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## For The Love of A Woman

The love for a woman is one of the most awesome and beautiful emotions known to man. A kiss on the cheek can make the strongest man tremble and gentle words of endearment will linger in his mind forever.

But love, like so many other powerful forces in this universe, can quickly turn from being a thing of beauty into a dark and deadly force able to wreak havoc and death.

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# For the Love of A Woman

The love for a woman is one of the most awesome and beautiful emotions known to man. A simple smile from the woman he loves can make a man aspire to heights of greatness never before imagined. A kiss on the cheek can make the strongest man tremble and gentle words of endearment will linger in his mind forever.

But love, like so many other powerful forces in this universe, can quickly turn from being a thing of beauty into a dark and deadly force able to wreak havoc and death among the same people who once swore to love one another forever.

Some people say the fate of 35 year old Bernie Burnette was sealed on a warm summer night in Huntsville in 1977 when he first laid eyes on Irene Douglas.

"They were at this party," recalled Willy Stone. "Bernie was by himself and Irene had a date. You could tell she liked Bernie from the way she kept looking at him. Later on that night Bernie asked her if she wanted to go outside for a smoke. We didn't see either one of them again for days.

They just took off and left her date sitting on the front porch waiting for her to come back. Next thing I heard, they were living together and fighting like cats and dogs."

Bernie Burnette was no stranger to the emotions of love. He had already cut a wide swath among the eligible ladies around town, loving them and discarding them each time he met a new challenge. He had two children with a woman he had briefly lived with and was rumored to have had several more with other ex-girlfriends. There was also a dark side to Bernie Burnette, a side of violence, alcohol and drugs that had frequently led to calls to the police.

At almost six foot tall, with a stocky muscular build and an engaging smile, Burnette was considered by many to be an ideal catch for any woman who could tame him. He had grown up in Huntsville in the midst of a large and caring family before entering the Army and being sent to Viet Nam. While stationed there he began using drugs.

"When he got back," recalled a friend, "that's all he wanted to do. He just wanted to stay high all the time."

Irene Douglas was a vivacious and attractive young lady who lived life to its fullest and saw nothing wrong with dating several men at the same time. She was fiercely independent and



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would often boot a boyfriend out of her apartment only minutes before another one would show up to escort her to a party.

From the very beginning there was an immense physical attraction between her and Burnette that neither had ever experienced with anyone else. A short time after moving in together they got married and for a while it seemed as if the two lovers were ready to settle down to a life of domestic bliss.

But, like so many other couples who surrender solely to the pleasures of the flesh, their love was doomed from the start. Even with both of them working there was little money left to live the partying life-style they had known before. They began to fight and the arguments frequently became violent. Several times the police was called to break up the combatants and at least once Burnette was forced to seek medical attention after she clobbered him in the head with a golf club.

Burnette was still insanely jealous of Irene. The end came one night during a party when he accused her of flirting with another man. Grabbing her by the arm, he dragged her outside and began slapping her. Other guests at the party broke them up and Irene went home alone.

When Burnette got home several hours later he found his

clothes and belongings strewn across the front yard and driveway. In March of 1979 they were divorced.

The divorce hit Burnette hard. He said later that he knew nothing about it until after it was final. Unwilling to let her go, Burnette became a frequent visitor to Irene's apartment, alternatively pleading and threatening in attempts to win her back. Although Irene refused to live with Burnette, she was still passionately attracted to him and would often allow him to spend the night with her.

Life for Irene and Burnette might have continued on its erratic path forever if, on July 1, 1979, she had not met Eddie Fletcher. Friends who knew Fletcher described him as a tall, well-built man, almost six foot four and weighing about two hundred and fifty pounds. He had grown up in Huntsville but had moved to Dayton, Ohio years earlier. He had come back to Huntsville for a family reunion and was staying with his grandmother when he met Irene.

Irene was captivated by the well dressed man and his stories of living up north. She had always dreamed of a life in a big city but somehow it just never worked out. After meeting Fletcher, however, a new life in Dayton, Ohio seemed entirely possible.

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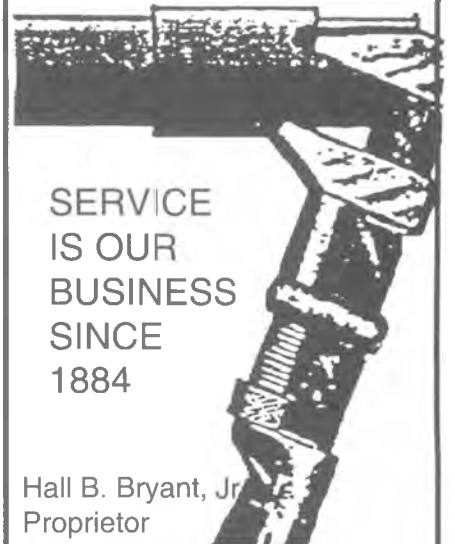


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Within days Fletcher and Irene had moved in together and Burnette, to his extreme displeasure, took on the status of a "has been."

When Burnette learned of Irene's involvement with another man, he was devastated. The fact that Irene would reject him for another man was almost incomprehensible to his muddled thinking. He began to consume immense amounts of alcohol hoping to dull the ache. Somewhere between the cheap wine, gin and marijuana he began to reason, perhaps as an extension to his own fantasies, that Irene had become a prostitute and that Fletcher was her pimp.

The morning of July 3 found Burnette sitting in a room at the Barclay Motel surrounded by empty liquor bottles. Sometime during the night he had decided that if he could not have Irene, then no one else would either. Fletcher, the cause of all the trouble, had to disappear.

Although alcohol can often make a man feel courageous, Burnette realized he would need more than a bottle of gin to confront someone of Fletcher's size. After getting dressed he drove to the home of his cousin and asked him to go with him to find Fletcher and have a talk with him. All he wanted, he explained, was for Irene to come back to him. The cousin begged off with the excuse that he had chores to do that day.

Burnette left and drove to the

Birdnest Apartments on Sparkman Drive where Irene was living. For the past several days he had been following Fletcher and Irene around town, studying their habits and letting his anger build as he watched the couple laughing and joking with one another.

After confirming that Fletcher's white 1968 Cadillac was still parked in front of Irene's apartment, Burnette left and went to the home of his sixteen year-old brother, Barry Burnette. The younger Burnette readily agreed to help his older brother and, after obtaining a pistol and shotgun, they returned to the Birdnest Apartments at about 11:00 that evening. Irene worked second shift at Automatic Electric so Burnette was reasonably certain that Fletcher would be alone.

After parking the car and slipping quietly up the steps to the apartment, their attention was riveted by a set of keys that had been left in the door. Fletcher had apparently come in late and accidently left the keys in the lock.

Burnette silently returned to the car where he retrieved a shotgun from the trunk. After motioning Barry to stand guard near the staircase, he used the keys to enter the apartment where he found Fletcher sprawled across the bed asleep.

The cold barrel of a shotgun jabbed roughly into his ribs caused Fletcher to waken with a

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start. After ordering him to lie on the floor, Burnette summoned his younger brother and told him to tape the victim's hands and feet together. While this was going on Burnette began making wild accusations, accusing Fletcher of being a pimp and demanding to know every detail of their relationship.

Suddenly Burnette's rage seemed to subside, and after untying Fletcher's hands and feet, ordered him to get dressed. Once Fletcher was dressed, his hands were once again tied behind his back. With Barry holding the shotgun, and Burnette a pistol, the duo ordered Fletcher out into the parking lot and into the front seat of his white Cadillac. Burnette mumbled something about keeping Fletcher as a hostage for a few days until he agreed to leave town.

Burnette drove the Cadillac and Barry followed in the other car as they drove to his house on Mercedes Drive. After ordering Barry to watch Fletcher, Burnette retrieved a short piece of rubber hose and a plastic anti-freeze container from the garage. Getting back into the Cadillac, Burnette motioned to Barry to again follow them as he drove slowly out of town to a secluded spot road near Homer Nance Road north of the Huntsville city

limits. The hour was approaching midnight and there were few people out and about who could bear witness to the horrible scene that was about to unfold.

Burnette parked the Cadillac on a deserted dirt road and once again began to confront Fletcher with accusations. His rage had built to a fever pitch during the short drive from town. Barry parked the other car and walked over to see what his brother was going to do next before being ordered to go back and wait in the car. An almost-full moon provided illumination as Barry watched his brother retrieve the hose and plastic jug and begin to siphon gas from the Cadillac. Once the container was full Fletcher went to the front of the car, and after opening the door, began to berate Fletcher again.

No one will ever know exactly what transpired between Fletcher and Burnette in those last few moments. Perhaps Burnette was merely trying to scare him or possibly his rage had reached a point where there was no turning back. Whatever the reason, Burnette abruptly ended the conversation and, as Fletcher watched helplessly with his hands tied behind his back, began soaking the car's interior with almost a gallon of gasoline.

Barry Burnette, sitting in the

other car, watched as his brother fished a cigarette lighter from his pocket. Seconds later an immense fireball illuminated the night, with the explosion knocking Burnette to the ground. Burnette's shirt caught fire and he struggled frantically trying to extinguish the flames. His hair was singed and his arm suffered a large burn.

Burnette got back in the car

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with his brother and ordered him to drive back to town. He was silent most of the way, only once breaking his silence to say he didn't mean to do it but "the dude made me mad." The reality of the horrible crime had began to sink in his alcohol-laden brain and he began worrying about covering his tracks. Directing Barry to drive to a car wash on the corner of Oakwood and Meridian Street, they scrubbed the car to remove any traces of the crime scene. The anti freeze container and the rubber hose, as well as Fletcher's shoes and car keys were tossed out along the road.

The two men then drove to a friend's house where they stayed just long enough to attempt to establish an alibi. At about 2:00 a.m they left and drove back to

Irene's home at the Birdnest Apartments. Burnette ordered Barry to stay in the car while he went to talk with Irene.

She had just gotten off from work at Automatic Electric and was expecting Fletcher to be at home waiting for her. When he was not there she was disappointed but not surprised. She had learned long ago how fickle men could be. When Burnette showed up at 2 in the morning, her first thought was that he had something to do with Fletcher's absence.

Burnette adamantly denied knowing anything about Fletcher's whereabouts. The only reason he stopped by, he explained, was because he missed her. Irene evidently believed him and they sat talking and drinking from a bottle of gin that Burnette had brought. Perhaps it was loneliness, or maybe the gin, but for whatever reason Irene was persuaded to sleep with him.

While Burnette was making love to the girlfriend of the man he had just murdered, the Huntsville police were already investigating the flaming inferno that had once been a gleaming white Cadillac. Preliminary investigation revealed a body in the front seat, burnt beyond recognition, leading officers to suspect

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**7. The Kennemer Book: A Great American Family**, by Woody Anderson Kelley \$60

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foul play. Although the fire department was on the scene within minutes, a decision was made to let the fire burn out on its own accord in order to preserve the crime scene. A trace of the license plates showed it was owned by Levon Fletcher who lived in the Greenbrier community. Lt. Joe Whisante and Sgt. Jim Tabor of the Madison County Sheriff's department was dispatched to question the owner.

Questioning by the investigators revealed that Levon Fletcher had loaned his car to his brother, Eddie Fletcher, to visit Irene Burnette, a woman he had been dating. Levon did not know of anyone who might be angry at his brother, except possibly Bernie Burnette, Irene's ex-husband. He didn't know Irene's address but told the officers he could take them there.

While the investigators were questioning Levon Fletcher, Burnette had finished making love to Irene and was lying in bed watching as she prepared to get in the shower. Irene was still bothered by the fact that Fletcher had disappeared so suddenly, and began to question Burnette

again.

