified as Dr. Jack Wilson, lying in the upstairs hallway. He had been brutally murdered, apparently with a

baseball bat that was found lying nearby. Homicide detectives began searching every square inch of the house and grounds and a police dog was brought in to sniff out possible evidence the police

might overlook. As they began the tedious task of trying to determine what had happened, none of them realized they were about to become involved in the most notorious murder case in Huntsville's history.

By talking to neighbors and reconstructing the events, the police determined that Dr. Wilson had left his office around 4:00 p.m. He changed clothes and went outside to his front yard where neighbors reported seeing him using a baseball bat to drive a campaign sign in the ground. This was at approximately 4:30 p.m. Apparently, he then took a stepladder from the garage and carried it to the upstairs hallway where he removed a smoke detector from the ceiling. It was later found lying on the bed, disassembled.

At this point, police theorized, Dr. Wilson was surprised by someone who was already in the house. The unknown assailant grabbed the baseball bat and began beating the doctor. After the doctor collapsed to the floor, the assailant stabbed him twice with a knife.

Though the crime had originally been reported as a possible burglary, it had none of the typical signs. There were no opened drawers, ransacked

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tan health club, working evenings. I really enjoyed that job and met many people who are friends of mine to this day.

A woman from the health club talked me into applying for a job at the Humana Hospital, and gave me a recommendation. I became a "unit secretary" (word clerk) and from the very first day I loved it. I could hardly wait to get to work every morning! As I became involved with the patients I realized this was what I wanted to do with my life. I know

it sounds silly; I had grown up wanting to be a scientist, an artist or even the owner of a dress shop. Being a nurse had never entered my mind, but never the less I decided to become one.

After I received my nursing degree I became interested in kidney dialysis and soon became proficient at it. The work was demanding and the hours long but in a way this was one of the most satisfying periods of my life. Often times at night I would go home and just crash on the

bed, too tired to even undress.

I met Jack while working at the hospital. It would have been hard not to have noticed him. He reminded me of a little boy with an impish smile on his face all the time. He was one of the kindest people I had ever met and regardless of how busy he was, he always had time to stop and talk. He was always teasing me about something or the other and calling me "brown eyes" in front of the patients.

We were both involved in re-

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relationships with other people and I really didn't think much about it until one day when a patient Jack had operated on went into kidney failure. I was on call and we worked late that night, barely exchanging words except to monitor the patient's condition. A few days later Jack called my supervisor and asked if I was engaged or involved. He even asked my age and "is she intelligent!"

Our first date was a basketball game, sharing a bag of popcorn. That was about all either of us could afford at the time.

Looking back, Jack and I never really dated. On our second date he suddenly announced that if we were going to spend the rest of our lives together, he may as well move in with me! That was fine with me. I was already madly in love with him and would have done anything he asked me to do. It was also an easy move; everything he owned could be put in a couple of cardboard boxes!

The subject of marriage never came up at the time. He was still a young doctor building his practice and my career was going great. To be honest about it, we were both so busy we were happy to just take each day as it happened.

About a year later I was offered a job as an executive with a company in Atlanta. The job offered a fantastic salary, with travel and all kinds of executive perks but I was in love with Jack and didn't want to leave him.

It was Jack who finally talked me into taking the job. We were both still young, he pointed out, and had the rest of our lives to be together. Jack had always pushed me to do as much as I could and now he

said if I didn't take the job I would always wonder if I had made a mistake. Those weren't the words I wanted to hear, but deep down in my heart I had to tell myself if it was meant to be, it would be.

The new job was exciting. I traveled a great deal, often in a company jet. I had a plush executive office that even had a fully stocked bar built in. The job was demanding, but satisfying at the same time. If there was a dark spot, it was my missing Jack.

Many people claim that absence makes the heart grow fonder, but in our case, it just became more expensive! Two hour telephone calls became nightly rituals, and almost every day brought a letter or card from Jack. Every weekend we could get away from work I flew to Huntsville or he flew to Atlanta. Sometimes we would both be so tired from working all week we would just curl up with a book and read to one another.

Our world came crashing down in 1978 when Jack told me he had to have an operation. He had long suffered from Crohn's disease and now it progressed to the point where an operation was necessary. This meant removing part of his lower intestine, forcing him to wear a plastic bag for the rest of his life.

There was never really any doubt as to what I would do. I quit my job, gave up my apartment and moved back to Huntsville to be with Jack. It was more than him just needing me. We needed each other. He used to tease me by saying that with all of our faults, if we could put both of us together we would have one normal person.

Shortly after an operation, Jack and I got married. The first time I signed my name, "Mrs. Jack Wilson," I thought my heart



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would burst with pride. I must have spent hours just practicing writing my new name!

My husband was a lovable eccentric with absolutely no need for material things. When I tried to explain to him the benefits of computerized billing, for instance, he asked, "Why? Isn't a pencil cheaper?" Finally, when he saw my frustration, he merely grinned and said, "Besides, that's what I married you for!"

At other times he was extravagant. One time he came home from the office, with a sheepish look on his face, and told me he had accidentally run into my car. "I think I tore it up pretty bad," he said. With that, he took my hand and led me outside. A brand new Mercedes convertible was sitting in the driveway! "Oh well," he laughed. "We can't have the neighbors thinking you're the maid!"

Like all marriages, ours had its problems, but strangely enough, none of them had to do with sex. Jack and I were both grown people who believed what we did in our bedroom was our own business, as long as both of us agreed. Yes, I had, "affairs," but I never cheated and neither did Jack.

We had other problems though, many of which were my fault. For years I had been a heavy drinker, and now that I was a "Doctor's wife" it got worse. The days seemed to revolve around Bloody Mary brunches, martini lunches and evening cocktails.

I never felt comfortable around many of the other wives and drinking seemed to help. The first time I attended a Medical Auxiliary meeting I was already half smashed and it was only 10:00 in the morning! And I wasn't the only one!

I had always been a "verbal" person but now with my drinking and social insecurity, I became even more vocal. Many times I found myself saying outrageous things solely for the shock value. Once, when a doctor's wife complemented me on my marriage to Jack, I responded by saying that Jack was the one who should be complemented! The look on her face was worth it!

My life reached a low point in 1986 when my doctor told me I was an alcoholic. Up until 1984 I had never thought about my drinking. It had never caused me any problems. Then I had an attack of pancreatitis and the doctor said it was from drinking. I stopped drinking for two months with no problem. Then one night we went to a dinner party where everybody was drinking wine and having a good time, except for me. There was an interesting person there I wanted to talk to but I didn't have the courage to start a conversation. I needed a drink and the table was covered with filled wine glasses so I took one.

For the next two years I drank more than ever without realizing what I was doing. When I was drunk I would say horrible and nasty things, often attacking the people who loved me the most. Fortunately, for me, I don't remember many of the things I said, but Jack did.

After I had been sober for about two years we talked about it once. Jack told me he used to think to himself, "Maybe she will start drinking earlier in the evening and pass out sooner."

Joining AA was one of the best things that ever happened to me. Not only did it sober me up, but it gave my life a new direction by making me realize I

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could help other people in the same situation. I became an active member of AA, often giving talks about alcoholism and encouraging others to seek help.

Ironically, that's what got me in trouble.

I had attended a school play that my sister Peggy's children were in and while there had admired a playhouse that one of the other teachers had hired a carpenter to build. I was impressed with the work and asked my sister about the carpenter possibly doing some work for me. I wanted some "old-fashioned" screen doors built for our kitchen door and the doors leading out to the pool but couldn't find anyone to do it at a reasonable cost, (or anyone who would even show up for a small job).

The carpenter, Mr. White, my sister explained, was a recovering alcoholic and needed the work because he was on disability. In my own way I probably thought it was perfect, he was AA and he needed the work and I could help!

I asked my sister to have him come to my house and give me an estimate. Mr. White was supposed to have come on a Tuesday morning but after waiting until almost 1:00 p.m., I finally gave up and went to an appointment I had. Just in case, however, I left a note on the door instructing him where I wanted the screen doors.

Though he never showed up or called, I didn't really give it much thought. I had dealt with enough contractors to know this was "par for course" for many of them.

The following Friday I was getting ready for an AA weekend retreat at Gunter'sville Lodge, in the state park, when Peggy called. She told me that Mr.

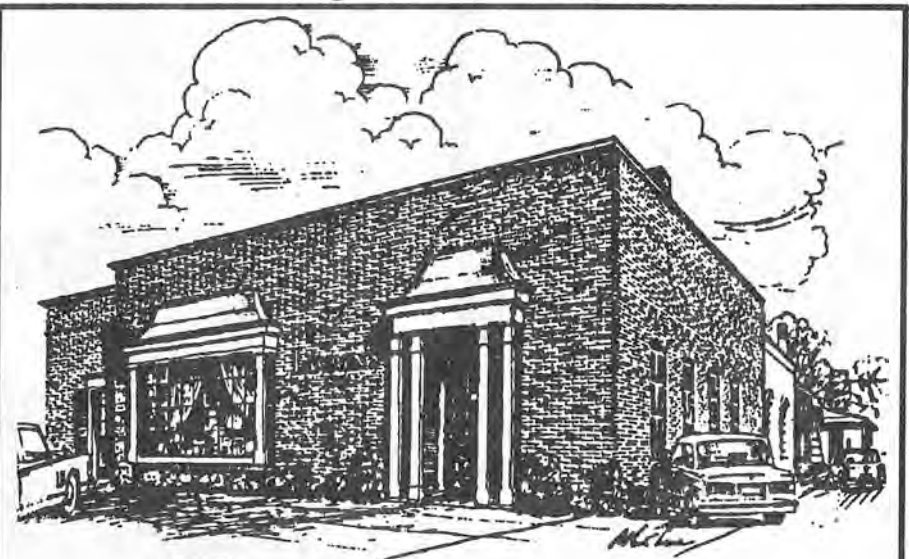
White had called her and was threatening suicide as a result of his drinking. Peggy has one of the kindest hearts in the world, and after having suffered with me through the years of my alcoholism, she knew I would be sympathetic also.

I told Peggy to have him come to the meeting and I would see that he received help. When Peggy told me she thought he was broke, I said I would leave some money in my car, under a book, for him to pay for lodging and food.

