



No. 202
Dec. 2009



Old Huntsville

HISTORY AND STORIES OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY



A Girl Named Lucy

Returning home, Emma filled the bathtub with water and helped Lucy undress. Suddenly she drew back in horror as she saw the bruises and welts that covered the little girl's back.

"Who did this to you?" Emma demanded.

A look of fright came across Lucy's face as she spoke for the first time. "No one. Nobody. It was all my fault."

Also in this issue: An Eternal Love

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A Girl Named Lucy

Emma Hopper sighed as she looked out her window in the summer of 1946. "It's going to be a beautiful day," she thought. "This is the kind of weather that Dave loved."

Dave was Emma's husband who had been killed in a car wreck the year before. They had been married for twenty four years and after his death Emma seemed to have lost all interest in life. She would get up in the morning, make a bowl of oat meal and then sit in the living room listening to the radio with her knitting basket next to her side. She was not really interested in knitting - she had already knitted bags of scarves, mufflers and gloves that were stowed in the closet - it was just something to do. Her friends had tried to get her out of the house but she always refused - she just had no desire.

Every day was exactly like the one before. Sometimes, she thought bitterly, it would be bet-

ter to just go to bed one night and not wake up in the morning.

Her thoughts were suddenly interrupted by the shrill ringing of the telephone. Picking up the phone, a faint whisper of a smile crossed her face as she recognized the voice on the other end. It was Sheriff Henry Blakemore. They had been friends for most of their lives and he had been a favorite fishing buddy of her husband.

After exchanging a few pleasantries, Blakemore got to the point. "Emma, I need you to come down to the jail. There's something I need to talk to you about." Emma started to protest, but something in Blakemore's voice stopped her.

Emma made a face as she entered the jail. Although the building was not very old, the smells of cheap disinfectant, human sweat and stale cigarette smoke had already seeped in to every crevice.

The first thing she noticed as she walked into Blakemore's office was a tiny waif of a girl, maybe six or seven years old, sitting silently in the corner. The girl's dress was more of a sack than a piece of clothing and her long dark hair was dirty and knotted. Emma looked at him with a questioning look on her face. The sheriff ignored the gesture, simply telling her to sit down as he shook



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another cigarette from a pack on his desk.

"Emma, you know a woman named Sally Little, don't you?" It was more of a statement than a question.

Emma nodded her head slowly. Sally was a second or third cousin of her husband. She had been in and out of trouble all of her life and the family had lost contact with her years earlier.

"Well, I've got her in jail," the sheriff continued. "She's serving ninety days for disorderly conduct, but I have a problem and I need your help. That's her daughter sitting over there in the corner and I have no place to send her."

Rushing his words so Emma could not interrupt him, he went on to explain that the girl had no family or friends that would take care of her. An older woman had been taking care of her, off and on, but when she was not paid, she had dropped the child off at the jail. He had been on the phone all morning trying to find a place to send her, but in 1946, there were simply not many social services available for homeless children.

The only hint of hope had been the state orphanage but they were full at the time and it would probably be several months before they could take her.

Emma suddenly realized what Blakemore wanted. Rising from her chair she started to say no, no way, when the sheriff ordered her to sit down again.

"Emma, it will only be for a couple months until her mother gets out of jail. And - she is your husband's blood kin!"

There was silence for long moments before Emma finally looked at the girl and then back to the sheriff. "All right, I'll do it. But just until you find another place for her. What is her name?"

"Lucy, I think," the sheriff replied. "At least that's what the old woman called her. I can't get the girl to talk to me."

Emma quickly understood what the sheriff meant. She had already decided to take the girl to Woolworth's and buy her a couple dresses and underclothes. On the way there, she tried to draw Lucy into a conversation but the girl refused to talk. The only response Lucy would give was a slight nod of her head, indicating yes or no. There was no eye contact at all.

Returning home, Emma filled the bathtub with water and helped Lucy undress. Suddenly she drew back in horror as she saw the bruises and welts that covered the little girl's back. "Who did this to you?" Emma

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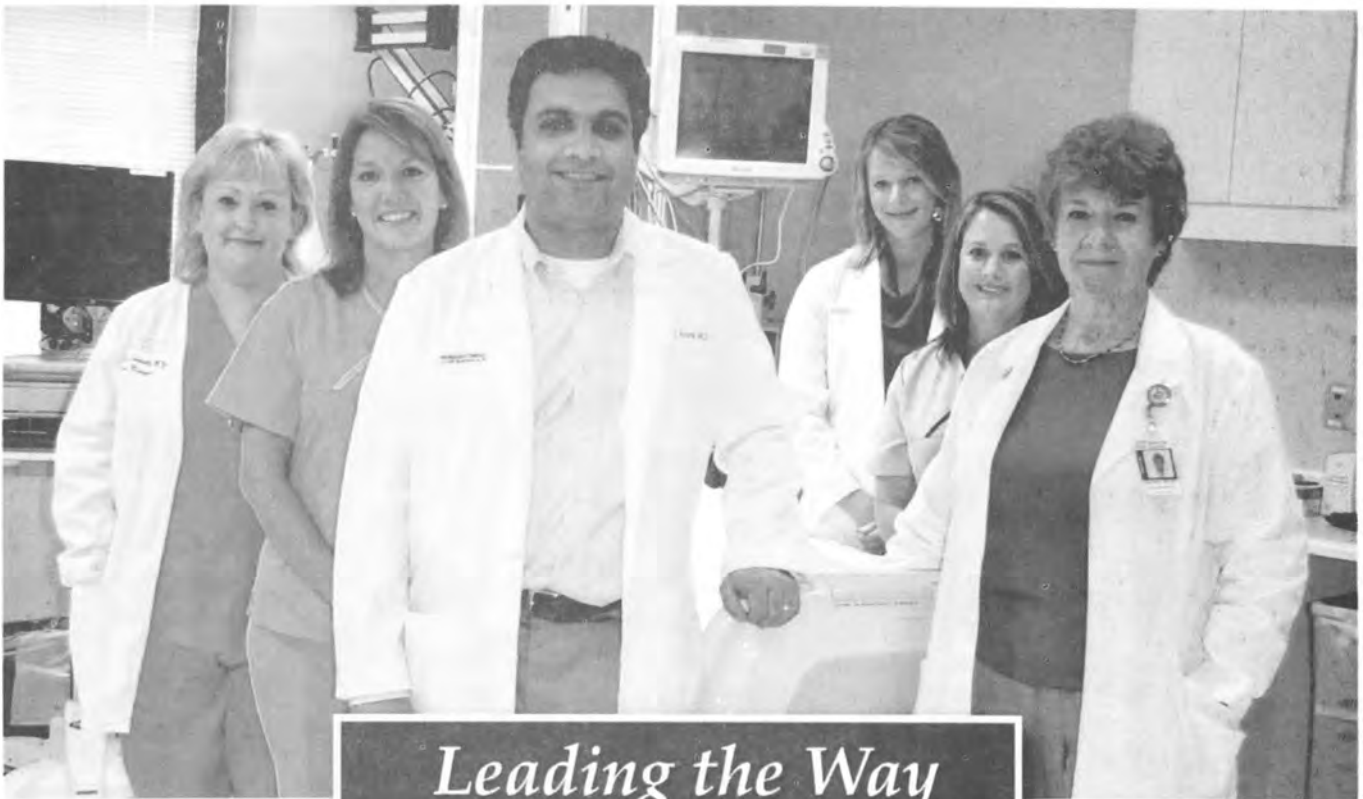
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demanded.

A look of fright came across Lucy's face as she spoke for the first time. "No one. Nobody. It was all my fault."

Seeing how frightened the girl was, Emma did not ask any more questions. After the bath, hair-washing and a change of clothes Lucy asked where she was supposed to sit. When Emma told her she could sit anywhere she wanted, she went to a chair in the corner of the living room and sat there motionless.

A pattern seemed to develop. If Emma told Lucy to do something, she would do it and then return to the chair where she would sit quietly, as if afraid to move or say anything. Every morning when Emma woke up Lucy would already be in the chair, just quietly sitting there.

Emma tried talking with her, taking her shopping, even buying games they could play together. It was to no avail; there seemed to be an invisible wall surrounding her, not letting her out or letting anyone in.

The break came one day when Emma happened to see Lucy standing in front of a mirror trying on one of her hats. It was an ugly floppy hat, one she had reserved for yard work, but for some reason Lucy seemed fascinated by it as she placed it in various positions on her head while making faces in the mirror. It was the first time Emma had seen her smile.

Suddenly Emma remembered her own childhood when she used to love dressing up in her mother's clothes.

That afternoon Emma asked Lucy to help her go through some old clothes. She began with her hats, trying on each one in front of the mirror and then insisting Lucy do the same. Within a few minutes a hint of a smile began to appear the little girl's face. Minutes later they were both laughing hysterically as Lucy pranced in front of the mirror wearing a fur around her shoulders, a large feathered hat on her head and adorned with countless pieces of costume jewelry.

Emma had never had any children of her own, and wasn't sure if she even wanted any, but as the days turned into weeks she found herself being drawn to the small child. After Lucy's initial fright she seemed to thrive in her new environment. Whenever there were chores to do around the house Lucy insisted on helping. Sweeping floors was her favorite chore. Oftentimes, Emma would have to turn her head to keep from laughing as the little girl struggled with a broom almost twice her size. Emma solved this problem by buying another broom and having the handle sawed off to the appropriate size.

In the evenings, after dinner, it was "school time." Sitting at the kitchen table while Emma taught her the alphabet and helped practice writing her name

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was Lucy's favorite time of the day. She seemed to have a voracious appetite for learning and Emma was constantly amazed at how quickly she learned.

