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HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY



The Story Of Isham Hobbs

Night time was a time of demons for him. For the past several months he had been having trouble remembering things. Sometimes he was not even sure what his real name was or where he was from.

Even more terrifying were the mountains. Though he had once felt at home in the rugged wilderness, the mountains now represented something dark and evil. It was, as he later said, as if "the mountains were holding a dark secret" he could not remember.

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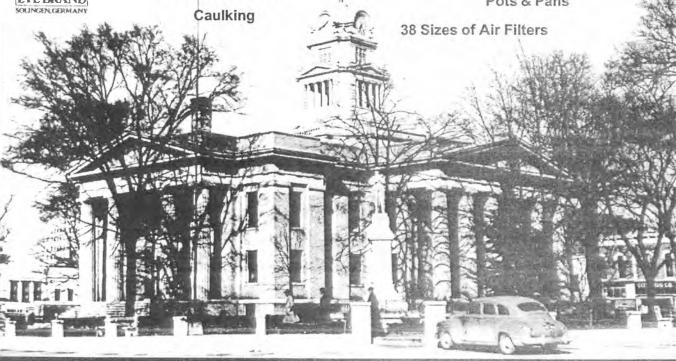
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The Story Of Isham Hobbs

The name Isham Hobbs was a familiar one to the people living in the mountains surrounding southeast Huntsville. Some people said he was antisocial and didn't like people. Others said he was just a natural woodsman who felt more at home in the rugged wilderness than he did in civilized society.

Isham David Hobbs was born near the banks of the Tennessee River below Farley in 1917. His family was known as being Godfearing, hard-working farmers whose ancestors had helped settle the area almost a hundred years earlier.

As a youth Hobbs developed a fascination with the mountains surrounding his home. With no supplies except for his .22 rifle, he would disappear into the forest for weeks at a time. While still a teenager, he earned the reputation as one of the most skilled woodsmen in this part of the country. A friend later recalled going hunting with Hobbs, "One minute he would be right next to you but when you turned your

head he would disappear. It was eerie."

As Hobbs grew older he began spending longer periods of time in the mountains. Often he would disappear for months at a time, sleeping in caves and surviving off of squirrels and rabbits he hunted. The few supplies he needed; ammunition, a pair of pants or maybe some salt, were easily obtained by pilfering nearby homes at the foot of the mountains.

Though the pilfering was petty, it still raised the ire of people in the community. A warrant was sworn out and Hobbs was quickly convicted and sentenced to probation. The judge, however, believing a stretch in the military might help Hobbs, released him from probation and allowed him to enlist in the army.

Information about his time in the army is sketchy. He was reported to have been an expert rifle shot, extremely shy and a loner who was never at ease around other people. He was also described as a "highly intelligent individual with an overpowering vocabulary, "who hardly ever read a book but when he did, could quote entire pages from memory months later."

"All in all," a friend later said, "he just didn't fit in."

In October of 1943, Isham Hobbs deserted from the army



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Scrolls, Informals, Ribbons Napkins, Matchbooks, & more and returned to the mountains of Madison County. Although he had family living in the area, he spurned all contact with them and took up residence in a cave at the base of Green Mountain. Salvaging items from trash piles at night, Hobbs soon furnished the cave with bedsprings, dishes and cooking utensils. A fishing rod and a .22 rifle provided much of his food.

Many of the mountain families living in the area identified with Hobbs and were only too happy to supply him with extra food and information about the M.P's who were searching the mountains for him. For them the woods were a way of life and they too were suspicious of "government people poking around."

Hobbs later described this period as "the happiest in my life."

All this was due to change however, during the early morning hours of May 5, 1944 when Sheriff Henry C. Blakemore received a phone call about a homicide that had just taken place.

Huntsville, like most small Southern communities in 1944, had its share of homicides. Most of them were caused by family feuds, drinking and an occasional robbery attempt. Normally there was nothing about them to merit headlines for more than a day or two.

Blakemore knew this case was going to be different. The

murder victim was Mrs. Margaret Thornton Fleming, a member of one of the most prominent families in North Alabama. The Fleming family was reputed to be one of the largest and wealthiest landowners in Madison County. They were heavily involved in Huntsville cultural and social activities and were rumored to have political connections reaching all the way to Washington, D.C.

As investigators gathered at the murder scene in south Huntsville they began to patiently reconstruct the events of the night before.

Mrs. Fleming had gone to bed shortly before 10 p.m., and the two ladies staying with her retired about thirty minutes later. Around 4 o'clock in the morning one of the women was awakened by the presence of a man in her bedroom who began beating her furiously about the head with a rifle he carried. She began screaming hysterically and within seconds the other women attempted to come to her rescue.

During the wild melee that followed, the women attempted to beat the assailant off by hitting him with an iron poker. At one point in the furious struggle, the attacker's rifle was discharged into the ceiling. Overwhelmed by the sheer ferocity of the women's defense, the assailant pulled a hunting knife and began slashing about, trying to free himself.





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By the time the stranger managed to escape, Mrs. Fleming was lying on the floor, dead of multiple stab wounds. The other ladies had suffered cuts, bruises and broken bones. Evidence of the ferocious struggle was easily apparent to the investigators. Overturned furniture, broken lamps, a broken end table and the pool of blood on the floor all bore witness to the violence of the brutal crime.

At first the clues seemed meager. There was no sign of forced entry, but further investigation revealed a small hole in one of the screens where an intruder may have used an instrument like an ice pick to unlatch it. The only other clues were the murder weapon, a small fragment of cloth from a jacket, the magazine from a .22 rifle and a cap.

It was reported the assailant was about 17 or 18 years old, dark haired and with a very prominent nose. Investigators seemed confident of the ladies' abilities to identify the murderer.

The first break in the case came several days later when a person known only as Mr. X, and who has never been identified, told investigators the cap found at the scene had once belonged to him. Weeks earlier, he told the authorities, he had gone swimming with a friend named Isham Hobbs and had given the cap to

him.

The identification of Hobbs as a suspect came as a total shock to the community. Though everyone agreed he was eccentric and a loner, no one could imagine him committing a murder. One friend later described him as "being gentle as a lamb - the last person in the world to do harm to someone."

Bloodhounds from Chattanooga, Tennessee were sent for and dispatched to the murder scene. At first the hounds seemed to pick up the trail but as they entered the nearby woods they soon lost it.

Sightings of him were reported from all across the county. Skilled woodsmen from all parts of Alabama joined the search, hoping to collect the reward. It was an exercise in futility. The area being combed was larger than Huntsville and the Arsenal combined. A person who grew up in the mountains was quoted as saying, "You ain't gonna catch him until he gets ready. There ain't no one knows these mountains better than Hobbs."

Truer words were never spoken.

For the next 17 years legend, folklore and tall tales would all combine to make Hobbs seem invincible. Stories would be told of people meeting him on a



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mountain trail, carrying a rusty rifle and wearing a long straggly beard. Every time something was misplaced on the nearby farms its disappearance would be blamed on Hobbs.

Hobbs was well aware of the manhunt in progress. At the least, if he gave himself up, he would have to face charges of desertion. And as a friend later recalled, "In the charged climate of Huntsville at that time many people thought if he was a deserter he was probably a murderer, too."

For weeks following the murder, he easily evaded law enforcement authorities, often sitting on a bluff while watching the law men search the woods below. At one point he was discovered by bloodhounds, but rather than being the ferocious man-hunters he had imagined, they jumped all over him in their excitement to be petted. Before sending the dogs back down the mountain, Hobbs removed their collars.

Hobbs would have been content to stay in the mountains but friends convinced him he had to get away. Three weeks after the murder he was smuggled out of the mountains and carried to Chattanooga where he boarded a bus to Ashville, North Carolina.

Using the assumed name of Jack Perry, Hobbs rented a room across from the bus station. For the first few weeks he rarely ventured out of his room but as time passed he began to feel more com-

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fortable in his new surroundings. He worked as a house painter for a short period of time and then got a job on a surveying team. When that job ran out he went to work as an apprentice optical technician. For all outward appearances he seemed to be just another ordinary working man.

Night time however, was a time of demons for him. For the past several months he had been having trouble remembering things. It had gotten to the point where sometimes he was not even sure what his real name was or where he was from. Even more terrifying were the mountains surrounding Ashville. Though he had once felt at home in the rugged wilderness, the mountains now represented something dark and



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evil. It was, as he later said, as if "the mountains were holding a dark secret" he could not remember.

The effort of trying to remember caused on constant excruciating headaches accompanied by sickening nausea. The only relief he ever felt was at night-time when he went to sleep. Hobbs later said that he would often write his name on a piece of paper before going to sleep so he would know who he was when he woke up.

In 1947, after almost two years on the run, Hobbs tried to commit suicide. He later spoke of being terrified of demonic memories hidden somewhere in the deepest recesses of his mind. "I wanted to know," he explained, "but I was scared to know at the same time."

Though Hobbs recovered from the suicide attempt, he knew he had to get away from the mountains. They were a constant reminder of something he could not remember, and could not forget. With the few clothes he owned tied on the back of his motorcycle, Hobbs left Ashville, spending the next four months wandering through Tennessee and Georgia before finally settling in Florida.

Strangely enough, though the

Sheriff's department and the F.B.I. knew of Hobbs' possible presence in Ashville, the local authorities were never contacted to look for him.

Hobbs undoubtedly harbored a desire to be caught. In Atlanta, he mailed letters in his own name. In Macon, Georgia, when stopped by M.P's who were suspicious of the military-type shoes he was wearing, Hobbs again gave his own name. Through a bureaucratic blunder, his name did not show up in any records and he was soon released.

