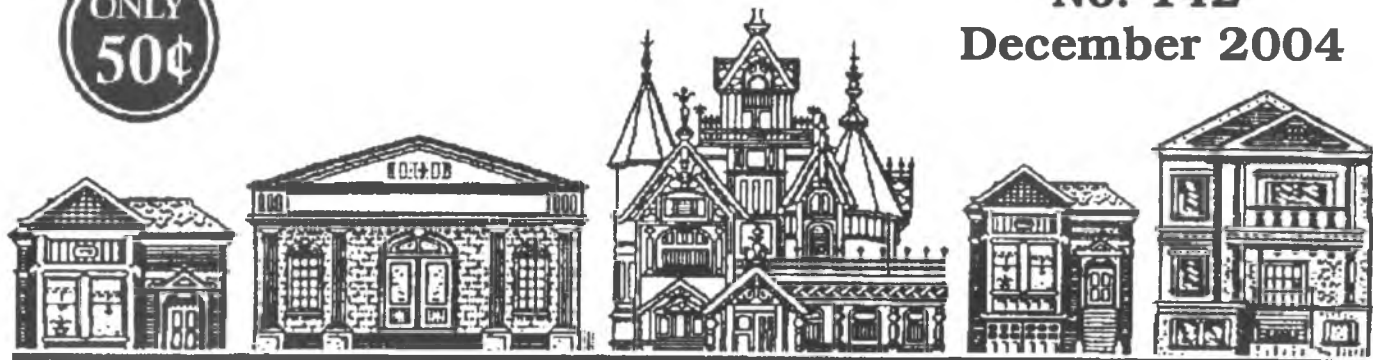


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December 2004



Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY



Aunt Eunice

The walls were decorated with pictures of the famous and infamous, grandchildren and friends. Most likely you had to pour your own coffee and if you wanted something besides ham, biscuits and gravy, it probably wasn't on the menu.

The owner, Eunice Merrell, never became rich and famous and she never held political office, but during her life she achieved something even more important.

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Huntsville has had many attractions throughout its two hundred-year history. Many people would come to visit the Space and Rocket Center. Other people would take tours of the antebellum homes or walk the banks of the Big Spring where so much of our history was centered.

For many others, however, the highlight of their visit would be a trip to a small nondescript brick restaurant on Andrew Jackson Way that specialized in ham, biscuits, hugs and smiles. The walls were decorated with pictures of the famous and infamous, grandchildren and friends. Most likely you had to pour your own coffee and if you wanted something besides ham, biscuits and gravy, it probably wasn't on the menu. The owner would always be sitting in her own chair at a table, surrounded by friends, where she made change out of an old cigar box.

The owner, Eunice Merrell, never made a lot of money and never held political office but she achieved a status that made her unique to everyone in our city.

She was Huntsville's Aunt Eunice.

Eunice Merrell was born into

a society that, in 1919, had not changed much since the Civil War. Madison County was still largely agricultural with most people living on small farms and raising cotton as their sole cash crop.

"We were so poor we couldn't afford to pay attention!" is how Aunt Eunice, with a twinkle in her eye, described growing up in rural Madison County.

Her father, Joseph Franklin Jenkins, had moved to Madison County in the 1880s with his mother when he was three years old. Known as a hard working and industrious man, he married Mary Magdeline Hornbuckle and purchased a small farm near Piney Woods, now known as Cave Springs. Even for a hard working man, with little money to hire help, raising 250 acres of cotton with a pair of mules was backbreaking work.

"I started working in the fields before I was even old enough to go to school," recalled Eunice. "I remember when I was just a little girl and Mama made me my first (cotton) picking bag out of a flour sack. I never was very good at picking cotton but we were all expected to do what we could."



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If Eunice wasn't very good at picking cotton, her brothers and sisters probably made up the difference. In all, there was a total of twelve siblings - six brothers and six sisters.

Her father was a minister and named all of his children after figures in the Bible. The brothers were Phillip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James and John, and the sisters were Martha, Ruth, Mary Magdeline, Naomi and Elizabeth. Eunice's friends used to tease her by saying they had the whole Bible sitting at the supper table!

"We had a two-horse wagon when I was a child," said Eunice in an interview several years ago. "I remember once when we were coming back from church and Mama started counting heads. No matter how she counted, she kept coming up one short! Finally, Mama made Daddy turn the horse around and go back to church where we found one of my sisters curled up under a bench asleep.

"My father was a deeply religious man who never missed a church service the whole time I was growing up. He and my mother were called on constantly whenever there were sick folks in the community. I remember many times when there would be a knock on the door in the middle of the night from someone needing help. My parents

never said no to anyone.

"Daddy performed a lot of marriage ceremonies. I remember one time when a couple, wanting to get married, came to our house late at night after we had gone to bed. Daddy never complained. He just married them, wished them luck and went back to bed. Another time, he married a couple in a cotton field, at the end of the rows. I don't think they picked cotton for the rest of that day!

"All of us had our own chores and one of mine was helping with the washing. Mama had this big black wash kettle that we would build a fire under in the backyard, and my job was stirring the clothes with a big wooden paddle. We put bluing in the water to make the clothes whiter. Later, when I was grown and got my first washing machine, I thought that was the most wonderful invention in the world.

"As a family we were pretty self-sufficient. We raised most everything we ate and Mama made a lot of our clothes out of flour sacks and fertilizer bags. I remember carrying lunch to school in a tin bucket. Sometimes, if I was lucky, I would trade a couple of ham and biscuits for a peanut butter sandwich. At that time I thought only rich people ate peanut butter.

"I was twenty years old the first time I ever came to town. It

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Huntsville Hospital is the unquestioned leader when it comes to healthcare experience in north Alabama. It's been that way for 109 years. With nearly 5,000 employees, 2,000 nurses, and 600 physicians on staff, our team is unmatched in its credentials and experience. From cancer care to the latest surgical procedures, Huntsville Hospital leads the way with experience. It really is the difference.



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was at the end of cotton picking season and as a special celebration Daddy carried us to the County Fair. I had never seen so many lights and so many people. The thing that really impressed me the most though was the cotton candy. I had never tasted anything like it.

"I suppose it's difficult for anyone who never picked cotton to understand how happy we were when it was finished. We would get out in the fields at first light, sometimes freezing to death, and work all day long bent over picking cotton. There was no comfortable way to pick it. If you bent over, your back killed you and if you worked on your knees you got gouged by sharp rocks and thorns. If I was working for someone else I got paid .50 cents a hundred pounds, or .50 cents a day for chopping cotton.

"The only good times of the day were lunch time and quitting time."

In 1940 Eunice met and married a local farm-worker named Leonard Merrell. Though the couple soon had three children, any thoughts of her becoming a typical housewife soon vanished. The area was still recovering from the worst depression this country had ever known and simply putting food on the table was often a Herculean task.

"I did housework for Mrs. Butler, who lived down the road, and also helped take care of her children. I was paid six dollars a

week for six days a week. It doesn't sound like much money now, but we did whatever we had to do back then.

"Later I went to work for my brother-in-law who owned a small restaurant in Farley. I made \$15 a week and the first time I got paid I was scared to death to be carrying that much money. That was the most money I had ever had at one time!"

The restaurant was a popular gathering spot for local politicians and people wanting favors. One local wag claimed there was more business conducted at the restaurant than at the courthouse. For a young country girl like Eunice, it provided a valuable insight into how politics were conducted at the time.

"There was a back room in the restaurant with a big wooden table and every Monday morning the sheriff (Oliver McPeters) would do his business there. People who wanted to pay a fine or wanted a favor, would wait their turn to see him. Of course, all the business was done in cash. Sometimes the whole front of the restaurant would be full of people waiting to see (or pay) some politician in the back room.

"The first thing I learned in the restaurant business was how to pour coffee and the second thing was how to keep my mouth shut!"

After a few years Eunice de-

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cided to open her own place, called the Butler Grill, across from the old Butler High School.

"I borrowed seventy-five dollars on my life insurance policy to open the restaurant with," recalled Eunice. "I don't think I was ever so scared in my life as I was at the thought of losing that money.

"I opened at 5 o'clock in the morning and stayed open until about 9 or 10 o'clock at night. Sometimes I would run out of food before I had a chance to go to the store. I remember late one night when a bunch of rough looking men came in and ordered hamburger steaks. They had been up for several days gambling and you could tell they were all drinking. Anyway, I had to tell them I was out of hamburger steaks. Next they ordered pork chops and again I had to tell them I didn't have any.

"Finally, one of the men grinned at me and said, 'Miss Eunice, you just cook us anything you have!'

"I cooked them the biggest breakfast you ever saw and before they left they told me that if anyone ever tried to bother me,

to just give them a call.

"I didn't think much about it until they started to leave and I saw they were all carrying guns!"

Although Eunice worked long hours and tried everything she could think of, she finally realized that if she was going to make a living from the restaurant she would have to find a different location. Its location across from the school proved to be a magnet for the kids during recess and lunch. Though the restaurant was often packed, she simply couldn't make a living on the nickels and dimes the children spent.

The one legacy from the location, however, was the addition of "Aunt" to her name. While most of her friends called her Eunice; to a youngster, calling an adult by her first name was unheard of. The kids solved this problem by simply calling her "Aunt Eunice."

In 1952, Aunt Eunice moved to a location on Andrew Jackson Way. The restaurant was surrounded on three sides by a parking lot full of pot holes. When a local politician offered to send her a couple loads of gravel from the county as a "favor" in return

for her support, Eunice declined and purchased it from a local contractor. Though at first her business seemed to thrive, the new location brought problems she had never faced before. The

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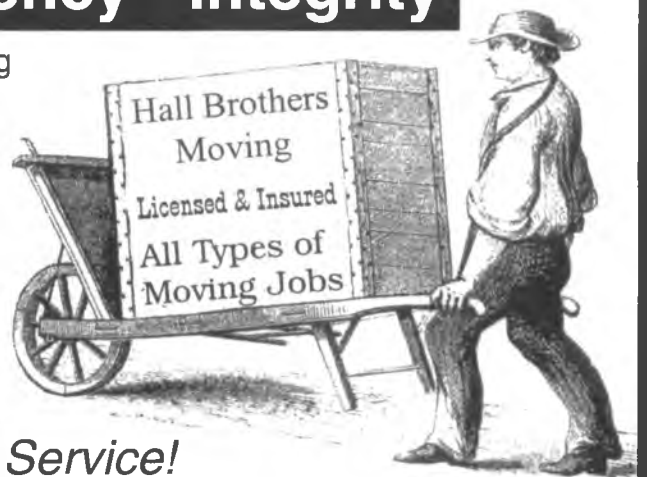
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city began widening the street in front and her customers were forced to run a gauntlet of construction work to get to the restaurant. Whenever it came a hard rain, the nearby drainage ditch would flood, often leaving the restaurant with six inches of water covering the floor.

Thankfully, the city soon finished the road construction, but though it would be several years before the flooding was fixed, her customers solved this problem by simply sitting on the tables when necessary!

With her business starting to make a small profit, Aunt Eunice decided it was time to take care of another problem. She had never learned to drive and had for years depended on other people for transportation.

"I didn't know nothing about cars but I decided it was time to learn. I called Ray's Auto and told them to bring me a car. They must have thought I was crazy because when they asked me what kind of car, I said one that I can drive! They brought me a 1956 Buick."

"I talked a friend of mine into teaching me and the first time I got behind the steering wheel she told me to just keep going until I hear glass breaking. When I looked over at her a few minutes later, she was sitting there with

her eyes clenched shut and holding onto the door with both hands!"

As the years began to pass, Aunt Eunice and her restaurant became a fixture in the community. It was no longer just a restaurant where you went to eat, it was more like visiting with a favorite member of the family. If you received a promotion on your job, you stopped by to tell her. If you became the proud parents of a new baby, Aunt Eunice was one of the first people you told. For many people who had moved here from out of town, she became the replacement for the family they had left behind.