Good times cannot last forever, and so it came about that one evening as they were listening to the radio, they heard a car door slam, followed by a loud knocking on the front door. After opening the door, Emma did not need any introductions to the woman standing there. It was Sally Little, Lucy's mother.

Emma invited her in the house. Slurring her words and smelling of alcohol, the woman said, "I hear you got my girl."

Before Emma could reply, the woman noticed Lucy standing across the room almost petrified with fear.

"Come here, girl," Sally said, "and give your Mama a big kiss."

Lucy bolted from the room. It didn't seem to bother her mother. "She gets that way sometimes. I'll have to straighten her out when I get her home." Suddenly she changed the subject. "I'm in between places to stay right now and I

was wondering if you would keep the girl a few more days. Just until I get on my feet again."

Emma nodded her head and Sally started to leave before turning to Emma again.

"I'm a little short of money right now and I was wondering if you would loan me five dollars until I get straightened out. It will just be for a few days." Reluctantly, Emma got her purse and gave Sally the money.

After locking the front door, Emma went to find Lucy. She looked in every room but Lucy was nowhere. She began searching the closets and then went through the rooms again but she was nowhere to be found. Emma became frightened, trying to decide what to do, when suddenly she heard a sound from under her bed. Quickly getting down on her hands and knees, she saw Lucy curled up in a corner, her little body trembling as tears rolled down her face.

The next few days were difficult. Lucy seemed to revert to the little girl that Emma had first met; not talking, unsure of herself and jumping at every small noise. Patiently, Emma

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struggled to get her out of the shell she had withdrawn into.

A few weeks later the scene was repeated. A knock on the door, Sally standing there intoxicated, explaining that she was going to leave Lucy there for a little while longer "just until she got straightened out." This time she asked for ten dollars, supposedly for some medicine. Emma reluctantly gave her the money although she suspected the medicine was the same type sold by the local bootleggers.

And again, it took days to get Lucy out of her shell.

Emma and Lucy worked out a routine. Whenever there was a knock on the door at night, Lucy would run and hide in the closet until Emma gave the "all clear" sign. Emma hated doing this but did not know what else to do. When she talked to an attorney she was told, "It's Sally's girl and if she wants her, that's her right."

The visits by Sally became almost a routine. Every couple of weeks she would show up, needing money for something. Sometimes it was for five dollars, and then twenty and several time even fifty. When Emma tried to protest, Sally replied, "I'm her mother and I'm entitled to something."

Emma was not poor, but neither was she well off. She began by cashing in Government bonds her husband had purchased years earlier. When they were gone, she started withdrawing money from her savings account.

Suddenly it was December, and almost like an early Christmas present, Sally stopped com-

ing around. Emma and Lucy decided this was going to be the best Christmas ever. They spent hours picking out the perfect tree and decorating it. Garlands were hung over the doorways and candles were placed in the windows. Together they made a large wreath which they hung on the front door.

And every day another present appeared under the tree with Lucy's name on it.

They were sitting on the couch late one evening, reading Christmas stories, when there was a loud knocking on the front door. Lucy sprang from the couch to hide in another room as Emma, hoping against hope that it was a neighbor, went to open the door.

Sally staggered into the house accompanied by a strange man who appeared to be equally drunk. Looking around at the Christmas tree and decorations,



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she said in a sarcastic voice, "It looks like you have already made plans for my girl. Don't you think you should have asked me first?"

Abruptly she changed the subject. "Me and Jim," she said while motioning to the man with her, "are going to get out of this town and start over in Chicago. You want to keep my girl, you can have her for five hundred dollars. After all, I am entitled to something!"

Emma protested, saying she did not have that much money.

"Well, find it!" Sally said. "I'll be back tomorrow night and if you don't have the money I'm going to take my girl with me."

Late that night, after calming Lucy down, Emma laid in bed trying to decide what to do. She didn't have the money but she could not bear to imagine Lucy having to live with a drunken

mother who cared nothing about her. Her last thought before finally drifting off to sleep was, "I need advice."

The next morning, after leaving Lucy with a neighbor, Emma walked the ten or twelve blocks to the county jail where she asked to see the sheriff. Blakemore immediately realized something was wrong and began questioning her. Slowly Emma began telling about Lucy being terrified, about the bruises on her body, and about Sally's constant demands for money and her ultimatum of five hundred dollars.

"Sheriff, I just don't know what to do."

Blakemore had not said much before now but finally he broke his silence by asking, "You really want to keep that girl, don't you?"

Emma was taken by surprise.

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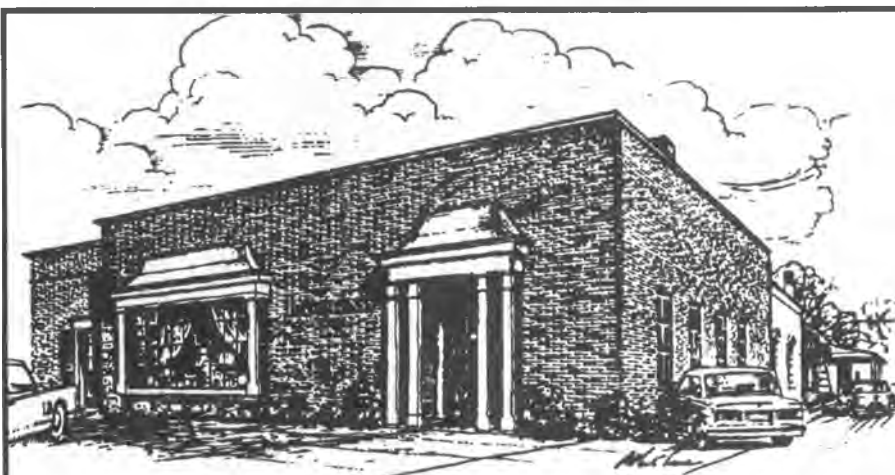
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She had always thought about what was best for Lucy and had never really thought about her own feelings. After a long pause she replied, "Yes. Yes, I do."

The meeting ended with Blakemore telling Emma to go home and let him think about it.

Later that afternoon, Blakemore called one of his deputies into his office. After giving him a little background, the sheriff explained what he wanted done.

It wasn't hard to find Sally. She was sitting in the second bar the deputy walked into, along with a male companion. The deputy walked over to where she was sitting and grabbed her by the back of the neck.

"We're going outside!" Sally's companion started to get up but a pointed finger and a sharp look from the deputy convinced him to sit back down.

Once outside, the deputy explained. "There's a warrant about to be sworn out for your arrest. Human trafficking - trying to sell your own daughter. I'm supposed to tell you that you have twenty-four hours to get out of town. After that you will be facing twenty years in prison. If you try to go back around your daughter, I will have you in jail within thirty minutes. Do you understand?"

Sally nodded her head, already wondering how fast she could leave town.

That same night Sheriff Blakemore stopped by Emma's home. After talking with Emma in private for a few minutes then turned his attention to Lucy. "How would you like to stay with Emma forever and not have anyone try to take you away from her?"

Lucy seemed puzzled. "But how?"

Blakemore grinned and kneeled down next to the little girl. "See this badge? That means I'm the High Sheriff of Madison County and what I say is the law!"

Lucy turned to Emma with a questioning look on her face. "He's right," Emma said with a big smile, "He's the Sheriff"

Two days later on Christmas morning, Emma awoke to find Lucy standing next to her bed. Slowly, as if unsure, Lucy handed her a piece of paper that had been folded like a card. On the front was a crude drawing of a Christmas tree and inside, written in a small child's hand writing, were the words,

*To Mama,
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The following year Emma adopted Lucy. Sally was never heard from again.



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Changing the Landscape
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The Old Carriage

by Floyd Frazier

It was a cold damp Monday morning in December as Albert and C.W. headed for the horse barn. The sun would not be up for another 45 minutes but the hurricane lamp gave enough light to get through the gate to the hall of the barn. The Myricks had been up since 4:30 and had one of Ma's big breakfasts before going to the milk barn. Twenty-five cows took the family of 6 boys and one girl only an hour and half to milk. Papa had already pasteurized the milk and headed toward his daily delivery route in town in the milk wagon.

The boys lead the two big percherons Maud and Henry out of the stall to stand by the gear room for hooking up the harness. They would be headed nine miles out Pulaski Pike to the big pine grove they had contracted to clear. This was an added income for the family in 1910. They were clearing the land of the trees for fire wood. The big tall loblolly pines were being sold to the local fledgling telephone and utility company to be used as power poles. The wagon bed had been removed so

the rear axle could be moved further back to haul the seventy-five feet long poles.

C.W. was born on a farm not far from downtown Huntsville. Albert was born in Waxahatchee, Texas in 1896 while the family was living with Ma's folks. They had come back to Huntsville when Little Pap had found this dairy farm on Oakwood Road for them to buy in 1898.

Little Pap was Papa's father and was a Civil War veteran who still proudly wore his sharpshooter's medal to all the local Confederate gatherings. He owned forty acres between Maysville and New Market in Hurricane Valley and lived in a two-room log cabin.

When the boys arrived at the grove, the sun was already mid-sky and the temperature had become quite warm for this time of the year. After unhitching Maud and Henry from the wagon, the logs were pulled to a ramp used to hoist them onto the front wheel axle and then to the rear.