The next night, the front desk at the hotel had me paged and

told me that a Mr. White was at the gate. Apparently, the guards would not let him into the parking lot where my car was. Reluctantly, I told them to tell him to wait at the gate; I would have a guard bring him the money. When I got to my car I looked for an old envelope or something to put the money in, but when I couldn't find anything, I simply placed it inside a book and told the guard to give it to the man at the gate. I didn't give it much thought; I really thought I would have the book back in a few minutes.

When Mr. White didn't show



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up at the meeting, I knew it had all been a con job. Furious at letting myself be ripped off, I got his phone number from Peggy a few days later and called him. When he answered, I told him off, saying he was nothing but a thief and a low life con man.

The following week my niece (Peggy's daughter) was rushed to the hospital and I dropped everything to rush to her side. After we returned to Peggy's home, Mr. White called, informing her that he was ready to do the work on my house. When Peggy tried to tell him that I was no longer interested in using him, I grabbed the phone from her and told him in blistering and no uncertain terms exactly what I thought, as well as demanding my money back. He said he had already spent the money and began whining about what a hard time he was having. Disgusted, I finally just hung up, and marked it off to experience.

The following Friday, May 22, 1992, was a busy day for me. The pool man and the yard people were coming by and Jack was supposed to pick up the grandchildren after work. I had also invited a friend, who had company from California visiting him, to stop by sometime that day. His friend was an architect and was interested in seeing some of the landscaping designs in Huntsville and when he heard about my "rock pile backyard,"

expressed an interest in seeing it. I explained I would be busy most of the day but they were welcome to stop by anytime they wanted to, even if I wasn't home.

Jack and I were leaving for Santa Fe, New Mexico the next morning on vacation so most of the afternoon was spent shopping and running last minute errands. That evening I grabbed a quick hamburger at McDonalds with a friend and then went to an AA meeting.

Late that evening, after the meeting, I returned home and was halfway up the stairs when I saw Jack's body lying sprawled

in the hallway. Something inside of me told me it was not an accident.

It's easy to say what you would do in a time of crisis, but the harsh reality is that no one knows.

I remember dropping my packages, and falling down the stairs. I remember banging on a neighbor's door pleading for help. I remember all the police and the ambulance and a policeman telling me that Jack was dead.

The next day or so is almost a complete blur in my mind. I spent the night at the home of one of my sisters and it seemed as if

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there were people constantly coming and going. A doctor friend of Jack's spent a lot of time with me giving me tranquilizers and trying to calm me.

That Sunday I met with a detective who asked about my whereabouts on the day Jack was killed. I told him everything I could remember, even which stores I had visited at about what times and what I had purchased. He also wanted a list of everyone who had access to our house, or might have worked for us. At one point he asked if I ever had any affairs.

I told the truth and said yes, and when he asked for them, gave him the names. I held back one name, though.

Tuesday, the day of Jack's memorial service, was emotionally devastating. Up until then it had been like a bad dream but now I had to face the fact that Jack was really gone and I would never see him again. Going home after the funeral was the hardest part, to know that it was over and there was nothing I could do for Jack any more.

About 8:00 that evening a detective came to take me down to the station for some more questions. Ever since I had last talked to them I had felt guilty in holding back a name of someone I had had an affair with. I knew he couldn't possibly be a suspect and I knew it would cause him untold embarrassment.

Now I told him, and from the look on the detective's face, I wondered if I had not made an even bigger mistake.

"He works for the city, doesn't he?"

I said yes.

"Isn't he married?"

I said yes again.

Left unasked was the question he already knew the answer

to ... "He's black, isn't he?"

The questioning became harsh and accusatory. They accused me of hiring a man by the name of James Dennison White to murder Jack. At first I denied knowing him for I had referred to him as Mr. White or Mr. Carpenter. Finally when I realized who they were talking about, I tried to explain but they wouldn't listen. They said they had arrested James White and he was in the next room where he had already given a complete confes-

sion implicating Peggy and me. They said they also had Peggy and she was confessing everything. I knew they were lying because neither Peggy or I had done anything to confess to!

At one point they told me they had a man coming to give me a polygraph test but when I told them I was willing, they dropped the subject. Instead, they began hurling more accusations and questions at me. All I could do was say no, no, no, it's not true! I remember asking them if I

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needed a lawyer and they told me, "No, not yet!"

I had been taking heavy doses of Valium for several days and had not hardly slept since Jack's death. I was a complete emotional and physical wreck and barely remembered some of the questions. At one point, when they left me in the room alone, I actually fell asleep in the chair. I was awakened when a detective threw a phone book in my lap and told me to look up an attorney if I thought I needed one.

How do I really sit here now and describe that night. Only hours before I was at my husband's funeral and now I was being interrogated like some plot out of a cheap B grade movie. It was almost like nothing was real, like some horrible nightmare that was too terrifying to actually exist.

Sometime around midnight they carried Peggy and me back to my sister's home where I was staying and warned us to keep our mouths shut about what happened that night.

We both laid awake all night,

numb with the realization that we were being accused of something so horrible. We didn't talk much that night, the whole thing was so incomprehensible we didn't know what to say and we were scared to death. We just lay there waiting for daylight to come.

The next morning, my brother-in-law knocked on the bedroom door and told us that Jack's murderer had been arrested. Peggy and I both just stared numbly at him. Neither one of us were up to talking about what had happened the night before. In a way it was almost like if we didn't talk about it, maybe it wouldn't be real.

A friend of mine drove me around town that day and helped with the arrangements. After we did this we went to his place to eat something and rest. One of the first things we did was wash our clothes. Peggy had only brought what was on her back and most of my clothes were still at my home. Everything we had was dirty. While my clothes were washing I put

on a man's pajama top.

That was a mistake.

Suddenly, there was a loud banging on the door and when we answered it, we were placed under arrest. Handcuffs were put on our wrists and we were led outside where a mob of reporters and photographers had already gathered.

All the headlines that day were different but they all had the same meaning; "Rich bitch who had affairs arrested for murder." And then, as if to prove the point, everyone showed pictures of me wearing a man's pajama top, insinuating that I had been caught in the midst of another affair!

How many times can a person describe events as being horrifying without the word finally losing its meaning?

Peggy and I were locked in separate isolation cells where we spent the whole night crying. The other prisoners jeered at us, calling us lesbians and telling us to get used to it, that we're going to be here for a long time.

continued on page 34

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The Murder

continued from page 2

closets and overturned furniture usual in most burglary cases. The whole case was beginning to look more like an "inside job."

The widow, Mrs. Betty Wilson, was too distraught at the time to be questioned but later investigation revealed she had lunch with her husband that day around 12:00. After he returned to his medical office, she spent much of the day shopping in preparation of a trip they planned for the next morning. Later that evening, after attending an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting she returned home at about 9:30 where she discovered her husband's body. She went to a neighbor's home and they called 911.

By using credit card receipts and eyewitnesses the police were able to verify Mrs. Wilson's whereabouts for the whole day, except for one 30 minute period at around 2:30 p.m., and another 30 minute period between 5 and 5:30 p.m.

Other family members were checked out but they all appeared to have alibis.

The first break for the investigators came when the Shelby County Sheriff's office passed on a tip they had received the week before. A woman had called, concerned about a friend of hers, James White, who while drunk had talked about killing a doctor in Huntsville. The whole story was garbled, but what emerged was that White was supposed to be infatuated with a lady by the name of Peggy Lowe who had recruited him to murder her twin sister's husband in Huntsville.

The lady admitted that she doubted the story. "White liked to talk big when he was drinking and lately he had been drunk almost all the time." Never the less she decided to pass it on to the police.

After the Huntsville Police learned of the tip it took only minutes to establish that Peggy Lowe was Betty Wilson's twin sister. Investigators decided it

was time to pay Mr. White a visit.

James Dennison White was a 42 year old Vietnam veteran who had a history of mental disorders and antisocial behavior caused largely by drug and alcohol abuse. He had been in a number of mental institutions as well as serving time in jail. While serving time for selling drugs he escaped and was captured almost a year later in Arkansas, where he was involved in kidnapping a man and his wife. One of his last mental evaluations described him as suffering from

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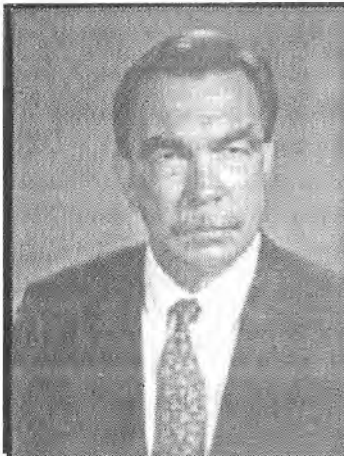
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delusions and unable to separate fact from fantasy.

At first, as White was being questioned by the detectives, he denied everything. Slowly, as the evening and night grew longer, he began to contradict himself, spinning a web of half truths, lies and fantasies. He denied knowing Peggy Lowe, then admitted it. He denied knowing Betty Wilson, then said he was going to do some work for her. Gradually a pattern emerged. As he would get caught in one contradiction, he would admit it but deny everything else. The detectives were used to this type of behavior though; almost every criminal they interrogated did the same thing. They understood from experience that it was going to be a long drawn out process in getting White to tell the truth.

Finally, just as the sun was peeking over the horizon, White

broke down. Though it would take another several months, and numerous different confessions, to get him to tell the whole story, he basically confessed to being hired by Peggy Lowe and Betty Wilson to kill Dr. Jack Wilson.

He claimed to have met Peggy Lowe at the elementary school where she worked and where he had done some carpentry work. After he did some work at her house, according to White, Mrs. Lowe became infatuated with him and spent hours talking to him on the

phone. Gradually she began to talk about her husband and hint that she would like to see him killed. A short time later, though, she dropped the subject of her husband and began talking about her sister who wanted to hire a "hit" man. White pretended to play along, saying he knew someone who would do it for \$20,000. Mrs. Lowe told him that was too expensive, her sister was almost broke. Finally they agreed on a price of \$5,000 of which Mrs. Lowe gave him half, in small bills, in a plastic bag.

continued on page 20

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Tips from Earlene

Make a list of all your favorite fat outfits for the days you feel heavier than usual.

Simplify your life to get rid of unwanted stress, and that might include relationships, too.