Perhaps it was the wounded ego of a man lying in a woman's bed while being questioned about her boyfriend, but for whatever reason, the anger and jealousy inside Burnette once again reached a boiling point. He began slapping and hitting her and as she fought back he reached for a hair dryer and pulled the cord tightly around her neck. Seconds later her crumpled body lay in the bathtub as the last breaths escaped from her dying body.

Burnette, keenly aware of the murder he had just committed, wiped his bloody hands on the shower curtains and looked around the sparsely furnished apartment for any evidence that might tie him to the crime. Hoping to establish an alibi with anyone who might see him, he called

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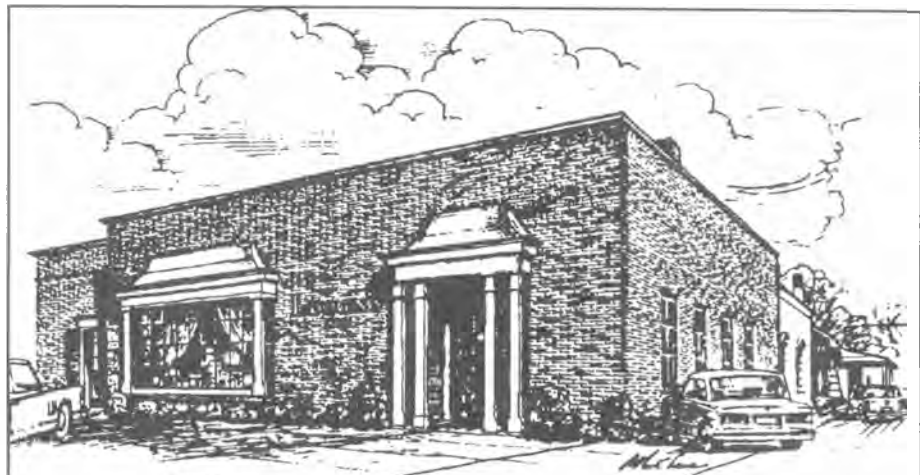
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out in a loud voice as he exited the apartment. "Don't forget our date tonight."

Barry, Burnette's brother, had fallen asleep in the car while waiting. When he woke up the sun was beginning to creep over the tops of the nearby hills. He had scheduled an interview for a job at Huntsville Manufacturing at 8:00 that morning and was worried about missing it. When he returned to the car, however, all thoughts of the interview vanished when Burnette explained what had happened. Again trying to cover their tracks, the two brothers drove to an isolated spot on Carter's Gin Road near Toney, where they burned the hair dryer and Irene's purse which Burnette had taken from the apartment.

About twenty minutes after the brothers left the Birdnest Apartments, Sgt. Tabor and Lt. Whisante pulled into the parking lot. Whisante knocked loudly on the door to Irene's apartment but there was no answer. Whisante questioned neighbors who told him they had heard noises from the apartment a short while earlier. Suspecting the worst, the investigators summoned the apartment manager

who used his passkey to open the door. The crumpled and battered body lying in the bathtub bore stark evidence of the brutal crime that had occurred just minutes earlier.

Still feverishly trying to establish an alibi, Burnette changed and dumped the bloody clothes he had been wearing when he killed Irene into a dumpster. Burnette was worried about the burns on his arms that had occurred when he torched the Cadillac. He had to have an explanation for them. They drove to his home on Mercedes Drive where he took a lawnmower and gas can from the garage. After splashing the lawnmower with the gas he struck a match and set it on fire. Seconds later he pulled his shirt off and used it to extinguish the fire.

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Satisfied with his handiwork, Burnette went to a neighbor's home and told them he had been attempting to start his lawnmower when it caught fire. He had burned his arms, he explained, while putting out the fire. The neighbor applied vaseline on the burns and wrapped them with gauze.

By this time, all the leads the police had pointed to Burnette as the chief suspect. An all points bulletin was issued by the police department describing the car Burnette was driving. Within minutes Burnette and his brother were spotted on Sparkman Drive. Both men surrendered meekly to the authorities and were separated at the police station for questioning.

Burnette was confident that his well laid plans would provide an alibi. Unfortunately for him, when Barry was confronted with the possibility of the electric chair, he had second thoughts about brotherly love and made a full confession.

When Burnette learned of his brother's confession he used the gauze bandages from his burns to attempt suicide in his cell. That too failed when an alert guard summoned help.

Barry Burnette and Bernie Burnette were both charged with two counts of murder. For cooperating with the authorities Barry's lawyer was able to get the counts dismissed against him. On January 7, 1980 Bernie Burnette stood trial and was found guilty of murder and sentenced to death.

In sentencing Bernie

Burnette, Judge Page said, "The deaths were brought about by insidious acts on the part of the dependent, evidencing a depraved mind and showing a complete lack of humanity."

The sentence was later overturned by the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals. At his second trial Burnette entered into a plea agreement and was sentenced to life in prison. He would have the rest of his life to think about a warm summer night in 1979 when an overwhelming love for a woman turned into something horrible and evil.

Barry Burnette, although he escaped the murder charges, was later convicted on an unrelated charge. He, too, is incarcerated in prison.




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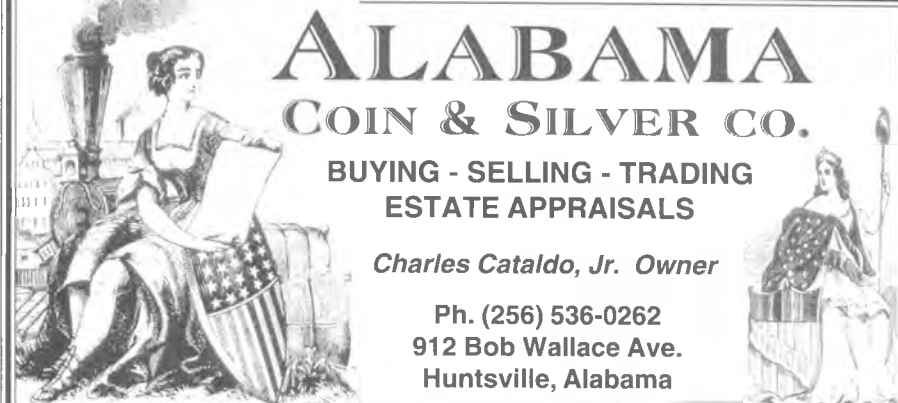
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**Sometimes Nothing Else Will Do!**

# News From The Year 1904

- Dr. John C. Stegar of Sharp's Mountain and Capt. John P. Harris and Mr. W. Young of Scottsboro, "Soldiers of the Lost Cause," were in the city yesterday to participate in the decoration of Confederate soldiers' graves at the cemetery.

- Dr. F. H. May of Birmingham is visiting the city. And Robert Chisolm of Birmingham is registered at the Huntsville Hotel.

- The Huntsville City Hospital was formally opened yesterday with a public reception and about 200 people attended and were shown through the establishment. Sherbet and lemonade was served to the guests by Mrs. Bolling and Mrs. White.

The hospital is one of the best equipped institutions of its kind

in the state and everybody who visited was so impressed. The operating room is complete in every way. Mrs. Brown is the nurse in charge and took great pleasure in explaining things to the callers yesterday. The hospital has been receiving patients for the past several days and a new one was taken in yesterday. July 16, 1904

- Lost - gray linen coat on Monte Sano Pike Sunday. Had four Portuonda cigars in pocket. Finder will be rewarded for return to this office.

- For Sale - Monte Sano cottage known as the Bob Halsey cottage, is for sale for \$750. Apply to Thompson Land and Investment Co. or the First National Bank.

- Lee Hyatt, a young man of Dallas, claims that he was assaulted by five men while walking on the Southern Railroad yesterday morning at an early hour and that they beat him unmercifully. He was attended by Dr. E. D. Burwell who found that his injuries consisted of a broken jaw bone, cuts on the head, crushed elbow and severe bruises on the side and back.

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Never hold a cat and a dustbuster at the same time.

Johnny Edwards, age 8

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# The Mailman

This may be hard for Huntsvillians to believe, but as German rocket scientists were preparing to move here to set up an arsenal that would change the world, our mail was still being delivered by horse and buggy!

Clarence Celia Powers, a mail carrier for the Huntsville Post Office for over 30 years, refused to change to the automobile and delivered mail to his customers by horse and buggy until he retired in 1948.

Clarence was a familiar sight to all on his route. He knew all his mail recipients by name and would often carry candy to the young children along his route. The children especially liked to run alongside his buggy until he would get out of their neighborhoods. On several occasions he had stopped to help people in distress, and was known to have a kind heart and a good sense of humor.

Having served several territories throughout Huntsville, his last route covered the area of Pulaski Pike and West Clinton Avenue. One of the few black men working for the post office at that time, Clarence was born in March of 1878 and was the youngest of five brothers. His fa-

ther was a farmer and a Methodist minister and Powers had always taken an interest in church work. When he wasn't delivering mail, he was usually found at the church. Powers' high school education was received at Central Alabama academy, located on Franklin Street.

Clarence became a mail carrier on June 1, 1917 after working for Chattanooga, Memphis and other Huntsville employers. He especially liked carrying the mail, he said, because he liked

seeing the same people every day. The fact that ladies along his route often times would have pies and cakes waiting for him just provided an extra incentive. For all the eating he did, Clarence was a tall, slim man.

The last day that he served,

**The rich would have to eat money if the poor did not provide the food.**

*Russian Proverb*

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January 27, 1948, was one of the most difficult he had ever experienced, due to the severe icy conditions of the Huntsville streets. His horse had gotten quite old by this time and found it very hard to maneuver the slick roads. There were very few days that Clarence was not able to deliver the mail to his customers. He had many friends, both black and white, among the people who knew him and respected him. Powers was recognized by the post office for all the years of dedication he had given by a dinner in his honor, and the gift of a beautiful pocket watch. Clarence Powers was 70 when he retired.

The new man who was to take over Clarence's route, when asked if he was going to use a horse and buggy replied he was going to use a "gas burner, not a hay burner!"

Upon his retirement, the horse and buggy were consigned to the county barn. Two months later, a group of people led by farmer Ben Lucas bought the buggy and horse and presented it to the retired mail carrier in appreciation of his years of dedicated service.

**"When she fainted, her eyes rolled around the room."**

**Seen on a local patient's hospital chart**

# A Sad Incident Near Maysville

*from 1897 Huntsville newspaper*

On Saturday morning last, Miss Nancy Rogers, daughter of the late Benj. Rogers, residing two and one half miles north of Maysville in this county, left home on a mule to attend preaching at Maysville. Some hours after, the mule was seen grazing in Perry L. Harrison's cornfield which lies between two roads to Maysville, one a broad public road, the other a more private road. She probably took the latter because it was more shady, and so the riderless mule was not sooner seen. Inquiry was made in Maysville whether she had been there, and no one had seen her. Search for her was then begun by a hundred or more persons (it is said), through the field and elsewhere till a late hour at night and renewed Sunday morning. About 12 a.m. she was found lying in the cornfield with her skull broken over the left eye and unconscious. She was removed and doctors sent for. Dr. Fleming Jordan performed the operation of trephining and said she might recover if inflammation did not set in.

Two men were arrested on suspicion of assault with intent to rob her, and one of them having told the searching party that there was no use in looking for her in the field strengthened the suspicion, as she was found there; and there was talk of hanging him. But the doctors and others concluded from the nature of the wound and the vicious traits of the mule and its tracks that Miss Rogers had dismounted and the mule got away and jumped over the fence into the field and when Miss Rogers walked behind it to catch it, kicked her. So, the men were discharged.