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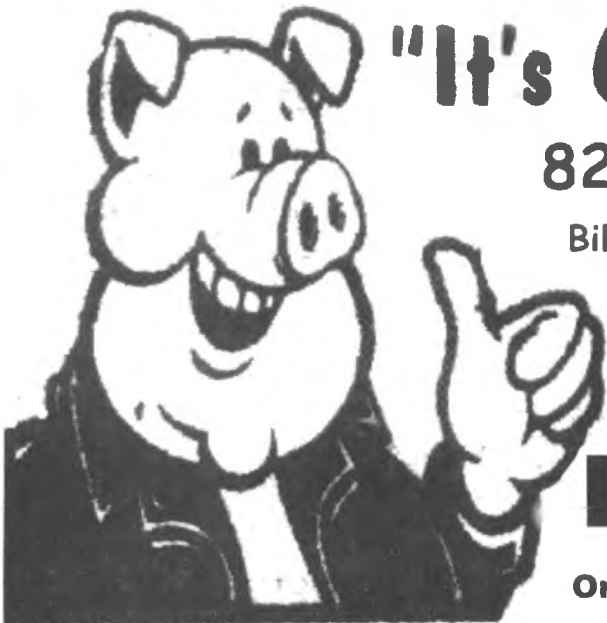
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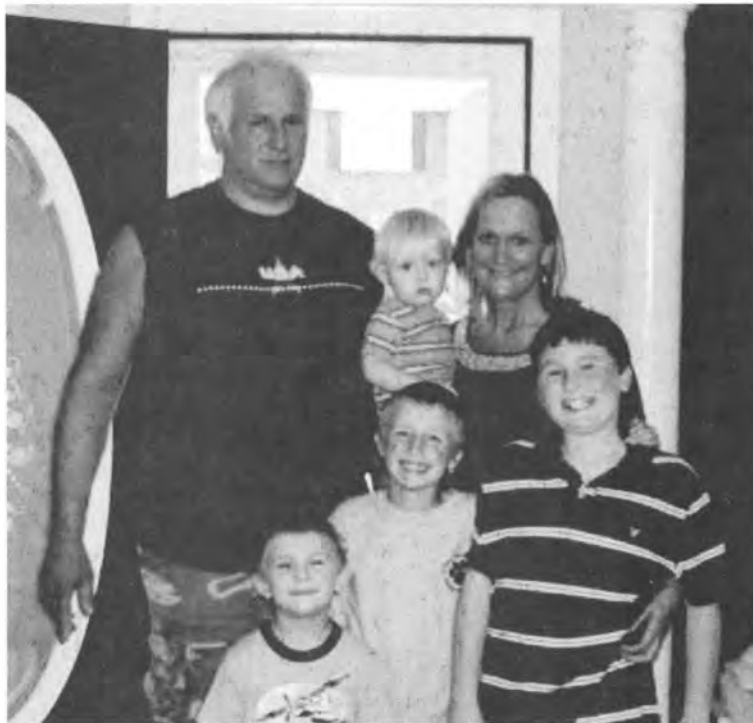
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The sisters were well known in the area as daughters of Cyrus McCormick who wintered in Huntsville at their home named Kildare. The carriage was driven by a young boy and instead of stopping well back from the turn, he continued driving into the wedge being created by Albert and C. W.'s wide turn. As the horses became aware of the squeeze they became nervous, rearing and trying to back up. The two ladies jumped from the carriage and ran down the road away from the mayhem. Albert and C.W., watched in amazement at the sight of the two ladies with their long dresses pulled up to keep them from tripping as they ran. This sight was hilarious and told about for many years afterwards around family get togethers.

Now, forty-something years later, a young man named Charles McBrayer from North Carolina moved to Huntsville to manage the downtown JC Penney store. After a few months of searching he found the perfect farm for raising his family. Located out Highway 72 east on Steger road (now Wall Rd.) he began accumulating ponies, horses, goats, chickens and other livestock for his new hobby. Soon after attending an estate auction, he came home with

some interesting odd items. One was a small wicker pony wagon and another was a fancy worn out carriage. The carriage seats were torn, the wheels had rubber tires that were held on by baling wire.

Through the years at the McBrayer farm, this carriage was hitched many Sunday afternoons and driven by the twin brothers, Charles and Larry, up and down the road. There were always neighborhood buddies who were ready to ride in the carriage.

As time elapsed one of the neighborhood boys became part of the family when he married the McBrayer's only daughter. Shortly thereafter JC Penney transferred the family back to North Carolina, taking with them the old carriage and leaving that daughter in Huntsville. When that young family visited them on another small farm in Carolina, the grandchildren always wanted to ride in the old carriage.

With the interest of all of his grandchildren, Big Daddy McBrayer decided to have the carriage refitted. He found an Amish carriage maker in the Shenandoah Valley to do the repairs. On a one-week vacation visiting the family, the son-in-law and father-in-law made the trip to Virginia with the carriage for repair.

A month later the carriage

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was picked up having new overstuffed seats, new convertible top, and yes, new rubber tires. Another interesting thing was that the hoops over the wheels now had patent leather fenders.

In the 1980's, the carriage became idle again and was placed in a dark corner of the basement. As the boys often discussed what we would do with the carriage, Big Daddy decided he wanted no ill feeling in the family and decided to take an offer to sell to an acquaintance who was starting carriage rides in Charlotte, NC.

Albert, one of the young brothers mentioned at the beginning was my stepfather and Big Daddy became my father-in-law in 1962. That carriage my stepfather saw in 1910 is the same as the one my father-in-law bought in the mid 1950's and kept until the 1980's. One of the oldest granddaughters has just recently moved to Charlotte and hopefully we'll get to see and ride in the old carriage again.



Scandal from 1896

Huntsville: A handsome young woman from Birmingham recently came on a visit to a young matron whose husband is a prominent businessman in Huntsville. The fair guest was extensively entertained, remained several weeks and departed.

A few days afterwards the husband left the city on a business trip. During his absence, his wife, in rummaging through the pockets of his coats, came across a letter written in a decidedly feminine hand.

Her suspicions were instantly aroused, and she read the

tender contents from beginning to end.

What was her astonishment and anger to find that the letter was an endearing little note from her recent visitor, fixing an upcoming meeting with her husband in Birmingham.

When the gentleman returned home from his business trip, he was confronted with the "billet doux."

Those who are acquainted with the fact say that the tender missive will probably be made public as an exhibit in upcoming divorce proceedings.



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A Daisy Christmas

by M.D. Smith, IV

It was Christmas 1947 and I had just turned seven years old. I already owned and loved my Daisy Red Ryder air rifle that shot .177 caliber BBs. I had asked Santa for a Daisy # 118 BB Pistol that shot even smaller. 12 caliber lead BBs. The blue steel, fixed sight model was made from 1937 to 1949 except for the war years.

It was the best present I got that morning along with several tubes full of the tiny BBs. My father and I had shot it in the house into paper targets held by a cardboard box with an opening and a rubber catch backup inside. It didn't have much power and I could shoot it into my blue jeans-covered leg and barely feel the

sting (the air rifles would sting a lot).

Well, it was Christmas evening and my parents had left to attend a party at their friend's house, leaving the maid, Mariah, in charge of me. She was very easy-going and almost anything I did wrong or otherwise, she'd always say, "Well, ain't he cute?"

She was in the kitchen and I was in the living room among all the Christmas of the day, climbing under the sofa on my belly, pretending I was on a war mission behind enemy lines. But there was nothing to shoot that would react to the tiny BBs until I spied the Christmas tree with about 150 glass ball ornaments on it, of every size and color.

So, just to see IF it would break one, I fired off a .12 caliber round from my trusty pistol. A loud POP followed by shattering of glass rewarded my marksmanship on the first shot. Wow! What a GREAT target that was.

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Now, I knew my parents would not like me doing that, but I also knew I could clean up the little bit of glass, remove the hook and cap from the tree, and they'd never miss that ornament. Then, I thought, well they'd never miss two, so another bit the dust.

It was like trying to stop eating just one potato chip, so another and another exploded and came tinkling down. When I finally came to my senses, over half of the ornaments were gone, and you definitely could tell it. I cleaned up best I could, but I couldn't get inside the tree and behind it in the corner. Then my parents came home, took one look at the tree and knew exactly what had happened. Mariah entered the room and said, "Well, ain't he cute?" Unfortunately, that didn't save me.

I got a hard spanking on the rear end, but the worst punishment was that I didn't see my trusty BB pistol for six months, almost a lifetime in the life of a kid. Lesson learned.

An Unusual Marriage

From 1891 Newspaper

- The marriage of John Ring, aged 70 of Jackson County, and Miss Mary Donnan, aged 20 of Decatur, is somewhat romantic. An old friend of the aged groom says that Ring was at one time in love with Miss Donnan's mother, but on account of his then comparative poverty was forced to see her wooed and won by her present husband.

He remained true in his feeling, however, and when his present bride was a little girl, became much attached to her. In appearance so much like her mother, the old gentleman found in her childish affection a solace for the loss of her mother's love.

As the girl grew to womanhood the old gent became a wealthy man, and when he sought the hand of Miss Donnan a short time ago, found the mother a ready helper in the match. The groom has just purchased a fine farm near Scottsboro and will enjoy his last days in the sunlight of the smiles of his young bride.

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Heard On the Street

by *Cathey Carney*

Congratulations to **William Henderson** for being the first caller to correctly guess the Photo of the Month for October. We have gotten hundreds of calls so far and most of them are correct! The adorable boy is **M.D. Smith IV**, who has been associated with TV and radio, (WAAY-TV) and now the internet (HIWAAY.net). William is retired from the Post Office and the Air Force, and is a Proud 1957 Butler High School graduate!