Politicians began stopping in to take the pulse of the voters and editorial writers visited in search of stories. Astronauts, generals, sports legends and movie stars all ate breakfast and rubbed elbows with whoever might be sitting next to them. For people with out of town guests, Aunt Eunice's Country Kitchen became a place they had to visit.

Hardly a week went by when she didn't get a letter from someone who had visited her restaurant. Oftentimes they were addressed simply "Aunt Eunice, Huntsville, Alabama."

Most people however, returned time and again for the

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warmth of the lady who had become everyone's Aunt. Everyone who visited left with a kind word, a smile or a hug.

Her kindness was legendary. Almost every week she would send huge platters of ham and biscuits to families who had lost a loved one. She delivered meals to people bedridden and her restaurant was open to everyone who wanted to have a fund raiser for some charity. If she thought someone could not afford to pay she would simply smile and say, "pay me next time."

She made it a practice to treat everyone the same - a fact that Congressman Bud Cramer can testify to. Shortly after being elected to his first term, Bud walked in one morning and started to sit down when Aunt Eunice stopped him.

"Don't sit down yet," said Aunt Eunice. "Help clear the table off first!"

She was also a shrewd business woman who saw the benefits of cheap labor. A customer once complained about the service, telling her she needed more help. Aunt Eunice listened carefully, agreeing the customer had

a point. The following week the customer returned to find the Sheriff pouring coffee and a city councilman waiting tables.

Being well-known can also have its pitfalls; a fact Aunt Eunice discovered in the pre-dawn hours of October 19, 1995 when she was brutally attacked and robbed. Though left for dead, she managed to attract the attention of a next-door neighbor who immediately summoned help. Within minutes she was transported to Huntsville Hospital where doctors worked to stabilize her condition.

As Huntsville begin to wake up to a new day, the news of the brutal assault on Aunt Eunice was greeted by an incredulous mixture of outrage and disbelief. The district attorney's office and the police department were besieged by phone calls from

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citizens demanding swift justice. Television crews conducted live updates from the hospital, and newspapers across the country headlined the phenomenon of a woman whom a whole city claimed as their Aunt. She recovered from the attack and within days was back at the restaurant, once again greeting visitors with a smile and a hug.

In 1996 a group of her friends decided to have some fun and ran her for mayor. Several thousand dollars was raised, bumper stickers printed and posters put up, all saying "Aunt Eunice for Mayor." Her platform was "a liar's table in the city council" and a "coffee pot in every office." The money raised as "campaign contributions" was donated to the Arthritis Foundation. All of the news media picked up on the story and even CNN did a story about the woman who promised not to serve if elected.

Although it was supposed to have been all in fun, several local politicians began stopping by, with worried looks on their faces, asking if she was serious. Aunt Eunice, with a twinkle in her eyes, would always reply, "Don't you think I'd be a good mayor?"

As Aunt Eunice grew older

she fell victim to the crippling disease of arthritis. Partly because of this and partly because of a desire to help others, she became involved with the local Arthritis Foundation where she became a major fund raiser. "I'm too old for them to help me," she said with an impish smile on her face. But after a moment's serious reflection, she added, "Though I pray they might be able to help someone else."

In 2003 Aunt Eunice's physical condition had deteriorated and she was forced to enter a nursing home. Despite being bedridden she would always insist to everyone, "I'll be back at the restaurant next week."

"That restaurant was her whole life," said one friend. "It

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wasn't about making money - it was all about seeing her friends. When she finally realized she would never be able to go back, something inside of her died."

After her death, the interior of the restaurant was moved to a building in the Huntsville Railroad Depot complex where it has been preserved as a museum. During special events politicians still show up to pour coffee and clean tables.

The chairs are still mismatched, the walls are covered with the memorabilia of a lifetime and the Liar's Table sits in a prominent spot, near the chair that Aunt Eunice used to sit on.

And if you listen hard enough you can almost hear the woman who became Huntsville's aunt saying, "Remember that I love you all."

Recipe for Corn Pone and Pot Likker

CORN PONE - Mix about 1/4 cup of corn meal with 1/8 teaspoon salt for each cake. Blend with enough water to make an easy-to-shape dough. Mold into cakes about 2 inches square by 1/2 inch thick. Now comes the tricky part. Wet brown wrapping paper and wring it out. Wrap each PONE tightly in wet paper and bake in the ashes of your fireplace. (For those of you less adventurous, bake at 450 degrees for 20 minutes.)

POTLIKKER - Put a ham shoulder into about 3 quarts of water and simmer for about two hours. Wash young turnip greens and put them in the pot with the ham. (Cabbage can be used if preferred.) Add 2 teaspoons salt, 1/2 teaspoon black pepper and pinch of red pepper. Cover and simmer another 2-3 hours. Add water as required to keep original volume. Chop the greens, slice the ham, put the greens and ham on top of the PONE and pour some POTLIKKER over the whole mess.

Personally, I think that's why Grandpa died!

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Huntsville News from 1885

- The colored Cumberland Church laid the corner stone of their new church building on Church street Saturday evening, with interesting and appropriate ceremonies under the auspices of the Evening Star Lodge No. 6 A. F. & A. M.

- We are glad to see Mr. C. H. Halsey, the popular proprietor of the Huntsville Hotel out again after several days of illness during the past week.

- Nine of Mr. J. R. Stegall's fine lot of hogs were impounded this week under the vagrant hog law. Mr. Stegall states that on Saturday night his hogs were closely put up in his lot, and on Sunday morning had escaped through the removal of a plank which had been either removed by some person, or rooted off by the hogs themselves. He claims that the Ordinance does not apply if the owner of the hogs does not intentionally permit them to run at large and has requested the hogs from Justice R. W. Figg for the purpose of testing the question.

- Stolen last Thursday night from Thomas Gore near Huntland, Franklin county, Tenn. a black horse mule. A reward of ten dollars will be paid for the return of said mule and ten dollars for the apprehension of the thief. The lucky man can address the Mercury or Thomas Gore, Huntland, Tenn.

- Dr. J. J. Dement has added another to the list of his building enterprises which have contributed so much to local property, by contracting for the erection at an early date of a handsome brick store, 86 x 100

feet, on the present site of Wright's Boarding House, between the Dement Block and the store of J. R. Kress. The store has already been engaged and will be filled by parties from abroad, with a stock of machinery and agricultural implements.

- Matilda Cox, a colored woman, was arrested Thursday on a warrant from Judge Richardson for larceny. It is charged that she received clothes to wash and sold them instead of returning them.

- A party of young ladies and gentlemen left the city yesterday morning in vehicles for the Mountain.

Among them were Misses Shelby White, Corinne Goodman, Mary Newman, Nona Winter and Lula Goodman




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By 1842, William McDowell had become a successful cotton broker and was looking for a site to build a home on that might benefit his newly found status. After much searching he finally settled on a site facing Adams Street. The area was still largely rural, but McDowell felt sure that it would become an affluent neighborhood someday, thereby justifying the high cost of the land.

During the next several months McDowell spent every free moment working on plans for his new home. Every detail was planned meticulously, even down to the type of wood to be used and how many nails it would take.

Just as time for construction was to begin, McDowell was forced to go to England on business. Realizing it would be months, and possibly a year or so before he could return, McDowell went over every detail of the house with his newly hired contractor. Finally, after satisfying himself that the contractor knew what he wanted, McDowell left for England.

In the following months, Huntsvillians watched curiously as the house began to take shape. The materials were superb, the workmanship was excellent, but

still... there was something that was just not right.

When the long awaited return of McDowell arrived, he immediately went to the site to view the home he had been dreaming of for so long.

One can just imagine McDowell standing in the streets and gazing at the home. It was exactly as he had planned it, down to the smallest detail.

Except for one minor detail. It had been built backwards!

Possibly McDowell had forgotten to inform the contractor of which way the house was to face, or maybe as some locals later surmised, the contractor simply could not read.

Regardless of why, the home still stands today as the only known house in America to be built backwards.

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Sometimes Nothing Else Will Do!

The New Tree

by Colette Eiden Ming

The center decoration of our 1957 Christmas living room was a "live" tree. After purchasing the tree, there were rituals. Cut off part of the trunk, so that the tree would fit under the 7' ceiling. Use a carpenter's level to check that the tree was set straight in the Christmas tree stand and not tilted. Figure out which was the "bad side" of the tree so that it would face away from the openings to the living room. Keep the tree watered.

OH! Let us forget not the task of unraveling the Christmas tree fights and getting them to work! In 1957, one nonfunctioning bulb meant the whole string would not work, also. When a string malfunctioned, one would plug the string of lights into an electrical socket, remove each bulb out of its socket, and replace it with a new one until the string lit up. Usually Dad took on that task with Mom admonishing him to "watch what you

"Dear God: Is it true my father won't get into heaven if he uses his bowling words in the house?"

Note to God from Madison student for class assignment

say in front of the children!"

Around 1961, a new tree appeared on the market. It was a hit with my Mom! One could remove the "branches" from the "trunk," and store it from year to year. We did not have to drive from tree lot to tree lot for the "perfect tree." No longer needed were strings of lights. Because the "needles" of this new tree were made of aluminum, it changed colors as the wheel of stained glass rotated in front of the flood light on the floor.

"Putting up the tree" took on a whole new meaning.

Although I own a green artificial tree today, during the holiday season I light pine-scented candles in the living room to remind me of my Christmases with a live tree.

"Be careful about reading health books. You may die of a misprint."

Mark Twain

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Heard On The Street

by *Cathey Carney*



Congratulations to **Dave Phillips**, Production Manager at the Von Braun Civic Center, who called with the first correct guess of the Picture of the Month for November. It was **Dea Thomas, Jr.**, son of Dea Thomas, Sr. who is quite a legend in Huntsville.

We were so sorry to hear of the death of **Sallie Thomas**, mother of **Edna Pierce** of Orange Beach. Mrs. Thomas was one of the oldest people in Alabama, having been born in 1897. We send our love and sympathy to Edna and the family.

It was great seeing our friends **Darla Furman** and **Pam Delozier** recently at Papou's on the square.

Halloween downtown was made much more exciting by the performance of a couple of really good barbershop quartets singing in Humphrey's that night. "**Familiar Ring**" was great and played songs we hadn't heard in a long time. "**Audio Radiance**" was just as entertaining and we enjoyed talking with Bill Aldrup.

We want to send a special hello to **Jane Tippett**. She recently suffered a foot injury but sure has a good caretaker in her sweet husband, **Louie Tippett!**

Cheryl Tribble, of Atlanta, and her mom **Barbara Fortner** of Long Beach, CA. recently made their annual trek to Huntsville. They just love this city and its people and plan to do this for many more years to come. They recently spent two hours shopping in **Harrison Brothers Hardware** and had a blast!

Anni Weber was a good friend to many Huntsvillians, especially the Germans here, so we were saddened to hear of her death in November. She was founder of "**A German Singing Group**" who entertained hospitals for years.

We recently saw **Marie Hewitt** at 801 Franklin with friends who were all celebrating her birthday. She is sure a gorgeous lady!

Del Spears is a name many people knew, he died recently at 90. Our sympathy to his friends and family, including **Linda Drake** who knew him as her stepdad.

We saw our friend **Tony Mason** downtown recently and must say he looks better than

ever. Married life certainly is agreeing with him!

Good luck to **Newman Ward**, formerly a Huntsville mail carrier back in the old days who has written several stories for "Old Huntsville." He and his family are moving from Maryland to Malibu, Ca. where at least the weather will be better!

Many of you may remember **Bob Presto**, who wrote a book about Huntsville years ago. His mother **Eunice** tells me that he is moving back to Huntsville and will be working on his third book, about corruption in the superior courts.