Yesterday, we learned that Miss Rogers was still unconscious and had only spoken once, exclaiming, 'Oh, Lord!' She exhibited restlessness but hopes were still had for her recovery.




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# Heard On The Street

by Cathey Carney



Congratulations to **Gale Nichols** of Huntsville who correctly guessed the Photo of the Month last month. It was none other than the famous **Lee Ann Lancaster** of **Furniture Factory** fame. We had many calls on this one, with callers guessing everyone from the **Mayor** to **Nancy Van Valkenburg** to **Aunt Eunice**.

We were so saddened to hear of the death of **Byron Laird**. He was a Huntsville treasure who will never be replaced. Our love and sympathy goes out to his wife of over 50 years, **Tillie Laird**. Bryon was well known for his sense of humor and used to answer the phone by saying, "Hello, this is Tillie's husband!"

It was good to see **Lynda Hall** the other day. Lynda is the Madison **County Tax Assessor** and is sure a hard-working lady.

We saw our friend **Tommy Huskey** recently who was looking for some heavy equipment to use in building his model train set. He was wearing a "**Mary Jane Caylor for Mayor**," button.

Congratulations to **Tom** and **Donna Gurley** who are celebrating their 7th anniversary in May. Trust me, it gets better every year!

Our good friend **Ann Price** has not been feeling too well lately - get well and come see us!

Congratulations to **Kathy Heckman** on the birth of her beautiful grand daughter **Magdeline Ann** on April 5. We know you are so proud!

Best wishes go out to **Chuck Saunders'** mother who may have to undergo gallbladder surgery.

A group of friends tried out the new club/eatery **Black Water Hatties**, owned by **Margaret Poole** and **Danny George**, and had a really good time. One of the people there was **Tom Whitney**, Ret. U.S. Army. He's originally from Pittsfield, MA. and says he's a "Yankee who loves Huntsville and the South." **Renee** and **David Nunn** were there looking good, also **Jannon LaRue** who recently moved to Huntsville from Athens Al.

Our sympathy goes out to the family and friends of **Keith Beal**. He was a very well-known guitar player for the band **Hot Rod Otis** when he died recently, at a very young age.

It was good to see **Glenn Watson** and his family recently. Glenn's son-in-law **Ken Ward** works at one of our favorite barber shops - **Jackson Way Styling Salon** on Andrew Jackson.

We saw our buddy **Benny Little** and his sweet wife **Nancy** a couple days ago. They're looking good. Nancy is about to retire after teaching school at East Clinton for thirty years!

We were saddened to hear about the death of **Tom Guthrie**, the right hand man of **Woody Anderson Ford**. He had stopped by the office many times in the past and we were always fascinated by his stories.

Congratulations to **Stella Musick** and her sweetie **Jim** who are celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary. They say every year is better than the last!

Mayorial canadate **Parker Griffith** stopped by the office recently to talk politics. He is an impressive man and will make the mayor's race interesting.

We were so sorry to learn of

## Photo of The Month

The first person to correctly identify the pretty girl shown below wins a year's subscription to "Old Huntsville" magazine.

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**Hint:** This lady is up to her ears in history



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the death of **Bill Mitchell**. He left behind a loving family and many friends. He will be missed.

**Louise Avery** held a "Welcome the Twins" party for her daughter **Dawn** and **Dan Schmit's** new twin boys, **Jacob** and **Jeremy**. They, of course, slept through the entire event but the adults had a great time!

**Mike Kaylor**, of the **Huntsville Times**, stopped by the office a couple of weeks ago. He sure is proud of his kids. Just ask him!

We saw a lot of friends at a recent auction. **Mr. Bill Miller** of Miller & Miller was there, trying to stay out of the hot sun. Then we saw **Cecil Ashburn**, **John Ashburn**, **Robert Madison**, and **Blake Dorning** along with many others. **Tom Newby** helped conduct the sale.

Hello to **Doc Daniel Skinner!** He is one hard-working man!

Congratulations to **Patricia Bratcher**, agent with New York Life Insurance Co., who along with **James McCoy** and **Sam Brentnall** is opening a brand new office on Florence Blvd. in Florence, Ala.

We saw our dear friends, **Louie** and **Jane Tippett** recently. Jane is one of the sweetest people we know, and Louie's not bad, either!

A big hello to our friend **Jerry Murphy**, of Cedarville, Illinois. His grandfather, **Jere Murphy**, was Huntsville's mayor around 1900.

When we stopped by **Five Points Restaurant** the other day for lunch we were happy to run into **Art Wikle**. It was good to catch up with him again. He told us he has gone back to school to get his degree. Congratulations!

A small bird told us the other day that **Joanne Randolph** will soon be celebrating a milestone birthday - we don't want to say how many but let's just say it's between 49 and 51. Her hus-

band **Norm** says she sure gets better with age!

We want to send out a big hello to our friends **Bob** and **Judy Rothe** who visited Huntsville early in the year from Colorado. They absolutely fell in love with our city. Some people they met here were **Barbara Lauster** at the Weeden House, and "**Red**" **Williams** who lives at a retirement home in south Huntsville. They were amazed by 21-year old **Cameron Carpenter** who improvised an entire symphony based on 3 hymns at the Episcopal Church of the Nativity.

Our good friend, **Arnold Hornbuckle**, stopped by the office recently. That man is a walking history book when it comes to Huntsville. We could sit for hours and listen to his stories.

We said hello to **Lynn Cawthon** recently, of Somerby at Jones Farm. **Annie Rausch**, who lives at Somerby, recently had a bad fall and we send best wishes to her for a good recovery.

Well that's all for this month, but just keep remembering how lucky we are to live in a wonderful city like Huntsville, Alabama.

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## Bench & Bar Favorites

### Quick Cheese Drops

- 1 c. flour
- 4 T. butter
- 2 t. baking powder
- 1 c. sharp Cheddar cheese, shredded
- poppy seeds

Cut butter into flour as in making pastry. Mix in cheese, stir in 1/2 cup ice water til all is moistened. Drop by teaspoonfuls on greased baking sheet. Bake at 450 degrees for 8-10 minutes and lightly browned. Serve very hot, recipe can be doubled.

Anne Mitchell, Esq.  
Birmingham, Al.

### Maggie's Monkey Biscuits

- 2 T. butter
- 1/2 c. molasses
- day old biscuits

Put butter and molasses into skillet. Heat slightly and drop in biscuits. Fry both sides

and serve hot.  
Jeff Utsey, Esq. Butler, Al.

### Beef Chowder

- 1 1/2 lb. ground beef
- 1/2 c. onions chopped
- 1/2 c. celery chopped
- 1/3 c. green bell peppers chopped
- 2 - 10.5 oz. cream of celery soup
- 2 - 14.5 oz. Hunt's whole tomatoes
- 1 - 17oz. can whole kernel corn
- 1/4 c. parsley snipped

Cook beef, celery, onion and pepper til meat is browned. Drain, then add remaining ingredients and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Simmer covered for 30 minutes. Pour into containers or Ziploc bags and freeze.

Before serving, heat soup. covered, about 30 minutes, stirring often.

Robert E. Willisson, Esq.  
Huntsville, Al.

### Quick Clam Chowder

- 1 can cream of celery soup
  - 1 can cream of potato soup
  - 1 pt. half and half cream
  - 1 can minced clams
  - salt/pepper to taste
- Mix all ingredients well and heat to serve.  
Sherry Collum-Butler, Esq.  
Florence, Al.

### Judge Bell's Pickled Eggs

Pickling juice:

- 1 3/4 c. white vinegar
- 3/4 c. water
- 1/2 t. salt
- 1/4 t. garlic salt
- 5 peppercorns - whole
- few dill seeds
- few coriander seeds
- few mustard seeds
- sprinkle of red pepper
- sprinkle of celery salt
- 18 hard-boiled eggs

Put pickling juice over eggs in appropriate jar or container. Let pickle for at least 7 days in



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the refrigerator. Eat with salt, pepper and Louisiana hot sauce. *Note - these were Aunt Eunice's favorites.*

Judge William K. Bell, Huntsville, Al.

### Brown Almond Rice

1 - 10 1/2 oz. Campbell's beef consomme soup

1 - 10 1/2 oz. Campbell's French onion soup

1/2 stick butter

1 sml. pkg. slivered almonds (about 2 oz.)

1 c. white rice

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Put all ingredients in a 1 1/2 quart casserole dish. Bake at 350 degrees for an hour. Stir once in about 30 minutes.

Bob Robertson, Esq. Huntsville, Al.

### The Judge's Fried Shrimp

3 c. milk

1 c. white wine or vinegar

1/4 t. bitters

3 t. garlic powder

3 t. onion powder

1 t. Louisiana hot sauce

Large fresh shrimp, peeled

In a bowl mix together all ingredients except shrimp. Marinate the shrimp in the milk mixture for 3-4 hours. Bread shrimp in pancake flour and deep fry at 365 degrees for about 8 minutes.

Judge William Bell, Huntsville, Al.

### Bourbon Roast

1 rump or sirloin tip roast

5 oz. soy sauce

1/4 c. bourbon

1/4 c. water

3 T. lemon juice

3 T. Worcestershire sauce

3 T. cooking oil

Place roast in a deep glass bowl. Mix the remaining ingredients together and pour over roast and let marinate for 2 hours. Place roast and sauce in oven in a pot and cook covered for 2-3 hours at 350 degrees.

Jack Livingston, Esq. Scottsboro, Al

### Starving Law Student's Casserole

1 lb. ground beef

1 can red beans

1 onion - chopped

1 bell pepper - sliced

1 can sliced mushrooms

1 box Jiffy cornbread mix

Brown beef in skillet, drain. Mix in red beans, onion, bell pepper and mushrooms. Simmer for 2-3 minutes. Prepare Jiffy cornbread mix according to package directions. Put beef mixture in 8x8-inch casserole dish and top with cornbread mix. place in 350 degree oven til cornbread is done - about 25 minutes.

Robert H. McCaleb, Esq. Huntsville, Al.

*These recipes taken from the cookbook "May it Please the Palate - Volunteer Lawyers Programs, Legally Delicious Recipes" available by calling your local Legal Aid Services.*

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# Growing Up In Big Cove

by William Sibley

I was born in December of 1939, so my growing up years were mostly in the 1940s and 1950s. There were five boys and five girls in my family and all but one sister lived into middle age and seven of us are still surviving. My family grew up on the south side of Highway 431 and on the west side of Old Big Cove Road. It is unbelievable what things we have seen happen near our home and it is better to leave unwritten some of the things we have witnessed.

It is difficult to know where to begin when writing about the things that occurred in my earliest years. When I was about four years old and my sister, Sherrie, was about three, Daddy and our oldest brother, Donald, went to the mountain behind our house and robbed a bee tree. They brought quite a bit of honey home and warned us that bees were still in the honey and not to stick our hands into the bucket until the bees were taken out. We disobeyed and both of us got stung.

My school days at Big Cove have always had very good memories in my recollections. It is hard to put into the correct

order the things that occurred in my school days, so if the reader recognizes that some of those recollections seem to be slightly out of order, the reader is probably correct. The Big Cove School that I attended for grades one through eight beginning in 1946 had four classrooms and four teachers, including the principal, who usually taught 3 grades and served as the coach. One room, the one which usually was the third and fourth grade classroom, was smaller than the other rooms. I learned from Aunt Stella many years earlier that the smaller room had been a music room at Camp Ground School and that several students, including Aunt Stella, had taken music in that room.