Use Miracle Grow to fertilize your plants. The "No clog" sprayer works great and is easy to use.

For great ice tea, brew it strong, roll a lemon and add it, cut up, to the pot. Add sugar to taste and drink!

For beautiful landscaping, try to stick to one or 2 colors, then look for that exact shade when picking out plants.

Love those really dainty choker necklaces? Look in children's or babies' departments, then find one to fit your neck.

If you want really healthy, long lasting plants for your flower and vegetable garden, I've found that nurseries are much better than

large discount stores. My favorite is Bennett's because the staff is knowledgeable, they serve Starbuck's coffee and soft drinks (as well as grilled chicken on occasion), play classical music while you shop, and have the largest, healthiest stock I've seen anywhere.

Want a cup of Cafe Latte but don't have an Espresso maker? Simple, just brew a very strong cup of coffee, then add a large spoonful of real vanilla ice cream. Add a dash of nutmeg and you're in heaven!

If you are wanting to exercise but don't have the time, just get up a half hour earlier in the morning and walk briskly around the block. You'll love the quiet and solitude, as well as the pounds melting off!

If you do a lot of traveling, like I do, carry some scented candles or incense with you to make it feel like home. You can light them while in the hotel room at night.

If you're really trying to lose weight but lose all sense when you're hungry, carry a bag of raisins mixed with dry roasted peanuts to munch on during those hunger pangs. The peanuts have fat but they fill you up, and give you energy from protein.

Have you noticed that people are wearing less perfume? If you want to smell good but don't want it to be that strong, use a scented soap and follow it up with lotion in the same scent. You get layers of scent that way, much more pleasant to others than a strong, overpowering perfume.



The difficulty with marriage is that we fall in love with a personality, but must live with a character.

--Peter DeVries



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Classic Southern Fare

Breakfast Eggs 'N Cheese

2 t. water
4 eggs
8 T. grated sharp Cheddar
cheese

Dash Cayenne pepper
Dash garlic powder
Salt & pepper
4 t. butter

With a fork, beat your eggs for several minutes in a medium bowl. Add the water, cheese, spices. Melt the butter in a skillet over low heat, pour in the egg mixture, stir gently as it begins to set. Make sure all of the cheese melts. Just before the eggs are completely set, remove from heat and finish cooking in the pan.

Serve right away with grits, home fries and crispy bacon. Don't forget the hot biscuits.

Favorite Home Fries

2 T. bacon grease
2 T. butter
6 medium sized potatoes,
sliced
1 medium onion, diced
1/2 c. finely chopped celery
1/2 c. green pepper, chopped
Salt and pepper to taste
Dash garlic powder

Heat your bacon grease and butter in a large skillet over high heat. Add the potatoes, onion, celery and green pepper. Lower heat to medium and cook, stirring often, til the potatoes are browned on all sides. Season them with a half teaspoon each salt and pepper.

Cover with a tight fitting lid, cook for 20 minutes or well

browned. Stir, taste and add more seasonings as you like. When crisp and brown, remove potatoes from pan, drain on paper towels and enjoy.

Spicy Pinto Beans

2 c. dried pintos
4 c. water
1 small onion, coarsely
chopped
8 oz. salt pork, diced
2 t. Tabasco sauce
Salt and pepper

Wash your beans, pick over them and discard any rocks. Best if you soak overnight. After soaking, drain the beans and put them in a large pot with 4 cups water and salt pork. Bring to a boil, lower heat and simmer uncovered til tender about 2 hours. Serve with a big ole wedge of cornbread.

Real Southern Fried Chicken

4 chicken breasts, skin on,
washed
Salt & pepper
garlic powder
onion powder
1 c. all purpose flour
2 T. paprika



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- 1 brown paper bag
2 c. oil or lard

Season your chicken with the salt, pepper, garlic and onion powder. Mix the paprika and flour in a bag, add your chicken and coat thoroughly. Begin heating about 2 inches of oil in a large skillet. When very hot but not yet smoking, begin to add your chicken pieces, skin side up. Don't crowd them, continually move them around. Don't leave a breast in one place more than 5 minutes. When each piece is golden brown, about 25 minutes total, remove them to paper towels and begin to make your gravy.

Real Southern Fried Chicken Gravy

- 2 T. all purpose flour for every 3 T. chicken grease
2 c. water for every 2 T. flour
Salt and pepper
1 t. garlic powder

Pour off most of the grease from where you cooked the chicken. I would keep about 6 tablespoons grease. Add 3 tablespoons flour and stir it into the grease over medium heat til the flour turns brown. When the paste looks right add about 3 cups water and bring to boil over high heat. Stir for a bit and reduce heat, stir in your seasonings. Serve either as a side to the

chicken or toss the breasts back in, cover and warm til eating.

Awesome Southern Pancakes

- 2 large eggs, well beaten
2 c. milk
2 T. melted butter
2 c. all purpose flour
4 t. baking powder
3 T. sugar
1 t. salt

Vegetable oil to grease the griddle

- 1/2 c. melted butter
2 c. pure maple syrup, warmed

Combine eggs, milk, and butter. Sift together dry ingredients, then whisk them into the egg mixture. Whisk til almost smooth but do not over beat. Prepare your pan or griddle, when grease is hot pour the batter I like 1/4 cup per pancake. When the pancakes begin to bubble and air pockets form, flip them over. Brown other side and serve at once with melted butter and warm maple syrup, with a side of bacon.

Brownies, Southern Style

- 4 oz. semisweet chocolate
1/2 c. butter
2 large eggs
1 c. sugar

- 1 t. pure vanilla extract
3/4 c. all purpose flour
1/4 t. salt
1/2 c. chopped pecans

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Melt the chocolate and butter in top half of a double boiler over hot water. Allow to cool down, beat the eggs. Add the sugar, chocolate, vanilla and butter mixture to the eggs, blend well. Sift flour and salt together, add to the batter and blend again. Throw in the nuts, mix. Butter a 9" by 9" pan and spread the batter evenly. Bake in preheated oven for about 25 minutes. Take out of oven, leave in cool place for about 15 minutes, then cut into small pieces. Do not overbake!

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Rufus King The Vice President Who Never Served!

In a white marble mausoleum in Live Oak Cemetery in Selma lies the remains of perhaps Alabama's greatest statesman, a man who attained the second highest office in our nation and whom history has forgotten.

He was born April 7, 1786, in Sampson County, North Carolina. A precocious schoolboy, King finished private school early and entered the University of North Carolina at the ripe age of 12. He graduated in 1803, and soon began his study of law in Fayetteville, N. C. He opened his own law office, and was elected a member of the state legislature in 1808.

At 24 years of age, King was chosen as a representative to the Congress of the United States. He had to wait a few months

until his 25th birthday before he could take his seat. He remained a member of Congress for 6 years before resigning to take the position of Secretary of Legation to the American Embassy in Russia. He stayed abroad for 2 years.

When he returned from Russia King found out that Alabama was beginning to be settled, and he was determined to make a home for himself there. He purchased a plantation near Cahaba in Dallas County. He called his home King's Rest, but it has become to be known as King's Bend, because it was on a bend in the Alabama River.

After having adopted Alabama, King determined to do whatever he could to help the state on its way to becoming a full fledged state.

In 1819 he was a delegate to the convention which was called to frame the first constitution of the state. He was a member of the subcommittee that drafted the document. King was then chosen as one of the state's first Senators, a unanimous vote and kept that office for one more term.

He served Alabama until 1844, until he was once again called upon to serve his country. Texas had just been annexed, and his duty was to go to France and there, as minister, to convince that nation of our right to annex the new territory. His efforts at diplomacy were successful, and he returned to his Alabama home in 1846 amid much praise for his extraordinary service to his country.

Rufus King was a man of

many interests. In addition to his skills at diplomacy, he was also a planter and a businessman. In one of his enterprises he bought land holdings on a high bluff of the Alabama River.

There, protected from flood waters, he was sure that a city would grow.

He developed the land and offered it for sale. He took a name from a poem by Ossian, a Caldonian poet of 200 A.D. The name was a Greek word meaning a "high seat." Thus from "Songs of Selma," a poem composed by an ancient chieftain to soothe his anguish for the loss of his son, the county seat of Dallas County derived its name.

continued on page 39

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Dullsville

Billy Joe Cooley, Huntsville's long time scribe, moved here in 1971. He had worked as a reporter for major newspapers covering presidents, crooked politicians, scandalous murder cases and all the other things one would expect in a big city. Needless to say, life was a lot different in Huntsville.

About six months after moving here Billy Joe received a call from an old colleague who worked on the editorial desk for Webster's Dictionary in New York City. After exchanging the appropriate pleasantries the friend asked how the local news was going.

"Dullsville!" replied Billy. "The most exciting news we had last week was the school board meeting."

His friend, a stickler for proper verbiage, replied, "There ain't no such word as Dullsville."

"There is if you try to cover news in Huntsville, Alabama," came the reply.

In about eight months a package came in the mail from his friend at the publishing company. It contained a new edition of "Webster's Ninth Collegiate Dictionary," with a note attached instructing him to look on page 388 for "Dullsville":

"Dullsville, dull + sville (as in Huntsville) slang: something or some place that is dull or boring; also: boredom."

Editor's Note: Don't believe this one? Get a copy of Webster's Ninth Collegiate Dictionary, and look it up yourself.



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Huntsville Coffee Talk

by Aunt Eunice

*With pearls of wisdom
contributed by the Liar's Table*



by now.

Jeff Enfinger sure is campaigning hard. He had a great turn out at the depot to kick off his bid for State Senator. Good luck, Jeff!

Well, the **Crime Prevention Academy** is wrapping up another class of 52 graduates. This program educates Seniors on how to help prevent becoming a victim of crime. **Pat Colson** helps to put the program on and is doing a great job. Call the Senior Center, 880-7080, for info on the next class starting in Sept.

Get well wishes go out to my good friend **Miss Dolly Davis**. She's a great lady and we all love her!

We're pleased to announce that **Old Huntsville Magazine's** publisher **Cathey Carney** told us the other day that her beautiful daughter, **Stephanie**, is getting married in August! Her lucky beau is John Troup. The newlyweds will make their home in

One of my favorite people from the Police Department, **Howard Turner**, retired last week. He was our top investigator in the state of Alabama. Good luck Howard and don't forget who feeds you your breakfast!