Meagan and **Jason Mack** are the proud parents of a handsome new son, **Anthony Jason Mack**. The Grandma is **Joyce Russell** and she's already got pictures!

We were really sorry to hear that **Lee Ann Lancaster**, of Furniture Factory, lost her brother-in-law recently at the young age of 49. **Terry Laster** died in Bentonville, Ar. where he lived with his wife **Lynette**. Lee Ann's sister, and their daughters **Lacy**

Photo of The Month

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

Call (256) 534-3355.

Hint: This little girl wasn't born in Huntsville but she has sold the homes of many who were.



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and **Charlsye**. Our sympathy to the family, we know he will be missed.

We loved talking with **Cathy Yarbrough** recently at Sazio's. She is a talented hair stylist and the pretty wife of Propst Drug Store's manager **Scott Yarbrough**. We had fun with **Lori Pence**, also of Propst, talking about ghosts we've seen in some of these old downtown homes.

While there we neighbored with **Brit Crossley**, the bartender who always has tons of friends around him.

We attended a fabulous party recently at the home of **Layne and Claude Dorning**, of Sterling Travel and Railroad Station Antiques. The party was in honor of **Ellen Bettridge** of New York City, representative of American Express. The food was outstanding and the beautiful home was packed with people.

While there we caught up with **Leah (Childers) Lovell** who is an old schoolmate of **Stefanie Troup** and is now a resident of Old Town. We met **Phil Moore**, President of Fiscal Systems of Madison and enjoyed talking with him.

A big happy birthday to our friend **Margaret Duffey**! She is a beautiful and sweet lady and looks like she's in her forties!

The **Veterans Day Parade** was good this year as the weather cleared up and was cool but mostly dry during the event. All the local politicians were there as well as our **Veterans** whom we are SO proud of.

A special hello to **Margaret Poole, Danny George** and **Cynthia White** of Black Water Hattie's. The club/eatery on South Parkway is developing quite a following!

We were so sorry to learn of the death of **Ruby Crabbe**. She lived in Huntsville all of her life and was a loyal reader of Old Huntsville. She was 85.

It was quite a surprise to see

Glenn Williams recently. He is really looking buff and finally home from his world travels!

The **Beta Sigma Phi** sorority, Preceptor Alpha Gamma chapter, held its annual November meeting at the Heritage Club, hosted by **Joyce Russell** of New York Life. The event is always enjoyed by the members.

Congratulations to **Gann Bryan**, also of New York Life, and his beautiful wife **Katie**. They are expecting their first baby in the next several months.

Allie Macielag, a cheerleader at Central School in Ryland, sure has some proud Huntsville grandparents in **Brenda** and **Jim Rigsby**. We saw pictures of her recently and she's just a doll. Her parents are **Brian** and **Lori Macielag**.

It was interesting to find out that the **Crawlers**, a local blues band that draws crowds wherever they play, has just released a CD of old country standards. We can't wait to hear that!

That's it for this month - but we hope you all have a great Christmas and safe holidays!

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RECIPES

Nancy's Christmas Sweets

These recipes are from Nancy Holliman's cookbook, "Cooking with Nancy Plain and Fancy" available locally at Shaver's & Star Market.

No Bake Christmas Cake

- 1 lb. golden raisins
- 1 lb. toasted almonds or pecans
- 1 lb. shredded coconut
- 1 lb. vanilla wafers, crushed
- 2 1/4 c. half-and-half
- 1 c. white corn syrup

Mix all ingredients together well to distribute fruit and nuts. Pour into small loaf pans which have been lined with waxed paper. Refrigerate for 2 days before slicing to serve. I use vanilla wafers flavored with pure vanilla extract. Most brands use an artificial vanilla flavor which isn't as good.

Old-Fashioned Pecan Pie

- 1 c. plus 2 T. sugar
- 4 extra-large eggs
- 1/2 c. melted butter
- 1/2 t. salt
- 1 1/3 c. dark Karo syrup
- 1 1/3 c. broken pecans

Mix together first 4 ingredients. When smooth add the Karo and pecans. Pour into a 9" deep-dish pie shell. Bake 40 to 45 minutes at 375. Double this recipe for 3 (9") regular pie crusts or 2 (9") deep dish crusts.

This was our Grandmother Holliman's pie - our favorite.

Pepper Jelly

- 3/4 c. chopped bell pepper
- 1/4 c. hot red peppers, chopped
- 1 sml. bottle Certo

- 6 1/2 c. sugar
- 1 1/2 c. apple cider vinegar
- Rubber gloves

Mix sugar and vinegar and bring to boil. Put in chopped peppers and stir for 2 minutes. Remove from stove and let cool for 5 minutes. Stir in Certo and pour into jars. Wear gloves when chopping red peppers to protect your hands.

Amaretto Cakes

Make 1 box yellow pudding cake mix, substituting 2/3 cup Amaretto or other almond-flavored liqueur for the cup of water called for on the box. Bake in a Bundt pan according to instructions.

Glaze:

- 1 c. confectioners sugar
- 1 stick melted butter
- 1/2 c. Amaretto

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Pour 1/3 of the glaze over the hot cake and reserve the rest. When cake has cooled, remove from pan and pour remaining glaze evenly over cake.

Pecan Meringues

- 1 egg white
- 1 c. brown sugar
- 1 t. vanilla
- 1 T. flour
- 1 1/2 c. pecan pieces

Beat egg white, gradually adding sugar and vanilla. Sift flour and salt over the mixture, then add pecans. Drop by teaspoonfuls on cookie sheet. Cook at 275 degrees for 30-35 minutes. Check occasionally after 20 minutes for progress.

Chocolate Pecans with Almond Paste

Spread almond paste on a pecan half and press another half on top. Dip pecans halfway into melted chocolate. Use perfect pecans halves for prettier candies, and dry on waxed paper.

Beth's Musical Brownies

Family-size Duncan Hines brownie mix

3 eggs
3 lrg. Symphony candy bars
Mix brownies per package directions. Use 3 eggs rather than the 2 the mix calls for. Pour 1/2 batter into a greased 9x13" baking pan. Lay candy bars on top of the batter. Pour remaining batter over the candy bars. Bake per package directions. The candy bars will melt into a mousse-like center. Expensive but yummy. Consider using 2 (9x9") cake pans & saving one!

Sally's Peanut Butter Pie

Soften 1 quart good vanilla ice cream. Spoon it into 1 graham cracker pie crust. Swirl in 1 cup of peanut butter, but don't stir. Freeze. When frozen spread 1 jar hot fudge sauce over ice cream. Peanuts can be sprinkled over fudge if desired. Freeze again, before serving.

Macaroon Delight

- 2 doz. almond macaroons
 - 2 jiggers bourbon or cream sherry
 - 2 c. whipping cream or Cool Whip
 - 1 qt. coffee ice cream
 - 1 can toasted, slivered almonds
- Soak macaroons in

whiskey. When they are crumbly, stir in the ice cream and almonds. Place in silver bowl or cake pan. Freeze for 30 to 40 minutes. Whip cream and spread over top before serving.



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My Childhood Professor

by Billy Joe Cooley

The story of Mr. Gordon Hartline is one of several miracles. He was blind from birth, but had just enough vision to keep him from falling into ditches as he made his daily rounds through South Pittsburg, Tenn.

Despite his affliction, he delivered more than 200 newspapers around our neighborhood every afternoon.

He taught me enough common-sense philosophy to get me through childhood. I was only 7 when I discovered his interesting mind. He didn't treat us kids like children, instead he'd explain world events in a way we could understand. Despite his severe visual-impairment he knew every inch of our town like the back of his hand. His newspapers would arrive at Buck Morgan's Store at about 1 p.m., but he'd arrive an hour earlier so he could get all the local news from the hangers-around, among whom I managed to be.

When I'd say some childish

thing, maybe repeat something foolish that I'd heard older people say, he'd comment: "Billy, that's silly. You're talking like a kid." Then he'd proceed to straighten out my mind with facts.

For instance, I remarked one day that somebody should shoot Wendell Wilkie for daring to oppose Mr. Roosevelt for president. I, of course, was parroting some older person. That's when he lectured me on citizenship.

"Even republicans have mothers who would grieve at the loss of a child," he said.

This was during World War 2 and although Gordon was a southern liberal with compassion a'plenty, his tolerance for the hated Japanese was nil. Once he said "all Jap soldiers should be shot."

I assumed the Jap soldiers didn't have mothers.

I was a Gordon Hartline "student" all through grammar school and into my teens.

Then, one Christmas season he went to Vanderbilt Hospital in Nashville and, miracle of miracles, they discovered whatever was keeping him blind.

His wife and children delivered the newspapers during his absence and us kids joined the community in praying for his healing.

Then on Christmas Eve, as others in the neighborhood sat

in church waiting for Santa Claus to come through the door bearing apples, oranges and candy for us, in came one of the Hartline boys with word that his dad's eyesight had been fully restored by way of surgery.

What a wonderful Christmas present for our neighborhood. He finished his life with excellent eyesight.

Recently I met a young singer named Keith Hartline from my home county, he's Gordon's grandson, but was born too late to meet "my childhood professor."

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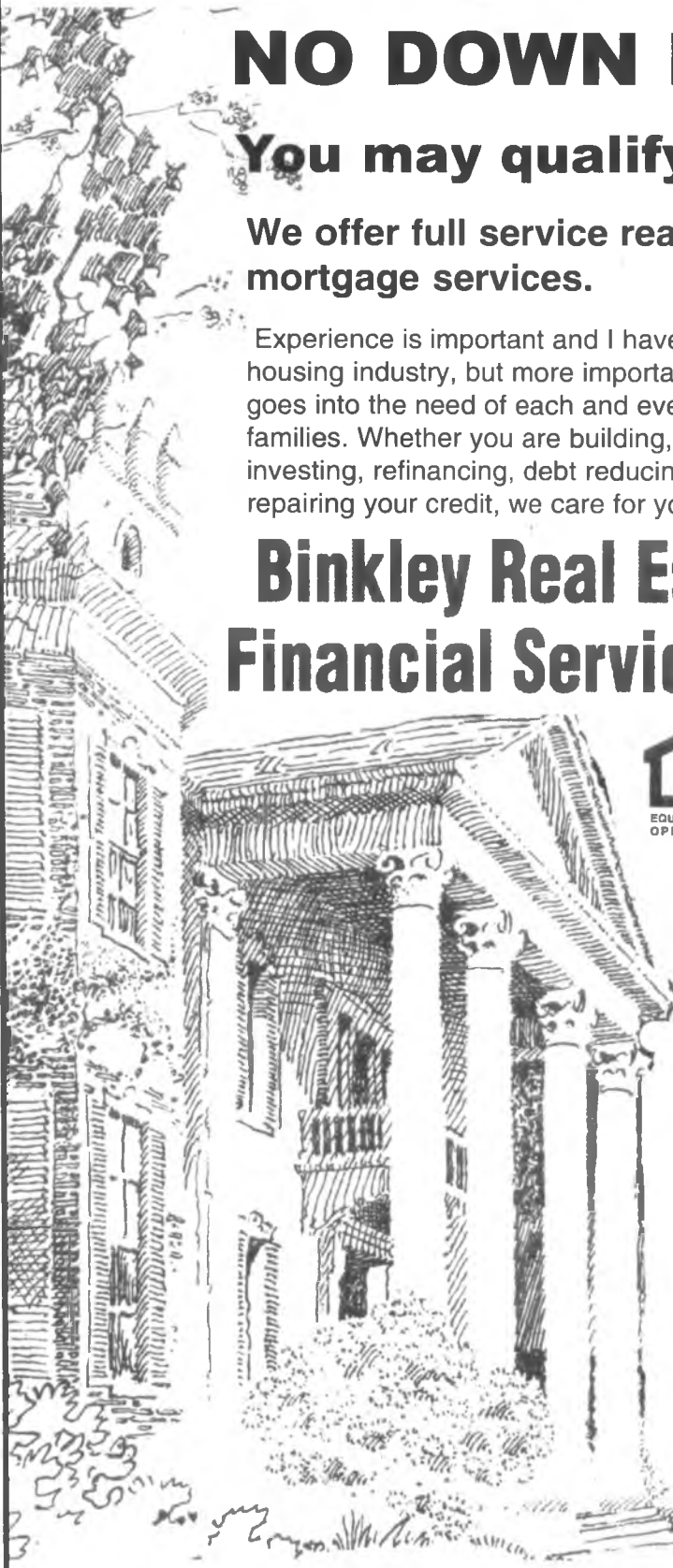
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Christmas Present from a Cop

by Collins (CE) Wynn

One of the best pieces of advice I received from my education colleagues when I first got into the teaching game here at Robertsdale High School in South Alabama was the social life and interaction of the students is not the real world. In other words, high school is a make-believe environment insofar as what is socially important is concerned. Over the last few years I have found that to be true partially because of the 40-year age gap between my students and myself. Oftentimes I have to really work at being tolerant.