The fifth and sixth grade classroom was separated from the seventh, eighth, and ninth classroom by collapsible doors, which when opened, would become a small auditorium. There were cracks between those folding doors and students would peek through those cracks or send notes to their friends when the teachers were not looking.

When I reached the ninth grade, we had a new building,

and we got many new students from the Owens Cross Roads School district. We had only three boys and three girls, a to-

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tal of six eighth graders, but when the new students from the Owens Cross Roads district were in our ninth grade, we had ten pupils.

It was July of 1946 and I had become six years old in December of 1945 and I was riding the school bus and headed to school for my first day. I could hardly wait to start to school. Aunt Stella was scheduled to teach the first and second grades for the summer term and would return to Lincoln School in Huntsville in the fall. We always had split sessions during my twelve years of grade school. Those split sessions were necessary because farmers needed child labor to pick cotton and pull corn, which will be explained later.

There were five of us siblings on the bus the day I started to school, including Bobby, James "Sib," Ann, Raye (in high school), and me. Aunt Stella was riding the bus to school with us. The next stop after picking us up, was at the Louis Broad home, where his children, Beryl and Floyd, were waiting for us at the bridge behind the Broad home.

After picking up Beryl and Floyd, the bus would not move forward one inch. Mr. John Hucks, our driver, tried desperately to move the bus forward, but all of his work was in vain. He did, however, get the bus into reverse and we inched backward

very slowly, stopping quite often as Mr. Hucks tried desperately to get us going forward again. The smaller kids began to yell that we were going into a ditch. Since the warning had not been sounded by older pupils, Mr. Hucks kept moving the bus backwards. Suddenly, Bobby Walker (Son of Almon "Dude" Walker and Vera Mae Lanier), a larger pupil in junior high school, yelled, "We're going into a ditch." Mr. Hucks stopped the bus and waited until he could be rescued by Mr. Percy "Uncle Perce" Ellett, the other Big Cove driver, who had to complete his runs before he could help Mr. Hucks.

Later that day, mechanics from the county's work garage came to the scene and got the bus going again. Uncle Perce delivered the high school pupils to Gurley as Mr. Hucks waited for the mechanics to get his bus going again. The bus always broke down on the first day of school

when I was a student.

In the meantime, Leon Moore, a neighbor, came to the scene and picked up Aunt Stella

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and me, and took us to school. My other siblings and many of the other students walked to school, but because of my size and age, Aunt Stella would not let me walk.

We took a new route to school after that first day. We caught the bus at the store that was next to our house and headed south on Highway 241 (presently 431) and turned west (right) onto Campground Road. We had to go south onto Old Big Cove Road, but the turn was so sharp that Mr. Hucks created a new road by turning left into a rugged field and passing by Charlie Moore's hog pen. That ride was very rough and bouncy, but we kids enjoyed it very much with the exception of a girl from the Dug Hill area, who would scream each time that we took that ride to and from school. The pupils between Campground Road and Highway 241 (431), who lived on Old Big Cove Road, would meet the bus between the homes of Charlie Moore and Mervin Broad.

The route from Old Big Cove Road to Highway 241 (431) had

to be changed because the bus was not able to climb the hill where Buford and Dorothy Ann Broad now live, and on rainy or snowy days, the bus would usually slide into a ditch.

Upon arriving at Big Cove School for the first day of my first day of school by way of riding with Leon Moore, I saw that the grass was about 12 to 15 inches high and looked as if it had not been mowed all summer. Cowitch vines were growing up the main building, the garage, the well shed and the boys' and girls' outhouses, and the vines were in full bloom. Boys were stirring up wasps nests and running and the girls were screaming because the wasps were flying all over the place. That scene was repeated each year of the first day of school, and I became one of those who stirred up the wasp nests.

It was very amusing to see boys fleeing from the wasps and brushing their hair frantically to make sure that no wasps were present on their heads. I would learn later that wasp stings can

be very dangerous, but we were so taken by the comedy of stirring up the nests and seeing the reactions of the pupils that we did not know that we could have been in danger. Stirring up wasps' nests seemed to be a ritual of the first day of school.

Aunt Stella was the first and second grade teacher; Ira Mae

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and Grace Drake, sisters, were the third and fourth grade and fifth and sixth grade teachers, respectively; Mr. Clyde Connally taught the seventh, eighth and ninth grades, and was principal and coach. The three lady teachers were there only for the summer term and would be returning to their usual school in the fall, which will be explained later. Mr. Connally remained for the full year.

The Drake sisters were excellent teachers and were related to the Big Cove Drakes, but had grown up in the Nebo community, east of New Hope. A 1904 student body picture of Nebo's pupils shows both of those sisters as students in 1904.

The Drake sisters were very precise and particular. They wore galoshes to school during the summer. Grace always did the driving, but according to a Drake relative, Ira Mae was the navigator, always telling her sister about road conditions, and how close they were to the curb when they were parallel parking.

Uncle Perce got us first and second graders to pull up the grass by hand that was growing between the garage and the main building, telling us that the Drake sisters did not want to get their feet wet as they left the garage and walked to the school, only a few yards apart. We did a

good job and Uncle Perce gave us a new, yellow pencil for our labors.

I was told later that the Drake sisters bought their car during the World War II era and that cars were very scarce, so their buying a new car was quite rare. They kept their car immaculately clean and were the only teachers who ever used the garage as far I can recall. Also, Grace always wore gloves when driving.

I had a very good summer session and was somewhat saddened at learning that school was coming to a close. Aunt Stella, Ira Mae and Grace Drake, took us pupils, grades one through six, to the playground and let us have free play and told us that at the end of the play time we would have a surprise. We learned that Uncle Perce would bring the surprise before school would be out, but that is all of the information that the teachers would tell us.

Uncle Perce, in addition to driving the school bus, clerked in Leonard Taylor's Store and would return to school a few minutes after 2 P.M. each day to drive his bus in the after-

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noon run. He drove a small blue, late 1920s or early 1930s coupe and we saw that car immediately after he left Taylors' store. We ran to tell our teachers, who told us to be seated and we would soon receive our surprise.

Uncle Perce handed a box each to Aunt Stella and to Ira Mae and Grace Drake. The boxes had little holes in the sides and the pupils began to suspect and announce that we were going to get baby chicks or baby chickens, as we called them, for our surprise. Instead, we got popsicles, a rare treat for country students in the middle 1940s, but we would have welcomed a baby chick as well. I have thought many times since that day in 1946 how it was typical of farm children, which most of us were, to want a baby chick from our teacher.

School resumed in late fall when our cotton was picked and most of our corn had been pulled and we could be spared to re-

turn to school. My new teacher was Miss Lola Moon, a very young teacher from Owens Cross Roads. We immediately liked her. She was an excellent pianist and taught us some very clever games and songs, using the piano many times as a part of those activities.

One thing I recall about Miss Moon was that she would move about the room and help slower pupils individually in arithmetic and reading, and suddenly she would exclaim, "There go my hose!" We never knew what she meant and it was quite by accident that I discovered what she meant.

About noon of that day, we had a knock on our door, and the substitute teacher when returning to us, announced, "That's Mr. Roach and he is here to give us calisthenics." She consistently mispronounced the word.

I think that most of us expected to receive some kind of

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fruit or dessert, but Mr. Roach had all of the students in grades one through nine to meet on the small ball diamond east of the club house and he gave us some exercises. I suppose the substitute teacher was relieved to find out about calisthenics.

When I was teaching at Owens Cross Roads School, I taught the daughters of my first grade teacher. Miss Moon became Mrs. Hatfield and her daughters, Ann and Delores, were students of mine. She had a son, but he was never a pupil of mine. As far as I know, Miss Moon only taught one year.

Very early in the first grade, I noticed that each day while we were outside and the bell would ring that students would run fast into the building. I didn't know why, but I ran fast with them. One day, I heard a little girl say, "I'm going to get into my desk." It was only then that I knew why we were running.

Our school had an enormous-sized bell that hung in the belfry, which resembled a church steeple. The bell was rung by pulling on a rope, a chore that pupils always wanted to do. Mr. Connally would allow students who were about ten years old or older to ring the bell, but smaller pupils were probably not strong enough to ring the bell.

At times, the bell would get stuck in the belfry and Mr. Connally or an older student would have to climb into the loft and get into the belfry and get the bell back into the correct po-

sition.

The boys' privy had dirty, nasty notes written on all the walls and stalls and everywhere inside the building except the ceiling. Big Cove had some of the best poets one can imagine. They never misspelled a word in their poetry and they used rhymes unbelievably well. In the classroom, those boys did not succeed so well.

During my earliest years at Big Cove I can recall seeing homeless people walking down

the highway (or sometimes they were riding bicycles). We called those homeless people tramps because they were tramping through the country. Our teachers would let us go down to the highway and look at those poor people. I never knew why they allowed us to do that, but they cautioned us not to talk to them other than a friendly hello.

Also, we were encouraged as small children to go down by the highway and wave to soldiers who were traveling in' great num-

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bers shortly after World War II. The teachers thought that our waving to the soldiers was a patriotic thing for us to do. When we observed the homeless people and waved to the soldiers, there were always older pupils in the junior high grades who were with us and they made sure that we stayed behind the double row of hedges that was located in front of a very wide, large ditch that ran parallel to the highway.

I recall how several girls were always convinced that the "cute" soldiers waved specifically at them. One might say, "I was just standing here and trying to keep my hair from blowing into my eyes and that cute little soldier waved at me." Other girls would also have stories that were attempts to top whatever another girl had said.

# Big Fire In Dallas Village

from 1905 Huntsville newspaper

A very destructive fire raged in Dallas village from 1-3 o'clock this morning and destroyed three of the principal businesses of the village and one residence. The list follows:

Geo. W. Wise merchandise store and store house, loss \$1000, insurance \$3300.

Richard Rousseau's grocery and general merchandise, loss \$1000, no insurance. Joseph Ward's meat market, loss \$500, no insurance

Joseph Ward's residence, loss \$500, no insurance

The blaze originated somewhere in the building occupied by Wise's store and hardly before the alarm had been given the whole building was enveloped in flames. The house was full of merchandise from top to bottom and the blaze was fiercely hot against the sides of all buildings in the locality.

There was little water to be had and the people of the village could offer practically no resistance to the spread of the flames except by dashing buckets of water against the sides of their houses. Another store across the street from Wise's, that of Holland, was on fire at one time but was saved



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# Daring Doctor Makes Record Time By Automobile From Decatur

*from 1904 Huntsville newspaper*

Dr. Jas. E. Dedman, vice president of the Birmingham Motor Club, arrived in Huntsville accompanied by his wife and child Thursday night from Decatur, having made the trip from Birmingham in an automobile. They came over from Decatur in the blinding rain of Thursday night and even with that disadvantage, made the trip from the Decatur ferry on this side of the river, a distance of 24 miles, in two hours and ten minutes.

Dr. Dedman and family made a leisurely trip, the doctor's object being to make a close inspection of the roads for the benefit of his fellow members of the motor club. They got in Cullman Monday night and then lost the next day at Layton as there was a swollen stream. The roads are in terrible condition.

The Birmingham papers have printed sensational stories in the last several days concerning Dr. Dedman, reporting him to be hopelessly lost and broken down in the mountains of Northern Alabama. He has had no mishaps on the trip and without having anything done to his machine except washing the mud off, he went to the top of Monte Sano in it yesterday. This is a good test of the auto.

Dr. Dedman will return home today, leaving this city at half past five o'clock. He will seek a new route to Birmingham, going by way of Triana, Summerville and Blountsville. This is a route not yet taken by the tourists.