The farther south Hobbs traveled, away from the mountains, the calmer he became. The demons were still with him and haunted his dreams but in his mind he had forgotten where they had come from.

In Bartow, Florida he answered an ad for an optical technician and was immediately hired. After getting a room at a nearby boarding house, his life soon developed into a pattern. Up at 4:30 every morning, two pieces of toast for breakfast and then sit and look out the window until time to go to work.

The very qualities that made him a recluse also made him a valued worker. He never complained about pay or working ex-

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- **2.** Huntsville/Madison County: to the Edge of the Universe. Over 300 local photos. Was \$49.95 / Now \$29.98.
- **3.** Mr. Anderson's Monument: Stories of Meridian St., Lincoln Mills & Lincoln Village, by Tillman Hill. Signed copies, \$25.00.
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- **5.** Lily Flagg The story of Huntsville's prize-winning Jersey cow, by Doris Benefield Gilbreath, \$10.95.
- **6.** Glimpses into Antebellum Homes of Historic Huntsville Alabama \$16.95.
- 7. Cemeteries of Madison County, Vols I and II, \$25 each.
- **8.** Historical Markers of Madison County, Alabama, \$18.95.
- **9.** An Alabama School Girl in Paris 1842-1844: the letters of Mary Fenwick Lewis and her family, by Nancy Rohr, \$16.95.
- **10.** Huntsville Heritage Cookbook (pub. 1967); over 100,000 in print. Junior League of Huntsville, \$15.95.

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tra hours. One coworker said Hobbs actually enjoyed working late and never seemed to care if he got paid or not. Years later Hobbs was asked how he spent his pay. Pausing for a long moment as if searching his memory, Hobbs finally replied, "I don't know."

After getting off from work at 5:00 p.m., Hobbs would go to a diner two blocks from where he lived and have the blue plate special, at 69 cents, for supper. He always sat in the same place, never talked to anyone, ate his dinner and after leaving a nickel tip, would go back to his room at a near-by boarding house.

There he would sit and look out the window waiting for darkness to fall, or as he said later, "waiting to die."

A psychiatrist later described Hobbs as "an atheist with no sense of smell or taste; a person who did not smoke or drink and had never been intimate with a woman; a person who never had any fun and had nothing to live for."

Adding to his emotional turmoil was not knowing who he



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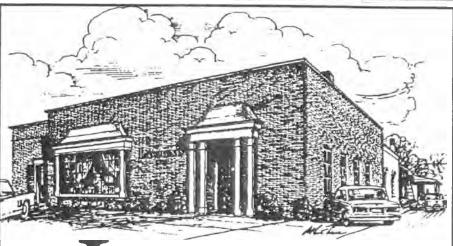
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was. By this time he was suffering from complete amnesia. His memory had been sporadic for years, but now he no longer could remember where he was from, his real name or even his relatives. The only thing that stayed with him were the demons that returned to haunt him night after night.

In November 1960, Hobbs, no longer able to cope with the night-mares or the loneliness, tried to commit suicide once again by smothering himself with a plastic bag.

The landlord of the rooming house discovered him a few minutes later and called the police and an ambulance. Though he quickly recovered at the hospital, the police's curiosity was aroused when they ran a background





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The news that Isham Hobbs had been captured in Florida hit Huntsville like a bombshell. Almost 17 years had passed since the murder and most people only had vague memories of it. Many people who remembered Hobbs believed he was still living in the mountains and had supposedly been sighted many times by hunters and hikers. As recently as 1960, a helicopter had been shot at near Green Mountain and people had automatically blamed it on Hobbs.

Before Hobbs could be returned to Huntsville to stand trial for murder he had to face charges of desertion from the military. He was sent to Eglin Air Force Base and confined to the psychiatric ward where a team of 11 psychiatrists examined him.

The doctors'reports were unanimous. Hobbs was suffering from complete amnesia and had



no desire to live in his present state. This posed a dilemma for the military authorities. Hobbs could not be tried for desertion if he was not competent, and if he was released without being charged he would be eligible for seventeen years back pay, a sum amounting to almost \$70,000.

In a move that would be debated in psychiatric journals for years, the doctors sedated Hobbs with heavy doses of drugs and used the murder charges to jog his memory. After extensive prodding he finally confessed to the murder and signed a written confession. Many doctors would later question whether Hobbs actually remembered the crime or whether it was implanted in his mind. Later, when questioned about details of the confession, Hobbs

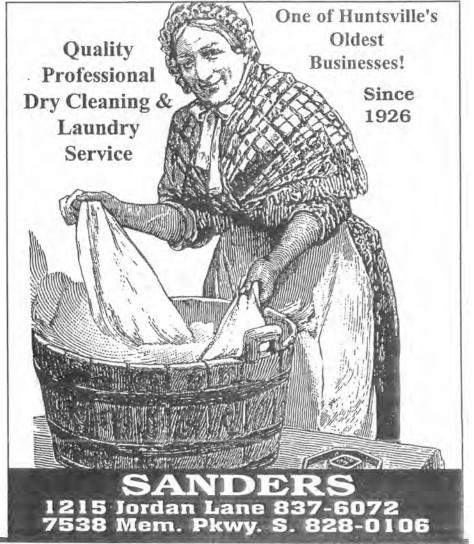


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would have trouble remembering what he had said.

In his confession, Hobbs said he had gone to the Fleming house to steal a shotgun but when he saw the woman lying in bed, decided to knock her in the head and carry her back to the cave. No one ever questioned him as to how he expected to carry an unconscious woman five miles across the mountains at night time in the midst of a pouring rain.

Three months later, by a split decision, the doctors ruled that Hobbs' memory had been mostly restored and that he was competent to be tried. He was presented with a "less than honorable" discharge and turned over to the Alabama authorities to stand trial for murder.

Sheriff L. D. Walls and Deputy Earl Frazier traveled to Florida to bring Hobbs back. Frazier later described Hobbs as "a loner, though eager to please and extremely intelligent." On the way back from Florida, as they were crossing Monte Sano Mountain, Hobbs told how years earlier he had ridden his motorcycle from Florida to that very spot on Monte Sano and had stood for hours staring at the city of Huntsville in the valley below. He had no idea

why, he said.

After being returned to Huntsville, Hobbs agreed to show the authorities where he had hidden out on Green Mountain, seventeen years earlier. Handcuffed and accompanied by Deputy Sheriff Joe Cobb, he led the way to an isolated and overgrown spot near the base of the mountain where, after a few minutes searching an opening to a small cave was revealed.

Inside the cave were the few remnants of his life in the mountains; a rusted .22 rifle and telescopic sight, bedsprings, an ax blade and a fishing rod. Stacked against a wall of the cave, as if waiting for someone to return and prepare a meal, were numerous jars and rusty tin cans.

Hobbs sat on a nearby rock and watched silently as his belongings were recovered from the cave. At one point he remarked, almost as if he was talking to himself, "I could have stayed up here for 17 years and you fellows would have never caught me."

Regardless of the military's decision, there were many people in Huntsville who questioned Hobbs' competence to stand trial. On May 23, 1961 the Circuit Court ruled that Hobbs should be trans-





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ported to Birmingham and be examined by another psychiatrist. Two weeks later Dr. Frank Keys, a noted Birmingham psychiatrist, ruled that Hobbs was sane, though "borderline and possessing a schizophrenic personality." The doctor further stated that, "Hobbs would probably commit suicide if released and the question remaining is whether he should be placed in an institution."

With the question of Hobbs' sanity established the case should have been a foregone conclusion.

It wasn't.

The mysterious "Mr. X" who had stated 17 years earlier that he had given Hobbs the cap found at the murder scene now changed his story and denied ever owning the hat. He still swore that he had been swimming with Hobbs and his sister two weeks prior to the murder but when the sister was interrogated in North Carolina she offered convincing proof that she had not seen her brother since 1943. Exhaustive lie detector tests given to Mr. X proved inconclusive.

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3409 S. Memorial Parkway Huntsville, Alabama 35801 Mr. X's testimony was crucial to the prosecution as he was the only person who saw Hobbs in Madison County at the time of the murder. Though everyone assumed Hobbs was hiding in the mountains, no one had actually admitted seeing him.

When the case went to trial on June 20, 1961, James Baker, Hobbs' defense attorney, entered a plea of not guilty by insanity. Reminding the jurors there was no evidence to connect Hobbs with the murder except that of a confession obtained during a "drugged state," he pleaded with them to examine the facts. He also reminded them that although the women who had been attacked the night of the murder had known Hobbs, they were still unable to identify him.

Macon Weaver, the prosecutor, asked the jury to sentence Hobbs to life imprisonment. Pointing to Hobbs sitting at the table he declared, "This boy would be happy to be institutionalized. The most cruel and inhumane thing you can do is to tell him to walk out that door. Where is he going to go to? What is he going to do?"

"Life imprisonment," Weaver continued, "would be as much





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compassion as punishment."

After deliberating for over six hours the jury reported back to Judge Parsons that they were hopelessly deadlocked.

Hobbs expressed disappointment at the verdict, stating that if he was not sentenced to the electric chair he would kill himself.

A retrial was held September 13 in Judge Parsons courtroom with Thomas Younger replacing Macon Weaver as prosecutor. The trial was much like the previous one, with the same witnesses being called and the same evidence presented. The only surprise came when Younger called one of the female victims to the stand and asked her to identify a 1943 photograph of Hobbs.

In a low voice that carried all across the courtroom, the woman identified the photo as a picture of the person who had attacked her. In seventeen years this was the only time identification of Hobbs had ever been made.