I have found it can be a bit of a trick to keep an open mind with students because my professional career was spent in an environment where everyone, while not socially perfect, was at least honest and forthright. To bring myself back to reality, all I have to do is sit quietly and recall some of my own escapades as a student. Along with some of my Lee High School friends I had an experience just before Christmas in 1963 that was especially humbling and could have, had circumstances gone the other

way, adversely affected all of our futures.

You know, when it is all said and done, we were just a bunch of knuckleheads (both boys and girls) trying to get along. Hanging out, gossiping and kidding around, all the while wondering what was going to happen to us out there in the cold, cruel world. In those circumstances sometimes the smallest consideration can make a difference.

It seems a carload of boys was cruising up and down North Parkway in a 1951 Chevrolet one dark, cold night in late December back in '63 (isn't that a song lyric?). As you can guess we were all laughing and joking, singing songs along with the radio, and of course, drinking a cold beer or two.

I know that Goose Shelton and I don't object to being named but I'm not so sure about the other 2 or 3 because they now claim to be substantial members of the Huntsville community. You'll just have to guess about the remainder of the pack but it shouldn't be too difficult if you are familiar with Lee High School from that era.

We were just

coming down south on the Parkway from Lakewood (possibly from Harold Tuck's house) and I was driving merrily along. Most

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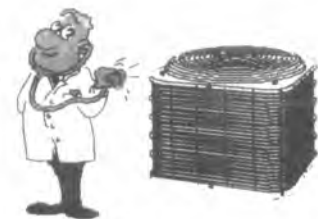
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everyone was pleasantly relaxed from having 2 or 3 Miller Pony's each (a "Miller Pony" was a good hearty full bodied Miller beer in a clear glass bottle about half the size of a regular beer). I happened to glance up in my mirror just in time to see the flashing blue lights of a Huntsville Police Cruiser. "Oh my god, it's the Cops!" With a carload of beer and several slightly inebriated boys, it seemed our world had suddenly come to an end. We ended up pulling over in the parking lot of the Hardee's at the corner of Highway 72 and the Parkway. In a 6 cylinder 1951 Chevrolet, one has no choice but to pull over.

The officer came up to my window, peered into the car, and asked for my license. I am sure he ascertained the situation immediately. After that, he carried

me back to his patrol car for a consultation. After looking at my license, he said to me "Boy, don't I know your Daddy?" Since my Dad was a Huntsville Police officer also, it was pretty obvious he did. My only acceptable response was "Yes Sir, you do." After that he spent 10 minutes telling what all was going to happen to me in jail, and just to make sure I didn't think he was joking, he went up to the car and shared that information with my passengers. Believe me, I was terrified, and I am fairly sure every one else was as well. Of all the pranks I had pulled, I had never come even close to getting into serious trouble.

He then had me get back into my car and sit there while he took my license back to his patrol car. I remember the color draining out of everyone's faces. Of course, the question on everyone's mind was "What am I going to tell my Mom and Dad?" And then, what do you know, a most kind and unexpected thing happened.

The officer walked up the car

and said to us, "Boys, I am about to give you the best Christmas present you have ever had!" And he did. "Pour all that beer out on the ground and get your butts home right now. I know where you all live and I'll be by to check on every one of you in the next 15 minutes." Of course, we all

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went straight home right then. My Dad never mentioned it to me so I don't believe he ever knew about the incident. You know, if I had been arrested that night my life would have taken a completely different course because the career I chose did not allow for a criminal record. In the years since I have often thought of that Officer's kindness and tolerance. It probably did not mean much to him but it was very important to us. When I am dealing with a student who is a little astray, I try to use a little of his wisdom from 40 years ago. Forgiveness and tolerance are wonderful things and grand Christmas presents.

First Christmas in Huntsville

by Lois S. Miller

My first husband and I and two children moved to Alabama in 1960. It was my first time away from my Kansas family, my parents, my sister and brother and their families. Also in Kansas were many extended relatives as my Mother and Father both had five siblings, so the holidays were filled with family.

We lived in the Triana Trailer Park which I understand now has a new name. I had spent some of the holidays crying and being rather sad when on Christmas eve Santa arrived at our mobile home door with many gifts. They knew we were far from home for the first time and they wanted to brighten our holidays. I will never forget that act of kindness. Since that time I have experienced the real Southern hospitality many times over.

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WAR NEWS

from 1863 paper

- A correspondent of the Huntsville Advocate tells planters to give their negroes more molasses and rice and less bacon. His plan would diminish the consumption of bacon two and a quarter million pounds per week in the southern confederacy.

- Special agents will be working in Madison County next week to investigate reports of numerous deserters hiding in the nearby mountains.

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When Santa Came To Visit

by Jack Harwell

It was Christmas Eve 1966 and I was eight years old. My five-year-old brother and I were as excited as young children can be on Christmas Eve and had resisted all attempts by our parents to get us into bed. Since we had company, a lady from church, Mom and Dad were perhaps hesitant to be as forceful as they might have been otherwise.

They warned us that, if we weren't in bed when Santa arrived, we wouldn't get any presents, but still we stalled. Then, at some point in the evening, they glanced out the front door and invited us to take a look. There,

standing on the front porch of the house across the street, was Kris Kringle himself — in the flesh! As we watched wide-eyed and open-mouthed, he finished his business with the neighbors and turned away — toward our house!

Now, to this day I don't have a clue as to who it was in the Santa Claus suit that night, but at that moment the sight of him caused my brother and me momentary heart stoppage. We hadn't listened when Mom and Dad warned us to be asleep when Santa got to our house — and now we were about to pay the ultimate penalty. We shot up the stairs, shedding clothes as we went, jumped into our beds and had our eyes closed, all, I'm sure, within five seconds.

Our parents and their guest laughed until they hurt at the sight of the two of us zooming through the house at about the speed of sound. The story comes up every year during family holiday get-togethers and never fails to get a laugh.

Now, I have a family of my own, and I no longer look out the

door on Christmas Eve expecting to see Santa Claus, but I still try to get to bed early — just in case.

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Mark Twain

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Christmas of 1920

by Newman Ward

It was the Christmas of 1920, or thereabouts. I think that I was about four years old, 84 years ago. I was in bed with the croup, feeling low, and this was not the first time that I'd had the croup. Daddy had been to Birmingham on business, and he had found a toy that he thought I would like. When he returned home, and gave the boxed toy to me, I hopped out of bed, opened the box, and got bug-eyed finding that it was an electric train. I had never seen an electric train except in Sears Roebuck catalogs.

We got the small oval track together quickly and put the locomotive and passenger car onto the track. Then we plugged in the transformer with switch, and Hot Dog! Wow! The train ran around and around like magic. Christmas was a few days away, and this was my present, but since I was sick, Mom and Dad thought it might help me feel better to give it to me as soon as possible.

And boy, did it do me some

good. That poor train got no rest for a couple of days, and the effect on me was almost magical. My croup evaporated, and that event must have developed such an immune system that croup has not bothered me since then.

I guess that we never grow up. "When" I win the lottery, I'll have a room full of railroad tracks, hills, buildings, signals, lights, and whistles, and will no doubt have as much fun as ever. I hope that it happens this Christmas.

Old Laws

by Stella Musick

- Under an 1860 Huntsville ordinance, anyone using a gravel shooter or "flipper" on the streets could be fined.

- Anyone in Huntsville in the mid-1860's who willfully wasted water would be fined.

- Anyone who built a privy within 20 feet of a street here in the 1870's was subject to a fine.

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A Special Gift for Christmas

by Amelia Olmsted

I was a young girl during the 2nd world war and money wasn't easy to come by. Christmas was a struggle for my parents in 1943. My brother and I were always so excited for Santa Claus to arrive.

We didn't understand the hardships our parents were going through to make ends meet. I was too young to realize at the time, that there was a chance we wouldn't have any presents from Santa under our skinny little Christmas tree on Christmas morning.

My parents somehow made a way for us to enjoy what little they could afford. I learned some years later that my Mother somehow got a second-hand doll for me and my Dad found a second-hand toy car and truck for my brother.

My mother did a makeover on the doll and took remnants of fabric and made new clothes for the little clothed-bodied doll with the little plastic legs, arms, and head. She scrubbed it up until the face was starting to fade. My Dad worked on the toy car and truck and did the best he could to make them like new. We had an apple, a few nuts and a candy cane in our old socks that we had hung on the mantle over our fireplace.

My Dad sneaked out the kitchen door when it was close to our bed time and went around

the house and made a noise near the house so we thought for sure Santa was waiting out there for us to get to sleep. I could picture those reindeer in my mind; my eyes must have been as big as saucers with the wonder of it all.

I learned from that Christmas so long ago that it isn't what you get, but what you give in life that makes it worth living.



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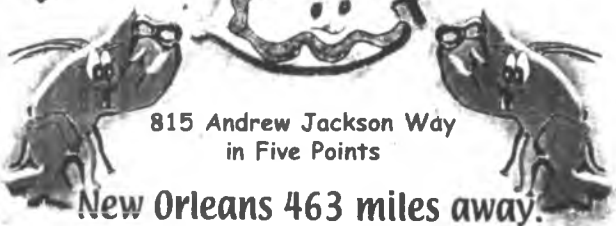
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Robert the Robot

by Tommy Towery

"Robert the Robot" was manufactured by Ideal Toys and was one of the first plastic toy robots to be introduced to kids of my generation. I wanted him from the moment I first saw him in the Sears Wish Book that year. I made sure that I let everyone who had me on their Christmas list know of my desire.

Robert was no ordinary robot. Robert had special powers. He had a little record player inside his back and when you turned the little handle attached to it, he would say "I am Robert Robot the mechanical man. Drive me and steer me, wherever you can." His hands had clips that would hold toys and his eyes lit up. He also walked. "This robot can walk," would be part of the explanation of why I had to own him. He had a long silver cable coming from the back of him leading to a handle where there was a control knob attached. You turned the knob and he would start moving. He could be steered by squeezing a trigger. He could even walk backwards if you turned the knob counterclockwise.

I am not sure if he was a gift from my mother, my grandmother, or if he came from Santa himself. Back in those days, it really didn't matter much where gifts came from. I knew he came from someone who loved me very much. That love made Robert appear, wrapped in Christmas

paper, under our Christmas tree in 1954 or 1955. It was a wish come true for a little kid growing up in Rocket City.

I'll never know the number of miles I put on him as we walked and steered all over the house. I'm sure my family could hear him talking in their sleep; I turned the knob on his back so much. Robert was too valu-

able a toy to play with outside so he stayed indoors and he only walked on the hardwood floors or rugs. He was even kept in his original box from that Christmas morning until the day that he picked it up in one of the clips on his hand and left home.