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# Local News From 1907

- In the recorder's court this morning Peter Stevens, arrested for disorderly conduct, was fined \$5 and costs.

- John Williams, an old man who was arrested a few days ago for drunkenness, was ordered released and directed to leave Huntsville at once. Williams is quite an old man being 72 years of age and Mayor Smith took pity on him.

- By reason of an open switch on the Southern railway freight train No. 306 - J. Edward, engineer and switch train No 431 with Conductor Miller in charge collided on the side track on Meridian Street late yesterday afternoon, wrecking and derailing two cars of the regular train, demolishing the pilots of both engines, smashing the front of a car and the trucks of the end of the switch train. No one was hurt.

- Mrs. Elma Wesley died of apoplexy in Merrimack. A long time resident of Merrimack Village, she died last night after a few days illness. She left three small daughters.

- R. C. Smallwood, sixty years, died last night at his residence in the Lowe Mill Village of pneumonia.

- The bursting of a water main leading from the city pumping station to the stand pipe caused no end of trouble Saturday and Sunday.

A leak was found in front of the Schiffman Building on the southeast corner of the square early Saturday morning and a force of men set to work to dig down and make the necessary repair. When the hard crust of the macadamized street was removed the escaping water burst forth and flooded the street. The flood washed out a bed down the gutter and being unable to get in the storm sewer at Randolph Street, passed on down to Clinton and flooded that corner.

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# A Rebel To The Last

*from 1864 newspaper*

The suburbs of Huntsville and the lands for some distance around the town are being fast denuded of timber. The beautiful groves are fast disappearing under the ruthless axe of the invader. There is scarcely a fence around any of the grounds in the vicinity. In all parts of the town there is similar evidences of destruction, but not to the same extent.

The soldiers are, for the most part, Regulars, and under better discipline than formerly, and being prohibited from entering private houses or lots, without special leave. Not a single Negro company is stationed there or has been organized there. Negro men, women and children are quartered in Greene Academy. When Governor Chapman was ordered out of his home for refusing to take the oath, and was on the eve of starting, he received notice that the family must vacate the house in a specified time and it was said that he was ordered not to remove any of the furniture, and that Negroes were to be quartered there, but the latter needs confirmation.

Thurstan Lumpkin, a citizen of Huntsville, who was sent to the Nashville Penitentiary several

months ago for telling the Yankees that he believed that they were stealing Negro men to carry them North and improve the Yankee breed, is reported to have died there, a short time since.

It is said that he was a Rebel to the last and denounced the Yankees almost with his dying breath.

## Cows Ruining Neighborhood

*from 1903 newspaper*

Some people in Huntsville are showing an utter and total disregard of other people's rights by turning their cows out at night to destroy the gardens and front yard flowers, as is now being done. The fine should be increased tenfold.

Several cows have been allowed to run at large on East Holmes street the last few nights. Wednesday night they found an entrance into a gentleman's garden and swept things clean. Under such provocation, a man is excusable if he fills the cow's hide full of bird shot.



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# The Picture Show

by Tommy Towery

We usually didn't call it a movie when I was growing up. We called it a "picture show" or "show" for short. Girls were asked for dates with the phrase "Do you want to go to the show with me?" Not only were they called differently, movie theaters themselves were different in the Sixties. Today, movies are shown for months at a time at the same place. During any one week in 1964, each theater would show three or four different movies. Usually the newly released movies started on Sunday and ran Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. A

different movie would be shown on Wednesday, sometimes that being the only day it would play. On Thursday a different movie would start that would also run on Friday.

Saturdays were special. There were usually double feature movies at the Lyric Theater every Saturday. Before those started there was a special showing we commonly called a "Cartoon Carnival." It was about an hour of nothing but color cartoons and on days that there wasn't anything special going on, it cost ten cents to get in. For one period of time the admission price for the cartoons was an empty Golden Flake potato chip bag. I never knew why they wanted them. When I was a kid, whole Saturdays were spent in theaters.

During one period you were

given a special ticket when you entered the theater. These were not the normal door-prize type tickets, but big ones about two inches square with a big num-

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ber ranging from one to sixteen in the center. These tickets were used in the Crazy Races part of the Saturday morning activities. Sometime during the morning, a special short film was shown with Crazy Racers with each racer wearing a number. The races were in the mode of the Keystone Cops or Our Gang type films and at the end of the film, one racer crossed the finish line first and was declared the winner. If your ticket matched his number, you were a winner and went up on the theater stage and received a prize. Usually fifteen or twenty prizes of some type of game or toy were given to the lucky few. After getting up early on Saturday mornings for two years and eating myself sick on potato chips, my number finally came up and I won a clay construction set.

On some Saturdays the Lyric theater held live talent shows with special prizes for the winners. Five or ten people got up on stage and put on their show and then the master of ceremonies would let the crowd pick the winner by yelling or applauding. There was not a lot of talent displayed but someone was always a winner. I don't even remember the prize I won when Don got all his friends to clap for me after he goaded me into getting up on the stage and singing "Take Me Out to the Ball Game." I think I was about seven then.

The other feature of the Saturday morning theater visit was

a "Serial" as we always called it. The rest of the world called them continued series. We would see one of the fifteen episodes of Commando Cody, The Rocket Man, Batman, or Dick Tracy. Each week we were left watching the hero go off the edge of the cliff and the compelling message "Don't miss next week's exciting episode of 'The Mask of Doom' in this theater," or something equally demanding. Of course we wouldn't think of missing it. More than once I went to the theater fifteen weeks in a row just to see what happened to my hero.

The Cartoon Carnival was the epitome of what children liked and

adults hated about movies. There was plenty of screaming and yelling and running through the aisles and throwing of popcorn and candy wrappers. Perhaps it was held to give the kids a time to do those kinds of things without disturbing the adults. The kids loved it.

I think my record for the number of different movies seen in one day was seven, counting the Cartoon Carnival. That day started early in the morning holding a potato chip bag in the



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line with the screaming kids at the Lyric Theater. I followed that with a double feature at the same theater.

A quick lunch at Krystal and I was off to the double feature at the Grand Theater a couple of blocks away from the cafe. Once that let out, a ten cent bus ride took me to West Huntsville where I had supper at the Rebel Inn. After that, it was a short walk across the street to the Center Theater for the third double feature of the day. It was a world-class record that would stand for a long time.

On Saturday evenings, the movies would change again and a special show would be shown that night only. On rare occasions, special "Sneak Previews" were given in some of the theaters and no one knew what movie would be shown. There were great ones and terrible ones. I remember one night "Gigi" was shown. It was such a sneak preview, that a month passed before it was shown again at the theater. I never learned where the sneak preview features came from, but if nothing else

was going on, they were always a good way to spend the evening.

In the early days of dating, before we were teenagers and the automobile entered our lives, movie dates were common. They gave the young people a place to sit in the somewhat-private dark with whoever they currently had a crush on.

You were as private as you could get, considering you were sitting in a room with a hundred or more people, all watching you

instead of the movie. The movie dates had one other thing going for them - they were cheap, since you usually met your date inside the theater instead of having to pay her way. Many a first date was to a movie and many a first kiss was made in the dark of the flickering lights. Kids started movie dates before they had any other way of dating, so it was up to the girl to get her own transportation to the movie and the boy did likewise. Usually you met

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each other inside the dark theater and whoever got there first saved a seat for the other. It didn't matter what was playing on the screen, that was not the reason for being there anyway.

## The New & Improved Inclined Horse Wheel

*from 1823 Huntsville newspaper*

Beirne & Patton & Jesse H. Posey have now in operation near the town of Huntsville a Cotton Gin and Grist Mill upon the plan of the inclined horse wheel. They have purchased from the Patentee, Joseph Best Robinson, the exclusive right to construct and use this highly important and saving invention for Madison County in the Ala. Territory. The Ginnners and Millers where water power cannot be had will find it a source of future and infinite advantage to procure the patent rights and build their machinery upon this plan, which is so constructed and used as to save exactly one-half of the labor and expense required to keep in operation gins and mills upon the old plan. The inclined horse wheel also has the steady and regular motion of a machine carried by water. It is simple in its construction and less liable to accidental injury.

## Fair Proves Expensive

Three residents of Huntsville did not fare too well at the last fair held here. G. L. Davis and H. L. Brown became entangled over a two dollar note that Davis was said to have lost on a horse racing bet, and which Albert Jolly had won. The entanglement cost them twenty dollars each, with the police being called.

Wm. Humphrey assaulted and attempted to batter Robt. West, for which he paid five dollars and costs.

Miss Ida Springfield made a sling shot of one of her stockings, putting a rock in it. With this dangerous weapon she went for Miss Maggie May and paid three dollars for the experience.

*from 1875 Huntsville newspaper*

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# News From The Year 1908

## News From Huntsville and Around The World

### Ford Builds Roadster Not Fancy But Costs Only \$850

**Detroit** - The first Model T rolled off the Ford Motor Company production line in Detroit today. The roadster, which seats two people, costs \$850. It is not fancy to look at, but it is relatively easy to drive, and you do not have to be a mechanical genius to take the wheel. Ford says it is simple to maintain the automobile, which has been nicknamed the "Tin Lizzy."

Up until now, only the privi-

leged classes have owned automobiles. Ford is hoping to keep the price tags on the Model T's relatively low so that millions of Americans can afford them. Henry Ford's company has direct control of raw materials and uses a conveyor belt on the production line. The Model T represents a milestone for Ford, but the company still has to make some changes to improve the vehicle's performance.

### W. H. Taft Elected President

**Washington** - William Howard Taft dealt a crushing defeat to William Jennings Bryan today and was overwhelmingly elected as the 27th President of the United States. Taft won the Electoral College 314-169, and captured the popular vote with a majority of more than a million. It was Bryan's worst defeat in his three attempts to become president.

Taft will find strong support for his policies on Capitol Hill, where the Senate remains firmly

### Wright Brothers Sells Aeroplane To Army

**New York** - Orville Wright says he is ready for a series of flights to prove that an aircraft he and his brother Wilbur have built can meet the demanding requirements set by the United States War Department.

The Army Signal Corps accepted the Wrights' price of \$25,000 for a military aircraft last February. To be accepted by the Army, the aircraft must demonstrate it can stay aloft for a full hour at a speed of 40 miles per hour. The Army also requires the aircraft be transportable in a standard horse-drawn wagon.

Orville Wright says he will undertake the Army tests of the new machine next month at Fort Myer, Virginia.

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in Republican hands. Taft's party also increased its majority in the House of Representatives to 65.

To secure his victory, Taft won handily in the Northeast and the West. He lost the South, but there was a surprising increase in the Republican vote there. Taft also won a majority in New York City. This is only the second time in history the city has voted Republican in a presidential election.

After Taft served as Solicitor General and Civil Governor of the Philippines, it was Roosevelt who appointed him Secretary of War.

## Highway Robbery Near New Market

A report was received yesterday of a highway robbery near New Market. Harold James, a peddler from Nashville, was waylaid on the road and robbed of nearly two hundred dollars. When he tried to resist he was brutally beaten around the head. Another traveler discovered him lying in a ditch beside the road. His horse and buggy were found nearby. He is staying at a local boarding house and is expected to recover fully.

A reward has been offered for the arrest of the persons responsible.

## Huntsville Passes New Budget

After much debate, the city leaders have agreed on a budget for the upcoming year. Included in the proposal are:

- Schools - \$4000
- Infirmiry - \$250
- Water - \$10,250
- Fire Department - \$6000
- Salaries - \$4,600
- Incidentals - \$1,500

In addition, it was agreed that the police department will be financed by fines and forfeitures. The school system is expected to also receive \$8,300 from the state, helping make it one of the most modern in the state.