Later when asked why the photo had not been showned during the first trial, Younger pointed out that he was not the prosecutor in that trial.

After deliberating for a little over two hours, the jury found Isham Hobbs guilty of first degree murder and sentenced him to life imprisonment.

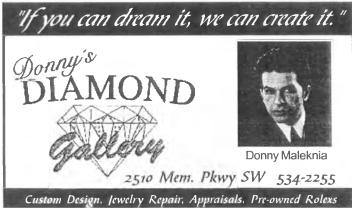
Isham Hobbs, though disappointed at not receiving the death penalty, expressed happiness at the prospect of being locked up for the rest of his life.

As Hobbs was being led away following the verdict, he paused briefly in front of Thomas Younger, the prosecutor. After eyeing Younger carefully, Hobbs told him, "Thanks."

Startled by Hobbs' comment and not used to people he prosecuted offering thanks, Younger









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"Now I don't have to worry," Hobbs replied. "I don't have to worry about getting out, looking for work or trying to make a living."

Isham David Hobbs died in 1969 of stomach cancer while serving a life sentence at Kilby Penitentiary.

Although it has been over a half century since the murder, questions are still being debated. Was the man whom people described as "gentle" really a cruel murderer? Who was the mysterious "Mr. X" who fingered Hobbs as a suspect? Why did Mr. X change his story years later? Was Hobbs really insane? Why did it take seventeen years before his photograph could be identified?

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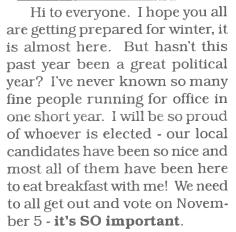
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Huntsville Coffee Talk

by Aunt Eunice

With pearls of wisdom contributed by the Liar's Table



We had lots of fun this month with people guessing the Picture of the Month. I think I had calls guessing every person running for office in the upcoming election, but finally a young fellow named Billy Wells said that the picture of the month was of Blake Dorning. Congratulations Billy! And come get your big country Ham breakfast!

You all remember our own Huntsville girl **Claudia Jackson** (Heaton) who is now living in Austin, Texas. Well she was here in town to visit her mother and she

never forgets me. She always comes in to see me and catch up and what's been happening. I keep telling her it's my molasses with biscuits (she loves that) and not me but she assures me she comes to see me!

My dear sister-in-law **Rhonie**Jenkins died this month. Our sympathy goes to her son JW and daughter JoAnn. And the rest of the family as well. I especially would like to say to Millie Kent Pike and her brother Elbert (Rhonie's brother and sister) and their family that I love you all very much.

I lost two of my long-time friends recently - Mr. Claude Green and Harold Pizitz. To their families I would like to say we love you all very much, and Mrs. Claude - we miss the Thursday morning visits. My deepest sympathy to you all.

We had some very distinguished visitors this past month-Cheryl Tribble came all the way from Atlanta and her mother Barbara Fortner came in from California. They sat at the Liar's Table which was appropriate since they received the prestigious Official Liar's Certificate. The ladies were the guests of **Tom** and **Cathey Carney** and they just loved their country breakfasts!

Here's the fun we had over this past month over country ham, biscuits and coffee. Bill & Doris (Ray) Hunter brought a group of family to breakfast in celebration of JB & Marie Anderson's 64th wedding anniversary! Among the guests were the Hunters' daughter Phyllis and husband Don Brown from Tennessee. Also there was Doris' sister Irene Asakawa from Portland, Oregon. Marie and J.B. make their home in Lewisburg, Tennessee. They all had a great time with me.

We had Political Day here and my dear friend **John Malone**

Photo of The Month

The first person to correctly identify the picture of this young child, shown below, wins a free breakfast at Eunice's Country Kitchen.

Hint: Her nickname in kindergarten was Hiwatha.





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Sandra Steele, President

came and interviewed all the candidates for a radio show - we had a lot of fun.

My good friends Ralph and Gwen Allred have been on vacation to New York and Canada they had a great time but we missed you!

Something great has happened to me since last month. My great friend Lee Sentell from the Madison County Convention and Visitor's Bureau met one of the Montgomery Bureau's representatives here for breakfast. But along with them were twelve British writers who were here from England, writing as they cross the U.S. about the places and people they meet along the way. Then on Sunday there were four more writers and the report is "We are Real People." Thank you Bud Cramer and Lee Sentell for arranging these wonderful visits.

I understand that some of Huntsville's greatest leaders through the years are not feeling well. Let's not forget these dear people - and I know many of you will recognize their names - Ray Pearman, Bill Penny, Alvin Blackwell, Woody Anderson and my dear Mr. W. L. Halsey. We need to never forget these great men who helped build our city many years ago.

Our friend **Brad Gashan's** mother had surgery last month in Birmingham. I'd like to say to **Mrs. Carol** and big Hello and hope that she is feeling fine.

So glad to see **Mr. Ellis Bedwel**l looking so good after a difficult time after surgery. Mr. Ellis and Brenda - we love you so very much.

We lost another great man to cancer this past Monday. **Mr. J. B. Whitaker** was one of the greatest Christian men I've ever known. He was an inspiration to lots of people and he meant so

much to me. Sympathy to his lovely wife **Carol** and his children - I know he will be missed.

How could you ever turn down someone who wants to work to start a Family Court here in Huntsville, like Billy Bell? How about a young man like Mark Craig - one of the finest men I know. Also Fran Hamilton, with all that experience she has? How about Blake Dorning with 20 years of experience in the Sheriff's department or Mac McCutcheon - one of our great Huntsville citizens. I think Lynda Hall and **Lynn** are both good people. Then there is Sandra Rhodes and Ray Swaim for Superintendent of Madison County School Systems. Our children are sO very important to us so please vote for your choice - our children today will be our leaders tomorrow.

Happy birthday to my grandson **Benjie Sledge**. Child you're really growing! I love you so much.

Well that's all for now. Please go vote on November 5 and remember I Love You All!

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Creamy Fruit Dip

1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened

1/3 c. orange marmalade 1/4 c. walnuts, chopped Milk as needed to make thinner

Mix all ingredients together, cover and put in fridge til ready to serve. Arrange fruit slices in a circle around the dip, which can be poured into a bowl in the center of the fruit. This is good with bread sticks also.

Quick Fig Bars

1 box pineapple cake mix (Duncan Hines)

1 c. fig preserves

2 c. nuts, chopped

2/3 c. oil

1 c. coconut

1 egg

1 t. vanilla extract

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees. Mix the cake per the box directions, add rest of the ingredients and mix well. Grease a 9 x

15" baking dish and pour mixture into the pan, bake for 30 minutes.

Dried Apricol Balls

1 lb. dried apricot

2 c. flaked coconut

½ c. sugar

½ c. frozen orange juice concentrate, not diluted

1c. vanilla wafers, crushed

Using a food processor chop your apricots finely, add to larger bowl. Chop the coconut and wafers finely in processor, put all ingredients back in processor bowl, add orange juice and sugar at the last. Process until well blended, then roll into 1 inch balls. Coat with additional sugar, place on tray and refrigerate til firm. Store covered in fridge.

Sweet Pecans

1 c. brown sugar

½ c. sugar

½ c. sour cream

l t. vanilla

2 ½ c. pecans

In a heavy saucepan combine sugars and sour cream. Cook to 234 degrees or soft ball stage. Remove from heat, add the vanilla and beat well til mixture thickens. Add nuts and stir quickly, spreading on wax paper before the mixture hardens. Break into pieces and serve.

Egg Nog

12 egg yolks

Pinch salt

3/4 c. sugar

1 c. rum

l pint whipping cream, whipped

12 egg whites, stiffly beaten

Nutmeg

Make sure all ingredients are very cold. Beat egg whites first, then whip cream in a separate bowl. Run water over the beaters, then beat the egg volks separately. Add salt and sugar slowly while beating. Add rum slowly. With a spatula fold in the egg whites, then fold in the cream. Pour into cocktail or brandy glasses and add a shake of nutmeg to each glass. Ever buy this in the store again? Forget it! This

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Roseanne

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will make about 3 quarts.

Oatmeal Fudge

1 square unsweetened chocolate

 $\frac{1}{2}$ c. sweetened condensed milk

1 stick butter

2 c. sugar

2 ½ c. quick oatmeal

½ c. nuts, chopped

In a saucepan slowly heat the chocolate and butter. Add the sugar and milk, increase heat. Cook for 2 minutes. Remove and pour over oatmeal and nuts. Beat well til cool enough to drop by teaspoonfuls onto waxed paper.

Christmas Punch

1/4 c. sugar
1/4 c. lemon juice
1/2 c. boiling water
1 pint cranberry juice
1 c. orange juice
1/5 bottle white champagne or
2 7-oz. bottles ginger ale

Boil sugar in water til dissolved, add juices, mix and chill. Just before serving, add the champagne or ginger ale.

Cheese Crisps

1 stick butter ½ t. dried red pepper

1 c. flour

1 c. grated sharp cheddar cheese, grated

salt to taste

1 c. rice crispies

½ t. paprika

Mix all ingredients thoroughly and form into small marble-sized balls. Place on greased cookie sheet, dip fork in flour and slightly mash each ball nearly flat. Bake at 325 degrees for 10 minutes, remove from sheet to cooling rack.

Poppy Seed Cake

l pkg. yellow cake mix

1 pkg. instant vanilla pudding 4 eggs

1 c. sour cream

½ c. cooking oil

1/3 c. poppy seeds

In a mixer bowl, place all above ingredients and mix well for 5 minutes. Pour into greased Bundt pan and bake for an hour at 350 degrees. Remove from pan and while warm, drizzle with Sugar Glaze.