Boy, have you heard what I heard about **Loyd Tomlinson**, from the Outback Restaurant? He and **Marci** had to go to New Orleans for a meeting and I heard he wore a skirt to some party!

He said it was for a masquerade party, but now we all know who wears the pants! **Marci** was the "Belle of the Ball!"

A good friend of mine, **James Brown**, came by to let me know he's running for City Council, Place 2. Very impressed with him! Good luck in your campaign!

On the flip side, if **John Cockerham** wins, it will make the city council meetings much

more entertaining. Maybe someone should get the concession to sell popcorn.

Looks like the sheriff's race is heating up. I don't know about the rest of you, but **Joe Whisante** is doing a fine job and why would we want to change? I sure don't.

Well, congratulations to **Tim Morgan**, our District Attorney for the next six years. He's done such a fine job no one wanted to run against him. And yes, his employees still have to be nice to everyone!

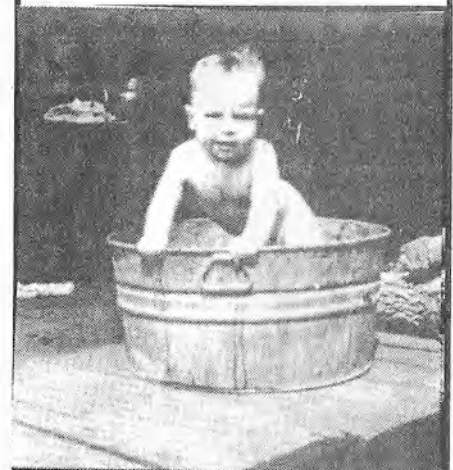
Sharon Brakefield wants everyone to come to the second annual reunion at Blouchers Ford this year on May 23. **Sharon's** also running for City Council, Place 2.

Is everyone running for that seat? Anyone notice any thing strange about this election year? Where's **Jackie Reed**? Normally we would have heard from her

Photo of The Month

The first person to identify the little boy in the picture below wins a breakfast at Eunice's Country Kitchen. So stop by and tell Aunt Eunice who you think it is!

Hint: Murderers are his specialty.



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Nashville. Now take it from me. Feed him country biscuits and gravy and he'll do anything you want.

Sure hope my minister, **Eddie Levick** doesn't get too smart. He went to California for some classes and now we hear he's educated. Hope he doesn't forget all of us common folks!

Sandra Rhodes, running for County Superintendent, Board of Education, doesn't have any competition for the June primary but she sure is working hard anyhow! She's one smart lady and exactly what we need in that job!

Thanks to the **Huntsville Police Department**, **HEMSI** and **Huntsville Hospital** for treating me so nice when I had my car accident and also a big thanks to the **Outback Restaurant** for feeding me that night. And the flowers from **Miss Roper** and **Jeff Enfinger** were so pretty.

Coffee pourer of the month award goes to **City Councilman Bill Kling** who recently poured a pot of coffee in the lap of another council candidate.

We hear that **Herb Dixon**, "The Man With The Plan," is running a "sensational" campaign in his bid to unseat **Bud Cramer** from his congressional seat. As the old-timers used to say, "That's going to be a hard row to hoe!"

Our friend **Ranee Pruitt**, keeper of the secrets at the public library, was recently seen giving **Glen Watson** a piece of her mind about the recent library vote. Even though Glen voted for the library, Ranee insisted he should have voted twice!

Our Mayor, **Ms. Loretta**, just got back from Washington, D.C. trying to get more money for our city. Ms. Mayor, you're doing a great job of taking care of our city and creating new jobs!

Patrick Jones' kick off for

representative down at **Floyd's** (our Five Points Mayor) was a huge success. Good luck, Patrick!

Happy Birthday to **Miss Tillie Laird**, still holding at 39.

All the newcomers from **St. Louis** are fitting in nicely. I over heard one the other day talking about those "yankees up north!" And talk about eating! You'd think they never had ham and biscuits in their life to watch them put it away!

No one guessed the picture last month so we're running it again. Here's another hint: "**Murderers are his specialty.**"

And believe me, he's good at it!

I just want to let everyone know that I'm going to be closed for **Mother's Day**.

I hope everyone takes time to spend with their families that day and just remember, I love you.

Don't Enfinger

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Murder

continued from page 12

Gradually, as his story evolved, it included phone calls between him and the sisters, the twins giving him a gun, a trip to Guntersville to pick up expense money inside a library book and meeting Mrs. Wilson in Huntsville to get more expense money. On the day of the murder he claimed Mrs. Wilson met him in the parking lot of a nearby shopping center and carried him to her home where he waited for two hours until Dr. Wilson arrived home. He was not armed at the time. He stated later that he had not liked guns ever since Vietnam. Instead, he carried a length of rope. White said that although he remembered struggling with Wilson over the baseball bat, he did not remember killing the doctor. After the murder, Mrs. Wilson returned to the house, picked him up and carried him back to his truck at the shopping center. He then drove back to Vincent and went out drinking that night with his brother. To prove his story he led the police to his home where a gun was found that was registered to Mrs. Wilson and a book from the Huntsville Public Library.

White was unsure about dates, times and specific events but the detectives expected that. It would take time to sort the whole story out but in the meantime there was enough evidence to arrest the twin sisters.

A source close to the case described White, after he was brought back to Huntsville, as being in "physical agony, almost climbing the walls and begging to be given his medicine." The medicine, supposedly Lithium, was withheld because it was in a different bottle than what it came

in and White did not have a prescription for it.

The news of Betty Wilson's arrest for the murder of her husband exploded like a bombshell in Huntsville. Not only was she a well known socialite, but her husband's estate was rumored to be worth almost six million dollars. Adding fuel to the flames was the report that she had helped host a fund raiser for a popular political figure the night before the murder.

Huntsville is a small town, especially during political seasons, where rumors and gossip can be passed around so quickly that the daily newspaper is already dated when it hits the streets. By piecing the juicy tidbits of gossip together a portrait of a cold blooded murderess began to take shape. She was rumored to have always been a "gold digger" and had been heard cursing her husband. Most of the talk, however, centered on her alleged numerous sexual encounters.

When the news media caught up with the story they pursued it with a vengeance. Reporters seemed to be competing against one another to see who could come up with the juiciest story. Newspapers, magazines and television shows from all across the country began following the story. The whole affair also took on political overtones as mem-

bers of the D.A.'s office and the sheriff's office began leaking information to the press and trying to use the case for political advantage.

The case became even more political when the D.A. agreed to a controversial plea bargain for White, which would give him life, with parole possible in 7 years, in exchange for helping convict the sisters. Pundits later claimed the plea bargain spelled the end of the D.A.'s political career.

At the hearing, the prosecution successfully argued that because Betty Wilson was a beneficiary of her husband's will, and the fact she had sexual affairs was enough to prove the motive. A tape recorded confession of James White provided the evidence. After a brief hearing both sisters were ordered to stand trial for murder. Peggy Lowe was granted bond and released after her neighbors in Vincent put their homes up for security. Betty Wilson was denied bond and remained in the Madison County jail until her trial.

A short time later family members of Dr. Wilson filed suit to deny Betty Wilson access to his estate.

Despite the posturing going on from all sides, many legal analysts began to doubt if the prosecution really had enough to build a case on. There was no one who ever saw James White and Betty



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Wilson together at anytime and there was no physical evidence linking White to the crime scene. Also a major headache for both sides was White's constantly changing stories. He would describe events one day and have a completely different version the following week.

Perhaps James White was sitting in his cell thinking about the same thing because suddenly he recalled a fact that he had not remembered before. He had changed clothes in the house and placed them in a plastic bag, along with the rope and knife, and hid them under a rock a few feet from the swimming pool. The bag was supposed to be the same one he received the money from Mrs. Lowe in.

Officials later explained the clothes not being found during the initial search by saying the police dog had an "allergy."

Although the clothes and bag were found exactly where White said they would be, the forensic people were never able to establish if they had been bloodstained, or if they actually belonged to White.

The clothes were to become one of the biggest mysteries of the case. No one seriously believed the clothes had been missed during the initial search. Privately, even members of the Huntsville police expressed skepticism. Many people believed that White had gotten someone to place the clothes there in an attempt to bolster his credibility and escape the electric chair.

By this time the case of the "Evil Twins" had captured national attention. The *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Times* and *People Magazine* ran lengthy articles and television tabloid shows such as *Hard Copy* and *Inside Edition* ran feature stories. When

two national television networks expressed an interest in making a movie, agents descended on Huntsville buying the movie rights from most of the people involved.

As the summer wore on, even the most impartial observers began to take sides. Never in the history of Huntsville had a case generated so much controversy and news coverage. Because of the publicity the judge ordered the trial moved to Tuscaloosa.

When the trial finally began, the case boiled down to one simple question. Who was tell-

ing the truth?

*Prosecution argued it was a murder for hire. Defense claimed the fact that White did not carry a weapon with him made the story unbelievable.

* Prosecution argued White's testimony was credible. Defense argued he had changed his confessions so many times it was unbelievable and he had fitted his testimony to fit the prosecution's case in order to escape a possible death sentence.

* Prosecution argued White's testimony was corroborated by records of phone calls and the library. Defense argued there



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was another explanation.

* Prosecution argued the gun was given to White by Betty Wilson and Peggy Lowe. Defense claimed he stole the gun and offered the fact that the empty box the gun came in, along with shells, was found in the home afterwards.

* Prosecution offered a witness who claimed to have seen James White and Betty Wilson near the murder scene within thirty minutes of one another. Defense argued the witness was not credible because she had been unable to pick White out of a lineup.

* Prosecution claimed the time line proved their case. Defense argued the time line did not fit.

* Prosecution offered a witness who claimed Mrs. Wilson had talked about wanting to kill her husband. Defense argued the story was not credible because it had happened almost 6 years earlier and the woman had continued to be friends with Mrs. Wilson.

* Defense offered a witness to prove the murder could not have happened at the time the prosecution said it did. The witness claimed to have seen White at the Ramada Inn during the time the murder was supposed to have taken place. Prosecution argued the witness was not credible because he waited too long to come forward.

* Defense offered a witness who stated she had received a message from Dr. Wilson on her answering machine after the alleged time of death. Prosecution argued the call could have been made earlier.