## Huntsville Gets Electric Streetcars

The first electric streetcar in Huntsville made its debut last week with Robert Bailey serving as Motorman. Almost ten miles of track have been laid across town, with an extension running down Madison and Whitesburg Pike to the fairgrounds.

Ed Pulley, who owns the franchise, expects the line to be profitable within the year as citizens begin to use it for their everyday travel. More tracks are planned for the future.



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# Tips From Liz

Household Advice, Beauty Tips  
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It's bad luck to sweep out ashes or carry out trash after sunset.

If you spill a jar of face powder, a bad quarrel with a lady friend will ensue.

If you desire to become a good seamstress, allow a lizard to run across your hand.

A young woman seeking a husband should stick seven needles into a lighted candle while praying to the Virgin Mary, until the wick is consumed. By doing this she can obtain the love of the man of her dreams, while rendering him impotent with other women.

Get out of a mild depression by getting into gardening - you'll be amazed how much it helps.

Never invite thirteen guests to dinner, or one of them will suffer very bad luck.

If a hen is set in the light of the moon, the eggs will hatch roosters who will refuse to ever leave the hen house.

Should a man and woman pour tea together, they will have a baby within a year.

Check your cup of coffee in the morning. If bubbles on the surface are floating in your direction, you will soon come

into a sizable amount of money you weren't expecting.

Always plant peppers when you're good and mad at your wife, and give your gourd seeds a good cussing as you plant them or they will never grow correctly.

If you get out of a chair and it tips over, you will NOT be getting married during the coming year.

If you buy clothes when you're feeling fat, and they look good on you, chances are that they'll still look good when you begin to

lose weight. This works!

If your nose is stuffy, rubbing your ears as hard as you can for a minute will often clear up the stuffiness.

When there is to be a full moon, be extra careful and conscientious with your diet and medication during this time.

Bing cherries, 4 oz. a day, is a wonderful remedy for gout.

Cuticle remover will remove nicotine stains from your hands.

A small bag of sulfur kept in a drawer or cupboard will drive away red ants.

Baking soda will remove mildew from small areas.



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# Looking For Information

Old Huntsville is seeking information on the following subjects. If you have any information please call (256) 534-0502 or email [oldhuntsville@knology.net](mailto:oldhuntsville@knology.net).

- A bronze memorial plaque located in Merrimack Village in front of the old Huntsville ball park. It was erected sometime around 1955 and listed the names of local men who served in the military.
- The County Poor House once located at the end of Hermitage. It was supposed to have been built in 1922.
- Information about the row of trees planted along Whitesburg Drive to honor the dead of WWI.
- The W.P.A. and the projects they built in Huntsville and Madison County.
- Any information about a local character by the name of "Preacher Bob." He worked in one of the cotton mills but, when drinking, would preach to the crowds around the courthouse square on Saturdays. He was always accompanied by a tamed rooster. This occurred during the early 1940s.
- Information about a spy that was caught here in the late 1950s or early 1960. He is supposed to have lived in present day Old Town and was spying for the Russians.
- A union hospital built in Huntsville during the Civil War. It was located near Fagan Spring.

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# Owen Hunter

By Austin Miller

Owen G. Hunter was about thirty-five years old when he moved to Ryland in 1957. He was a short, stocky man who drew trouble like a lightning rod. He was not a man that went unnoticed and was soon well known throughout the community. His booming voice, usually laced with curse words, carried above others in any crowd. He drank, gambled and caroused at places where fist fights and other trouble were common occurrences. At times, he stayed out all night without his wife knowing where he was or what he was doing. He was known as somebody that most people wanted to stay away from.

He had no pretensions, no apparent fear and was totally unaffected by status or what people thought or said about him. I saw him around Ryland and Yankee Town long before I met him. His life style and standard of living put us in entirely different circles. He was one of the top bosses at Olin Matheson, a chemical company located on Redstone Arsenal.

He drove the biggest Pontiac or Buick on the market. One day he pulled up in our yard in a new Pontiac accompanied by his two sons. The car was less than a

month old but was rattling and knocking like a thrashing machine. He had knocked a hole in the radiator on his last drunk, ran it without water and burned up the motor. He shut off the engine, got out and said, in a voice that seemed to unnerve the chickens running loose in the yard, "Emmett McKinney says you cut hair." When I said I did for kinfolks and close friends, he said, "How about giving these boys a trim up?" When I finished, he said "That's a good job, how about giving me one?" About three weeks later he came back and I cut their hair the second time. This time, we started talking and I learned that we both liked trotline fishing. He said that he loved it but he couldn't get

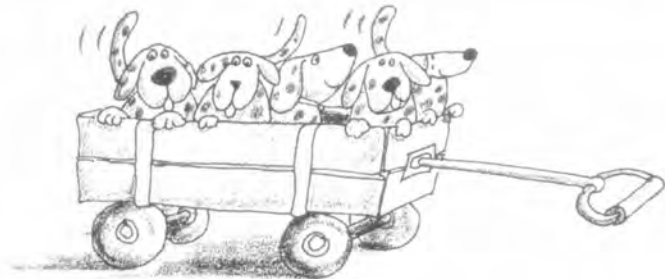
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anybody to go with him and had about given up on ever getting to go again. We planned a trip on the spot and soon became fishing buddies. He would laugh and say we spent so much time that summer on Flint River that we didn't dry out all year. We ran out of crawfish and minnows and started using stale commodity cheese. It was good bait for channel cat but it stunk and the smell stuck with you long after you quit fishing. He got great sport out of going to stores and other public places smelling nearly as bad as a skunk. We had a grand time. Mama and Daddy were not pleased at first but before the summer was over he was visiting us almost every day and they soon liked him as much as I did.

He didn't think much of churches or preachers but made an exception one Sunday and went to Shiloh church to see his kids perform in a Vacation Bible School Program. The altar call lasted longer than usual that day. Billy Fears, the preacher, just didn't seem to want to close the service and kept asking the congregation to sing one more verse. At the end of what the preacher said was going to be the last verse, Owen jumped up and scurried down to the front of the Church. I felt a sense of panic because I thought he was going

to jump on the preacher for holding the service so long. I couldn't believe my eyes when he stopped and knelt at the Altar. The congregation sang a few more verses and the preacher closed the service. When I left the church, he was still at the altar. He didn't join the church that day but started visiting Billy Fears. Two extremes had met, a ruffian who had done it all and a Man of God who had lived at the foot of the cross all his life. They came to terms and Owen Hunter joined Shiloh United Methodist Church.

Joining the church and changing his life did not quiet his soul. He started having health problems and had to be put in the hospital. The doctors ran all

kinds of tests but couldn't find anything wrong. By his account, he was lying in his hospital bed one afternoon when the noise of the air conditioner changed into the most beautiful music he had ever heard. Before that day was over he made the decision to become a minister of the gospel. He left the hospital the next day feeling better and at peace with himself.

It was not going to be easy. To get a good church, he would have to start back to school.

School was not an option; he felt God had called him to start preaching right away. He met many nights with Billy Fears until the wee hours of the morning. After a while they went to Bir-

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mingham to see the Bishop. Based on the support and recommendation of Billy, the Bishop promised that he would find him a church. The provision was that it would be a small, poor country church that nobody else wanted. The bishop stressed that he would have to work at another job to support his family. This was not a problem because he had a job that paid considerably more than the Bishop made.

His first sermon was at Shiloh. Even among first sermons it was not stellar and he knew it, but he was nonplussed and said, "God will help me get better."


The second time I heard him preach was on a hot summer night at a church in the community where he grew up. On the way, he said there would be a big crowd. He knew old friends and old enemies would come to see the spectacle of Owen Hunter preaching. He was afraid they would disrupt the service. The thing that seemed to concern him most was that they would come out of curiosity and not a desire to go to church. We got there early and still had to park quite a distance away. The church was a typical white A-frame building with a steeple at the front of an unpainted tin roof. It had two large front doors and three long clear glass windows on each side. There was no air conditioning and the doors and windows were open. The ladies were fanning vigorously with fans that had a picture of Jesus in a long red robe on one side and an advertisement for Spry's Funeral Home on the other. The building


didn't have a pot bellied stove but it hadn't been gone long because the area around the flue opening in the ceiling was still smudged with soot. Extra chairs were brought in. People were standing along the back and on both sides. They were crowded in at the front doors and looking in the windows. There were as many outside as there were inside. He talked about the way he had lived, the things he had done and the change that had come to his life. Before he was through, there was not a dry eye in the church. At the end of the service the crowd swarmed around him

warmly. He had changed the heart of the toughest audience that he would ever face. He was in his element and there was no doubt that he had found his calling. His loud gruff voice served him well.


Soon afterwards, he was offered a small country church with about twenty regular members. He said that God had not called him to be a part time minister and he quit his job. This meant moving from a nice home to a dilapidated old shack and giving up a good salary for little or no pay. He and his family of six would have to live off the giv-

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**Ron Eyestone, Madison**



ing of a small relatively poor congregation, an extreme hardship for his family.

He and I often rode around until late at night talking. Before he moved, he asked me to go for a ride. He told me that we wouldn't be able to spend much time together in the future because the ministry was going to take all of his time. I rarely saw him after that. He passed out of my life and was soon in demand as a revival speaker drawing huge crowds at small country churches all over North Alabama.

A few years later when I was working with the state of Alabama, I was in Scottsboro and heard he had a church there. I called and went to see him at his house. We spent the best part of a day together. It was like old times. He told me that the two men above him at his old job had died of cancer as well as a number of others who worked at the plant.

A few days after Christmas in 1973, Gaylor, Anna and I were returning to Douglasville from Ryland. When we were driving through Guntersville, I saw him walking down the street. I stopped, and he came over to the car. We had a good visit. When we continued our trip, I watched him in the rear view mirror until he was out of view. That was the last time I saw him.

In the early 1970's the government banned the use of DDT. It was found to be a carcinogen harmful to people, animals and the environment. After years of use to control insects such as boll weevils and mosquitoes, it brought many wild life species to the brink of extinction to include the bald eagle and eastern bluebird. Olin Matheson Chemical Company made DDT and had to close its Huntsville plant. Not long after that, I heard that Owen had died of cancer.

In the 1980's, national media

attention was drawn to Triana, Alabama. A much higher than normal number of residents had died of cancer, many more were sick. Public health officials came to find out why. It didn't take long. The people fished from a creek that ran through the community and ate the fish. The creek was traced to Redstone Arsenal and the closed Olin Matheson Chemical Plant. They had dumped DDT into the stream for years. The company had to pay the residents of Triana millions of dollars in compensation. It will never again be safe to eat fish from the creek.

It was an honor to be a close

friend of Owen Hunter. I think he can be compared to the apostle Paul and the disciples. He lived the majority of his life far removed from church and Christianity; like Paul, when he changed, he became a devout and dedicated advocate of the faith. When God called him, he followed the example set by the disciples by dropping everything and picking up the cross to follow Jesus. I will never forget him.

**My wife and I like to keep the romance alive. Two times a week we go to a nice restaurant with a little wine, food and companionship. She goes Tuesdays, I go Fridays.**



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# Something Like War

Charles Wills, a Union Army officer from Illinois, was delightfully honest in his letters home. His writings from Alabama still make fascinating and informative reading.