Sugar Glaze

1 ½ c. powdered sugar 3 T. butter

1 t. vanilla extract

Warm milk to make a paste

Mix together the sugar, butter, extract and a bit of warm milk or cream to make a stiff paste. Spread over cake while still warm.



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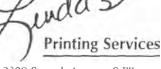


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B-26 Crashes Near Huntsville

by Charles R. Wells

On an early summer morning in June of 1944, 1 decided to go fishing. With Mama and Daddy's permission, I found my fishing pole, dug a can of worms, got my new (to me) bicycle and got ready to leave. I had celebrated my fourteenth birthday about three weeks earlier (June 2nd), and Daddy had scrounged together enough money (\$6.00) to buy me a Hienz 57 used bicycle. By this, I mean it had oversize handlebars, no chain guard, a 26-inch wheel in the back and a 24-inch in the front. I was always going downhill. I rolled up my right overall leg to keep it from being caught in the sprocket and headed over to one of my favorite fishing holes on Indian Creek.

After traveling about three or four miles, I had gotten to the hill on the west side of the creek and the north side of 72 Highway. I was pushing my bicycle along a cow path that ran about halfway up the side of the hill. As I was nearing the highway, I heard a huge explosion to the south and looked that way. It appeared that the whole end of Rainbow Mountain was gone. There was fire and a lot of smoke, and I could see trees falling from the sky.

I looked up and saw a plane (B-26 Marauder) coming toward me. It was on fire and smoke was coming out of the cockpit and the bomb bay doors. It was losing altitude rapidly as it passed over me and headed toward a cultivated field at the top of the hill. Its nose was down at a very steep angle and did not flare out before impact. Upon impact, the nosewheel collapsed, the nose of the plane dug into the ground, the tail went up into the air and a matter



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of seconds later, it blew up. The pilot had apparently dropped part of his bomb load on Rainbow Mountain.

I made my way closer to the crash site. The pilot must have radioed the base that he was in trouble because only minutes after the crash, the area was crawling with MPs, police cars and ambulances. Within minutes, they had formed a circle of guards around the site. There were several planes, flying around the area. Curiosity seekers began to gather on the highway but were not allowed to approach the crash site. No one questioned me as to what I may have seen. I was told to leave the area immediately. I guess a freckled face, barefoot boy dressed in overalls, carrying a fishing pole and holding on to a weird-looking bicycle could not tell them anything they wanted to know. An article in the Huntsville Times stated that the only witness to the crash was a Negro woman who could not tell them very much.

Besides myself, the



McMurtrie family, working in their field across the highway. were also witnesses to the crash. For whatever reason, none of us were ever questioned about the crash. I had seen the plane many times before. Almost daily, depending on the weather, it would come over the farm several times; always approaching from a southeasterly direction, pass over and then go on to the southwest. A few minutes later, we would hear the report of exploding bombs dropping on a mock village on the Arsenal. Sometimes it would be flying low enough that we could clearly see the pilots. We would wave and sometimes they would wave back or dip their wings to let us know that they had seen us.

The crash site is now occupied by Huntsville Memory Gardens. Perhaps a fitting tribute to the three men who perished there.





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Early History Of Huntsville

"Life Of The Early Settlers"

by Brig. Gen. E. C. Betts

The life of these pioneers was very primitive; they drew solely on the resources of the surrounding wilderness for their necessities and comforts. Their houses seldom had a piece of iron about them. The floors were of dirt, and in rare instances this was covered with puncheon. Even the hinges of their doors were of wood. The walls of the houses being built of logs.

Instead of fastening the covering upon roofs, with nails, lengthy poles were placed across the boards, and weighted down at the ends. Owing to the scarcity of adequate tools and hardware supplies, the houses were necessarily very small, one-room structures. The small huts served to house families, which, in many instances, were greatly out of proportion to their size, for be it remembered, in those days families were large and in this particular settlement, legend records that they were unusually large.

As families increased in size, and necessity demanded, rooms were added to the family hut, but without increasing its exterior dimensions-by the simple process of stringing up another buckskin curtain, which served to partition off the new room. The erstwhile "feather-tick," upon the bed was not one of the luxuries of which these early settlers could boast, at all events, the entire family could not; for the younger children were bedded upon pallets, and as the family continued to increase in numbers, the larger boys slept in the barn loft, and legend has it, even under trees and most anywhere.

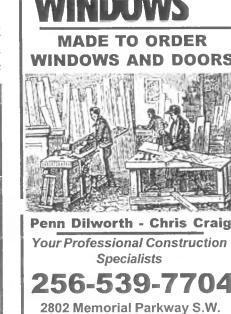
The prevailing table-ware was constructed of hewn wooden utensils, though some of the wealthy settlers possessed pewter ware.

For some time these pioneers lived a life of freedom from tilling of the soil, subsisting the while in sumptuous complacency upon the abundant provisions of nature. However, after a time they realized the unusual fertility of the soil, and then clearing of land was commenced, and corn was planted.

There being no grist mills at which their corn could be ground into meal, resort was had to the

age-old custom, in primitive quarters, of using a crude mortar and pestle, made by hollowing out a hard stump in which they pounded the corn Into meal. Little or no wheat was planted, and they lived for a time without flour; however, when the population grew, flour was shipped in from the trading station at Ditto's Land-





Huntsville, Alabama 35801



ing (Whitesburg).

During the first years of the settlement all supplies received from the outside world were transported in by pack mules from the settlements further north; later, practically all supplies were shipped from these settlements further north, down the Tennessee river, and put off at Ditto's Landing, about ten miles south of the settlement, and from there hauled in by wagons.

At this landing on the Tennessee an Indian trading station was operated by John Ditto, who lived there among the Indians of this territory, without white associates for some years before the settlers came into the north part of the county.

In due time, the cultivation of cotton was begun, and shortly thereafter the cotton spinning wheel came into very general use in the settlement. The yarn made therewith superseded in some measure buckskin, which was still in very general use as a substitute for cloth; the principle article of clothing being dressed buckskin. Prior to the arrival of cotton and the cotton spinning wheel, buckskin was used almost exclusively as bedspreads, ropes, sewing threads or thongs, as well as for many other and varied purposes. For a time, at any rate, the advent of the cotton spinning wheel, locally, did not supersede the use of buckskin as an article of dress, for cotton cloth remained a scarce and seemingly very precious article, as calico cost 50 cents a yard.

As a consequence only a few

"The word 'genius' isn't applicable in football. A genius is a guy like Norman Einstein."

Joe Theisman,

NFL football quarterback

young ladies of the wealthiest families could afford to disport themselves along the paths of the settlement clad in a calico dress, colored by boiling with different kinds of native barks, and shod with buckskin moccasins. Some few of the wealthier inhabitants could boast flax spinning wheels, with which clothes, table and bed linen were made in limited quantities for home use.

Things which we have learned to consider as every day necessities, such as lamps, were, with these early inhabitants only "medical" necessities, being used exclusively in cases of sickness. Gunpowder, the chief instrumentality for protection and subsistence, was made by the settlers themselves.

In summing up and taking a survey of the apparent hardships undergone by the early settlers, who traveled here from homes and communities furnishing more of the ease and luxury of the times, and far greater security of life; we naturally inquire, why did they abandon such homes and communities, and why, again, on such abandonment, did they choose this particular spot, the then furthermost settlement from civilization, and many miles away from their former friends and neighbors? In answer to these queries. we can only surmise. But, it is not wondrous strange that these people should have been possessed of the spirit of the times;



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that pioneer spirit which was so predominant. Having once gotten upon their way, it is still less to be wondered at, that they should have halted in their journey and built their huts around the wonderful "Big Spring," about which Hunt had spread the news when he returned to his home for his family.

Truly, this new Eden must have offered many and unprecedented inducements. Though surrounded by Indians, they were never molested. The surrounding country was well supplied with waterways; the streams abounded with redhorse salmon and trout; the forest with bronze turkeys, flocks of pigeon, and red and gray squirrels; and quail could be bagged by herding and driving them into nets; deer and bear frequented the river bottoms, and wild duck were plentiful. Truly to them, it must have seemed that nature had provided this spot with an unlimited wealth of resources.

In addition to these, many more inducements offered themselves to the large slave owners; chief of which was the fertility of the soil, upon which could be produced one thousand pounds of cotton to the acre, which was a prime attraction during these years, as the price of cotton was from 20 cents to 25 cents per pound. Perhaps an equally potent consideration was, here their slaves were never molested. If they escaped their owners, they

fell into the hands of the Indian tribes; if the tribe was hostile, they were re-enslaved and treated very cruelly; if friendly to the settlers, the fugitive slave was returned to the master.

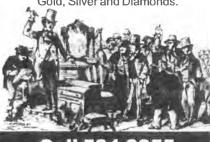
This was no minor consideration to the slave owner, especially those from Virginia, since, for some years their slaves had been decoyed away, and were escaping with annoying and increasing frequency. Nor had they settled in a country which offered no means of transportation; for as early, probably, as 1809, cotton, which was then being cultivated extensively, was floated on flat boats or barges down Paint Rock and Flint river to the Tennessee. On the return trip, these boats brought supplies.

"I was provided with additional input that was radically different from the truth. I assisted in furthering that version."

Col. Oliver North

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The Kildare Mansion

by Dirk Bauerle

Located on Oakwood Ave., the Kildare home has long stood as a historical landmark, reflecting the days when Huntsville was the home of rich, and often eccentric, socialites. The Kildare house was built as a summer home for Michael O'Shaughnesy, a wealthy northern capitalist who had many investments in Huntsville. Due to the home's huge dimensions, and unusual design, it took almost thirty years for the house to be completed. Unfortunately O'Shaughnesy never occupied thee home.