Regardless of the hard evidence, everyone agreed that a central theme of the prosecution's case was to paint Betty Wil-

son as a cold and immoral woman who wanted her husband dead. To prove this the prosecution paraded a stream of witnesses who testified about hearing her curse and belittle her husband. Other witnesses testified to having knowledge of Mrs. Wilson taking men to her home for sexual liaisons.

Perhaps the most dramatic part of the trial came when a black former city employee took the stand and told of having relations with Mrs. Wilson. Although the prosecution denied playing the racism card, observers of the trial all agreed it had the same effect.

The case went to the jury at 12:28 on Tuesday, March 2, 1993. After deliberating the rest of the day and much of the following day the jury returned

with a guilty verdict. Jurors later revealed that the deciding factor in their decision was the telephone records. Betty Wilson was sentenced to life imprisonment, without parole.

Six months later Peggy Lowe stood trial for her alleged part in the murder for hire. Much of the evidence was almost a repeat of her sister's trial, with the same witnesses and the same testimony. New to the case, however, was testimony by expert witnesses who stated that two people may have been involved in the murder. Citing the lack of blood splatters on the walls, the experts theorized the murder probably occurred some other place than the hallway and was caused by something other than a baseball bat.

For the defense, the most cru-

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cial moment probably occurred when White testified that Betty Wilson picked him up at the murder scene between 6 and 6:30 p.m., on the day in question. This was an hour later than he had previously testified. If the jurors believed White's story, it would have been impossible for Mrs. Wilson to have participated.

The biggest difference in the trials, however, were the people being tried. While Mrs. Wilson seemed to be the reincarnate of everything evil, her sister portrayed the image of a virtuous and compassionate church going woman who was constantly helping people less fortunate. Though it had been difficult to get people to testify in Betty Wilson's behalf, Mrs. Lowe's jurors heard a steady parade of witnesses extolling her virtues.

The jury deliberated for only two hours and eleven minutes before finding Peggy Lowe not guilty. The jurors cited James White's lack of credibility as the major factor. The prosecutor explained the verdict by saying he

was "fighting God."

Although Peggy Lowe can never be tried again, the fact remains that it is impossible for one sister to be innocent and the other guilty.

Betty Wilson is serving life without parole at the Julia Tutwiler prison in Wetumpka, Alabama. She works in the sewing department and spends her free time writing her supporters. Her case is being appealed.

Peggy Lowe is separated from her husband and is working for the school system. She travels often, speaking on her sister's behalf to various groups.

James White is serving a life sentence at an institution in Springville, Alabama, where he is attending trade school and receiving counseling for drug and alcohol abuse. In 1994, he recanted his story of the twins' involvement but later took the fifth amendment when questioned about it in court. He will be eligible for parole in the year 2000.

Editor's note: See page 28 for the text of James White's recantation.

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Helion Lodge: Birthplace of Alabama Freemasonry

by Raneë Pruitt

The impressive white edifice has long stood on the corner of Lincoln and Green Streets in Huntsville's Twickenham District. Almost everyone has passed by it. Many have been inside it. However, not many know the fascinating story of this historic Masonic building. In fact, it is generally referred to by a somewhat incorrect name: Helion Lodge. The true name of this Huntsville landmark is Eunomia Masonic Hall, but even its members call it Helion. Home to both Helion Lodge and the Huntsville York Rite bodies, Eunomia Hall is the oldest Masonic structure in the entire state and houses Alabama's oldest Masonic bodies.

The Masonic fraternity has played an important role in American society since the very beginning. Prominent among the fraternity's distinguished 18th century members were George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Paul Revere, the Marquis de Lafayette, and a host of others — including signers of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.

Masonry came to Alabama with its earliest settlers. Since Alabama in those days essentially meant Madison County — Mobile was still in Spanish hands and the only other settlements far away in the southwest — it is



not surprising that the light of Freemasonry first burst forth in the city of Huntsville.

On August 29, 1811, Madison Lodge #21 opened under dispensation from the Grand Lodge of Kentucky. This premier lodge of Alabama consisted of brethren from a number of Southern states. Serving as first

master was Marmaduke Williams, a former U.S. Congressman from South Carolina. Williams' older brother was Governor of the Mississippi Territory, which then included Alabama. Marmaduke Williams had resigned from Congress and moved to Huntsville, evidently expecting to be appointed governor of the soon to be created Alabama Territory. Instead, another was named to the job. Williams stayed on in Huntsville, and when Alabama achieved statehood in 1819, he ran for the office of Governor. Defeated in a close contest with William Bibb of Mooresville, Marmaduke Wil-

liams left Huntsville forever, settling in Tusculumbia.

Nevertheless, the lodge he had first led continued to thrive. Madison Lodge received its charter from Kentucky on August 28, 1812. The names on its membership roster are almost a who's who of early Huntsville. Included are such notables as Dr. David Moore (personal physician to Andrew Jackson), Calvin Morgan (father of Confederate hero Gen. John

Hunt Morgan), Capt. John Hunt (founder of Huntsville), and LeRoy Pope (the developer of early Huntsville).

On April 16, 1818, Madison Lodge gained company when the Grand Lodge of Tennessee issued a dispensation to Alabama Lodge #21. This lodge received its charter five months later. The two lodges continued to meet in

Huntsville until 1823, when the Grand #3 Lodge of Alabama was formed in Montgomery. Both Huntsville lodges then returned their charters and received new ones from the Grand Lodge of Alabama. Shortly afterward, the Huntsville Masons decided to combine their lodges. They chose the name Helion from the Greek "helios," meaning the sun — the great light which opens and closes each day. Helion Lodge #1 received its charter under that name on December 18, 1824. It has continued to meet as such ever since.

In the year 1823, the Huntsville Masonic bodies — Helion Lodge and the Royal Arch Masons — joined together to erect an impressive two-story lodge building. It was given the name Eunomia Masonic Hall, after the Royal Arch Chapter. The property on the corner of Lincoln and Green Streets was purchased at

that time from lodge member LeRoy Pope.

Masonry encourages patriotism, and this early lodge building saw its members march off to fight in the Texas War of Independence, the Mexican War and the War Between the States. The structure survived the turmoil of the Civil War, when Huntsville was occupied by the Union Army and repeatedly threatened with burning. Another generation of its members left to follow Mason Gen. Joseph Wheeler in the 1898 war with Spain or to serve under Mason Gen. John J. Pershing in the campaign against the Kaiser's army in Europe. At various times a private school met in the lodge's ground floor, while the Huntsville Female College held classes downstairs until their own campus was completed. A Baptist church temporarily met in the lodge, and B'nai Shalom

Synagogue also used the structure until they completed their brick temple on Lincoln Street just before the turn of the century. In 1905, little Meridianville Lodge #265 gave up its separate existence and combined with Helion #1. Helion today thus represents a union of three antebellum Alabama lodges.

By the second decade of the 20th century, the 90 year old building was felt to be too small for the growing membership. Huntsville architect Edgar Love, a Helion member, designed an impressive new structure that would incorporate the old building, sparing it from destruction. Love's plan called for a double-wing neoclassical lodge, in which the original structure would acquire a new facade to match the rest. The structure you see today is Edgar Love's design, completed in 1917. Regrettably one very important part is missing.

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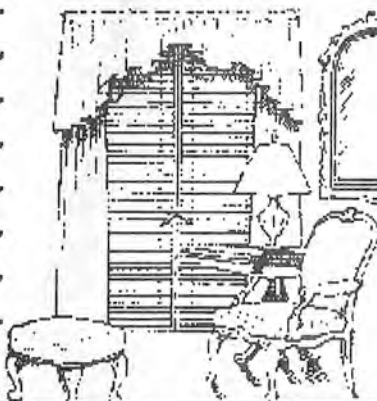
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By the early 1920s, the present structure was in use, with the old section awaiting renovation. However, a violent wind storm one night seriously weakened the century old north wing. A few days later the roof caved in, taking parts of the walls with it. The lodge could not afford to rebuild the structure and the original building had to be torn down. One wall remains, however, so that at least a portion of the 1823 building is still standing. In fact, if you go inside the present lodge, you will see a double set of stairways. The stairway on the north now leads only to a blank wall without even a visible doorway.

The stairway to nowhere is just one of the delights of today's Helion Lodge. While the tales of ghostly apparitions and strange footsteps are unverifiable, there can be no question over the existence of a wonderful array of historic memorabilia. The lodge still has its original King James bible from 1811, the same bible that was opened when city founder John Hunt attended meetings nearly 190 years ago, as well a wonderful letter to the members from Andrew Jackson dating to the same period. There is also on display a leather Masonic apron from the 1790s, donated a century ago by a descen-

dant of the man who wore it at a lodge in Baltimore when George Washington presided as master and Lafayette assisted him as the number two officer. The York Rite bodies — Eunomia Chapter #5, Royal Arch Masons; Eureka Council #5, Royal and Select Masters; and Huntsville Commandery #7, Knights Templar — have their own impressive assortment of Masonic mementos. The York Rite bodies have deeded their share of the building to Helion Lodge, but they still continue to meet here, just as they have since the early 1820s.

With a current membership of close to 800, Helion is the largest Masonic lodge in Alabama. Noted members in recent times have been U.S. Senator John Sparkman, Huntsville mayor Joe Davis and the late Tilman Hill. Even though he had left Huntsville many years before, Col. Carroll Hudson, first commandant of Redstone Arsenal, maintained his membership at Helion until the day he died. Gov. George Wallace was also occasional visitor back in the days when his health permitted. Helion Lodge now has two offspring in the modern city of Huntsville, Solar #914 on 9th

Avenue and Apollo #921 on Bob Wallace. Before Solar and Apollo were chartered, Helion's membership totalled an incredible 1,200. Old timers still tell of the days when members had to sit on the floor, there simply not being enough seats to go around.

Proving false the charges that Masonry is a "secret society," Helion Lodge has opened its doors to the public on a number of recent occasions, including the Huntsville Tour of Historic Houses. Try to visit Helion Lodge some time, if you have a chance. The classical architecture of the beautiful lodge room is truly inspiring and gives evidence of the affection that architect Edgar Love had for his beloved fraternity. And if you would like to become a Mason, simply knock on the door of this or any other lodge and introduce yourself the brethren. All you have to do is ask. You would be following in the footsteps of a long line of honorable men stretching back far into the distant past.