Wills could be surprisingly sympathetic towards the Southern civilians and was frequently critical of his soldier comrades. While on the march in Mississippi, for example, he described the Union soldiers' conduct to his sister:

"Rebels though they are," he said, "'tis shocking and enough to make one's blood boil to see the manner in which some of the folks have treated them. Trunks have been knocked to pieces with muskets when the women stood by offering the keys, bureau drawers drawn out, the contents turned on the floor, and the drawers thrown through the window, bed clothing and ladies'

clothing carried off and all manner of devilry imaginable perpetrated. Of course, the scoundrels who do this kind of work would be severely punished, if caught, but the latter is almost impossible. Most of the mischief is done by advance of the army, though, God knows, the infantry is bad enough. The d—n thieves even steal from the Negroes (which is lower business than I ever thought possible for a white man to be guilty of), and many of them are learning to hate the Yankees as much as our "Southern brethren" do. This army is becoming awfully depraved. How the civilized home folk will ever be able to live with them after the war is, I think, something of a question. If we don't degenerate into a nation of thieves, 'twill not be for lack of example set by a fair portion of our army."

Stationed at Tuscumbia shortly thereafter in August of 1862, Wills again expressed his dismay with what he saw, though

he tried to persuade himself that it was proper.

"Orders have been given us to put every woman and child (imprison the men) across the

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line that speaks or acts secesh, and burn down their property, and to destroy all their crops, cut down the corn growing, and burn the cribs. That is something like war. 'Tis devilish hard for one like me to assist in such work, but I believe it is necessary to our course... I'd hate like the devil to burn the houses of some secesh I know here, but at the same time I don't doubt the justice of the thing. One of them has lent us his cook, or rather his wife did; and they don't talk their secessionism to you unless you ask them to."

Later at Scottsboro in January, 1864, Wills' infantry regiment was temporarily mounted and became a part of Sherman's notorious army.

"I think that today," wrote Wills, "(Generals) Sherman, Logan or Ewing would not trust a detachment of this brigade on sorebacked mules if they had only three legs. This little squad of 500 men in the two months they have been mounted have committed more devilment than two divisions of regular cavalry could in five years. Everything you can think of from shooting Negroes, or marrying these simple country women, down to stealing babies' diapers. From taking \$2,700 in gold, to snatching a brass ring of the finger of the woman who handed a drink of water. From taking the last old mare the widow had to carry her grist to the mill, to robbing the bed of its cords for halters, and

taking the clothes line and bedding to boot. I'll venture that before we were dismantled, not a well rope, trace chain, or a piece of cord of any kind strong enough to hold a horse could be found in the districts through which we have foraged."

This is the Civil War as it

actually was—not the way it's told to us in Northern-authored history books.

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# Memories of the War

by Dr. John Allen  
(written in 1911)

All the railroads in the South which could be operated were taken over and run by the United States government, which gave our family transportation to Decatur, Alabama, by train and thence up the Tennessee by steamboat to where Guntersville had been. With the exception of half a dozen dwellings, which were spared because they sheltered the sick or wounded too feeble to be removed, the village had disappeared. Nothing but tumble-down walls and a mass of brick debris was left of our home. The nearest shelter which could be obtained was in a log house on Sand Mountain, five miles from town, and in this my parents found a temporary

abode. We were not wholly unprepared for the scene of desolation about us. As we came west on the train nothing but lonesome looking chimneys remained of the villages and farmhouses. They were suggestive of tombstones in a graveyard. Bridgeport, Paint Rock, Scottsboro, Larkinsville, Woodville, - in fact, every town in northern Alabama to and including Decatur (except Huntsville, which, being used as headquarters, had been spared) - had been wiped out by the war policy of starvation by fire. Farmhouses, gins, fences, and cattle were gone. From a hilltop in the farming district a few miles from New Market I counted the chimneys of the houses of six different plantations which had been destroyed. About the fireplaces of some of these, small huts of poles had been erected for temporary shelter.

Northern Alabama had paid dearly for the devotion of her people to the cause of the South. Nowhere in the Confederacy had such ruin been wrought, save in the path of desolation along which the march to the sea was made, or perhaps in the valley of Virginia, in obedience to the

order to leave it so desolate that "a crow flying over here would have to carry his rations." Our

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lands had suffered in a double sense, being overrun for the last year and a half by bands of marauders who robbed the defenseless people of the little the two armies had left.

The story of one tragedy which was enacted on a small island in the Tennessee River may give an idea of the awful conditions which prevailed. Buck Island was then almost wholly covered with dense cane. Hither five men, noncombatants, had fled for a hiding-place, and had taken with them the few cattle which had escaped impressment. In the depths of the canebrake they had constructed a pole cabin for shelter.

A Confederate soldier named C. L. Hardcastle, wounded and on furlough, a relation or friend and neighbor, slipping in to visit his family, came to stay all night with the refugees. Toward morning they were aroused from sleep to find their cabin surrounded and themselves in the hands of the notorious Ben Harris and his band who had learned of their retreat and had come for their cattle.

Being a farsighted man and well known to the Rodens and their guest, Harris gave them five minutes for prayer, after which he made them stand in a row

along the river bank, and, to make sure of a clean job, with his sixshooter he put a bullet through the hearts of five of the six and thought he had done the same with the sixth man. This man was Hardcastle, who told me that as Harris came down the line, placing the muzzle close to the left side of the chest of each victim as he fired, he made up his mind to drop quickly a little before he was shot, which he did, and the ball missed a vital spot. Feigning death, he was dragged with the other five bodies and

thrown into the river, the current of which washed them downstream as they were sinking. Holding his breath, he floated under some driftwood lodged against a fallen tree and concealed himself behind a log.

The bullet had struck a rib and taken a superficial course. When the murderers walked off to round up the cattle he crawled out and into the cane, and in this way made this marvelous escape from death.

I knew the men who were killed. The war experiences of the

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home people were, however, not wholly tragic. There were occasional glimpses of the seriocomic in which the comical features predominated. Our natures are such that we love to turn away from sad things and forget them by laughing when we may. One of these experiences was Uncle Dan's retreat from Gunter'sville when the Union batteries first shelled this unfortunate village. Another, as the sheriff related it, was his narrow escape from the Fourth Ohio Cavalry when in 1862 it dashed into Gunter'sville early one morning, to the surprise of everybody but I have yet to tell how two young lads belonging to the same company surprised and captured themselves in the streets of their native village in 1864

The two actors were playmates of mine who were old enough to see service as "Home Guards" the last year or two of the war. They told it on themselves to me, and it was witnessed by several residents.

During all of 1864 and the spring of 1865 the county was the scene of active hostilities, not only between scouting parties of regular soldiers of the Union and Confederate armies, but between bands of Tory marauders, who paraded in Federal uniforms, and small squads of Confederate home guards under partisan leaders. Some few of the Tories had been Union men all along, but were wise enough to keep discreetly quiet until the Federals occupied the country. Most of them were poor whites who had

dodged conscription by hiding out in the mountains near their cabins when the Confederates were in control, and came into view as soon as the Federals appeared.

Some few were deserters from our army, but all were united now in their love of country by the cohesive strength of a desire to plunder the helpless.

As these men of the two sides had known one another before the war, it may be imagined that what is described as "feeling" ran about as "high" between them as it could run. Toward the last it was con-

sidered a waste of time to surrender, even if cornered without hope of escape. The recognized practice was to sell out as dearly as possible and keep shooting as long as a trigger could be pulled.

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Ben Harris had led off in a practice of extermination (which put Cromwell to the blush). The conqueror of Ireland knocked only every tenth prisoner on the head, but Captain Ben overlooked none, and just to be sure that no detail was omitted he was his own executioner.

On the day in question Bent Adams, from a commanding eminence, scanned the valley and saw hanging on the clothesline in his mother's yard something white, which signal meant "the town is clear." Had it been red or blue Bent would have rested content upon the distant height. As it was, he rode into the village, and, sitting on his horse (for in those perilous days nobody dismounted in town) was conversing with his mother at the gate. Tom Anderson, a member of Bent's squad, had from another hill also read the signals; and he cautiously rode into the suburb. Having been successful as scouts, these two enterprising youths had acquired and, as it was a frosty morning, were wearing each a warm, very blue Yankee overcoat. As Tom's horse turned the corner of Main Street,

some three hundred yards off, and he saw a lone Yankee or Tory in the road ahead of him, his first impulse was to turn and run, but Bent was too quick for him and ran first.

Seeing only one Yankee or Tory, and that one running away, Tom changed his mind and whipping out his six shooter, he stuck the spurs to his charger and began pursuit. For half a mile down Main Street the two horsemen sped, the women and children leaning out of the windows, not certain whether it was a fight or a horse-race. Tom's mount was so much superior to Bent's that by the time the latter was checking up to make a safe turn around the corner at Cornwell's store to get into the straight reach of roadway leading to the bridge the pursuer was near enough to begin to empty his army pistol at the fugitive, who, to avoid being hit, was now lying as flat on his horse's neck as his anatomy could be applied. Having made the turn with safety, Bent ventured to glance back, and, seeing only a single pursuer who had already expended four of his six shots without effect while his own battery was as yet intact, took his pistol out of the holster and eased up on his speed, determined to settle accounts at close quarters. A few moments later, pulling the reins and wheeling suddenly about, he was

in the act of firing into Tom's chest at close range when Thomas, recognizing his chum, yelled-out as loud and distinctly as he could shape the sentence, "Don't shoot, Bent; it's me!"

Bent, not lowering his weapon, replied "Tom, you damn fool! I've a great notion to blow your brains out, anyhow!"

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The frontiersmen would merely chuckle under their breaths and change the subject. They all had a past they were running from and that is what drew many of them to Texas; a chance to start over again.

There was a small grain of truth in Little's stories however. He had been a lawyer, though one Alabama paper labeled him as "the worst barrister in the state." Little's legal career came to an abrupt end when he murdered a man for making advances toward his wife. Shortly afterwards he abandoned his pregnant wife and fled to Texas.

Once in Texas, Little got caught up in the war fever that was sweeping the territory and offered his services to the small Texas army. Probably realizing he faced possible death in combat, William Little resumed using his real name.

Every man dreams of winning immortal fame and William achieved it at the Alamo. Near the old walls of the ruined mission stands a simple granite monument. The inscription reads. 'Defender of the Alamo ... William Travis.'

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# My Father's Other Wife

by **Kenny Stone**  
as told to **Jon Jackson**

I came into the room where my grandson was sleeping the other night and thought about how much I loved that little boy. It's strange how these little people worm their way into your heart and extract an amount of love you never thought anyone, let alone you, could possess. That must have been how my father felt about me and why he stayed when he could have just walked away.

At five foot five inches, maybe a hundred and ten pounds, and with a bald spot that he always tried but failed to comb his hair over, no one would ever confuse my Daddy with Clark Gable. I never heard him talk about his family or his childhood but I later learned that he had been born in New Jersey. There his family ran a successful jewelry store that afforded him the chance to learn to fly airplanes. At eighteen he got his pilot license and when the war broke out in 1939 he ran off to England where he enlisted in the RAF. He spent the next several years ferrying men and supplies around Europe. The Germans shot him down over the North Atlantic once and he spent three days in the water before being rescued. He never talked about his time in the war much. I don't think anyone would call Daddy especially secretive; he just didn't talk about himself or his life.

Near the end of the war he moved to Huntsville where he took a position at Redstone Arsenal as a draftsman in the same office where Mama worked. When he first got to Huntsville the stories about his war record and his heroism made their rounds about the office and

Mama told me later she expected this big swashbuckling hero. Instead she met a quiet, shy, unassuming man who Mama later recalled as the only man in the office who didn't try to date her. I guess when you live with wolves, there's something kind of wonderful and cuddly about a sheepdog. Five months later they were married. Then the war ended and Daddy got laid off.