As the home neared completion, it was purchased by the McCormick family, who had become extremely wealthy through the manufacture of farm equipment. It was one of four other homes that Mr. McCormick

owned. The others were located in Chicago, Toronto, Maine, and San Marino. When this family came to Huntsville via train, they created so much excitement and curiosity with their wealth that the schools actually closed to allow the townspeople to watch the unloading of their opulent furnishings.

Mrs. McCormick resided at the Huntsville Hotel until Kildare was completed to her satisfaction. With other homes to chose from, according to the season, Kildare became the summer home for the McCormick family. A staff of twenty, many imported from northern states, worked full-time just to maintain the house for her visits. Large gardens were planted in a way so that plants would bloom profusely only when she was there. The house, even by capitalist standards, was massive and eccentric.

It looms four stories high, with 23,000 square feet contained in its four levels, including the basement. It features a central stairwell -so family eyes wouldn't have to be distracted by servants moving back and forth following their

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commands. There were many rooms dedicated to specific functions, such as a plant room, in addition to the traditional living quarters.

The McCormicks introduced Huntsville to the trappings of wealth. They brought the first electric car to the city and housed it in a carriage house built in the same massive proportion as the main house

Mrs. McCormick's Easter egg hunts became legendary, with real gold and silver eggs awarded for first and second prizes. In her later years, Mrs. McCormick became more and more eccentric, giving away parts of her house and its contents to any visitor who might express an interest in a particular piece.

Following her death, Kildare declined, passing through several owners and serving many functions, including being both a "hair

salon and a "head" shop run by "hippies." In the latter part of the 20th century, it was a rooming house with as many as 20 families living in it.

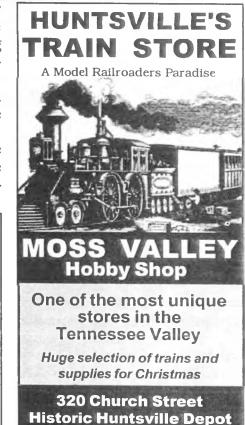
In recent year there has been a great interest in restoring the home to its former grandeur.

After all, how many people ever have the opportunity to live in a 23,000 square foot landmark?

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Official Orders

Report of Major J. Morris Young , Fifth Iowa Cavalry, concerning his command's activities in North Alabama

Camp near Maysville, Ala., November 18, 1863.

CAPTAIN: I have the honor to report that, under orders from Col. W.W. Lowe, temporarily commanding Second Cavalry Division, dated November 13, 1863, instructing me to thoroughly scour the country situated between the Memphis and Charleston Railroad and the Tennessee River from Whitesburg to opposite Decatur, and over that country. pressing horses, mules, cattle, sheep, hogs, wheat, &c., (to prevent them from being run across the river) for Confederate use: to capture and destroy all boats and ferries on the river from Whitesburg to Decatur; to break up or capture a band of rebels, supposed to be encamped near the Tennessee River, about the mouth of Limestone Creek, and to destroy or render unserviceable a grist and saw-mill in that vicinity and in the service of the rebels, I left camp early on the morning of November 14, with detachments from the Fifth Iowa, Fourth United States, Seventy-second and Seventeenth Indiana - in all. 400 men, and moving by a circuitous route across the mountains, leaving Huntsville to the right, reached Whitesburg at 5 PM., capturing 2 Confederate soldiers after a lively chase of some 4 miles, a drove of 29 young, fat hogs, and the ferry-boat which had just come over for them. Learning that the island above was used as a rendezvous for captured stock, I detached Lieutenant McCamant, Fifth Iowa Cavalry, and 24 men to proceed with the ferryboat and search it thoroughly. He returned about midnight with 25 head of horses and mules. The ferry-boat was then destroyed.

November 15, broke camp at daybreak and moved down the river some 3 or 4 miles below. Captain Bowman, Fourth United States, was detached with 150 men to make a detour northward, by way of Madison Station, down

the Memphis and Charleston Railroad, and to secure a position in the rear of Limestone Creek, guarding the roads leading out by way of Mooresville and the point



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opposite Decatur, on this side the river; while 1, with the remaining command, moved on down by way of Triana to the mouth of Limestone Creek.

At Triana, captured a sergeant (Confederate States Army), but found the ferry-boats (two of them) on the opposite side of the river, and saw rebels apparently guarding them; also learned that all boats below were, by Confederate authority, kept on the opposite side of the river and sent to this side only on certain preconcerted signals.

Patrolling the banks of the river, a skiff and two canoes were found. The detachment of the Fifth Iowa Cavalry was called on for volunteers to cross in these and bring off the ferry-boats. The call was almost unanimously responded to. Quartermaster Sergt. A.T. Phelps, Company G, and 11 men were selected, who, under cover of 25 sharpshooters selected from the Seventy-second Indiana, dashed across the brought off both the large boats without loss or accident. The information that all the boats below were on the opposite side of the river and also that a number were collected for some purpose over there and secreted up a creek some miles below, necessitated the idea of organizing a regular boat expedition. Lieutenant Cassell, Company 1, Seventy-second Indiana, and 30 men were selected, and with instructions to capture all boats where it was practicable and join me with them at the mouth of Lime-



stone Creek, where, should we be fortunate enough to find the enemy, they could co-operate in the attack from the river side. The boat party moved out into the stream, just beyond Triana. The advance chased a party of 15 rebels several miles, but their horses were too fleet for ours.

Arriving at the mouth of Limestone [Creek] I found no enemy there; communicated with Captain Bowman, who was already in position. Learned from him that he had chased a squad of rebels and been fired on in the rear by a small party, but in both cases the enemy's horses were too fleet. He

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(Captain Bowman) also informed me that the day before a squad of 20 and another of 60 rebels had passed down the road and crossed over the river to Decatur. Shortly after our arrival Lieutenant Cassell and party arrived with eight boats, some of them being 60 feet long. Having learned that Major Falconnet, with four companies of rebels, was commanding the post at Decatur,

I thought that with the eight boats now in my possession we could attack the post and bring off the ferry-boat without incurring too much risk; accordingly, organized an expedition to start from the mouth of Limestone, which is 5 miles above Decatur, two hours before daybreak the next morning. About 12 midnight the enemy commenced throwing up rockets, and continued some time.

November 16; deeming it advisable to be cautious and reconnoiter before dispatching the boat party, parties were sent out in all directions. At dawn the rebels opened on us a brisk fire of small-arms from across the river. A party returning from opposite Decatur brought information that two pieces of artillery could be seen across the river in position and covering the landing.

A prisoner captured by the same party reported he had been sent over that morning with small party; that General Roddey had been sent for, and was to be at Decatur by sunrise; that a portion of General Lee's command had already arrived, and that they had been entrenching on the upper and river side of Decatur since midnight. Another party reported seeing the enemy throwing up earth-works.

Rather amused than otherwise at so unexpectedly stirring up so much trouble for the rebels, I

deemed it not advisable to attempt just at that time capturing that only remaining boat mentioned in my instructions, and had the boat moved around from under fire of the enemy and up Limestone Creek, where they were chopped up and burned.

Having destroyed certain portions of the machinery of the mill referred to in my instructions, and which I found to be in the service of the rebels, grinding corn and sawing lumber to build boats, the command was divided into three separate detachments, and, with instructions to concentrate at Huntsville, moved out by different routes, leaving the rebels across the river still shoveling dirt, according to last accounts.

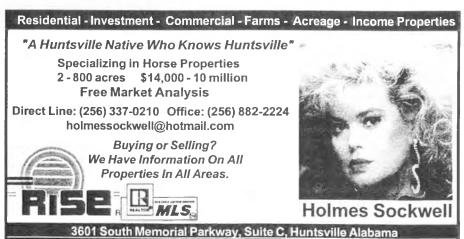
We had I man slightly wounded. No means of ascertaining the loss, if any, of the enemy.

Arriving at Huntsville, the Fourth United States reported having captured on the way 5 Confederate soldiers, 1 of them the

notorious Captain Robison.

November 17, arrived in camp here about noon. The country from Whitesburg to Decatur is bottom lands, exceedingly rich, and in a high state of cultivation; the plantations very large, generally from 2,000 to 4,000 acres each.

The crop of corn is enormous, and horses, mules, cattle, hogs, and sheep were in abundance as I passed through. Many who had their stock hid out or run across the river, had just had it returned or brought out, thinking the Yankees all out of the country. As the result of the expedition, we captured and destroyed 9 ferryboats, 9 Confederate States sol-





diers, one (supposed to be) a captain, and one a sergeant, and remounted the command with from 150 to 200 fine mules and horses, with a loss of 1 man slightly wounded.

Respectfully, your most obedient servant.

J. MORRIS YOUNG,

Major, Commanding Expedition.

Woman Takes Pre-Emptive Action Against Husband

from 1901 newspaper

Mrs. Ethel Olsen, formerly of England, and later of Huntsville, sent a pistol bullet at her husband in a crowded street near the courthouse here late Sunday, missed him and powder-burned a passerby.

She declares she fired to protect her face from a dash of muriatic acid which she charges her husband was preparing to cast at her. She was arrested and charged with assault with intent of murder. She tells a story of her husband's alleged cruel treatment of her and their children. It is a sad case which has the town inflamed.