Jesse Hopkins was a very hardworking member of the Golden K Kiwanis, and headed up the distribution of "Old Huntsville" magazine. Jesse passed away at 88, on November 10. Even though he had some serious medical issues, you never heard Jesse complain or be anything but positive. Our deepest condolences go to Jesse's family and many friends.

We are so proud of **Debra Jenkins**, co-owner of Merrimack Hall on Triana Blvd. Debra just won national recognition when the magazine "Traditional Home" named her as recipient of its 5th annual Classic Woman award. Debra makes it possible for disabled children to learn how to



dance, something they would not ordinarily be able to do. Congratulations, Debra!

Stephen Bzdell, Sr. was 91 when he passed away Nov. 13. His son **John Bzdell**, of Marathon Painting, would often take his Dad with him on jobs, which they both really enjoyed. We send our sympathy to the family of Mr. Bzdell, who lived each day to the fullest.

That smiling face you see when you walk into Redstone Federal Credit Union on So. Parkway near Gibson's BBQ is that of **Beth Dunson**, who works there as a teller & receptionist. She wants to say "Merry Christmas" to her dear husband **Carl**, as well as kids **Kimberly** & hubby **Nathan**, and daughter **Michelle** and husband **Anthony** who live in Tulsa.

We wanted to wish a special Dec. 22 Happy Birthday to **Princella Hatcher**, who works at

BB&T (Colonial Bank on Church St.). She is a really sweet lady and is always smiling!

Scott Reeves is a young Systems Engineer who works for Nasa. He just won an award from Space Flight Awareness which sent him to Kennedy AFB to see the launch of the Space Shuttle. This award is given to only a few annually who have gone over and above in flight safety. We are so proud of you Scott!!

Happy Birthday **Robert Madison**! He turned 66 years old and is one good-looking dude!

Many remember **Bryce Davis**, who often would eat breakfast at **Eunice's Country Kitchen** on Andrew Jackson Way with his sweet wife **Dolly**. Bryce recently passed away at age 85 in Fort Worth, TX. We send our deepest condolences to **Jan Davis** and their family & friends.

The spirits were moving on Halloween night at the **Historic Lowry House**. The first annual Costume party attracted a large crowd of spooks who danced to the music of the Fairlanes and

Photo of The Month

The first person to correctly identify the youngster below wins a 1-year complimentary subscription to "Old Huntsville" magazine.

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sampled heavy hors d'oeuvres. The winning couple were **Judy** and **M.D. Smith IV**. Judy came as the *Swine Flu* and M.D. was the doctor! Plans are underway for next year already!

Happy Birthday to **Mable Hawkins**, who turned 96 in October! And she still lives at home! Her very proud daughter is **Linda Taylor**, whose hubby **Ollie** owns Taylor's Barbershop on South Parkway.

John Shaver, of Shaver's Books located at the Railroad Station Antiques, sure is looking happy these days. He and sweet wife **Sue** have a brand new granddaughter, **Suzanne (Annie) Shaver**. John, of course, wouldn't think of bragging, but he told us that she is by far the most beautiful baby on Earth!

Chuck Bailes was the long-time love of **Jackie Reed**, and she said he was her absolute rock. He especially enjoyed helping her prepare for the City Council meetings that she has spoken at for so many years. He died in August at only 77. Chuck will never be forgotten, and we send our deepest condolences to Jackie.

Malcolm Miller recently underwent a pretty serious operation but we're happy to hear that he is doing fine and a good recovery is expected. Malcolm is a very talented musician and also writes stories. His dear wife **Lois** is taking good care of him.

We read in the Times recently that **Mike Marshall** was wondering about the history of the road that travels over Monte Sano to Hampton Cove. Mike remembered when he traveled that road 8 years ago with **Cecil Ashburn**, the premiere roadbuilder in Huntsville, to find out the history. Cecil said the road used to run from Longwood to Big Cove Road, and was very steep. It curled up the side of the mountain, then to the top of Monte Sano where the Big Cove Pike sign stands today. It was changed later to U.S. 431.

Angela Copeland-Humlicek is the owner of "The Design House" located across from Haysland Square. I met her and **Stacey Courson** there recently and found out that Stacey is the daughter of that sweet lady **Kathy Ogle** who works for **Dr. DeJarnatte**.

Jana Hinsley, who works for Edward Jones as a financial advisor, has a big day coming up in December. She and her fiancée **Will Wise**, an engineer at Redstone Arsenal, will be getting married during the month. Congratulations to both Jana & Will!

Maple Hill Cemetery had their largest crowd ever at the October cemetery stroll. Costumed volunteer actors stood atop the graves and shared stories of more than 60 people of the past. One of the most outstanding of these was **Christy Webb** who portrayed a very believable **Molly Teal** (1852-1899). Miss Teal was the very popular "lady of the night" who gave her large Victorian home to the city of Huntsville which was used as the first city infirmary, then the first public hospital, now part of Huntsville Hospital.

Christy gave a charming and extraordinary performance, and has been named the **Best Madam Teal** to date. In fact, Christy has already been tapped by the Pilgrimage Asso. to play Miss Teal

again next year! When she's not performing, Christy owns Sexy Shoes in the City, next door to Thai Garden - the Best Thai food you'll ever find!

Have a warm & wonderful Christmas, and watch over your older neighbors.

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It's Christmas!

Poor Man's Boursin

- 2 sticks unsalted butter, softened
- 2 8-oz. pkgs. cream cheese, softened
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 t. oregano
- 1/2 t. marjoram
- 1/2 t. thyme
- 1/4 t. basil
- 1/2 t. white pepper
- 1/2 t. dill weed

With your electric mixer, combine butter and cheese with the spices. Mix til it's smooth and well-blended. Pack into decorative containers, cover with foil or plastic wrap.

Will keep for several weeks in the fridge, this is great with crackers, sliced French bread or vegetable crudites.

This can also be made ahead for Christmas giving.

Cheddar Cheese Soup

- 1/2 cup each finely chopped carrots, celery, onion and green pepper
- 1/4 c. butter
- 1/4 c. plain flour
- 1/4 t. dry mustard
- 1 qrt. chicken broth
- 3 c. shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 2 c. evaporated milk

Saute vegetables in butter in heavy 3-quart pan for 5 minutes, remove from heat. Stir in the flour and mustard, Add broth and return to heat. Simmer 5 minutes, stirring. Add cheese slowly, add milk. Stir and heat til cheese is melted and soup is hot. Do not cook or reheat over high heat, or bring near high flame as it could burn. You can also puree all or part of the soup in a blender or food processor.

Hot Mulled Apple Cider

- 1 qrt. natural apple cider
 - 2 sticks cinnamon
 - 7 whole cloves
- Put all in a saucepan and heat slowly. Simmer for 20 minutes, strain and serve hot in mugs.
So good on a cold winter nite!

Vin Brule

The French say this grateful potion is better than aspirin to ward off the grip of a cold and chilly night.

Place in a saucepan, covered, over high heat:

- 1 bottle dry red wine
- 4 sticks cinnamon
- Peel of 2 oranges
- 4 T. sugar

When the mixture boils, uncover and ladle into mugs.

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Hot Buttered Rum

- 1 t. powdered sugar
- 1/2 c. boiling water
- 1/4 c. rum
- 1 T. butter

Add above ingredients to a tall mug. Stir well, sprinkle on freshly grated nutmeg.

This is a very old-fashioned drink that the Puritans made, which is said to make a man see double and feel single.

Cranberry Bread

- 2 c. flour
- 1 c. sugar
- 1 1/2 t. baking powder
- 1 t. salt
- 1/2 t. baking soda
- 3/4 c. orange juice
- 1 t. grated orange peel
- 2 T. salad oil
- 1 egg
- 1 1/4 c. cranberries, chopped or halved (fresh)

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees. Grease bottom of one 9x5" loaf pan. Combine all dry ingredients in one bowl. In another bowl mix the egg, oil and juice and add to the dry ingredients, mixing til combined. Stir in berries and nuts and pour into pan.

Bake for about an hour and toothpick comes out clean. Remove from pan and cool on rack.

Christmas Macaroon Torte

- 1 c. flaked coconut
- 1/2 c. graham cracker crumbs
- 1/3 c. chopped pecans
- 1/2 c. red and green candied cherries
- 4 egg whites, room temp
- Dash salt
- 1 t. almond or vanilla extract
- 1 c. sugar

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees and grease a 9" pie plate. Combine first 4 ingredients, set aside. In a large mixing bowl beat the egg whites and salt til soft peaks form. Slowly add the sugar and beat til stiff, add extract. Fold in the coconut/nut/cherry mixture and mix. Pour all into pie plate, bake for 30-35 minutes and pie is lightly browned. Serve with whipped cream and additional cherries.

Cranberry Almost Pie

- 2 c. fresh cranberries
 - 1/2 c. sugar
 - 1/3 c. chopped pecans
 - 2 eggs
 - 1 c. sugar
 - 1 c. flour
 - 1 1/2 sticks butter, melted
- Spread cranberries over bottom of pie plate. Sprinkle with nuts and 1/2 cup sugar. Beat eggs, add 1 cup sugar, add flour & melted butter, pour over cranberries. Bake for one hour.



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Segregation Laws and the Mailman

by James E. Taylor

From 1926 until 1-565 took our property in 1990, my parents' home was on Mitchell Drive which was a couple of blocks from Pulaski Pike and West Holmes Street, both of which were predominantly black neighborhoods.

Around 1931 when I was 10 years old, I became fascinated with the black postman (Clarence Powers) who delivered our mail primarily because of his gentle manners and his mode of transportation. He delivered the mail by driving a horse and carriage. The carriage was enclosed much as in the manner of the small enclosed trucks of that day.