A cynic said to a politician, "Don't worry, you'll double-cross that bridge when you come to it."

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A kindly gentleman by the name of William Henry Harrison visited Alabama in 1840 and left an impression that the residents would never forget.

At that time, the Whigs were determined to get their representative into the White House, and this man was Harrison. He was projected as the frontier hero of Tippecanoe, and the campaign was complete with coonskin caps, log cabins and cider barrels.

Harrison, then 68 and with his health failing, came to Montgomery by way of a tiny log cabin mounted on a wagon pulled by oxen. The log cabin was a symbol, that the election would be

decided by the "common folk" and not by the "aristocratic gentry in the fine mansions." His slogan was "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too." The rigors of the tough campaign and his rudimentary means of travel took its toll on Harrison.

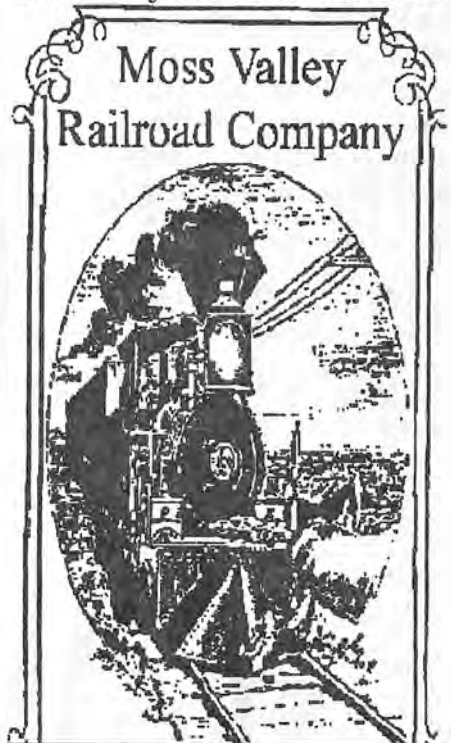
A doctor by the name of Thomas Brown, who owned a plantation a few miles east of Montgomery, gave the President-to-be some much needed medical attention. Regaining some of his lost strength, Harrison was driven to Montgomery in Dr. Brown's carriage, and made a few appearances and talks. Harrison would never forget the gentle attention of the Brown family.

As a token of his affection, William Harrison promised Dr. Brown's little daughter, Mary Eliza, that his log cabin on wheels would be ideal for a playhouse. With twinkling eyes, he had the cabin fitted out in just the right size furnishings and gave it to the delighted youngster.

For many years, the traveling log cabin stood at the plantation, a lasting reminder of the campaign of "Tippecanoe and Tyler too." Within five weeks of his inauguration, Harrison was dead. The rugged campaign, the tough traveling over hundreds of miles, had proven too much

for the aging gentleman. John Tyler, Vice President, succeeded to the Presidency.

In Huntsville, sorrowful citizens poured out their hearts to the wry, personable Harrison who had, in effect, knowingly given his life for a change in the White House. For years afterwards, citizens would meet at the courthouse to witness cannons fired by the Alabama Militia booming to salute the fallen President, and church bells would ring out on the anniversary of Harrison's death, a sorrowful tribute to the kindly old gentleman who won the hearts of so many citizens of Alabama.



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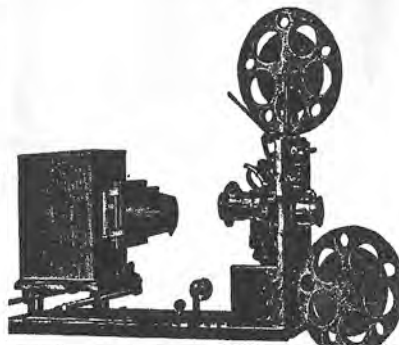
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The Confession of James Dennison White

On June 1, 1994, after spending two years behind bars, James White gave the following sworn statement. He later took the fifth amendment when questioned about it in court.

I, James D. White, being of sound mind, do of my own free will, and without coercion, enhancement, or inducement other than my desire to find personal peace with my conscience by correcting the wrongful and harmful injury I've done to Mrs. Betty Wilson, do offer this sworn statement to all interested parties attesting to her innocence and the contrived testimony given against her by me during Mrs.

Wilson's criminal prosecution and trial for the murder of her deceased husband, Doctor Jack Wilson.

I have long been diagnosed as being severely manic depressive and have a lengthy history of being emotionally unstable. I have been hospitalized on several occasions for the aforementioned mental disorders and take prescription mood altering drugs on a permanent basis for the purpose of treating these mental disorders.

In addition, I am a chronic alcoholic and chemical substance abuser, which causes me to experience frequent and prolonged states of alcohol induced amnesia (blackouts) where I have absolutely no awareness or recall

of my actions or the events which transpire during these blackout episodes. My only references to my actions and the events which occur during these episodes are the fragmented refabrications I am able to construct from the suggestions of others who may or may not have actual knowledge of my actions and of what occurred during my periods of obliviousness.

During the Spring of 1991, I had an occasion to meet Mrs. Betty Wilson's sister, Mrs. Peggy Lowe, for the first time by way of her being a school teacher at my daughter's elementary school. As a result of our initial informal introduction, Mrs. Lowe and I formed an amicable acquaintance. In the course of that acquaintance, Mrs. Lowe would recommend me for jobs as a handyman as a kindness to me, which helped to supplement my income as a short order cook.

As a result of the kindness shown to me by Mrs. Lowe, I began to form romantic notions toward her; but when I professed my feelings toward her, Mrs.

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Lowe merely laughed at me and rebuffed me in what I perceived as being demeaning, which made me feel inadequate, humiliated and resentful toward her. I immediately resorted to soothing my injured pride and feelings of rejection by heavy drinking and drug use.

The weeks after Mrs. Lowe's rejection and prior to my arrest

ing and taking. But I do remember being completely confused and disorientated and unable to separate reality from fantasy.

Detectives (...deleted) and (...deleted) denied my request for my medication and an attorney, and kept on interrogating me so insistently and confidently that I eventually began to think that what they were bombarding me

They (the detectives) kept telling me that it was Mrs. Lowe and Mrs. Wilson they really wanted to get. But if I didn't help them convict them, they'd send me to the electric chair. The longer they hounded me the more confused, afraid and desperate I became until I reached a point where I was willing to say anything they wanted me to in

Old Huntsville takes no position on the accuracy of this statement. Certain names have been deleted to protect the innocent.

for the murder of Dr. Jack Wilson were, and still are, a visual blur to me. My last lurid memory of that period was deciding in a drunken state to travel to Roanoke, Alabama to visit my children by my third wife.

My only recollection after making the decision to visit my children is my being interrogated by Detective (...deleted) and (...deleted) at the Shelby County Sheriff's office concerning the murder of Dr. Jack Wilson.

I initially denied any involvement in the murder of Dr. Wilson but in reality, I could not remember nothing of what I'd said during the weeks prior to my arrest. I did not believe that I'd committed this crime but Detectives (...deleted) and (...deleted) kept insisting that they knew things that I didn't which proved that I murdered Dr. Wilson, and kept demanding that I confess to killing Dr. Wilson.

I don't know how long I had been without the Lithium medication which had been prescribed to treat my mental disorders, but I doubt if I had been taking it during my blackout episode. I don't even know if I was still intoxicated from the alcohol and pills I'd been drink-

with was true, and found myself being persuaded that I might have murdered Dr. Wilson, especially since there had been so many other occasions in my life in which I'd done things that I could not remember.

Detectives (...deleted) and (...deleted) just kept threatening me over and over again that if I didn't confess to the murder of Dr. Wilson and implicate Mrs. Lowe and Mrs. Wilson in it that they'd send me to the electric chair, which frightened me senseless and made me feel desperate to appease them.



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order to make them leave me alone.

My resentment toward Mrs. Lowe's rejection was also an incentive which influenced me to make the false statements to the detectives implicating her and Mrs. Wilson in the murder of Doctor Wilson.

I might add that all my life I've been intimidated by authority figures, especially policemen, and it has been my inclination when being confronted by them to deflect their anger at me by assigning blame to others, and that's what I did in that instance. I simply used the theory of the crime related to me to refabricate a false and concocted narrative of Dr. Jack Wilson's murder which involved me as the perpetrator and Mrs. Lowe and Mrs. Wilson as conspirators.

In reality, I've never even met or spoken with Mrs. Wilson - not even to this day. I was never propositioned by Mrs. Peggy Lowe to murder Dr. Jack Wilson. I made it all up in order to appease detectives (...deleted) and (...deleted), so they would stop hounding me and threatening to send me to the electric chair.

Later on, after I had been transported to the Madison County Jail, and the realization of what I'd told the detectives occurred to me I tried to explain to (...four lines deleted)

... "life sentence" deal offered me by the prosecution in exchange for my false testimony against Mrs. Betty Wilson and Mrs. Peggy Lowe.

Throughout my interrogations by detectives and my pre-trial confinement, my manic depression medicine was withheld from me. When I tried to make people on the outside of the jail aware of what I was being pressured into doing to Mrs. Wilson

and Mrs. Lowe, the (...deleted) threatened to punish me and told me that I wouldn't be given my medication until after I testified against Mrs. Lowe and Mrs. Wilson.

Subsequently, I became extremely depressed and ceased to care about anything. I just wanted to get it over with, so I'd be transferred from the Madison County Jail to prison. As a result of my dependency I went ahead and pled guilty to the murder of Dr. Jack Wilson, which I'm now positive that I had nothing to do with it and gave false testimony against Mrs. Betty Wilson and Mrs. Peggy Lowe.

At first I tried to justify the lies I told about Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Lowe in court with the rationale that even though I didn't actually remember any of what I was saying, that maybe what the detectives induced me to say against them was true. But I realize now with profound certainty that what I really did was lie on Mrs. Betty Wilson and Mrs. Peggy Lowe in order to get myself out of peril and also to get back at Peggy for making me feel that I wasn't good enough for her.

Having found my solution in Christ, I realize that I cannot live with myself without trying to undo the tragedy I've caused these two innocent women, especially considering that their only wrong was in one of them being kind to me. I find myself constantly hounded by the realization of the grief and hardship I've caused them, and I'm certain that I can know no peace until my conscience is cleared from this guilt.