Potato Cake

An 1845 Recipe

6 c. hot mashed potatoes 1/2c. butter 1/4 c. sugar

Grated rind and juice of a lemon

1/2 t. salt

1/3 c. soft breadcrumbs

8 eggs, beaten

1/2t. vanilla extract

1/8 t. each: ground nutmeg, ground cinnamon, ground allspice, ground cloves

Combine first 5 ingredients-stir til butter melts. Set aside to cool at room temperatures. Coat sides and bottom of a heavily greased 2-quart baking dish with breadcrumbs, set aside. Add the eggs to the potato mixture and mix til combined. Stir in remaining ingredients, mix well. Pour the mixture into prepared dish and bake at 350 for 45 minutes or lightly browned. Serve immediately.

Please attend the Veteran's Day Parade on Nov. 11

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In Remembrance

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- Douglas McArthur, 1923

WWI Dead From Madison County

Raymond Acklin, Oral Allison, Robert Bevell, James Arnold, James Burkes, Cecil Cochran, Percy Crunk, Alvin Colwell, Hugh Davis, Bryan Dutton, Dennis Fulkes, Horace Fisk, Herman Gentry, Clarence Gold, Dock Mill, Thomas Hill, Ben Hope, Oscar Lee, Charles Joplin, Jim Kirby, Jonas Logan, Albert Brannum, Peter Poach, James Lane.

Turner Mayes, Ben Maples, Ellis Moon, David Penland, George Rutledge, John Styles, Robert Wagger, Gray Martin, James Manning, Charles Moore, Robert Naugher, Ralph Prentice, Robert Strong, William Moore, James Thomas, William Well, Thomas Allen, Leslie Mason, Milus Payne, Horace Preston, Kirk Satterfield, James Stewart, Joseph Thomson

WWII Dead From Madison County

Isaac Denton, John Allen, Marcy Allen, Robert Alverson, William Archer, Raymond Arnold, Raymond Ashburn, James Ayers, Louis Baites, Fred Baker, Robert Baker John Batt, Claude Baugher, William Bell, Chester Bennett, Harry Benson, Milton Berry, Orden Blankenship, James Bolling, Claude Boyd

Terrell Braly, Morgan Brandon, Wallace Breedwell, Howard Britton, Cecil Butler, James Butler, Sammy Butler, Buford Byrom, R.E. Cagle, Thomas Callender

John Campbell, Herbert Carroll, William Caudle, Merril Chaney, Herman Clark, Herman Coggin, Ison Collier, Edd Cooper, Hollis Cooper, John Cooper

Robert Cooper, John Cowley, Carl Crabtree, Russell Craig, James Crawford, James Daniels, Arthur Davies, Robert Dickson, John Duncan, Robert Elders

Paul Ennis, Richard Ford, Leonard Fowler, James Ghidotti, Harry Gibbs, O.H. Giles, Charles Glenn, James Goins, Orville Good, Perry Goosby, Perry Gore, George Graham

Joseph Graham, Charles



Grant, Charlie Grayson, Morris Gullatt, James Gumm, Edward Harbin, Lenton Harbin, Roy Hargrove, Donald Harris, Thomas Hargrove, Louie Hatchett

Henry Hester, Harry Hill, Melvin Hill, Wayne Hollingsworth, John Hornbuckle, John Hughes, J.B. Isbell, Joseph Reubin, Luther Isom, James Ivy, William Jackson

Claude Johns, Nelson Jones, Theodore Jones, James Johnson, Paul Johnson, Paul R. Johnson, Porter Jordan, Harry Kennamer, Oscar Kimbrough, Wayne King.

Virgil Knight, James Koonce, Thomas Lamb, William Landers, Mac Layman, Ernest Lee, William Lee, T.W. Lincoln, James Lindsey, Lonzo Locke, Gordan Loveday.

J.D. Luna, Erskine Maddox, Hershal McCann, Anderson McCrary, Hubert McKelvey, John Miller, Marvin Moore, Riley Moran, Nolan Morring, George Moss, James Mount

John Myers, Walter Nayman, Hulen Norris, Benton Nunn, Andy Parker, Bruce Patterson, Percy Patton, Leroy Payne, Henry Peak, Ozro Pigg, Richard Pitts

Thomas Pitts, Ernest Potts, Virgil Powell, Lonzo Pritchard, Hurbert Pulley, Sam Ragland, Robert Rainwater, Alton Reed, Frank Rolfe, Nolan Sanders, Robert Scrimpsher, John Sharp

Joseph Shirley, Carl Sims,

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Leroy Suggs, Amos Tate, Glen Tate, James Taylor, Thomas Taylor, S.E. Terry, Wilfred Thompson, Albert Thompson, Shelby Tidwell, Austin Travis

James Tribble, Thomas Usery, Emmette Walker, Thomas Ward, William Warner, Hawthorne

I read somewhere that typical symptoms of stress are eating too much, impulse buying and driving too fast. That sounds like a perfect day to me! Watkins, Robert Webster

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The Mountain Road

by Jack Harwell

By a fortunate circumstance of geography, Huntsville lies at the edge of the great mountain range that stretches all the way to New England. We may not have a Mt. Mitchell or a Mt. Washington here, but the heights to the east of the city are ours, and are as instantly recognizable as landmarks of home as the Golden Gate Bridge is to a San Francisco.

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reational destination almost as long as Huntsville has existed. A century ago, vacationers could take a train ride from the depot on Church Street to a hotel on the mountain's western face. Then, in this century, a state park was established atop the mountain, along with roads to get there. But for many years, the lack of transportation facilities enforced the isolation of the mountain, and of the people who lived there.

People were living on Monte Sano as early as the 1830s. During that decade, one mountain resident opened a female academy there; little information about the school survives. Enough people lived on the mountain by mid-century to form a small town, named Viduta. Today only a street name remains to recall the long-ago village.

Those who chose to live on the mountain were, of necessity, an independent lot. Getting to Huntsville was no simple matter, even though the mountain folks could almost see the city from their homes. There was a road to Huntsville, an old stage road, parts of which can still be travelled on

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foot today. But it was long, steep, and torturous, and taking a horsedrawn wagon down the road was an ordeal. It wasn't tried very often.

The joining of Monte Sano and Huntsville began in the 1880s. At that time the city was enjoying a period of prosperity brought about by the opening of the textile mills. The North Alabama Improvement Association, which was made up of mill owners and other entrepreneurs, many of them Northern transplants, built a hotel on the mountain. It was placed on the western side of the mountain top, and offered a fine view of the city below. Opening day was June 1, 1887.

It had been the thought of the Improvement Association members to attract tourism to the mountain, and initially they were quite successful. Promotional literature made much of the health benefits of mountain living. One brochure contained testimony from four physicians claiming that maladies as varied as dyspepsia, indigestion, and nervous exhaustion would respond almost miraculously to the air and water on Monte Sano - the "mountain of health."

But getting to the mountain remained a problem. The old road was repaired in 1883 as a prelude to development. Indeed, the Monte Sano Breeze, the newsletter published by the hotel, wrote in 1890 that the mountain could be reached by "a fine macadamized road with an easy ascent." But some more reliable mode of

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transportation was called for, and thus the Monte Sano Railroad came about.

With the completion of the railroad in 1889, the success of the hotel seemed assured. But the developer's hopes were not to be realized. To begin with, some people had reservations about riding a train up the steeply sloping mountain side. The curves in the track were numerous and severe, to keep the grade of the road bed down to a manageable level, and the locomotives had to move at crawl speed to take them. Shortly after the railroad opened, a locomotive lost its brakes coming down the mountain and jumped the track. There were no injuries, but the accident provided the line with the kind of publicity that they - and the hotel operators - could have done without.

Eventually, the railroad went out of business due to lack of customers. The tracks were lifted. and the cross ties stacked in piles which could still be seen half a century later. Not incidentally, the hotel closed not long afterward, following the 1900 season. It was reopened in the 1920s but without success.

A quarter century after the hotel closed, interest in developing the Monte Sano began anew. A local group called the Mountain Heights Development Company began selling lots on the mountain. This time a road was built so people could drive to the top. It led from the Florida Short Route - the main road leading to the South in those days, now US 431 - to the vicinity of the old hotel. It





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opened on Independence Day 1927 and is today called Monte Sano Boulevard.

Then in the 1930s it was decided to create a new state park on Monte Sano, making the mountain accessible to everyone. Cabins would be built, so that anyone would be able to enjoy the privilege of a mountain vacation close to home.

Those cabins, as well as many other facilities in the park, were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps. Because of the CCC's involvement, the federal government had a hand in the park's development. One local developer later told how two men from Washington described the need for another road from Huntsville to Monte Sano. But where to put it? The man showed them the old railroad bed and they decided that it would be the perfect place for a "parkway." The road was completed In time for the park's opening ceremonies in 1938.

William B. Bankhead, for whom the parkway was named, was born in Lamar County in 1874. In 1938 he was Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, but at the turn of the century he had practiced law in Huntsville for ten years.

His office was located in the Schiffman Building, which still stands at the corner of Eustis Street and East Side Square, across from the courthouse. It was there, too, that his daughter, Tallulah, was born in 1902.

Bankhead's career was both distinguished and meteoric. The son and brother of U.S. Senators, he was elected to the state legislature at age 26. Ten years later, he became solicitor for the 14th Judicial Circuit. He was elected to Congress in 1916, and in 1934 he was made chairman of the House Rules Committee. The next year he became Democratic Floor Leader, and, a year after that, Speaker of the House.

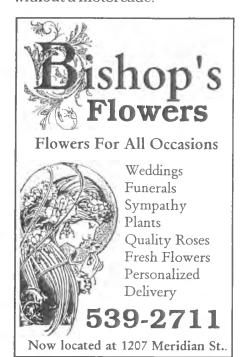
Congressman Bankhead was present at the lavish ceremonies that accompanied the opening of the Monte Sano State Park on Thursday, August 25, 1938. The affair was covered by radio stations from Huntsville, Decatur, Sheffield, and Birmingham.