After the war, I returned to work at the Russel Erskine Hotel and in 1947 was made manager.

Around 1948 or 49, the local postmaster contacted me and advised that Clarence's fellow workers at the post office wanted to give him a retirement party but didn't know how to get around the state segregation laws. (Remember - in 1948 there was only one post office in Huntsville and not very many postmen). Our blue room would seat 50 persons which was about the number in attendance. In the center of a dividing wall, there was a door to an adjoining room. We removed the door and placed a separate single table for Clarence in the door to give him the appearance of being the guest of honor, which he was. Thus, we legally beat the segregation laws.

I recall it as being a beautiful retirement party. As I recalled this event in later years, I only regretted that I failed to tell Clarence that I was that young teenager that he delivered mail to in the 30's.

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Emergency Landing of Squadron 17

by *Walter Terry*

In the fading evening light of March 15, 1938, my mother, father and I were listening to our living room radio when the program was interrupted by a totally unexpected and dramatic message - and an urgent appeal.

Eighteen Seversky P-35 Army pursuit planes, forerunners of the famous World War II P-47, under the command of Capt. D.T. Allison, were enroute to Tampa, Florida, with a planned refueling stop at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama. The planes formed the 17th Pursuit Squadron out of Selfridge Field, Michigan, and were to join maneuvers in Tampa.

Caught in stormy weather near Birmingham and bucking strong headwinds, the planes became low on fuel. Unable to make contact with the Birmingham airport, Capt. Allison decided to backtrack to Huntsville, Alabama, and try for a landing there, where the weather was reported to be less severe. The landing facilities there however, were somewhat of a question mark.

Dark was setting in when, approaching Huntsville, the pilots spotted a huge lighted sign reading, "HOTEL RUSSEL ERSKINE." The twelve-story structure was the city's tallest.

But Huntsville, a cotton mill town with a population of only eleven thousand, had little to offer for landing - an unlighted grassy field with a shed, a tattered wind sock; certainly no control tower.

In the gathering darkness amid rolling sky the planes began circling the area, following a prescribed, military procedure. Two state troopers, who had been observing the presence and behavior of the military planes, recognized their problem and rushed to notify a local radio station. The station, immediately interrupting its regular

"I want a man who is kind and understanding. Is that too much to ask of a millionaire?"

Zsa Zsa Gabor

program, issued an emergency appeal for townspeople to get in their cars and drive without delay to the airport.

Our family was among the first to arrive. All of the drivers were directed by the police to encircle the field and train their headlights on it.

As a teenager already enamored with every element of flying, I could hardly control my excitement as the first P-35, spitting blue fire from its cowl exhaust manifold, came swooping out of the darkened sky into the pool of car lights, touched down its unfolded wheels, bounced skyward.



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settled back to the ground, braked, then, engine roaring, taxied to the edge of the field. "By gosh, those are fighter planes!" I yelled to my mother and dad, hoping they would appreciate my aeronautical wisdom.

That first plane, as it turned out, was Capt. Allison's. He could now act as radio ground control for the others. The remaining seventeen planes, following his lead, peeled one at a time out of their circling formation through the gusty winds. All landed without incident except the last. We held our breaths as the plane, yawing wildly, could not be straightened and the pilot was forced to make another circuit. In the second attempt he was able to bring his plane in for a bumpy but successful landing. We all breathed a great sigh of relief. Then, as one, we exploded into a resounding cheer. Mine, I'm sure, rose well above all the rest. If I had not been sure before that night I would someday be a pilot, I was sure beyond any doubt after virtually living those landings.

In the crowd-surge following the landings, I managed to shake most of the pilots' hands, including Capt. Allison's. I was to keep the hand that had shaken those of the gods unwashed for days.

The pilots arranged their planes in smart military alignment along the field

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and secured protective covers around the engines.

City police and others volunteered to stand guard overnight. I would have, too, except for my parents reminding me of school the next morning.

Capt. Allison lavished praise on his "boys" for their courage and flying skills. He told our mayor, "Thank God for Huntsville. I don't know how we could have survived without you people." I heard one of the pilots say, "I'm just thankful we all came down right-side-up."

The pilots were given a hero's escort to the Russel Erskine Hotel whose bright beacon had called to them in the darkness. The hotel's staff offered them libation in the locally famous "Blue Room."

A friend since high school, Jimmie Taylor, who served as bellhop in the hotel at the time, told me one of the pilots, an "obvious Yankee," told one of the patrons in the Blue Room he'd been worried they might have had to land in one of those stubbly "grits fields." It was not clear, Jimmie said, whether the pilot was a bit in his cups or the victim of a Southern wag, perhaps a fellow pilot who had told him on some fall overflight of the area that that was what those rolling white fields were.

After the Blue Room, the pilots were fed a sumptuous meal in the banquet hall and given the best hotel rooms for

"I'd kill for a Nobel Peace Prize."

Steven Wright

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the night. Jimmie told me that grits were not served to them at dinner.

An order had been sent to Birmingham for aviation gasoline to be delivered by tanker truck by early the next morning. By two p.m. the refueling had been completed and the squadron had taken off for the remainder of their trip.

In days to follow I was not only to relive those daring P-35 landings, but my first flight at age ten out of that same grassy field. It was an "autogyro," a queer mongrelized forerunner of the helicopter. My grandfather, a "City Father," had been given a courtesy ticket for a ride. An ardent non-flyer, he had happily passed the ticket along to his grandson. Not so glamorous was the tin-lizzie, wind-mill-

ing autogyro as the sleek P-35s but still fascinating to this aspiring birdman in his first departure from Mother Earth,

There's no doubt the P-35 landings had been a dramatic event for our normally quiet little town. We heard that some of our citizens, without benefit of radio, had taken the noise of the circling planes to be an approaching "cyclone" and had rushed to their cellars.

But a good number of the town's citizens had witnessed, indeed been a vital part of, the most

"Those who hammer their guns into plows will plow for those who do not."

Thomas Jefferson

exciting event, some said, since 1863 when Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest and his calvary had run off a Yankee general and his staff.

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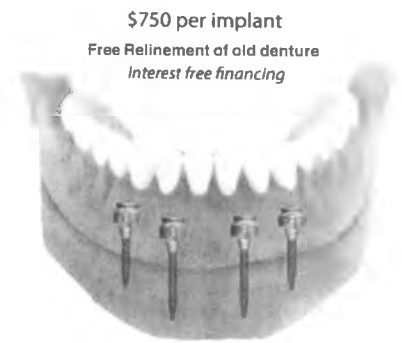
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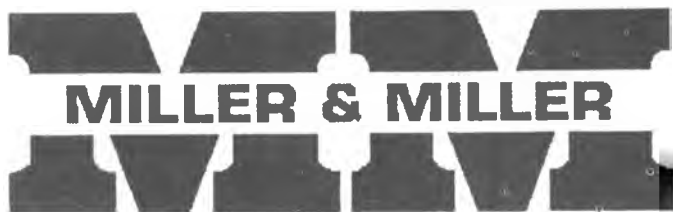
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Pleasure Palaces to Close

from 1913 Huntsville newspaper

The so called segregated or red light district of Huntsville will go out of existence tonight at midnight and by tomorrow, practically all of the occupants of "the houses of our midst" will have departed from the city or changed their mode of making a living.

When the question of abolishing the district was brought before the City Commission in November by a committee representing the Men and Religion Forward Movement, proprietors of the houses agreed to-close up quietly and get out provided they were not molested by the first of January. The commissioners entered into this agreement and the action of the police will not be necessary. The women declared their intention of keeping their promise to move away.

Several of the inmates of the houses have already left the city, but a majority are still here however. A few will go to the homes from which they have long been absent but most of them will make their way to other cities and continue their life.

Other cities have driven the red light districts out before this and the outcome of the experiment in those cities as well as here will be watched with a great deal of interest.

Notes from 1900

- Wanted: An elderly woman with no children and good disposition to take charge of house about 4 miles north of Arab.

- Charles Brickie has opened a restaurant and lunch counter on Washington Street. He states that no food more than three days old will be served.

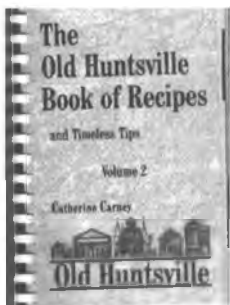
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by Cecil Ashburn

Bob and Lee were brothers whom I hired in 1946 at Ashburn and Gray Construction. Bob was an especially good worker who never failed to put his heart into any job I assigned him.

One day we needed to load a dump truck with sand. As I was telling them what to do, I bragged on what good workers they were and suggested they could load the truck in one hour. When I came back in about an hour the truck was loaded and

they were leaning on their shovels, tired but proud of having finished the task - an example of the "power of the boss' suggestion." Also, dump trucks were much smaller in those days.

One day Bob asked me to loan him a hundred dollars, which I did. Remember, that unlike the dump truck, a hundred dollars was bigger in those days. He had a little farm down

on Weatherly Road and I probably assumed the loan had something to do with it.


It wasn't long until Bob paid me back the hundred dollars.

As the years passed and business began to get better, I would buy a new car every year or so. I noticed that whenever I bought one, so would Bob - maybe not a new one but still a nice car.

I purchased a Pontiac, Bob

"Here's a home remedy - go home. Hey, it'll make me feel better."

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got one. I got a Buick and Bob got one. Finally I purchased a Cadillac, and yes, Bob got one too.

Bob was still a laborer and once while talking with him, I asked, "Bob, I know how much you make. How is it that you can afford those big cars?"

Bob kind of grinned when he answered.