I know Robert ran away, because I would have never thrown or given him away. He was just

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"Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving lotion and they go out and smell each other."

Chrissy, Athens 6-year old

too neat. He might have been off to see the world; it was a changing time back then. I really think he was kidnapped, because I know he had as much fun with me as I did with him, and would never run away. All I know is that one day he was gone. He had been in the back of my closet for a long time, his company replaced by that of girls who found their way into my life. All I know is that one day I went to visit with him, and Robert and his box were gone. Perhaps he got his feelings hurt. He was like Puff the Magic Dragon, I suppose

I searched my closet, the other closets in the house, and even the pantry. Robert was not to be found. I finally had to give him up for lost, but through the years I would always speak excitedly of him when anyone talked about their early childhood toys.

It was 40 years later that Robert came back into my life. Like a photo of a missing child on the

side of a milk carton, one day Robert's picture showed up on an eBay auction. I know there were other robots, and not just the one I owned, but I didn't care. I put in a bid, and in the next week, my friend Robert the Robot came home again.

Robert now sits atop my desk, looking at me with his red, light-up eyes. He still can walk and he still can talk. He still possesses the spirit of the love that someone in my family had for the little boy who first opened his box on that fateful Christmas Day. He will stay with me this time; at least until I can share his love with my own grandchildren and he can walk and talk with them. Robert loves to play with kids.

"That's how I learned to dance. Waiting for the bathroom."

Bob Hope, on living with his six brothers

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News From The Year 1954

News From Huntsville and Around The World

School Integration Ordered

Racial segregation in the public schools of America was outlawed today by the Supreme Court. With their unanimous decision, the justices set aside the "separate but equal" doctrine handed down by an earlier Supreme Court in 1896.

Many Southerners reacted angrily to the new ruling, with some leaders in at least two states, Georgia and South Carolina, vowing that they will abolish their public schools. "The South," said Senator James O. Eastland, Democrat of Mississippi, "will not abide by nor obey this legislative decision by a political court."

The court decision could vitally affect 8.5 million white children and 2.5 million Negroes now attending segregated schools in Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Co-

lumbia. The ruling will not affect private schools.

In the landmark decision, one of the most far-reaching rulings of the century, Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote: "In the field of public education, the doctrine of separate but equal has no place. Separated educational facilities are inherently unequal."

State governors have already said they will not comply with the order.

Sinatra Wins Oscar

Frank Sinatra received a best supporting actor award this evening for his role in "From Here to Eternity." The crooner tore his vocal chords in 1952; his singing career threatened, he begged for the part of Angelo Maggio in "Eternity." The film copped seven other Oscars, including best picture.

Joe DiMaggio Marries Marilyn Monroe

Joe DiMaggio and Miss Monroe were wed this afternoon in San Francisco City Hall.

Miss Monroe, born in Los Angeles as Norma Jean Baker, has starred in "Niagara" and "How to Marry a Millionaire." DiMaggio, a San Francisco native, was voted American League Most Valuable Player in 1939, 1941 and 1947. The eighth of nine children of a fisherman, he now co-owns an eatery on Fisherman's Wharf.

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Atomic Submarine Launched

The submarine Nautilus, the first ship powered by atomic energy, was launched today at the shipyard of the Electric Boat Company in Groton, Connecticut. More than 12,000 workers and other spectators crowded into temporary bleachers to watch Mamie Eisenhower, wife of the President, break a bottle of champagne across the bow of the Nautilus in the traditional christening ceremony.

The 340-foot-long submarine, built at a cost of \$55 million, is capable of cruising around the world without surfacing because its atomic engine requires no air. Its top speed of over 30 knots makes the Nautilus capable of outrunning all but the fastest surface vessels while remaining submerged.

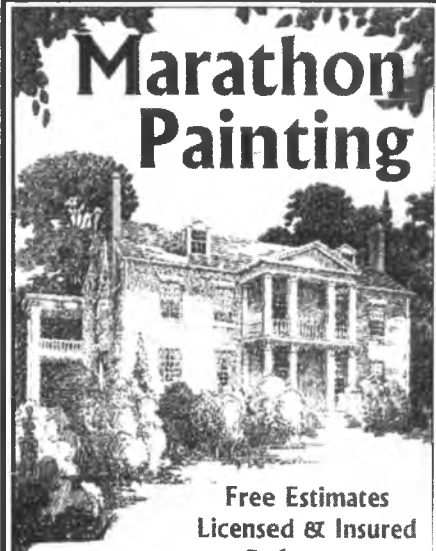
While the Nautilus adds a potent weapon to the arsenal,

speakers said she can also be influential in pointing the way to peaceful uses of atomic energy, since the reactors that power her will serve as prototypes for a generation of large civilian nuclear electric generating stations.

The sub is due to start a series of sea tests soon and could join the fleet next year. Hyman Rickover has been nominated permanent Rear Admiral after his key role in developing the Nautilus.

Cigarette Industry Denies Lung Cancer Claims

Seeking to counter scientific reports linking lung cancer and cigarette smoking, a group of 14 major tobacco companies announced today the formation of a Tobacco Industry Research Committee. The committee, a joint venture of tobacco growers, distributors and producers, will be in charge of "a scientist of unimpeachable integrity," the industry said.



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When Mom Saved Christmas

by Carolann Bledsoe

When I was about six years old, Christmas was coming up and my mom was hurriedly trying to get all the preparations together. Santa Claus was giving me a child-size kitchen that needed to be put together. Mom asked dad if he'd put it together over at my grandparents house while she watched me and my brother.

After three hours, mom called dad, since she hadn't heard from him in a while, to check on the progress.

When he answered the phone she could hear arguing in the background. She asked dad about the kitchen and he said

that he, his brother and father hadn't even started building it yet. They were still arguing over how to put it together. My mother said OK, you come back here, I'll go over there and put the kitchen together and you can look after

the kids. My mom went over to my grandparents house and put the kitchen together after a couple of hours.

Since that Christmas Dad has learned (as have all of us) to: *Read The Instructions* before putting anything together. It works better that way.

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Bits of History

by Stella Musick

- The first known divorce in Alabama was recorded in Madison County on May 11, 1812. It involved John and Catherine Carter.

- Land around the Big Spring was bought in 1808 by Martin Beatty for \$1 per acre.

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Christmas in Old Huntsville

by Johnny Johnston

I guess my family didn't know much about Christmas in the city before coming to Huntsville in 1939. Dad was still working at the Stave Mill on Wheeler and Church Street and looking for a better life for his family. Celebrations may have been smaller in those early days living in Huntsville, but in a couple of years they began to take on an extra meaning.

Dad had first rented a small house behind a home on Abingdon in Lincoln. The tiny house was only a few hundred feet from the home they later bought on Maple St. It was adequate, but extremely small. The second home was on Orchard Street just off where Pratt runs now and very close to Church Street. The house was larger that we had been used to so mom decided to rent out part of it and have people live with us. We heated with coal and wood, which was cut and hauled in by my older brothers.

Huntsville had a special downtown Christmas feeling with carols sung on the Courthouse Square. The Christmas parades covered all the downtown area with most everyone going to either participate or watch that annual pageant.

Decorations were sparse but hung from the streetlights and buildings along the route. A large Christmas tree was usually displayed on the square with lots of lights and tinsel hanging from the branches. The parade would

last over one hour with Santa riding a Huntsville Fire Engine and always bringing up the rear of the parade. I can remember at least one year when a large Christian Cross was displayed on the square. Politicians were riding in new cars and I remember at least once when U.S. Senator John Sparkman was Grand Marshal of the Huntsville Christmas Pa-

rade. He was one of the most powerful men in the Senate and possibly the most powerful man from Alabama at the time.

When we lived on Orchard St, the railroad track was only a few feet away from the front porch and the train schedule wasn't like it is now. A lot of trains were forever coming by to shake the ground and rattle the dishes. However noisy and discomforting that might have been I still have great memories of the



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Rodney Dangerfield

Steam Locomotive Engines which blew those great sounding whistles for the Wheeler and Church St. Crossings. In the fall and especially near Christmas the Steam Engines would occasionally set fire to the weeds that grew along the track. Being years before powered lawn mowers and Weed Eaters, weeds grew everywhere.

Cleaning a ground in those days meant scraping all the grass from the dirt so it didn't grow for a while. It was absolutely impossible for the railroad companies to clean all the weeds from the tracks. Putting out the fires fell to the goodness of the residents but did seem very festive to this little two year-old boy at that time. First in the fall of the year was the Madison County Fair which was held on the fairgrounds located just off Church Street and north of Wheeler. That was so close to our house that we could hear the barkers at the sideshows. We could experience the excitement as people screaming while on the rides. We always managed to go to the fair once each year. Those of you who know me know of my love of motorcycles. My first ride was at the fair when I was 2 years old. I got lost, was placed on the back of a policeman's Harley Davidson. He rode up and down the Fairgrounds until someone claimed me. My wife wonders why anyone would claim me, but then I was cute at two!

The next excitement of any consequence was Christmas, and how my family loved Christmas!

It wasn't that we expected expensive gifts, exciting trips' or anything above the Christmas spirit.

It was the change in attitudes, the special things we did for each other and the gathering of the community.

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had a large Christmas Tree, which usually set alongside the Piano of Mrs. Graham. Names were drawn in each classroom with a limit of five to ten cents for a gift. That later grew to fifty cents in high school. As a coincidence Chocolate Cherries sold for fifty cents a box so most all students got a box of Chocolate Cherries.

Students were excused from class for around two weeks that allowed us to celebrate Christmas and New Years before re-suming the learning curve. During that two weeks we were free to do whatever the weather allowed.

My Mother inherited a small farm from her father in the year of 1946, so we took the old truck out and cut a lot of Pine and Cedar trees to bring home and sell. I think we got from 25 to 50 cents for them depending on their size. I don't remember buying a tree for many years but I do remember many other ways to stand trees and decorate them for display in our homes.

You usually cut the stand from a couple of boards and made sure they were level and square. That was always dad's job.

You don't have to be as old as me to think about the early sixties when "The Aluminum" tree became a popular item. They shined, they were easy to put up, they held some decorations without falling down, but they were tacky. Some people tried to put electric lights on them, which shorted out and caused major fires. I for one am happy the fad only lasted a year or two.

Many people popped corn,

then ran a needle and thread through it to form a long string then wrapped it around the tree. My Mother said that was a waste of food and never allowed us to do it. There was a paper rope available in several colors, which you could purchase and put around the tree. We had Icicles made from aluminum, stars cut from cardboard, old lights which might burn one or two days but continually needed work. My sister liked to make a flour paste which looked like snow and spread it on the tree. The most terrible thing you could use was a product made from an early form of asbestos or fiberglass. It was called "Angel Hair", and could cause severe pain to you if you touched it with your skin.

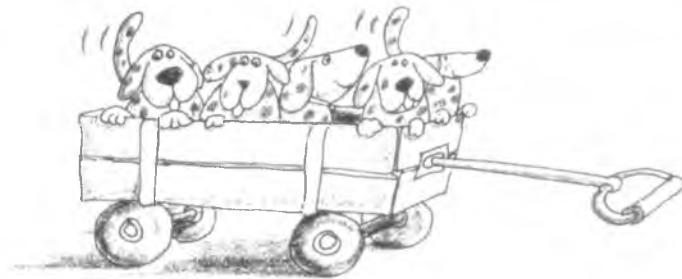
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**You know you're getting
older when you don't
know what time Taco
Bell closes anymore.
Sam Keith**

Children being children, Angel Hair fights would sometimes break out with each throwing the hair on another until everyone was miserable. Speaking of doing special things for each other!