Daddy worked hard to find something to support his new family. He took odd jobs, mostly doing carpenter work, until he found a permanent position with the Bendix Corporation. His new

position, as a quality control supervisor, meant that he had to spend roughly half his time in Huntsville and half in Birmingham.

Mama trusted Daddy too much; she could see that in hindsight. When you're in love, something inside you wants very much to trust. And in a lot of ways it's not right that you can't trust. But people are only flesh and blood and since God created them they have always fallen from their perches of grace.

Shortly after Daddy began traveling to Birmingham he met Jane. After a brief courtship they married and had a son. In those days the counties seldom bothered to check the marriage

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licenses against those in other areas so it was simple to get married again. Daddy didn't have a fixed schedule and telephone calls were expensive so Mama and I didn't wonder when he didn't show up on time. Sometimes he would call the day before but mostly he would just show up one day. I also found out later that he had a trust fund of about three hundred dollars a month that he used to finance his other life. The only thing he hadn't counted on was Jane deciding to pay a visit to Huntsville.

I turned nine years old the day my life changed forever. I always looked forward to Daddy coming home but no day was more special between him and I than my birthday. It seemed that the surprises got bigger and bigger every year and I expected a big one that year. But I never expected the surprise I got that day. I lay across my bed reading the latest issue of Hopalong Cassidy, the issue my Daddy had given me

just before he left on his business trip, when the doorbell rang. I ran to the door (maybe Daddy had forgotten his key) and threw it open. I froze and stood there, staring. On the front porch stood a woman and a small boy. It was the look of the woman that gave me pause. It wasn't that she looked mean or anything, it was that she looked so much like my Mama - same hairdo, same build, and same way of dressing.

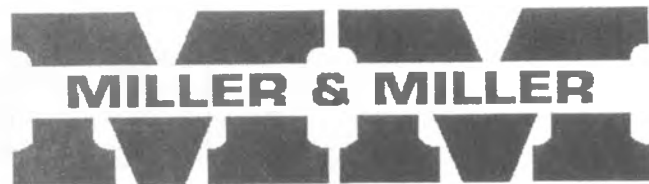
Mama came up behind me, put her hand on my shoulder,

and stood there. I looked up at Mama, her face was pale and she just stared at the woman. "Can I help you?" she asked at last.

"I—" The woman's voice broke and she stopped to regain her composure. "I was looking for my husband," she said at last. "The cabdriver seems to think this is where he lives."

"What's your husband's name?" Mama asked.

"Frank Stone," the woman replied. That was my father's name. Mama's face went from



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pale to ashen and the grip on my shoulder tightened. She stood there, her fingers digging into my shoulder for the longest time, and then invited the strangers into our home. While Mama and the woman went to sit in the living room, she told me to take the boy, Bobby, back to my room and not to come out till she sent for us. I didn't know at the time what was going on but I was sure my birthday party had been cancelled.

Several times I tried to open the bedroom door a crack and look at the women huddled on the couch. Mama saw me each time and told me to close the door and not come out till she said to. Bobby and I sat across the room from each other in silence and sized each other up. A year younger than me and about the same build, he probably favored me, though I wouldn't have admitted it at the time. The thought of Daddy in serious trouble hung over us and squelched any attempt at talking. What finally kindled a conversation were the comic books Daddy had given me. We talked excitedly about our favorites until he mentioned the ones Daddy had given him. It was like cold water and the conversation quickly sputtered and died. We tried briefly to get it started again and almost had it going when he showed me the wallet Daddy had given him for his birthday. I fell into silence and vowed to steal it and throw it away.

Later, long after the sun had gone down, we were called to dinner. Daddy sat at the head of the table like he always did, but there was no laughing or joking

that night. Every time Daddy tried to say something, glares from the women drove him back to his silence. After a few tries at talking he just looked at Bobby and me as he ate his food. When we looked at him he would give us a tightlipped smile. When we finished dinner we were sent back to the bedroom. Listen as we might we heard no screaming that night. Neither Mama nor Jane were the screaming types. Later that night Daddy came into our room and made a pallet on the floor where he slept.

Getting up the next morning we found that Daddy had already left for work and Mama and Jane were huddled on the couch talking in whispers. They took great pains to be nice to us, in between

telling us to go to the bedroom or to the backyard to play. If I live to be a hundred I don't think I could have a stranger day. That

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night it got a lot stranger: Daddy came home.

I believe the bravest thing a man can ever do is face his own sin. I also believe the only reason a person will do so is love.

When Daddy got home that evening we had the first of many family conferences. Mama started the conference by announcing that there would be some changes in our living arrangements. Jane and Bobby were moving in with us. The two women would each get a bedroom, Daddy would be moving out to the garage, and Bobby and me would share a bedroom. She also made it very clear that there would be no romance between either she and Daddy or Jane and Daddy. She explained that while both women felt Bobby and

me deserved a father and they did not believe in divorce, they were not going to be accused of living in sin. She also announced that Daddy would be quitting his job and finding one in Huntsville that did not require him to travel. I don't think I've ever seen a face with as much of a hangdog look as Daddy had that night.

After the conference Bobby and me helped Daddy carry a couple of chairs and a bed out to the garage. After we got them set up we were going to leave when Daddy asked us to stay for a little bit. He sat on the bed and we sat on the chairs. He tried to talk but the words didn't want to come out right. Daddy finally quit trying to talk and just sat there looking at the floor.

"Are you leaving, Daddy?"

Bobby asked him, his voice breaking like he was about to cry.

"Come over here," Daddy told Bobby, patting the bed beside him. "You too," he said, motioning to me. I sat one side of him and Bobby on the other and he hugged us close. "You're both my sons and I promise both of you that as long as I live I'll never leave you." That was a promise my Daddy always kept.

After that, as difficult as it might be to believe, life sort of got back to normal. Daddy got a job as a carpenter, Mama and Jane took care of the housework, and Bobby and me went to school. It got sort of confusing for me and Bobby to keep our Mamas straight so we started calling them Mama Jane and Mama Lee.

I never saw any sign of affection between Daddy and the women, not so much as a hand holding moment or a hug. Anniversaries and birthdays would be remembered but the only sign of it would be a card or a cake. I believe Daddy cared about them and they cared about Daddy, but the circumstances didn't permit them to do what they would like to. Whenever I think about that first year I call it the 'Cold Year'.

Later that year we moved into a bigger house in west Huntsville. There we ran afoul of Mrs. Clark. She lived next door and could not seem to keep her nose out of our business. Finally Mama Jane had enough and told her off in no uncertain terms. The next day when I came home there was a police car outside our house and an officer was leading Daddy to it in handcuffs. He had been arrested for bigamy and spent the night in jail. Mama Lee and Mama Jane spent that evening in a lawyer's office. I don't know what they said but the next day Daddy was free and he never faced charges. I guess they figured living with two wives was punishment enough.

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Better than a museum, Harrison Brothers is a living 19th century landmark sitting serenely in the midst of downtown Huntsville. High-tech Huntsville itself seems 100 years away as you enter the store.

Harrison Brothers, called a hardware store but really much more, is stocked from floorboards to high ceiling in tiny numbered drawers and on every available surface with old fashioned tools and housewares as well as modern items.

Goods nestled up high are reached from tall rolling ladders, the rope elevator is hand operated, and a real pot-bellied stove helps warm the store in winter. Nearby a tall desk displays an untidy mound of old invoices, catalogs and calendars, just as the last Harrison brother left it.

*A massive hand-cranked cash register still rings up sales - and a free Harrison Brothers yankee is yours with a \$20 purchase.*

124 South Side Square - 256-536-3631

We also endured visits each time the church changed pastors. Mama Jane and Mama Lee were both devout Baptists and attended church regularly. Usually both the women would give it to him with both barrels explaining that no one was sleeping with anyone else and that there was no sinning going on. I'm not sure any of them ever really got it but they would usually leave us alone after that.

As Bobby and I got older there was less to do around the house so both Mama Lee and Mama Jane decided to get jobs. Mama Lee got a job at Kress' Department Store and Mama Jane found one at Lee Optical. I think the work helped their tempers because soon after they started we began laughing and talking more like a normal family. Mama Lee's and Mama Jane's attitude toward Daddy slowly changed from coldness to love and respect.

The year I graduated from high school Daddy had a stroke that left his right arm partially paralyzed and his speech slurred. Mama Jane and Mama Lee both took time off their jobs to be with him in the hospital. Unable to go back to work as a carpenter, Daddy quit his job and took over the housework while Mama Jane and Mama Lee continued to work.

For a while he tried to earn extra money by repairing radios but he no longer had the coordination in his hands required for such work.

Bobby went on to the University of Tennessee and studied architecture while I enlisted in the Army. While stationed in Germany I received word that Daddy had passed away. I got home the morning of the funeral. It surprised me how many people attended the service. I had no idea Daddy had so many friends. The pastor paused when he got to the point where he was supposed to

acknowledge the family. "Frank Stone left behind two wives and two sons who he was proud of," he said at last.

I think Daddy would have liked that.

I made a career out of the Army and Bobby became an architect in Knoxville. Mama Lee and Mama Jane also moved to Knoxville where they moved in with Bobby and his family. They both died in 1985.

Many people have asked how I could love a man that did what my father did. I don't condone what he did, or even understand

it. For me the answer is much simpler - he was my father and he loved me.



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# The Law and your rights

by Sam Russell

**Q:** John Smith, Sr. reluctantly loaned his 2004 Ford Explorer to his seventeen year-old son, Johnny, Jr. to go to his senior prom. John, Sr. was reluctant because Johnny, Jr. did not have a stellar driving record. In fact, in the last year, John, Jr. had been involved in two car accidents for which he was at fault. While traveling to the prom with his date, he negligently headed around a sharp curve at an excessive rate of speed, crossed the center line, and struck an oncoming vehicle seriously injuring its driver. Is John Smith, Sr. liable for the injuries suffered by the other driver and the damages to her vehicle?

**A: Maybe.**

Under Alabama Law, John Smith, Sr. can not be held liable for the negligent acts of his son simply because he's John, Jr.'s father or merely because he was in his father's car. He could be held liable if he was on a trip at his father's request or on his behalf as his father's agent. But since Johnny was on a mission of his own, i.e. on the way to the prom, he was not acting as his father's agent, and the father could not be held liable on that basis.

A second theory of liability under which John, Sr. might be liable has existed in Alabama since at least 1915, when the

Alabama Supreme Court decided the case of Parker v. Wilson. In that case, the court concluded the mere permissive use by Dr. Wilson of his car to his son, Frank, aged 18 or 19 years, for his own use and business precluded liability on the theory that Frank was acting as his father's agent. To do so would be tantamount to "subjecting a parent to liability if he bought for his son a baseball or for his daughter a golf club, and, by permitting them to be used for their appropriate purposes, injury occurred." The court went on to say, however, that "No doubt liability will arise where the owner [entrusts] a machine of such dangerous potentialities [such as a car] to the hands of an inexperienced or incompetent person."

This theory is what is known as a "negligent entrustment." Thus, if in the scenario above, the jury found that John, Sr. acted negligently in allowing John Jr. to use his Explorer with knowledge of his son's driving record, he could be held liable under the theory that he negligently entrusted his vehicle to his son.

*This column is provided as a public service by Mitch Howie & Russell, Attorneys at Law.*

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**Suburbia is where the developer bulldozes out the trees, then names the streets after them.**

*Evelyn Mason, Madison*

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