"Captain, you remember that hundred dollars you loaned me?"

"Yes," I replied, "and you paid me back."

"Well," Bob said, "I took that hundred dollars and bought a hundred dollars worth of pints and half pints of liquor and sold them out of my smokehouse. I about doubled my money every night."

Bob died a few years ago and made his final journey to the cemetery in a gleaming black Cadillac. His family also rode in a nice one.

Rest in peace, Bob.

Message On a Tombstone

"In a negro cabin at Parkers Crossroads, from a wound received at that place December 31, 1862. He was most brutally treated by Yankees and Shamefully neglected by his own Southern doctors.


Before he had reached his 18th birthday he sealed with his own blood the devotion to a lost cause. To the youthful brave, a soldier's grave, a soldier's honored grave."

The stone is now on the "Rudder Lot," Cedar Hill Cemetery, Scottsboro, Alabama.

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An Eternal Love

Lucille Ensley leaned tiredly on her hoe in the cotton field and watched the mailman come to a stop in front of the mailbox. Lucille and her husband, Kenneth, rarely received any mail so whenever the mailman stopped it was a cause of great anticipation.

In this case, as Lucille looked at the official looking envelope, she felt a sense of gloom descend upon her. Although Kenneth and she had talked about it almost every day, it had done nothing to lessen the impact of actually receiving the news.

Though a war was raging in Europe and almost every able bodied male in the community of New Hope had received his draft notice, Lucille had still hoped that her husband would not be called.

Silently, she placed the envelope in her apron and walked back to their home. It was a typical share-cropper's house; two rooms, heated by a wood burning stove and an outhouse in the back. Regardless of their surroundings, Lucille and Kenneth still considered themselves lucky.

1943 was promising to be a bumper year for cotton and even after giving the landowner his share and paying the

bills, hopefully, there would be enough left over for the down payment on their own land. Lucille stoked the fire in the stove as she thought about what to fix for dinner. Kenneth would still be in the fields for another couple of hours and she wanted to prepare something special for him.

When they married she had thought her husband was the

kindest and best man in the world. Now, a year later, she was even more in love with him. Several times she had wondered what life would be like if he were gone, but the thought was so devastating that she immediately put it out of her mind. Life without her husband would be unbearable, so she refused to think about it.

That evening, after they had

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George W. Bush

completed dinner, and she was clearing the table, Lucille took the envelope out of her apron and placed it on the table in front of him. The look on Kenneth's face after he hastily read the notice confirmed her darkest fears.

He was being called up and had to report for induction in ten days.

That night, lying in her husband's strong arms, would be the most memorable of their brief marriage. They spoke of their dreams and of their love, and of how soon the war would be over. Two young people, madly in love, dreaming of the future but with a fear of the unknown lurking in the back of their minds.

Kenneth had always been a hard worker but the next ten days saw him working harder than ever. Up hours before daylight, he would already be in the fields when the first glimmer of a new day began to peek across the hills. And every evening, after working in the fields all day, would find him chopping wood for the upcoming winter by the light of a kerosene lantern.

Often, late at night, Lucille would carry a fruit jar of tea out to the woodpile where he was working and implore him to quit for the day.

Laughing, Kenneth would take her in his arms and tell her that he wanted to be sure that his wife would be warm that winter.

On the morning Kenneth was scheduled to appear for induction, they got up even earlier than usual. After breakfast they began the trek to town. Not owning an automobile and declining to ask neighbors for a ride, they chose instead to walk.

They had already talked about his departure and both had agreed it would be easier if she did not accompany him all the way. Two

blocks from the bus station, they paused and after setting his bag down, Kenneth took his wife in his arms one last time to tell her how much he loved her. Then abruptly, while choking back tears, he grabbed his bag and was gone.

During the long walk back home Lucille's mind was a frenzy of plans and ideas. She would finish the cotton

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could so they could buy their own farm when he came home. She would write every day and send pictures and clippings from the newspaper. Everything would be all right. She just knew it.

After returning home, Lucille spent the day working in the fields hoeing cotton. As she thought about the cruel war that had separated her from her husband, she attacked her work with a vengeance. The young cotton plants became Nazis and her hoe became the instrument of their destruction.

Unfortunately, the hard work was only a temporary relief. When she returned to the house late that evening she was instantly surrounded by silence. The kind of silence that only one who lives alone can understand.

And Lucille did what millions of other wives did that summer of 1943, she sat down on the edge of the bed and cried.

Although she worked from daylight to dark, seven days a week, it was impossible for her to keep up with the growing cotton by herself. Where there had once been neat orderly rows, more weeds began appearing

weekly. The harder she tried, the farther behind she got. It quickly became apparent that she would be unable to finish the crop.

Late one evening, as Lucille trudged tiredly home, she saw the landlord sitting on the porch waiting for her. Apologetic and with hat in hand, he told her that he was going to have to take over the crop. He had too much money invested he said, to take a chance on losing it.

"Of course," he said, "if you can get someone to help you, maybe we can do something. If not, I can pay you a little for your trouble."

Lucille knew there was no hope in hiring any farm help. Even Redstone Arsenal, where they were paying top wages, could not find all the hands it needed.

"You know you're getting older when you go bra-less and it pulls all the wrinkles out of your face."

Sue Jacobs, New Hope



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Reluctantly, she began to make arrangements to move. During the war, with gas rationing and overcrowded conditions, even a simple task like moving became a major chore. Finally after days of trying, she found a neighbor who was willing to move her to town with his horse and wagon in exchange for some farm implements she no longer needed.

Lucille went to work at the cotton mill and after several months of living with a relative, was fortunate enough to be assigned a house in the mill village. The previous occupant had been fired for allowing Arsenal workers to board with him, a practice the mills discouraged for fear of losing workers to the higher paying jobs on the arsenal.

Lucille's life soon settled into a regular routine. Up at 5 o'clock

every morning, work all day, and back home by 6 that evening. Run to the mailbox to look for a letter from Kenneth, and then write another letter describing her day.

Although a slow reader, she forced herself to read the newspaper every day to keep track of the war news. On her kitchen wall she had taped a map of Europe and every week or so she would laboriously trace the advances of the Allied army. Every foot the Allies advanced meant the sooner Kenneth would be coming home.

Finally after almost two years, Lucille received the letter she had

**"Charles Darwin was a naturalist who wrote the Organ of the Spices."
On 4th grade history exam**

been waiting for. The war had been over for months and the army was beginning to discharge its soldiers. Kenneth wrote to say that he would be arriving home by bus in a couple of weeks and

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he missed her terribly.

A friend later said that she had never seen Lucille look so happy and radiant as she did when she received the letter from her husband.

Two days before his scheduled arrival, Kenneth called a friend to say he was in Fort Benning, Georgia, being discharged and would be home in a few days. "Tell Lucille," he said as he hung up, "that I love her."

On the appointed day Lucille was at the bus station. Busload after busload of soldiers arrived to be welcomed home by their families, but Kenneth was not among them. Late that night after being assured that no more buses were scheduled to arrive that evening, Lucille finally went home, only to return at dawn the next morning.

Again, buses arrived and buses left all day long but Kenneth was not on any of them. The same routine was followed for almost a week until she was threatened with losing her job if she did not return to work.

Kenneth and Lucille had been given a lamp by a relative when they first married and now she placed it in the window so he would be able to find the house if he arrived home at night. Every night she would rush home after work to wash, do her hair and change clothes and then spend the evening sitting

on the edge of a chair next to the lamp, waiting patiently for her husband who never showed up.

Her neighbors began to grow concerned and finally talked her into writing the War Department. Several months passed until she received a reply. Kenneth had been discharged at Fort Benning and received a travel voucher to Huntsville. The department was sorry but it had no further information.

Neighbors began to speculate as to the fate of Lucille's husband. "Surely," they reasoned, "something must have happened to him. And it's not normal for a woman to keep waiting for so long and act like nothing is wrong."

Finally a delegation of neighbors approached her. "Lucille," they said, "we've known you for a long time and we just want to help. It's time you realized that maybe your husband is not coming home."

For what seemed like an eternity, Lucille stared silently at them, as if she was looking through them. When she finally spoke it was with a deliberate calmness. "My husband said

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he would come home and I believe him. Now if you will excuse me..."

Weeks turned into months, and months into years and every night the lamp was turned on, a silent beacon to a long ago memory.

Periodically, over the years, friends or neighbors would take an interest in the fate of Lucille's husband and try to discover what had happened to him. Letters were written to various organizations and inquiries were made of police departments and hospitals. The answer was always the same. "I'm sorry, but we have no information."

Whenever someone would relay the latest inquiry to Lucille, she would scornfully reply that they were wasting their time with such foolishness.

"My husband," she would always reply, "is on his way home."

In 1956, some of the mill homes were torn down and Lucille moved to a small cottage at the foot of Chapman

Mountain. Immediately, before her belongings were even unpacked, the lamp was once again placed in front of the living room window where it continued its lonely vigil.

When she lived in the mill village most people had been familiar with her story and had been sympathetic. Many of the residents, probably having seen enough suffering of their own, went out of their way to be nice to her, always asking if she had any word from her husband.

"No," she would reply. "He's on his way home and probably hasn't had time to call."

Now living in a new location, she soon became known as "the crazy woman." The neighbors knew nothing about her except that she lived in a fantasy world, turning the light on every night for the memories of a love she could not let go.

She rarely ventured out of her house, and when she did, she was often greeted by taunts from the neighborhood children. At Hallow-

een her yard would be rolled with toilet paper and rotten eggs would be thrown at her front door. Every few years some neighborhood woman would visit for a few minutes, more to satisfy her curiosity than anything else.