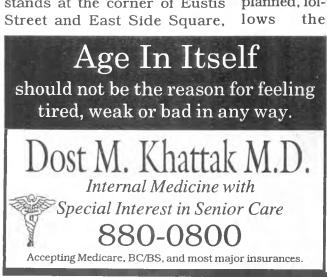
In addition to Bankhead's speech, there was a motorcade from the courthouse to the top of the mountain, and the whole affair was concluded in fine fashion with a ball at the Russel Erskine Hotel that night.

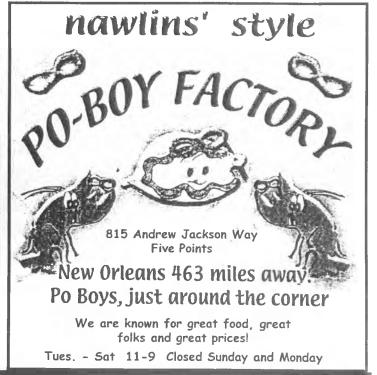
Today an engraved stone

marks the lower end of Bankhead Parkway. Much of the road, as planned, follows the

route of the old Monte Sano Railroad. Where the two digress, it is now possible to walk the route once travelled by steam cars, thanks to the Huntsville Land Trust. Part of the Parkway was closed in 1982 when the roadbed collapsed. Reopened in 1984 it had to be closed, again soon after, and remains so to this day. Still, it is a pleasant drive even without a motorcade.







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A Letter

Dec. 12,1942 Dear Mom,

I'm so sorry I haven't written to you in such a long time. I thought I would get to come home for Christmas but it doesn't look like I will now. I know I haven't a right to wish to come home before the war is over, but almost everybody who lost their ship in action, like I did, got a leave. I would have if I hadn't been wounded. They put me in a hospital here at Pearl Harbor with the other fellows who were wounded, and when we got well they sent us to ships and other places here. But no leave.

I guess I'm pretty lucky anyway, getting such soft duty, but I will never be satisfied here safe and letting some other felloe doing my fighting for me.

Mom, the Solomons battle was not the only battle I was in but I can not tell you anything about them. We sure gave the Japs h---before they got us, and I'm just iching for another ship and a gun to give it to them again.

Mom, I guess you think I'm getting bloodthirsty. Well, I'm not, I've just got a job to do, and I hope I can always be as good a sailor as some of my buddies that were killed.

Fighting like this gives a person a thrill that nothing else on earth could - being out there and knowing all your people are counting on us, and fighting for our great country.

I lost over a hundred and sixty dollars that I had in my locker when my ship went down. If I had that much money two years ago I would have died. But now that money doesn't mean anything, it didn't wortry me. I'm going to re-

vise my allotment the first of the year, so be sure to buy bonds with every penny you don't need yourself.

If you still have that picture of me and my buddies with whom I went through training, keep it safe for me, because there are only ten of us guys alive now and I wouldn't take anything in the world for it.

Your Son, J. D. Stovall

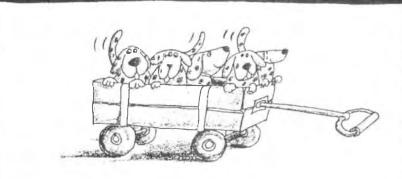
"It's no exaggeration to say that the undecideds could go one way or another"

George Bush, President

Some Advice To The Ladies

from 1890 newspaper

Never marry a man until you have seen him eat. Let the candidate for your hand, ladies, pass through the ordeal of eating soft-boiled eggs. If he can do it and leave the tablecloth, the napkin and his shirt unspotted, take him. Try him next with a spare-rib. If he accomplished this feat without taking out one of his own eyes, or pitching the bone onto your lap, name the wedding day at once. He will do well for you to tie to.



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Oh Brother!

by Carolann Bledsoe

My dad grew up here in Huntsville in a wonderful family. His mother provided for him and his brothers while his father worked as the foreman for the Huntsville Utilities providing for the family. But my father was known as quite a prankster.

On one occasion, as sibling rivalry goes, his older brother was taking a nap one afternoon: My father seeing this went over to him and tied his shoes laces together, then with fervor yelled, FIRE!!! Upon hearing that my uncle shot up out of bed and fell flat on his face. There was quite a scuffle after that!

On my dad's 70th birthday last year, family and friends gathered together to reminisce over tales of dad's escapades.

My dad's younger brother remembered that his mother went to see him one time at college when he was off at school. His mother,

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looking around the room at all the clothes strewn about asked, "Son, when do you wash your socks?" He said, "Well mom, when they stick to the ceiling, I figure it's about time to do the wash."

One of my favorite tales I was told happened when my grandfather had to work night shift for the utility company and slept during the day. Well one of those days, my dad decided to play a 45 on the record player. The song was Buttons and Bows.

He didn't just play the record, he put the needle down, listened to the words Buttons and Bows then picked the needle up, put it down again to here the words Buttons and Bows again, picked the needle up and did the same thing. He did this again and again. My granddad got up from his very disturbed sleep, came over to the record, picked it up and broke it over my dad's head.

Several months ago, I went on vacation with dad's first cousin. I told her of this tale and she said, "Yes, we were staying with your dad's family at that time and that was my record!"



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News From The Jear 1922

News From Huntsville and Around The World

King Tut's Tomb Found

Nov 26. In Egypt today, archeologists Lord Camarvon and Howard Carter opened underground doors that had not been opened for 3,300 years and found an extraordinary, priceless collection of antiquities in what's believed to be the tomb of King Tutankhamen. The Pharaoh was buried in 1337 B.C.

The British Egyptologists, working in the Valley of the Kings near Luxor, discovered the riches in two rooms next to the crypt of Ramses VI. At the bottom of a flight of stairs was a door stamped with the seal of Tutankhamen. The men gasped when they

opened it.

The first objects they saw were three gilt statues carrying beds carved from wood and inlaid with ivory and semi-precious stones. Inside a box they found embroidered robes, precious stones and sandals crafted from gold and painted with hunting scenes. The pharaoh's throne stood regally in one of the rooms. Nearby were two life-sized statues of Tutankhamen, four chariots and more furniture, most of it exquisitely carved and inlaid with stones. Word of the discovery spread quickly and guards had to restrain curious onlookers.

Local Woman Wins Mexican Lottery

Huntsville - Mrs. E. D. Kimbrough received word yesterday that she had won 27,000 pesos in a lottery drawing held in Mexico City.

Mrs. Kimbrough's brother had purchased the ticket several weeks ago while on a business trip to San Petros, Mexico and gave it to her as a token of the trip. He learned of the winning number while in Memphis and telephoned his sister immediately to inform her of the good fortune.

Mrs. Kimbrough is planning a trip to Mexico.



No Liquor On Ships

President Harding Orders Ships To Dry Up

New York - To the dismay of those in New York shipping circles, the administration has issued orders banniiig the sale and transportation of liquor on all American ships, public and private. The controversial ban, announced by President Hardilig, also applies to all foreign ships that enter American ports or sail within the nation's three-mile contijiejital limits. However, the liquor ban will not apply to foreign embassies within the country.

The United States officially became dry in 1920, a year after adoption of the 18th Amendment to the Constitution. The Harding administration order, however, is quite likely to prove a boon to Canadian ports, where no such li-

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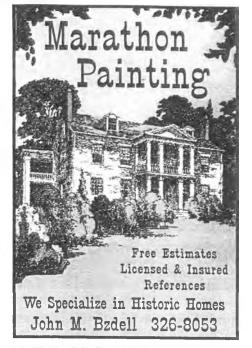


2215 Holmes Ave.

quor ban on domestic or foreign ships exists. The city of Quebec, for instance, can now handle vessels as large as those that now use New York City ports, but the Canadian city currently has only a modest amount of shipping traf-

First Woman Senator

Atlanta - Rebecca Latimer Felton, an 87-year-old Georgia widow, received credentials today as the nation's first woman United States Senator. While her appointment to succeed the late Senator Thomas E. Watson of Georgia is a historic first, it is uncertain whether she will ever be sworn into office. By the time Congress convenes, an elected successor to Senator Watson will have been chosen. However, Helen Longstreet, the widow of General A.P. Longstreet, has appealed to President Harding to call Congress back into sessionso that Mrs. Felton can take her oath.







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Growing Up On The Farm

by Chip Knight

I basically grew up in the city, but my uncle and aunt had a large cattle and cotton farm over in Limestone County, and a somewhat smaller one around Madison. So. I got to be both a city boy and a country boy. I learned to hunt on the Limestone County place, which was called the Fletcher place because it had come to my uncle from his uncle, a man named Shelby Fletcher. I do come from a strange family.

There had been bad blood between my grandfather, John Knight of Decatur and Shelby Fletcher of Huntsville. So, of course, John Knight's daughter and Shelby Fletcher's nephew insisted on marrying. Shelby Fletcher was into land and was not badly hurt by the Depression, whereas John Knight was pretty well wiped out. So, I grew up with money all around me but with none of my own.

As a young boy, I remember

that there were still several teams of mules on the place. One old man, General Washington, he was called, was known for his first attempt to drive a tractor. He got it started and then didn't know what to do. I was told that he was still yelling "WOAH!" as it finally ran into a tree and stopped. I also fondly remember Uncle Sonny, who was an ancient black man when I was a child. I don't know that he had ever been a slave, but he probably had. I do remember, though, that I could hardly understand the language he spoke. It was English, but it was really different from the way I spoke.