Signed:
James D. White

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Check cashing "loans" can be a rip-off and may be illegal.

In poor neighborhoods, check cashing companies offer to cash checks for a fee. This service is legal.

However, some check cashing companies, knowing that you have insufficient funds in the bank, will accept your check for, say, \$125; will give you cash of, say, \$100; and will hold your check for two weeks. If you do not return in two weeks to redeem the check for \$125, it will be cashed. If the check "bounces," you can then be charged fees by the check cashing company and by your bank because of the dishonored check, and you may be threatened with criminal prosecution for writing a "bad check."

Although the Alabama Attorney General has issued an opinion that such check cashing schemes are loans, many companies offering this service are ignoring consumer protection laws that apply to loans. Some of these businesses are not licensed by the state to make loans, and these loans may be illegal, like the above sample which constitutes a loan at 650% A.P.R., and far exceeds the allowable interest rate for a small loan in Alabama.

A class action lawsuit seeking to penalize offending check cashing businesses for these allegedly illegal "loans" has recently been filed in Huntsville.

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Some unusual Superstitions

Don't throw your hair clippings out of an open window. That signifies bad luck to the thrower.

If you kill frogs, your cows will "go dry."

Tickling a baby will cause it to stutter.

To thank a person for combing your hair is bad luck.

To allow a child to look into a mirror before it is a month old will cause it trouble in teething.

A child will have the nature and disposition similar to that of the person who first takes it out of doors.

If a person comes into your presence while you are saying bad things about him, and he puts his hands anywhere on you, you will die.

Plant all seeds, make soap and kill meat on the increase of the moon. If done on the decrease, the seeds will not grow, the soap will not lather and the meat will shrink.

Wasps coming out thick, in the fall, is a sign that winter is about to set in.

Misfortune will come to you if you sell or pawn a wedding gift. Above all, never hock your wedding ring.

If you work on the day of your wedding you will have to work always.

It is very bad luck to sweep your house on Friday night.

If rats cut your clothes, do not allow your kinfolks to mend them.

When you hear the first dove

of the Spring, take off your right shoe and you will find a strand of the man's hair you are to marry.

If you hear a screech owl it means instant bad luck. To prevent their cry, turn your pockets inside out and set your shoe soles upward.

Three successive cloudy mornings, it will rain on the third.



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For Baby Boomers Only



Pain doesn't always occur in the part of the body that's actually hurt. For example, a pain in the right side of your neck, chest or shoulder blade could indicate a problem with your liver or gallbladder. A pain in your groin could mean a kidney problem.

If you drink a lot of bottled water, you're probably not getting as much fluoride as you used to when you drank water out of the sink. Fluoride helps with healthy teeth, so ask your dentist to recommend a fluoride mouth rinse as a supplement.

You need fiber. Our ancestors got lots of it and had fewer health problems. All plant foods con-

tain fiber such as fruits, vegetables and grains. However, there's absolutely no fiber in animal foods, cheese, eggs, meat, poultry and milk.

More than 7 million Americans suffer from angina, a medical condition that's characterized by severe chest pain. This pain happens when the heart is not getting enough oxygen, brought on by exercise, heavy meals, emotional stress, extreme heat or cold, a lot of alcohol consumption and cigarette smoking.

If you like the black and green teas that are out on the market now, you may not know that they also provide valuable antioxidants. But don't mix milk with the tea, that will block absorption of the antioxidants by making them indigestible.


Know someone in the hospital and want to send a card? Put the recipient's home address on the return address spot. That way if they check out of the hospital before the card gets to them it will be forwarded to their home.

Adding a tiny pinch of cayenne pepper to your food can help relieve indigestion. It's believed that the pepper stimulates blood flow to the stomach lining, which helps jump start the gastrointestinal system.

Eating lots of onions may help keep you healthy. They contain quercetin, antioxidants that have been found to prevent cancer. The red and yellow onions are better than white for nutrients.

Caring for your aging parents doesn't have to be draining or difficult. Your attitude counts here. Think of the time as positive payback for their caring for you when you were young, as an opportunity to plan for your own aging, and as a chance to move into a new phase of your relationship with them, even if there were conflicts in the past.

I have one special place in my home to put bills, letters, important paperwork that I take to work. I check that place every morning on my way out and that way don't forget to take what I need.



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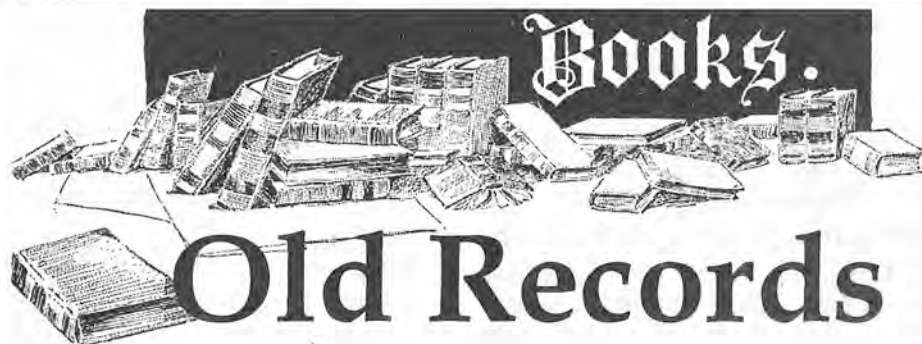
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Recently while browsing through the 1937 records of Bragg's Grocery, a store long since closed in Hurricane Creek, we wondered about all the untold stories and the faceless people contained on those yellowed pages.

There was Bob Ashbourn; he charged a pair of shoes that cost \$2.65. That same day, he purchased a shirt for .75 cents. Looking back at an old calendar we see that the day was a Friday.

Had he just got paid? Or maybe he was buying new clothes in order to court someone special.

Bill Matthews, the following day, bought 12 yards of cloth and .10 cents worth of snuff. Wonder if the same person used both?

Charlie Fears must have been a hard working man because most of his purchases were for farm implements and seed. Two days before Christmas in 1937 he was back in the store again buying apples, candy and oranges, probably for Santa Claus.

Henry Tucker stopped at the store for .50 cents worth of gas on Christmas Eve. Louise Jolly was in the store the same day settling her account.

Bob Langford must have not been in the Christmas spirit that year as the only purchases he made on December 24, was tobacco, snuff and coffee for a total price of .65 cents.

The first of the month must have been a busy time at the

store.

Old-timers called it "check cashing day" as that was when they received their government checks. That must have been a popular day for the children too, as almost everyone purchased candy when cashing their checks. Among the people cashing checks was Bill Smith, who also paid his insurance premium (.51 cents) at the same time.

Gus White must have been a carpenter, or maybe he was adding on to his own house. In January of 1937 he purchased 500 feet of oak boxing, 50 posts and 25 feet of lumber. The lumber was .02 cents a foot.

Macaroni was obviously a popular food. Besides tobacco, coffee and candy it was the product sold most often. The Walton family purchased macaroni four times in three weeks.

Alvin Blackwell probably didn't travel very far when he was young. His average purchase of gas was only .50 cents. That summer he also charged .19 cents worth of fishing tackle.

The community


didn't need a restaurant. On almost every page were listings such as "Logan Honey, lunch—.20 cents."

You would have to guess that the Robert Harris family suffered from sickness that winter. Among their purchases were aspirins, salve, iodine, Black Draught, castor oil, alcohol, and salts. The week before Christmas, Mr. Harris added a French harp, stationery, tablets, apples and a coconut to his bill.

Perhaps the most poignant entry in the ledgers is the account of an old man who purchased cotton seed in anticipation of making a crop that year. The man was poor with no way to pay until the crop came in.

Several weeks after the purchase, the old man died, leaving no family or money. The next day someone, in old fashioned, meticulous handwriting, carefully entered "Paid" to his account.


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Betty Wilson

cont. from page 10

My attorney tried to explain to me what happened. James White had been arrested for Jack's murder and in exchange for not being sent to the electric chair, implicated Peggy and me. He claimed he was having an affair with Peggy and agreed to kill Jack for \$5,000 to prove his love for her. To bolster his claim, he told the police of phone calls and of meeting me in Gunter'sville to pick up "expense money" hidden in a library book.

How do you say something is ridiculous when you are sitting in jail charged with murder? Regardless of how absurd the story was, my lawyer still had to prove White was lying.

At first it appeared as if that would be easy. White first claimed that he had come to my house to pick up the \$2,500 "down payment." When that story didn't play out, he said he picked it up on the side of a highway,

where I had thrown it out. That story was so far fetched he had to change it again, finally coming up with a story about picking it up at Peggy's home.

Trying to sort out White's lies was an exercise in frustration. Sitting in my cell, it seemed as if every time we managed to prove White was lying, he changed his story. All in all, he gave about 7 or 8 different confessions before finally settling on one that sounded almost plausible.

The first major blow to my defense came at my hearing. Although Peggy was allowed out on bond, the prosecution argued that I was a wealthy woman and might flee if I was released. The judge denied my bond and I was returned to jail where I was placed in a solitary confinement cell. I was to remain there for almost nine and a half months.

Ironically, though the court had cited my wealth as an excuse to deny my bond, a short time later the courts froze my assets. I had to almost laugh when I learned of it. All the news

media were talking constantly about how rich I was and speculating on "money getting me off," but now I didn't even have the money to pay a lawyer. In the end my attorneys worked for almost nothing.

I was in a solitary confinement cell that was so small the bed took up two-thirds of the space. At one end was a toilet and at the other end was a door with a small window in it. The only person I was allowed contact with was my attorney, and my immediate family who could visit me for a few minutes on Sundays. The noise was so loud, however, that we couldn't really talk. They had to shout at me through the window and even then it was hard to understand what they were saying.

I learned later that a rumor went around town that I was going mad. Maybe I was, but it was with anger. One time I looked up to see a man staring at me through the window. When I asked him what he wanted, he replied, "I just wanted to see what



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a rich bitch that would sleep with a black looks like!"

Undoubtedly, that's the way many people in Huntsville felt at the time. Every day there were fresh headlines and more lurid stories about my alcoholism and things I was supposed to have said. What hurt me the most though was many of my friends turning against me.

Friends had always been important to me, and even in jail I would try to send them notes or call them sometimes. During the first couple of weeks I received cards from my friends almost everyday, but after a while they stopped coming.