Ignoring her neighbors, Lucille continued to live in her dream world, turning the lamp on every night and waiting for a knock that never came.

More time passed and the friends who had sympathized with her began to die off. Every year there were fewer people who knew the story behind the lamp in the window. By this time, Lucille had become a virtual recluse and though she was able to take care of herself, her family still decided it was a good idea for someone to check on her every

"The most dangerous position in which to sleep is with your feet on your office desk."

Bill Drake, Huntsville


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day.

In 1992, almost a half century after Kenneth had left for the service, Lucille's nephew stopped by one evening to see how she was doing. After knocking several times and not getting an answer, he used his key to enter the house.

After first searching the rest of the house, he discovered Lucille crouched in a corner of the bedroom, with a sheet wrapped around her, sobbing. Looking up and seeing her nephew, she began to cry again.

"He's not coming home, is he? Kenneth's not coming home."

It was all her nephew could do to not cry himself. Sitting on the floor he wrapped his arms around his aunt and tenderly assured her that everything was all right.

"Don't worry Aunt Lucy, he's on his way home. He'll be home any time now."

Carefully he tucked the frail old woman into her bed. As she drifted off to sleep, a gentle smile played on her lips, the smile of a woman who still believed that love was everlasting.

Sometime that night, in the wee hours of the morning, Lucille died. Her body was found on the living room sofa, fully dressed and with her hair done up neatly. It was apparent from the calm and serene look on her face that she was finally reunited with the love she had waited so many years for.

As the hearse pulled out of the driveway, Lucille's nephew Kenny, went back into the house and picked up the lamp. That night he placed it on a table in front of his living room window and turned it on.

A silent and heartbreaking symbol of an eternal love.

The mystery of what happened to Kenneth has never been

solved. Though it was later established that he definitely boarded the bus in Columbus, Ga., for the trip to Huntsville, he was never seen or heard from again.

This story was originally run in Old Huntsville in 1992 under the name "A Lamp In The Window." Due to numerous requests, we are reprinting an updated version of what we think is one of Huntsville's greatest love stories.



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Anon.

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Po Folks Christmas

By Malcolm Miller

Several years ago singer, song writer Bill Anderson wrote a very popular country song titled "PO FOLKS"; then a few years later he came out with a different version titled "PO FOLKS CHRISTMAS."

"PO FOLKS CHRISTMAS" is a song I can definitely relate to when I was growing up as the seventh son of a share cropper.

There is one line in the song that says "When the howling winds would get mighty rough and we didn't have food enough we'd stop up the cracks and set the table with love."

I can't really say we didn't have food enough because we always had something to eat but it surely wasn't anything fancy and I do remember stopping the cracks in the walls and doors with rags or papers or whatever we could find to keep those howling winter winds out.

Christmas was really the only time of year that we had anything special and the things that were special to us back then are things we all have every day now and never give it a second thought. Christmas time was the only time all year that we had apples, oranges and raisins. It was the only time I remember Mama would bake a cake and make those wonderful tea cakes.

"Whoever said that the pen is mightier than the sword obviously never encountered Automatic Weapons."

General MacArthur

One of the older boys would go out in the pasture and cut a small cedar tree and we would decorate it by stringing pop corn on strings, cutting out paper circles, coloring them with crayons and gluing the circles into chains using paste made out of

flour and water for glue.

When Christmas Eve came we would all put our caps under the tree with our names in them so Santa Clause wouldn't get them mixed up. I don't recall ever getting any of the wonderful things that I had been

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seeing in the Sears Roebuck catalogue but the anticipation was always there and when I ended up getting a ball, a knife, or maybe a ten cent harmonica I was happy and always thought that Santa must have run out of the BB guns, bicycles, and other things I had dreamed about getting.

Now that I've grown older and raised a family of my own I think back how difficult it must have been for my Papa and Mama to hear us boys begging for all the wonderful things that they didn't have the money to provide for us.

However, thinking back, they provided the most important thing of all and that is love. Not only did I have parents who sacrificed for all of us boys, I had six older brothers who were my role models and idols.

My parents have been gone now for many years and all my brothers are gone also, so Christmas is a time for reflection back into the past and all the hard but

happy times my family spent together throughout my childhood.

Memories are a wonderful thing and they get sweeter as the years go by.

Since I've reached the sunset of my life, when I leave this world I just hope that someone will have fond memories of me, not only Christmas memories but life memories as well.



Fast Fudge Sauce

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Tips from Liz

* Judy Smith sent us a good tip for a super glass cleaner: Mix 2 cups water with 1/4 cup vinegar and 1/2 teaspoon of liquid detergent - works great!

* Use bread crumbs instead of cracker crumbs to cover anything that has been dipped in egg. Cracker crumbs do not brown as well.

* A small sock filled with coffee beans under your car seat will make your car smell really fresh.

* Use the peels of those little Clementines to toss into a pot of water along with ground cinnamon & cloves - the smells in your kitchen will get raves from everyone!

* Oil of almonds softens the skin and is essential for your complexion.

* For wrinkles, bathe the skin where they appear with a mixture of alum and water. This will tighten the skin.

* To soften hands, keep a dish of oatmeal near the washstand and rub freely on hands after washing. This will cleanse and soften the skin.

* A 93-year old lady we know who has the most beautiful skin washes her face each evening, then adds a light coat of olive oil.

* The best way to clean your broom is to soak it in a bucket filled with hot water, a little ammonia, and soap suds. Rinse well and let it dry, upended on the

broomstick before storing it away.

* Club soda is very good for cleaning & shining appliances & countertops.

* For the best holiday scent, buy some wintergreen oil and soak cotton balls in it, place them

in open containers around your home.

* For fridge odors, soak a cotton ball in pure vanilla extract and place in bowl in refrigerator. Your refrigerator will smell so sweet.

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Local News from 1911

- For Sale - One Everett piano, bed stands, chairs, gas stove, air tight heater, one double set of harness, one saddle, one refrigerator, kitchensafe and few other household articles; also one lot cedar posts and kindling. Can be seen at my home on west Clinton street for the next few days. - Mrs. C. F. Suggs

- Walker & Sitz, Washington Street - For soft drinks and lunches; also the place "across the corner." Both for Gentlemen only.

- Take your clothes to the Electric Pressing Parlor - old ones made good as new. Jefferson street - telephone 66

- Mr. and Mrs. W. W. Newman left yesterday on a business and pleasure trip to their silver mines in Canada.

- Miss Willie Harris is reported to be quite ill at her home on Adams avenue.

- . E. R. B. Martin and J. K. Mahan, millionaire natural oil operators of Pittsburgh, PA and who have options on more than 20,000 acres of oil lands in Madison County, left this afternoon for their home after spending a few days here in the interest of their probable local operations. The tip was secured by a prominent business man and friend of the gentlemen present, that within a very short time they expect to simulta-

neously start the drilling of 5 to 10 wells near Huntsville. The gentlemen made a visit to the Hazel Green and West Huntsville wells of the New York-Alabama Oil Co., and were pleased with the prospects.

- Serious Street Car Acci-

dent today - About 9 this morning Street Car No. 5, east bound with Dick Hatcher, motorman, collided with a two-horse wagon belonging to Hon. D. I. White and injured the two negro men drivers, Jack Parham, slightly and Jim Fields, seriously.

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News From the Year 1951

News From Huntsville and Around The World

MacArthur Fired

President Truman has stripped General Douglas MacArthur of all his commands in the Far East, saying that he was acting with "deep regret" but had finally concluded that the general "is unable to give his wholehearted support" to the policies of the U.S. government and the United Nations.

The president immediately named Lt. General Matthew B. Ridgeway to head the Far East commands, effective immediately. General Ridgeway has been commander of the Eighth Army in Korea and will be replaced in that post by Lt. General James Van Fleet.

The dramatic military reshuffling, while a surprise, had been building up to a climax for some time. Just last Thursday a message was made public in which General MacArthur publicly challenged the president's foreign policy. The general urged that the United States concentrate on Asia instead of Europe and use Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's For-

mosa-based troops to open a second front on the mainland of China.

General MacArthur has been a man of many titles during the war in Korea. With his recall, he loses them all: Supreme Commander, U.N. Forces in Korea; Supreme Commander for Allied Powers, Japan; Commander-in-Chief, Far East; and Commanding General, U.S. Army, Far East.

In relieving the general of his commands, the president said "It is fundamental that military commanders must be governed by policies and directives issued to them in the manner provided by our laws."

MacArthur has made no public comment so far but his supporters are pressing for congressional hearings.

Gossip is the art of saying nothing in a way that leaves practically nothing unsaid.

Eisenhower May Be Democrat


Harry Truman, President of the United States and head of the Democratic Party, has offered to sponsor the man who led Allied forces in Europe during the war as president of the United States.

General Eisenhower, to whom the offer was made, was flattered but has not made any public comment about Truman's offer, which is a virtual guarantee of nomination by the Democrats.




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American Income up to \$1,436

Americans averaged an income of \$1,436 for each man, woman and child in 1950, the Commerce Department reports. Total individual income payments were divided by the total population, which means that averages were pulled up by the large incomes of the very rich. The figure represents a gain of \$116, or nine percent, over 1949 and represents the highest dollar total in history, though a rise in the tax burden cut down the net gain.

Federal, state and local taxes averaged \$360 during the year ending June 30, 1950. Average incomes ranged from \$698 in Mississippi to \$1,986 in the District of Columbia.

Also reported was the fact that one out of four households owned their own homes and half

The mockingbird can change its tune 87 times in 7 months. Politicians regard this interesting fact with envy.

of the remaining said they expected to buy a home within the next five years.