There was a fine old barn up by the main farmhouse, which, unfortunately, had been let go to ruin. There were several stalls in the barn, and overhead, there was a loft where grain could be stored. I was In there one day and discovered some bad dynamite, that had the nitroglycerine leaking out of the dynamite sticks. They had to get an explosives man out from Dupont to get rid of it. He burned it and at least some of it blew up, and he was barely far enough away, but he didn't get hurt. I did love to explore that barn; I could always flnd something interesting.

When they were finally ready to tear down the old farmhouse I got to explore that too, and I found a bunch of steel traps up in the attic. I asked about them, and it turned out that the red foxes had been trapped when they started





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getting out of coritrol. My uncle liked to fox hunt (ride, camp, drink and chase but do not kill the fox) and had seeded the place with them. Not killing the fox finally caught up with them.

I remember one night when I was camping down there, I was out trying to gig frogs and a fox, perhaps blinded by my lamp, came right up to me. And it is true, a fox den does always have two exits, at least the ones I've seen.

One day I was hunting on the place and was walking in the woods looking for squirrels and I came across an old graveyard, right there in the woods. There were just a few graves, and the most recent was from the 1880s. It was an eerie feeling, flitding marked graves out in the woods.

The only duck I ever shot, I shot on the Fletcher place in a woods we called the Chestnut woods because it had been full of Chestnut trees before the blight killed all of them. It was a cold morning, well below freezing, and

I slipped In next to the spring head of what becomes Beaver Dam Creek, and there were about ten ducks in the water. I was ill prepared for ducks, as I was squirrel hunting. But, game was game. I slipped in a little closer and the ducks flushed. I missed with the right barrel but downed one solidly with the left. Of course, he fell in the water. I had no dog; I had no boat; I had no proper clothes. So. I waded in and collected my duck and got soaking wet up to my waist in that cold air and then walked about a mile back to where I had left the car. But, it was worth it because I had my duck. Interestingly. in later

years I lived on the river over by Guntersville and we had ducks who lived there year round and who would come up to the house for handouts. I fed them, but I have not shot another one since.

Being in the country has had some profound effects on my life. I yearn for space around me even as I dearly love my neighbors. I also remember gathering hay in near 100 degree weather and running the tractor with one implement or another and that tempers my yearning somewhat. I suppose I would really like to have my cake and eat it too. I don't really know how to do that, but I'm working on it.





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News From 1904

Huntsville, Alabama

- Hon. Jere Murphy is having a new flight of stone steps laid in front of his handsome residence on East Holmes Street. Mr. Murphy already has the handsomest residence on that street and the stone steps will add yet more to its beauty.
- Butler Kyser Oil Mill has found a site in Huntsville. The plant will be located on the Karthaus Lot on Dallas Ave. near Southern Railway. After looking over all the available sites of the city and adjacent territory, the Butler-Kyser Oil Co. has chosen a location on Patton Street and Dallas Ave. across from the Dallas Avenue Baptist church and the Wade Mattress Factory.
- The site is one of the best pieces of ground for the purpose in the city. It is flat and near the Southern Railroad, which has already secured a right of way and permission from the city council to build a sidetrack from the main line along the short street running from Meridian st. to Dallas Avenue.
- The owners of the land executed a deed to the Butler Kyser Co. yesterday and the company will proceed at once to award contract in the building construction. The company expects to enter business by the time the next crop of cotton begins to move in.
- Hon. James H. Ballentine has purchased the law office of Hon. Robt. E. Spragins on Eustis Street. Mr. Ballentine was to have purchased the office of Dr. McDonnell a few weeks ago but the deal fell through at the last

minute.

- For rent for the summer months, a furnished home with 10 rooms, all modern conveniences. Help can be provided at a reasonable cost. Apply to 424 East Holmes St.
- Wanted six solicitors, ladies or gentlemen. Guarantee \$50 per month. Call Mrs. Annie Nippers, 211 Jefferson this week.
- Wanted good home to a house salesman. Good pay, permanent position with board for horse and buggy. L. A. Hipp, Manager 220 Holmes St.
- Mr. R. W. St. Clair, of Hurricane, was among the visitors to the city Monday.
 - Mrs. Robert Lyons died yes-

terday morning at her home in Huntsville after a lingering illness of two or three years. She had been a patient sufferer and having lived a consistent Christian life, did not fear death at all. Mrs. Lyons was formerly Miss Lizzie Noblin of Hazle Green. Her husband and one son survive her. The funeral will be conducted from the residence this morning. Interment will be made in Maple Hill Cemetery.

"Smoking kills. If you're killed, you've lost a very important part of your life."

Brooke Shields, interviewed for an anti-smoking campaign

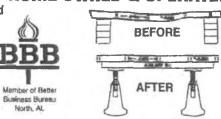


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Searching For A Ghost

by Cindy Stubblefield

Before I start my story, I want to tell you that I was raised to believe there was no such thing as ghosts or the supernatural. That sort of changed when I began working for a business office on Madison Street near downtown Huntsville. Some very strange events occurred that no one could really explain.

I recall one occasion, a co-worker was still at the office late one afternoon and everyone else had left for the day. When she went to clock out, she saw a gentleman in the kitchen, his back to her, looking out the window. When she entered the kitchen she startled him - he looked as surprised to see her as she was to see him - as she thought no one was left in the building.

He was wearing a dark orange suit that appeared to be from the early 1900's. Something made her shut her eyes briefly when she opened them he was gone without a trace. She remembered that for years later.

With our company, working on Saturdays was pretty common. I remember one particular Saturday two women were working alone in the office. They heard laughter coming from an adjoining room down the hall. When they went to investigate, they found no one but continued to hear laughing. It was really spooky.

On another Saturday I was working with 2 of my co-workers when we began to hear breathing and loud clinking sounds coming from the paging system. Since we knew for a fact we were there alone, this really made us jittery.

After some inquiring, we began to hear stories of a funeral home that had been in this vicinity - somewhere along Madison Street. But we never could find out any definite information. If some of the "Old Huntsville" readers know or have heard of this could you please let the magazine know? It was supposed to be close to the intersection of Lowe and Madison.

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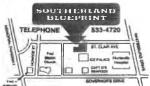
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Gone With Gauss!

by Art Pranger

The army enjoyed rifle inspection every day at 8:00 p.m. Rifles at that time consisted of Springfields and Enfields. The former a nice piece. The lafter a club that purportedly worked. The army also insisted on smooth operations at rifle inspections. The Springfield owners had no trouble. The Enfield owners had abundant. Namely the lieutenant would stand in front of you, grab the rifle, hold it up to the light after opening the bolt, inspect it and immediately shove it back to you and you were immediately supposed to clear the bolt — all in one faultless motion. Springfield owners did this faultlessly. Enfield owners had to push the follower down first and then close the bolt. This sounds easy but skinned fingers were common, not to mention the clumsy look which did not add to military precision.

But some brilliant PFC decided that before inspection if someone put a nickel in the follower, it would depress it just enough to close the bolt smoothly and then you would look like a Springfield owner. This worked fine.

Now for the point of this story. There was a guy named Gauss. He could neither read nor write. He came into the army with nothing and went out the same way, but in between he managed to make Sergeant ... honorary of course. Latrine sergeant to be exact.

One day he announced he had a girlfriend! He wanted to go to

town that night but had no money. So naturally he started borrowing. Nickels, dimes, anything to round up five bucks. Some of the boys went for it with dimes and nickels but no bills. They knew that Gauss thought borrowing meant a gift.

Now desperation forced his mind to work and it worked very well. About 45 minutes later his pockets were bulging and he grabbed his girlfriend and headed for the bus. All the guys said, "Hey, Gauss. Where are you going with no money?" He just pafted his bulging pockets. Be-

fore the light dawned among the on-looking men, Gauss was on the bus cruising out of sight. As one man, the group rushed to their respective barracks to find every nickel in every Enfield was gone - gone with Gauss!

He might have been ignorant, but he wasn't stupid.

Art Pranger was 19 years old when he was drafted into service. His son Larry created a web site, maintained by Art's wife Rose, with letters, pictures and memories of his war time experiences at www.private-art.com

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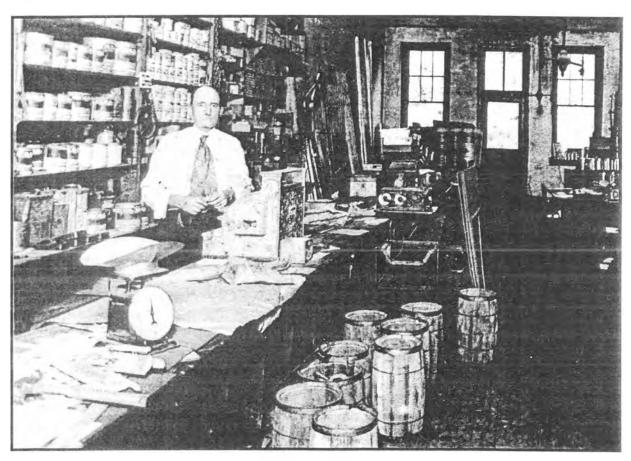
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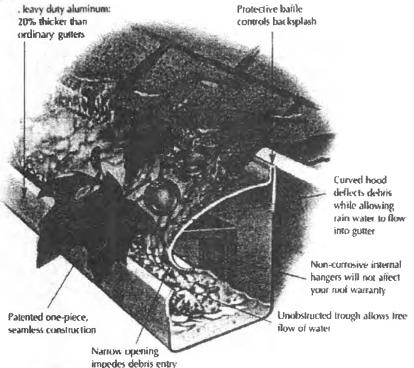
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