Someone will ask, didn't you have a "Mall Santa"? Well that's easy to answer; we never had a mall. Everything was downtown, you went there to shop, and you sat on the curb or at the courthouse to watch other people or to meet other people. The Parkway Mall was actually a strip mall when built in 1956. It had a field road in between two fields of corn just to the south of the last store. That is now called Drake Avenue.

Another thought came to mind when I thought of Christmas in Old Huntsville. Around Thanksgiving, Sterchi Brothers Furniture store placed figurines in their window facing Clinton. They were animated and magical to small children. I couldn't wait to see them as a child and still went to see them as a teenager. They usually were ice skaters, I had never seen anyone skate or a pair of ice skates.

Scenes included ice and snow covered homes with snowmen, frozen lakes, horses pulling sleds. Things we very rarely saw in Huntsville.

We were at the A&P Grocery on the corner of Green and Eustis Streets. I was maybe 3 years old when I asked Dad if that was "Santa Claus Land" behind the store. With snow on them, those houses looked evermore like a storybook picture of Santa's home. The old store is gone now, there is a reminder that on the very spot Frank James was tried and cleared of a robbery. In my book, it will always be "Santa Claus Land".

Wow! Would we be arrested now? I have mentioned Christian Christmas songs in school, pastors in school, an actual Cross on the square. The very idea of celebrating Christmas in public, that's dangerous anymore!

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Trapping In Alabama

E.N. Woodcock, a native of Pennsylvania, was one of the last professional trappers. During his career he roamed the country, coast to coast, hunting wild game. The following account, written in 1912 of his experiences in Alabama, are remarkable in that it gives an outsider's view of North Alabama around the turn of the century.

Well, comrades of the trap line, as I am getting well up to the seventy notch, and as the chills of zero weather chases one after the other up and down my spinal column, like a dog after a rabbit in a briar patch, and as I am unable to shake off that desire for the trap line, I concluded to go south again to trap. I began an inquiry in several different sections, in states of the South, and finally decided upon Alabama, where a gentleman and a brother trapper by the name of Ford had invited me to come. On the last days of October, 1911, I arrived in Alabama where I met Mr. Ford, whom I found to be a gentleman in all respects, and a member of the M.E. Church.

My first day's outing after reaching Mr. Ford's place was on the Tennessee River, raising fish nets, and putting out a few mink traps to ascertain what the complexion of the inner side of a mink's coat was. I got a mink the first night, which I found to be of fairly light color, but not quite light enough to my liking. The setting of more traps was delayed for a few days and we spent the time in tending the fish nets.

I have whipped the streams and drowned earthworms for brook trout and other fish, from my childhood days to the present time. I had never done any fishing in large rivers with nets, so you can imagine my feelings when one net after another was raised which contained many fish of different kinds, such as yellow cat, channel cat, buffalo,

pickerel, pike, carp, suckers, black bass (called trout in the South) and many other kinds. These fish ran in weight all the way from one-fourth pound up to twenty pounds each, and occasionally a buffalo or yellow catfish much larger. Mr. Ford informed me that often on trot lines they got sturgeon, weighing more than one hundred pounds.

We intended to put out a trot line and catch a sturgeon that I might get some oil. It is said that the oil from a sturgeon is a sure cure for rheumatism in the joints, but it rained so much, keeping us busy adjusting our traps, that we did not get any



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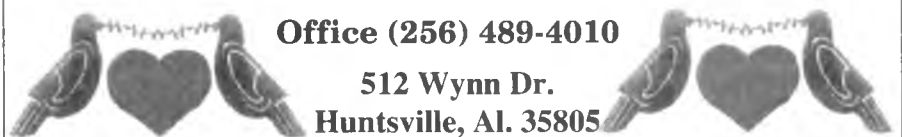
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time to get the bait and put out the trot line. So I did not get to see one of those large fellows.

Mr. Ford pointed out corn and cotton fields where the corn and cotton was still ungathered and told me that he had trot lines set out all through these fields last spring and caught hundreds of pounds of fish - it hardly seemed possible as the water was then fifteen or of twenty feet below the banks of these fields. But in December when it began raining nearly every day, and the water rose so suddenly that I was obliged to leave many of my traps

where I had set them around ponds and banks of streams and in the swamps, I could then readily see that it was perfectly possible for the fish to get out into the corn and cotton fields to feed.

The rainy season set in nearly a month earlier this season than usual, causing the rivers and streams to rise so as to flood the whole bottoms (it is called the tide by the people in Alabama).

I will not give my views of the country and conditions in northern Alabama - it would not look well; it is sufficient to say that the greater part of the land is owned in large tracts by a few men and leased out at from \$3.00 to \$10.00 per acre. Corn and cotton are the main crops. Any land lying above the overflowing sections requires heavy fertilizing in order to make a crop. The fertil-

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izer is the commercial sort, and all the crop will sell for is what is put onto the land in the way of fertilizers. These lands are mostly leased to colored people - in fact, I was told that the landlords did not care to lease to white men.

The poor white man in northern Alabama is worse off than the colored man, for he is looked upon as neither white nor black. In this section the population is largely of the colored class. All of the landlords have a store, so as to furnish their tenants with goods of an inferior quality at exorbitant prices.

There is no good water to be found in that part of Alabama. The water that the people use is something fearful - of course the wealthy class have cisterns. The soil is mostly red clay, and terrible to get about in when the least damp.

South of the Tennessee River is what is called the Sand Mountains; the soil is of a sandy nature, freestone water, and the people are all white - in fact, it is said that they will not allow a colored man to live there. I heard it stated that they would not even allow a negro to stop over night in that section.

The Sand Mountain region is a piney country with a sandy soil. The land is not as fertile as the bottom lands along the Tennessee River, but they produce a finer grade of cotton, which brings a cent or two a pound more than that of the bottom lands.

As to game in north Alabama, there is but little large game to be found. In the extreme northern part of Madison county, well

Seen on patient hospital chart: This patient had been constipated for most of her life until she divorced in 1989.

up to the Tennessee line, there are a few deer and wild hogs; it was said that there were some bear, also plenty of wild turkeys. There were plenty of ducks, and a good many quail. There is still some lumbering being done, mostly in oak of different kinds, though a good part is white oak. The logs are cut and hauled to the Tennessee River and taken by steamboat to Decatur in Limestone county, and worked up into lumber and manufactured articles. There is still quite large bodies of cugalo gum left in the swamps, though this timber is not yet used to any great extent.

I wish to say that if the trapper expects to ship his camp outfit by freight to any part of the South, he should start it from four to six weeks in advance of the time that he will arrive at the place where he will use it. The trapper, as a usual thing, is

too shallow in the region of the pocket book to afford to ship an outfit of camp stove, cooking utensils, tent and a hundred traps or more of various sizes, by express. Of course, he can take his bed blanket and extra clothing as baggage in his trunk.

Now to make this matter plainer, I will give my experience



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of the last two seasons. In 1910 I trapped here in Pennsylvania the first two weeks of November before going south. So shipped my camp chest by express to Cameron, N. C., started it four days before I started so as to be sure that it would be there by the time I arrived. But when I got to Cameron there was no express matter for Woodcock.

Five days later while I was standing on the depot platform at Cameron waiting for the eleven o'clock express train, along came a freight train, stopped and put off my camp chest. Now, the express charges on this chest was something over ten dollars on 180 pounds.

"Have you ever noticed that anyone going slower than you is an idiot, and anyone going faster is a maniac?"
George Carlin

The next season I concluded that I would not give the express company another rake-off, so started my camp outfit by freight for Madison, Alabama, four weeks before I started, so as to again be sure that it would be there when I arrived. Mr. Ford met me at the station nine miles from his place with a conveyance to take baggage and camp outfit to his place. And boys, imagine my feelings when I was again told by the station agent that there was nothing there for Woodcock. About a week later, I got the goods. So boys, take the hint and start the outfit well ahead if you wish to get it on time: I have had other similar experiences. On our way back to Mr. Ford's place the day he met me at the station, he called my attention to several different places along the road to mink tracks in the ditches and in the road. I thought that it would be no trick at all to take three or four mink each night,

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but I was not reckoning on the disadvantages I had to contend with.

This section of the country is very thickly settled with colored people, and each family keeps from one to three dogs, which are out searching for food all the time. These people never think of feeding their dogs. Nearly every night these colored people are out hunting in droves of five or six, and with six or eight dogs, they think it no more of a crime to steal a trap, and anything found in the trap, than they would consider it a crime to eat a baked 'possum. A trapper must keep a good lookout when setting his traps to see that there is no one anywhere in sight. If there is, you may expect that that particular trap will be missing the next time you come that way.

In setting a trap, the first thing to do is to select a place where the trap is to be set, then go into the bush and get the trap, stake and everything that you will use in making the set. Then you will again look carefully to see that no one is around, and will proceed to make the set, provided that yourself is the only human being in sight, stopping your work often to look about you. Do not think that this caution is not necessary, for it sure is. The writer had nine traps taken at one time within an hour after he had been over the line.

We went into our first camp, I think, on the 5th of November, at a place called Blackwell's Pond or Blackwell's bottom (Blake bottom?), I am not sure which. The first day after we got to camp, Mr. Ford went out and put out a few traps, while I stayed in camp and

fixed up things.

The next morning we went out to look over the ground a little, while Mr. Ford went to the opposite side of the pond to set a few more traps, and see parties who owned land along the pond, for we found that the land had been posted "No Trespassing." When Mr. Ford came in that evening I think he brought in five rats. We set nine traps that day and went south along the pond to look over the grounds.

The next morning we had one mink and one coon in the nine traps. I think Mr. Ford brought in four rats and had one coon foot. That evening Mr. Ford went home to raise his nets, and when he came back he brought in two mink; I got two

The sound of E.T. walking (in the movie) was made by someone squishing her hands in Jell-O.

Barbara Fortner

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February 21	6:30	Ed Gentle	Anniston PCB Settlement
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	7:40	Ralph Cook	Supreme Court
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April 4	6:30	George Moore	Worker's Compensation Law
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coon. Mr. Ford went home again and made arrangements for a team to come in and move us out to "pastures new." He also brought another mink, and I believe that we got two or three coons that night. I think we got nine rats, four mink and eight coons in the three nights with about twenty traps.

The next day after we went into Camp No. 2. I set a few traps near camp. Mr. Ford went down the creek toward his place and set a few traps, and went home to look after his fish nets, returning to camp that evening. Mr. Ford had warned me that the mink in that section would foot themselves equally as bad as muskrats, but as I had never been bothered with mink footing themselves, I paid no attention to his warning.

The next morning Mr. Ford Stepped outside of the tent it was

about five o'clock and called to me, asking where I had set my 3rd trap on the creek, and being told, he replied, "Well, you have caught a mink." When asked how he knew, he said, "Come out and hear him squall." I ate breakfast and hastened down to release the mink, but my haste was unnecessary for the mink did not propose to wait for me, I found only the mink's foot - the mink had gone.

I had never had a mink foot itself in this way before and did not think that the mink did, although here in Alabama, we had two mink to foot themselves in one night. Had I heeded Mr. Ford's warning, I would have been several mink pelts ahead.

While there was considerable fur to be found in the vicinity of Camp No. 2, it was a hard place to camp, owing to the scarcity of camp wood and the inconvenience of getting water, so we moved on to Beaver Dam creek in Limestone county, where we were in hopes of finding a few

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beaver and quite a plenty of mink and coon. But we were sadly disappointed; we found but little to trap, but found trappers and trap-lifters in abundance, so made haste to get out of that country while we had our boats left. Our catch was only two mink, twelve rats, five coon and one or two 'possum.

We moved from this place back into Madison county and pitched our camp at a point known as the Sinks, where we did a better business. But the rainy season soon set in, so we were compelled to break camp and get out, leaving a good part of our traps where we had set them, now under several feet of water. We shall never see them again.