One day I tried to call an old friend who I had always been especially close to. I could tell she felt awkward as soon as she answered. After only a few seconds, she tried to end the conversation. Almost begging, I asked her, "You don't really think I'm guilty, do you?"

There was a long silence on the other end of the phone before she finally replied. "Betty, I just don't believe the news would talk about it so much if there wasn't something to it!" I spent the rest of that day and night crying.

Soon afterwards, a poll showed that 85% of the people in Madison County believed I was guilty and my trial was moved to Tuscaloosa.

I was eagerly looking forward to my trial. Our strategy was simple; poke so many holes in the prosecution's story that the jury would see the truth. The whole case against me was circumstantial and we felt it would be easy to prove our case.

White claimed he met me at the Chick-Fil-A restaurant in Parkway City Mall the day prior to the murder, but I was having lunch with my son at that time. On the day of the murder I was supposed to have met him at Parkway City Mall and carried him to my home where he waited for two hours to kill Jack. Then I was supposed to have returned to the house, picked him up and carried him back to his truck at Parkway City Mall. The timing was impossible. I was able to establish, with credit card receipts, exactly where I was most of the day. In the few minutes unaccounted for, it would have been impossible for the events to have occurred the way White described them.

It's hard to describe my emotions when White took the stand. Curiosity, loathing, and sadness all welled up in me as I watched him being led in and placed on the witness stand. This was done before the jury was called in so they would not see him handcuffed and manacled.

In a way I felt sorry for him. The way his eyes kept darting

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around the courtroom reminded me of a small animal caught in a trap. At one point he looked over at me in a curious way as if he was trying to decide if I was the person he was talking about.

My attorneys had repeatedly cautioned me to remain calm, but in spite of the warnings my whole body and soul wanted to scream out and tell people it was a lie. At one point I must have started to stand up because one of the attorneys reached over and placed his hand on my shoulder to restrain me. All I could do was sit motionless, staring straight ahead, telling myself over and over -- "He's lying to stay out of the electric chair."

For the first time in my life I realized what it was like to be totally helpless. I couldn't talk, I couldn't cry, I couldn't do anything but just sit there.

As White's testimony began to drag on I actually started to feel better. There was no doubt in my mind that everyone in the courtroom could see through his story. Some of his claims were outrageous to the point of being impossible. According to him I was supposed to have met him in the Parkway City Mall parking lot and had him crouch in the front floorboard while I drove him to my home.

I wanted so bad to jump up and demand how he thought a grown man was supposed to hide in the front floorboard of a car and not expect anyone to see him in broad daylight. I wanted to know how a grown man could even fit in the front floorboard -- it's almost impossible. There were probably thousands of people at the shopping center that day, but yet, the police could not find one person to say they

saw me with White!

Though much was made of the money inside the library book and the phone calls, the explanations for them were so simple I wasn't really worried.

The low point of the trial was about to occur, however.

Basically the prosecution's entire case centered around the fact that I was supposed to be an evil person, and now they decided to drive the point home. Though they had the names of the men I had been involved with, and most of them lived in Huntsville, they chose to bring a man all the way back from California to testify.

He was the black man.

His testimony only lasted for a few minutes and consisted solely of him reluctantly admitting that we had once had a sexual affair.

From the looks on the jurors' faces, though, it was enough. For the first time I had to face the possible reality of being convicted. It was decided I would not take the stand. If I had, the prosecution would have tried to make me look even worse.

Strangely, the whole time we were waiting for the jury to reach a verdict my thoughts were not on the trial. They kept going back to Jack. He was my husband yet I wasn't even allowed time to

grieve over him. We were not perfect, but we were husband and wife and loved one another. Now he was just a name in a case for the lawyers to argue over.

The jury found me guilty of murder and sentenced me to life without parole.

A few months later my sister, Peggy, was tried on the same charges and with the same evidence and found innocent.

So what happened? I don't know. Maybe I was an easy person to hate and maybe media ratings were more important than guilt or innocence. I no longer think about the people who did this to me. I have long ago forgiven them.

My freedom has been taken away and memories of my friends and family are fading, but I will go to my grave with the one thing no one can ever take from me -- my innocence.

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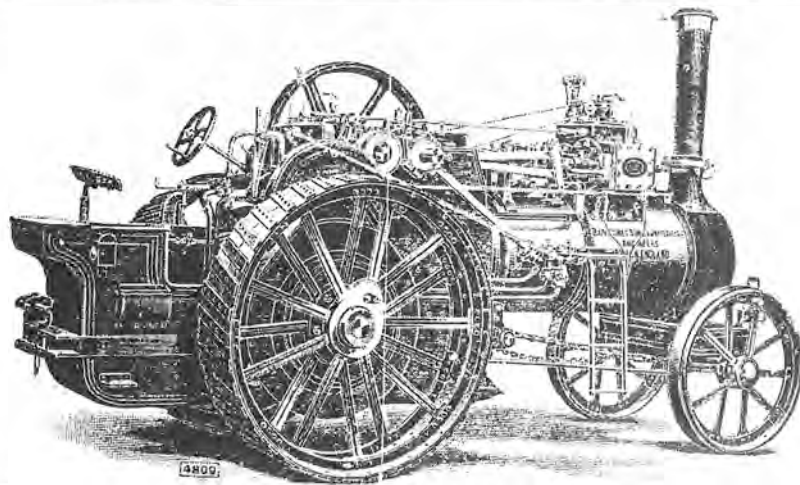
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The Paving of Locust Street

by Walter S. Terry

Along about 1925 or 26, I was fortunate enough to live on Locust Street when it was being paved. (Since that was back in what my children refer to as, "The Dark Ages," I'm not sure whether or not it was the initial paving, but my fading mind tells me it was.) To see and hear that beautiful smoke belching monster rumbling and clanking along its way over the newly poured, steaming asphalt was a small boy's dream of heaven. A sure 'nuff, really and truly steam roller! Across the street lived another four or five year old miscreant named Wells Stanley. As Wells and I watched together this marvelous process, we ran across a treasure almost equally fascinating: a brown paper bag with huge biscuits containing between their halves a greasy white substance we'd never seen before in its purest form (we learned later it was called

"fatback"). Not totally innocent of what we were doing we retreated to a "secret" place under Wells' porch steps and proceeded to feast on this strange and delicious banquet.

We were, of course, caught. The street department man, on missing his lunch come noon-time, somehow tracked us down (crime didn't pay even at that tender age). The man was as black as the asphalt he worked with but had a heart of gold, and I've never forgotten his kindness. He told our mothers that he reckoned we had "mistook" his lunch for ours.

But with our mothers, we both were in disgrace though we passionately blamed each other for being the instigator. Our mothers, to make amends to the worker, prepared a feast of fried chicken for him and his fellow crew members. Under these circumstances, we were more than

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forgiven for our sins by them, if not immediately by our mothers.

I haven't seen Wells Stanley in probably forty or fifty years, but I'm convinced he'd still be quick to say Walter Terry put him up to that thievery.

And I'd be just as quick to deny it.

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Rufus King

cont. from page 16

King was appointed to a seat in the U.S. Senate after his service in France. While serving in the Senate, King killed the Bates Resolution that would have dissolved the Union. In 1852 he was nominated as Vice President, General Franklin Pierce's running mate. King was nominated on the second ballot. In the election, Pierce and King won easily.

Meanwhile, however, King had contracted tuberculosis. He left for Cuba for his health. He was still there when it was time for him to take the oath of office. Congress extended him the privilege of taking the oath on foreign soil. And thus, on March 4, 1853, King became the first and only Alabamian to become Vice President of the United States.

His health continued to worsen, however. He knew that his time was short. When he arrived in Mobile from Cuba, crowds of welcomers greeted him as his ship arrived at the port city. "I pray that I may get

home to Dallas County to die among my people and there to rest," he said.

The boat trip to King's Bend was made on the packet "Royal St. John." The steamer breaking all records, traveling nonstop to King's plantation.

"The fields have never looked so green," King exclaimed as his land slowly came into view. The next day, in his own bed at home, he died.

The country mourned the death of the beloved Vice President who never lived to serve out his term.

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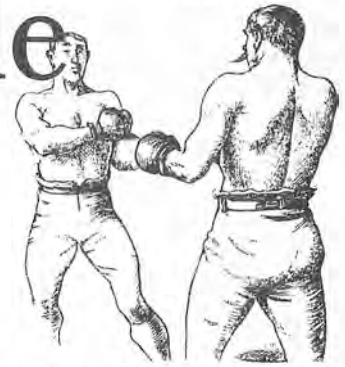
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The Battling Little Sergeant

by James Record



In the 1930s Huntsville boxing fans talked proudly of Sammy Baker, the toughest boxer to come out of the city in that era. Baker fought throughout the Deep South under the tutelage of Bushy Bolton and "Kid" Clant, two of Huntsville's early boxing promoters. Clant died in the mid-thirties while hitting a punching bag.

Baker was born on February 20, 1902 in New Hope. At age 16 he went to work as a weaver in the Merrimack Mill: He enlisted in the Army at age 18 and began boxing. Baker fought in the Army Olympics in Hawaii in 1924. He earned a seat on the U.S. Boxing Team and went all the way to the finals before losing a disputed decision to Al Mello. Mello went on to win a gold medal in the Paris Olympics.

Sammy Baker turned pro in 1924 while still a sergeant in the Army. On June 15, 1927 Baker knocked out Ace Hodgens in the seventh round at the Polo Grounds. He said it was his most memorable fight and claimed that Welterweight champion Joe Dundee refused to give him a shot at the title after witnessing the fight.

In 1929, Baker fought Tommy Jordan two times in Huntsville. The first was at Big Spring Park before a crowd of over ten thousand. On May 23, 1929 the re-match was held at the old Huntsville Fairgrounds before about twelve thousand

fans. It was the largest crowd to ever attend a sporting event in the Tennessee Valley at that time. This is significant since the population of Huntsville at that time was 11,554.

In 1931, "Young" Stribling came to Huntsville to fight Baker after losing to Max Schmeling.

Baker retired in 1937, never

having had the chance to fight for the title.

He will never be the champ in the record book, but to a generation of Huntsvillians he will always be the "Battling Little Sergeant."

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