Well boys, you will excuse me from bragging about just how many coon we got. I can only state that during the five weeks that Mr. Ford and the writer were in camp in Madison county that we got twenty-six mink, and I don't remember the number of coons, opossums and (musk)rats caught.

A Mistake

from 1897 newspaper

An item appeared in the Democrat recently which should have read as follows: Mrs. Haskins has the largest and nicest plants in town." In making up the form the "L" dropped out in the word plants, and the mistake was not noticed until the paper was printed.

The whole town was in an uproar and when the lady's husband read the item he armed himself with a shotgun and started for the printing office but the editor saw him coming and escaped through a back window.

Sheriff Marries Couple Charged With Adultery

from 1891 newspaper

We were the recipient of a verbal invitation yesterday from Sheriff Robert E. Murphy to be present at his hotel on the corner of Clinton and Green streets, Sunday morning at ten o'clock, at which time the knot will be solemnly tied to make John Locke and Zilphia Wilbanks a legally wedded pair. Judge Thomas J. Taylor will officiate on the memorable occasion.

Both parties are from Madison X Roads and were arrested a few days since and brought to town and lodged in jail, being charged with adultery. It is expected that charges will be dismissed once the couple is wed.



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Dear Editor

I'm writing in regard to Charles Rice's article on "The Giant Killer" in your November 2004 issue of Old Huntsville.

While our group of volunteers was preparing old Jackson County Probate Files for transfer to microfilm in 2003, I had the task of handling W.R.W. Cobb's file, and in it, found a voucher made out to him and signed by A. Lincoln.

The Jan. 4, 1863 voucher was worded, "To Any United States Depository: Pay on demand to W.R.W. Cobb, Esq. the sum of \$5000 for patriotic services to the United States of America as Provisional Governor of the State of Alabama".

A copy of the voucher was sent to the Lincoln historians where it was deemed authentic. It was a significant find in that it verified what the historians had long suspected but were never able to prove - that the President had in fact appointed Cobb as Provisional Governor of Alabama during the Civil War.

The voucher was not cashed as Cobb was apparently about to make another bid for the Confederate Congress that year and chose not to accept the President's appointment.

The original voucher is in the possession of the Jackson County Probate Judge's office.

Sincerely,
R.S. Mackey

**"Car in ditch, driver in tree.
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and so was he."
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The Frugal Reader

- Save on postage and send postcards instead of Christmas cards. You can even cut your old Christmas cards from last year in half, and send the front side as a postcard. It works great, and you're being earth friendly.

- Make a short phone call instead of sending a card. At 5 cents a minute, a 7 minute call would still cost less than a postage stamp, and your loved ones would probably much rather hear your voice than receive a card in the mail.

- The stores have incredible sales every year for decorations close to the holiday or even better, after the holiday! By hitting these sales you can fill your house with beautiful holiday decorations for a small fraction of what they originally cost!

- Save your children's (or grandchildren's) holiday crafts and artwork from school each year. After a few years you'll have a house full of free and beautiful decorations! And the pride your child will feel seeing his/her artwork proudly displayed each year will be priceless.

- Decorate your house by bringing the outside in, using holly, pinecones, acorns, etc. Sprinkle with a few drops of pine scented oil if you have it on hand.

- Don't try to get all your tree ornaments in one year (this one is especially true for newlyweds), it took your parents years to collect what they have and each ornament is more special because of it.

- This tip is from one of our readers: Instead of exchanging gifts among adults in the family, draw names so each family mem-

ber is only buying and receiving one gift. The children in the family would still receive gifts from all family members.

- Entertaining during the holidays doesn't have to be expensive. Take a drive around your town, and see the Christmas lights! It can be a beloved family tradition to do this on Christmas Eve, and it's free!

- Another fun and free activity is to bundle up the family and go caroling in your neighborhood. What a fun way to get everyone in the holiday spirit!

- Family gatherings and getting together with the people you love make wonderful memories and don't cost a thing. Sit around a warm fire and tell old family stories.

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Huntsville Madison County Airport

by Johnny Johnston

Fifty-one years ago this month Mr. William P. Fanning and I were in my Mother's 1950 Plymouth looking for me a job. I was enrolled in the Diversified Occupations Program at Butler High School. Mr. Fanning was a very familiar teacher to me because he had taught all my older brothers and my sister at Lincoln and at Butler. In order to be enrolled it was necessary to have a job starting by 1:00pm for five days a week. The job should be a vocation, which could develop into a career after graduation from high school. My oldest brother started the program during the war. He worked at the I. Shiffman Garage. Fred completed about 44 years at the Huntsville Times after being hired in this capacity and my sister Nell worked at Wilson Laundry. I can't remember the name of my Brother Lloyd's employer, but it was on Cotton Row.

We had been to Automotive Machine Shop where Mr. Coles offered me a job as a machinist apprentice. We were now driving up Airport Road crossing the railroad tracks. We were going to ask the airport manager if he had some work in the airplane mechanic area where I could learn to work on airplanes. I got the job at \$40 a month providing I could get to work on time and do a few other things such as put gas into airplanes, clean up the shop, cut grass around the runways and generally be a gofer. Ronnie Boles and I have discussed my decision of 51 years ago and

why I took the job at the airport. I still don't know!

We crossed over the railroad tracks and came upon a winding narrow road, which turned slightly to the north and around an embankment on the south side of the road. As I experienced the layout of the airport it became apparent that the rise was the end of the SW/NE runway which was positioned adjacent to the old airport terminal {shack} just by the hill. That building had been abandoned just a few months before our visit to become storage for extra wings, air surface pieces, engines and various other surpluses. Huntsville Air Service was into pilot training, fuel and maintenance service and aircraft storage (in the 11 T-Hangars). Mostly however, the business was reliant upon revenue from crop dusting. All the parts in storage were for crop

dusting aircraft. All the old airline signs and furniture was also left inside the dirty and wasp infected shack which for ten years had been the grand show

"mom, please put the cocktail down and come out with your hands up!"

"must you always be the center of attention? happy birthday."

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room of the Huntsville Madison Co. Airport.

Before long I was working from half a day at school to dark every day and from early on weekends to closing. What a job! I was there even when I didn't have to be and didn't get paid for most of it. In 1956 when I interviewed with Eastern Airlines I had made \$327 that month at \$1 per hour with no overtime incentive or over 75 hours weekly. Three years earlier, that \$40 per month was it, no overtime pay or days off including Sunday. However, I made friends with a lot of Huntsville flyers who were supportive of me in many ways. Jack Heffleman, theatre owner, paid for my first flying lesson. Several local Doctors and other professional men became close. Even Dr. Von Braun came out to fly. I had delivered the Huntsville Times newspaper to his home when he first came to Huntsville.

I read in today's Huntsville Times, a story about Hospitals, which referred to the Crestwood Hospital as being downtown. In 1953, that entire area from Airport Road to where Drake Avenue is now was part woods, part corn or cotton. Mr. Walton rotated the crop from corn to cotton and back again. The area wasn't even in the city limits let alone downtown.

Now let me do a little calculating. This weeks Huntsville Times said there were currently 7700 people working at the Port of Huntsville. In 1953 there were 11 people working at the Huntsville Madison Co. Airport.

So, if the growth of Huntsville had matched the growth of the airport during that 51 years there would be eight and one half million people living in Huntsville! Wow!

There were three rental cars, managed by the employees of Eastern Air Lines. I don't know how many there are now but I

assume well over 3000. The 1953 Chevrolet cars, all black, had one option, a heater. There were no turn signals, radio, fancy lights, white wall tires, these cars were basic.

In 1957, Dr. Von Braun flew to Germany with his family. By then I was working for Eastern. I checked his luggage, took care of his connections in Atlanta and bid them farewell. After the flight left at 3:35pm, I walked around to the other side of the counter to pick up trash and look around. What I found was all of the Von Braun Passports he had left lying in the lobby. He couldn't go to Germany without them. I took the Passports and found Frank Anderson at Huntsville Air Service. After telling my Manager, Jim Lindsay what was going on, Frank and I left in a rented Cessna and flew to Atlanta. By radio I talked Eastern into allowing us to park at Gate One of the old concourse and we literally ran inside. We paged Dr. Von Braun to come to a certain place in the terminal. When he walked

up he showed no signs of recognition. I said, "Sir you left your Passports in Huntsville and we flew them over." He barely said thank you, took the Passports then turned and walked away.

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When we got back to Huntsville, Russ Kyle, owner of the airplane, said "Who's' going to pay for this?" Frank and I said we don't know. So far as I know this incident was never mentioned again but one of my favorite people and his family made their flight to Germany.

Not long after going to work at Huntsville Air Service I came into the office just before 8:00am to be met by one of my very favorite people, W.A. Branum, who was with Eastern Airlines. He said, "Someone from here needs to take care of a problem in the Lobby". The Lobby of the Terminal consisted of three leather couches, two leather chairs and not much else. It wasn't very large. Matter of fact, at night the airlines wheeled all their air-freight into the lobby for safekeeping. Today's problem was a little different.

During my stay at this old airport, animals were always around. A cat hung around for employees to feed. There was a dog that met every airplane for years. He actually walked up to the steps to accept food from the Flight Attendant. In 1990 I was at an Air-line Memorabilia show in Atlanta. An elderly lady recognized me, asked if I didn't work in Huntsville in the 50's then started talking about that little yellow dog that met her flight every time she came in as Flight Attendant. With tears in her eyes she talked about the little yellow dog.

Animals never seemed to get in the way; so they were tolerated: except for the cattle on the Runway. That morning's problem as I said was a little different. The cat had crawled into the middle of one of those beautiful leather couches and had a litter of kittens. It was messy. I took the family to a better location, gave her some milk and left them alone. Cleaning the leather was another matter, especially with all those people in the lobby waiting for a delayed Eastern Airplane and looking for a place to sit down.

After taking the job at Huntsville Air Service, I began to meet lifelong friends. One of the people was Bud Cramer; yep that's him only this one is the senior, he was an agent for Capital Airlines. John Higdon was the manager of Capi-

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tal who later became founder of Channel 31, and after that Publisher of the Huntsville News. Richard Hughes was at Eastern along with W.A., and manager John Alford. James McAlister was the Airport Manager and owner of Huntsville Air Service. Mac, as he was known, was a mountain of charisma, a tough taskmaster and had a million friends. Mac had a serious heart attack, which happened just after he had moved into the second floor of the airport terminal and set up living quarters. He was tired of driving back and forth to Decatur where he had owned a float airplane base where the boat harbor is now. During recovery, he came back to the terminal to live and work but could not climb stairs for three months. It was my job to carry him up the steps at the end of each day. Having him downstairs during the day was better, then he couldn't stand on the roof and yell down orders all day long, which he did.

One of the most popular people there was Raymond Sherrill; he was chief mechanic, crop duster pilot and designated CAA inspector. No CAA is correct. The Civil Aeronautics Authority. It was redesigned as the FAA years later. I remember a story about Raymond. He grew up in Town Creek, Alabama between Decatur and Florence. He was drafted during WW2 and was taught aircraft mechanics. Raymond was good at his job so he was transferred to the Army's new base in Alabama. They built it in Town Creek. Raymond was transferred to Courtland Air Base and spent the entire war there. Since he was married just before being drafted he was able to slip below the fence each night and go home.

We had a lot of fun at the airport! My first week on the job, Raymond had me going all over

the place for hours with a bucket. He had asked me to find him a bucket of "prop wash!" It was funny, all eleven employees at the airport got into the act - one would send me to the next until I was the laughing stock.

Dick Hughes bought a new VW, he bragged daily about his gas mileage. We started adding a gallon every two days until he was bragging about 70+ miles per gallon then we started siphoning until it got down to 17. He never knew what we were doing; at least until now!

The men and ladies rest rooms were side by side; many people chose the wrong one. When the employees saw this mistake several would get close by and when the user came out of the room stood there looking and saying "Shame, shame on you". This happened to one of our Brig. Generals; he was changing into his uniform when a young lady came in to use the ladies room. I didn't see that one but he tells me he grabbed his clothes and came out in his shorts.

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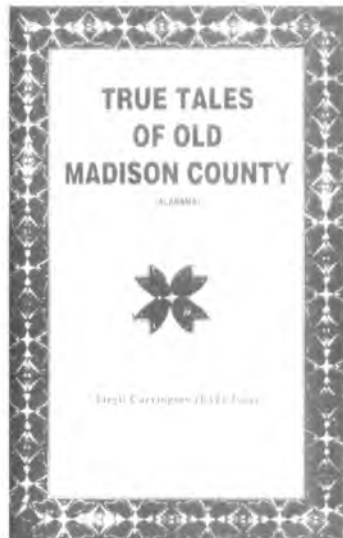
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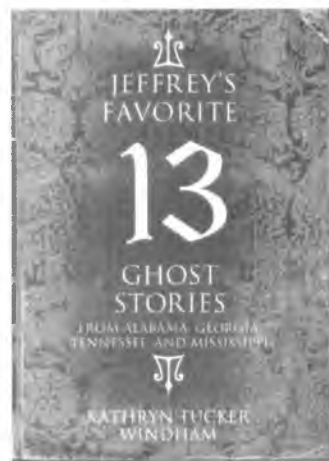
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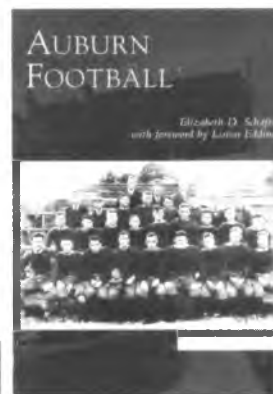
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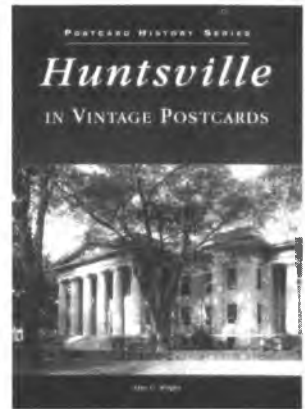
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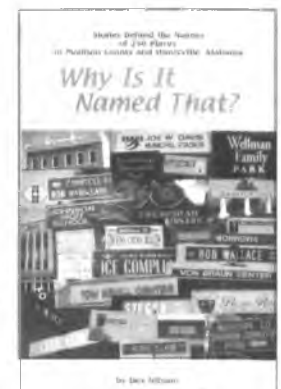
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I smoked a pipe on a regular basis, only in the back room of course, on one occasion when I walked out to help someone on the counter, an associate took out the tobacco, put ground up rubber bands in the pipe then placed the tobacco back. To this day I can still taste and smell that foul thing that was done to me.

We had a very likeable employee at Eastern who really didn't like to work hard: this was not a good place for anyone to be who had that attitude. We were all up to our ears handling passengers and their problems from a late flight. When the workload decreased, I walked to the back room and there he was, intently reading a newspaper. He didn't even notice it when I lit a match to the bottom of his paper. I was out front again when he began to yell.

Eastern's best employee may have been Bill Vinson. Bill had a cigarette habit and was always smoking. He would get busy at the reservation desk and sometimes use the wastepaper can for an ashtray. He would occasionally set it on fire, grab it up and run outside with it. On one occasion he set fire to a can full of paper but the customer would not get off the line so he could take it out. After squirming for awhile; it looked like the place was going to burn down; I was standing behind him with a bowl of water and put out the fire just before the can melted. The office

was a mess. Bill never did it again!

Probably the dumbest thing I ever did was losing my temper at the wrong time. Mac had hired a part timer to work at Huntsville Air Service. He was very big, about 6'4" tall, tough talking and would not leave me alone, always

picking on me. On one occasion he did the wrong thing when we were in the office. I shoved him up against the wall, slapped him and he simply put his arms straight up in the air and apologized to me. He left the room and a friend who was standing by said "You dummy, you don't

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know how lucky you are". It seems the man I slapped was on parole from prison for killing someone with his bare hands. If he had hit me he would have been sent back up, worse might have happened to me. I took a long breath of air and never, ever slapped anyone again.

The Police approached me just as we had closed the doors on the Eastern Lockheed Electra and asked if we had a gentleman board in the last few minutes who may have been shaken up, possibly intoxicated and gave me his name.

Yes we did have him on board and when I told the policeman he said, "you'll have to get him off because I must talk to him." I invited the cop to go get him and he said no that would cause a scene. I, like I was trained, brought the fellow off without trouble and did so thinking he must have a family emergency. To my surprise the policeman asked the passenger his name then slapped handcuffs on him. After we dispatched the airplane I asked the policeman what was the problem. The policeman said "He left his car in the street." His answer got me - Handcuffs for illegal parking? He invited me to go with him to the airport entrance where the road curved into the parking lot. The fellow had left his car in the middle of the road OK. Not so bad you say! Not enough to arrest him on! Well you see the car was completely upside down. He, in his drunken state, had taken the turn too quickly, turned his car upside down, crawled out, taken his bag out of the trunk and walked to the Eastern-loading gate.

We had a colorful fellow that everyone liked. His dad had obtained the airmail hauling contract. He picked up the mail from the airlines and delivered it to the Post Office several times a day. Like most of us, he too was un-

der fire with tricks and scams. When he became excited his stuttering became worse. Most of us would find some way to get him started every day. We might put something live in a mail sack just for him to discover or perhaps lock his car up with the key in-

side. Anything to hear him stutter. We were mean! His redeeming factor was a father who held a responsible position at the Huntsville Police Department. That is all you needed 50 years ago to be employed as a policeman. So this young man was



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eventually hired as a policeman.

During integration the black population was planning to test the integration of Huntsville restaurants and the police were tipped off. Our friend, as a new policeman, was dispatched to a local strip mall where a "sit in" was rumored to be in the planning stage. He was put into a patrol car with a two-way radio and told to call in if he saw the local college bus approaching. He sat there all afternoon listening to music and was a happy soul. However when the bus did appear he got completely out of control, picked up the microphone and yelled loudly "Hehe-hea-hear th- the- they come daddy!"

Did I ever make a fool of myself you ask! Aircraft batteries must have a generator charging the system when they are loading, unloading and especially when starting the engines. These units are called GPU - ground power unit. APU is the on board aircraft power unit. Most aircraft did not have them on board until the Jet age in the late fifties and early sixties.

We had a power unit, which drove very much like a car with a three-speed transmission and six cylinder engine. You drove it to the nose of the Martin 404 and backed it close so that the cable would reach. You placed the engine into high RPM, jumped off, plugged in the cable and then threw the switch, which loaded the generator. When I was very young, I got things mixed up a little. I backed up to the nose of the aircraft, set the governor which increases the engine speed then jumped off the seat to plug in the cable. I had left it in for-

ward gear! The unit took off down the ramp at a fast clip. Nothing in the way, thank goodness. I took off after it and caught it in about 500 feet, jumped on, got it under control and then turned the unit around to face the aircraft a hundred yards away. The Captain was hanging out the left window, First Officer

out the right window and they were laughing hysterically. From that day on that flight crew and others who saw it called me "Cowboy!"

When you see Mr. Bud Cramer, Sr. you might ask him about a certain gasoline storage container that belonged to Mr. McAlister!



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Christmas at the Church of Nativity

by Eleanor Hutchens

My prevailing Christmas memory from the 1920's is of awe. Christmas began on Christmas Eve, when we children were quietly shepherded into our Church of the Nativity to be overwhelmed at the sight of a tremendous, fully decorated tree in the chancel. The high old Gothic nave, decorated with evergreens, was completely hushed. The service began. The height of reverence came when Mrs. Tracy W. Pratt (Miss Neida to us) rose in the choir to sing "Silent Night." She began very quietly, as the words demanded, and rose to a thrilling height, not loud but intense, toward the end. I can see her noble profile now, expressive of worshipful joy, as her trained operatic voice filled our veins with the sense of the sacred miracle.

In the 1920's, Christmas had not already occurred for weeks in the local stores. It was one single time, the best in the year. At our Christmas Eve Festival we

children knew nothing of the pagan origins of the tree and the festoons of greenery. The carols, each sung by a different Sunday School class, and the presents from around the tree were exciting, but we were innocent enough to feel mainly awe under those soaring arches.

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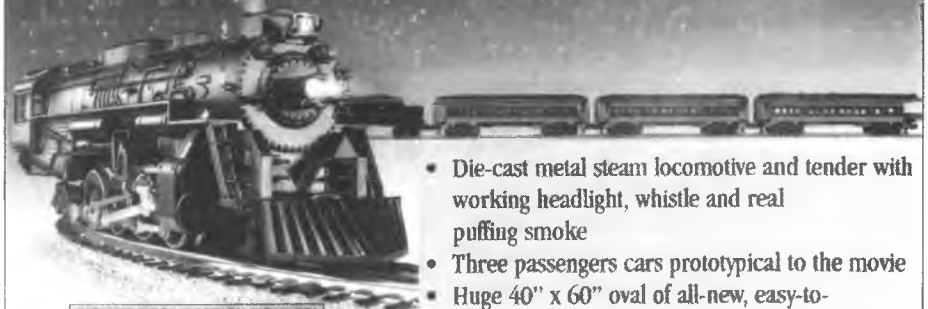
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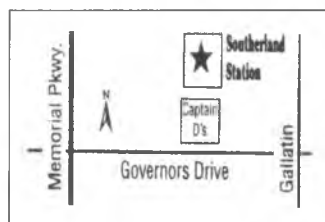
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Christmas in Killingsworth Cove

by Joe Broyles

My sister, Evelyn, told me that a special day was coming, but I was dubious. Evelyn said we would find toys, apples, oranges, and nuts, brought to us by somebody called Santa Claus.

I felt dubious about gifts brought to little kids by a stranger. We children hadn't seen many strangers, except for the gypsies who came through Killingsworth Cove every year and camped in the field next to our house. Evelyn tried to reassure me about the Santa Claus stranger who also came through only once a year. But I was still dubious.

Evelyn said kids hung up their stockings on the mantle before going to bed, and the toys were in the stockings next morning.

We wore long, black stockings, pulled way up over our knees. They would not stay up. Mother made us elastic garters, but they were never much help. We got holes in our stockings, too. I would daub Bixby's Jet-Oil Shoe Polish on my white leg, and this would hide the hole. These were the stockings that Santa was to deliver the fruit in. You can see how I felt about it.

Christmas morning, long before daylight, we were awakened

by an explosion. After the sound had bounced back and forth among the mountains until it wore out, another blast went off from another direction. Then Father stepped out onto our front porch and fired our double-barreled, twelve-gauge shotgun into the tops of the holly trees - both barrels at once.

Later I learned that this was the annual ritual of bringing in Christmas morning. But I had not been briefed about this ritual, and half an hour of terrifying noise did nothing to help my view of Santa Claus. If that's the way he came, my opinion of him was lower than ever.

We kids went into our parents' bedroom, where we opened our gifts from Santa Claus. I discovered that my little brass lion penny-bank actually came from Aunt Ida - an old-fashioned

woman with a long neck, which she hid by wearing starched, crocheted collars. The discovery was no boost for my opinion of the Santa Claus theory.

After breakfast, we kids were all bundled up and loaded into the two-horse surrey, and we rode around the mountain to spend the day at Aunt Kate's house. Aunt Kate served a noon-time dinner, ending with a four-layer cake with thick, white icing on top and between every layer and hickory-nut kernels between the layers. Eating that cake was the most reasonable thing we did all day.

In later years, I came to like Santa a little better. And Mother told me the real reason and meaning of Christmas. But the Christmas I remember most clearly is the one that began with a boom.

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