If the present trend continues, America will become the wealthiest nation in history of this world.

No Bikinis at Wimbledon

A year ago, tennis player Gussie Moran shocked Wimbledon officials by sporting lace underwear beneath her sporting outfit. The ensemble, designed by Britain's Teddy Tingle, was in evidence each time she swung her racket. Today, Wimbledon Chairman Sir Louis Greig said he wants to see no more "bikini bathing dresses."

A proposal has been offered to allow officials to inspect underwear before each match but so far nothing has been decided.

Sugar Ray Brings Title Home

Sugar Ray Robinson knocked out Randy Turpin of England in the tenth round today and brought the world middleweight title back to the United States.

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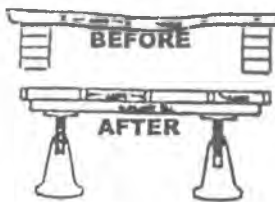
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Frustrated Warriors

by Charles Rice

On February 15, 1898 the battleship Maine blew up in Havana Harbor, Cuba, with a loss of 266 American lives. Rightly or wrongly - mostly likely wrongly - the Spanish government was held responsible for the disaster. Public opinion, flamed by fabulous and often fictitious newspaper accounts of alleged Spanish atrocities, demanded the United States declare war. A reluctant President William McKinley was virtually dragged into the conflict by hot-heads in Congress.

The wave of patriotism that swiftly swept across the nation was unmatched since the start of the Civil War, and men both young and not so young eagerly rushed forward to volunteer. At-

tempting to salvage something from the situation, President McKinley called Alabamian Joseph Wheeler to the White House and asked him to lead the invasion of Cuba. Wheeler,

a 62 year old former Confederate general, protested that he was too old for active duty. However, McKinley argued that he needed the Confederate hero as a symbol that North and South were

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now united. Little Joe finally accepted and put on his uniform once more - only this time in a less familiar shade of blue.

Alabama would recruit two white infantry regiments and one black infantry battalion for the Spanish-American War. To their disappointment, however, not one of the Alabama patriots, black or white, would ever fire a shot at the enemy. In fact, the closest the Alabama soldiers succeeded in getting to the fighting in Cuba were the debarkation camps of lower Florida.

There was understandable dissatisfaction with this, since despite President McKinley's good intentions it would be mostly northern troops who would fight under General Wheeler, while Wheeler's own Alabamians were left behind. "It might have been an accident that the six regiments selected to suffer at Miami came from Southern states," wrote Sergeant Moses Koenigsberg of Mobile. But some of the Southerners wondered. In fact, the title of Koenigsberg's wartime book said it all: *Southern Martyrs*.

Northeastern Alabama pro-

vided three companies for the Alabama white regiments. A fourth company became part of the black battalion.

First to arrive at the Mobile troop rendezvous was a newly formed company from Decatur, haphazardly thrown together at a meeting on April 29, 1898. The would-be soldiers elected Osceola Kyle as their captain, and he promptly telegraphed Governor Joseph Johnston that night to offer their services. Called the "Joe Johnston Rifles," the company, 76 strong, arrived by rail at Mobile on May 1 and were mustered into the Army twelve days later. They became Company E of the 1st Alabama Infantry Regiment, with Osceola Kyle appointed major and W. E. Wallace replacing him as captain.

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the "Huntsville Rifles," a militia unit that had succeeded the old "Madison Rifles" of Civil War days. R. L. Hay was their captain, but he soon resigned and was replaced by H. C. Laughlin. The Huntsville men arrived on May 3 and were mustered in as Company F, 1st Alabama Infantry.

The third white unit from northeast Alabama was a rough-neck assortment who called themselves the "Jackson Volunteers." Wrote Sergeant Koenigsberg, "Attired in jeans and homespun, the Jackson County volunteers appeared at the Mobile rendezvous as one of the most realistic volunteer commands that reported there." Circulars had been posted across Jackson County inviting patriotic citizens to gather at Scottsboro for a meeting on April 30.

The company was then formed with Charles Quintard Beech chosen captain. The men from "High Jackson" became Company I of the 2nd Alabama Infantry Regiment. The "Jackson Volunteers" acquired something of a reputation for rowdiness and had more court-martials than any other company in their regiment, but this was only in keeping with their rustic character.

The African-American company, organized jointly by Captain John Sheffey of Huntsville and Dr. Andrew Boyd of Scottsboro, became part of the Third Alabama Volunteer Infantry (Colored). The black Alabamians, too, would be denied service overseas.

The Alabama white regiments were soon sent on their way to the camp at Miami. However, the Florida site was by no means the pleasant resort city of today. In fact, it was little more than a sandy stretch of beach front studded with palm trees and sharp-pointed yucca plants. The Southern regiments were assigned camping grounds

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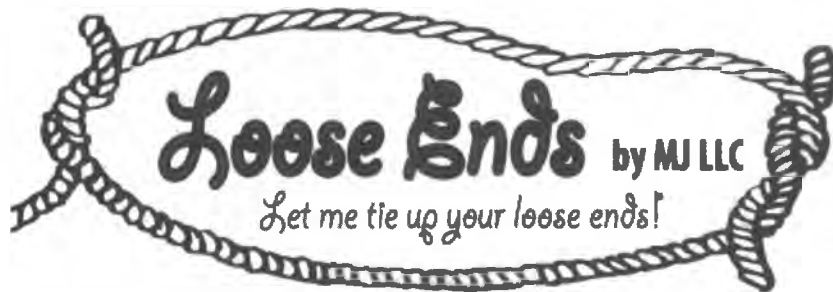
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with little thought of sanitation.

The camp site had previously been declared unsuitable by army inspectors, but the Army had gone ahead and stationed the troops there anyway. Not surprisingly, many of the men would quickly fall prey to disease.

The carelessness of the green soldiers made the situation even worse, since they simply dumped their refuse in convenient low spots not far from the wells where they drew their drinking water. "Had the troops at Miami been commanded by a wise and firm officer," wrote Sergeant Koenigsberg, "with any ordinary knowledge of sanitation, there would have been no reasonable complaint."

Within weeks of arriving in Miami, however, the death toll in the camp would climb to more than twenty. Most deadly was the dreaded typhoid fever. The Alabamians were "so far removed from the theater of active operations that they were not even issued ball cartridges," noted Sergeant Koenigsberg.

The war with Spain lasted less than three months. Nonetheless, it marked the beginning of United States as a world power. America emerged from the war with an empire stretching from the Philippine Islands to Puerto Rico, and the country would never be the same.

This was little consolation to the three men from Jackson County and the one from Decatur who died of disease in the camps of Florida. Probably hardest to bear for Alabama's frustrated patriots was the fact that they had not had the opportunity to prove themselves in battle. It is hard to feel like a hero when you didn't even get to fire your weapon.

Nevertheless, Alabama's Spanish-American soldiers earned our respect and gratitude. They had

stepped forward to give their very lives for their country. They had suffered silently with patience, while the eyes of America turned elsewhere.



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Lost Towns of Mullin's Flat and Pond Beat

by Tom Kenny

Located a few miles outside of Huntsville were once two thriving communities by the names of Mullin's Flat and Pond Beat. Today, if one tried to locate them, all that would be found are manicured fields bordered by the fences surrounding Redstone Arsenal.

Most of us are familiar with the government, in time of need, taking the land a house or a business sits on, but few people realize that at the beginning of the Second War, whole communities were erased from the face of the earth.

Pond Beat got its name from a series of ponds; Mack Pond, Rock Pond, Round Pond and others that extended from Pond Beat nearly to Triana.

The two communities were separated by a branch of Indian Creek. Mullin's Flat was north of the creek, Pond Beat to the south. These old communities lacked electricity, plumbing and telephones. Some of the houses had dirt floors and makeshift heating.

Many of the people occupying these communities were poor, very poor, but others were quite affluent. In Mullin's Flat there were over fifty black families and five white families. The community was not integrated but everyone got along very well.

Many of the residents were tenant farmers, providing labor for the land owner in exchange for a place to live and a share of the crop, usually a third or a fourth.

Most of the land was owned by individuals who were the children or grandchildren of former slaves. They farmed the land, owned businesses, stores, gins and mills and ran their own communities.

Peddlers called "rolling stores"

visited both communities once a week, selling household goods, foodstuffs, sweets and personal needs. Mail was delivered by horseback. The riders came from Talucah in Morgan County by ferryboat, delivered the mail and ferried back home. Later mail was delivered by automobile.

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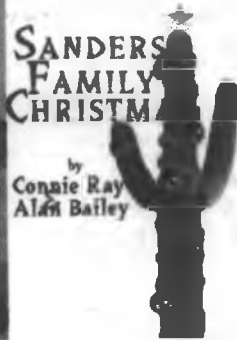
Perky's Crown of Beauty, Tanning & Karaoke Salon and the Beaverbrook Community Theater Presents: Another Christmas Carol (Rated PG12)



Somewhere in North Alabama, early one recent December: Those Beaverbrook actors are up to raising more money for their financially strapped little theater, after the disastrous robbery and loss of all their fund raising money just after their startling production of Romeo and Juliet closed, and with the holidays approaching, what better vehicle than to do what almost every community theater always does at the yuletide season to make a fast buck, a complete production of a Christmas Carol!

Dec. 4,5 @7:30pm, Dec. 6 @ 2:30pm, Dec. 10, 11, 12 @7:30pm, Dec. 13 @ 2:30pm. All seats \$12

Sanders Family Christmas



by Connie Ray & Alan Bailey

Get that old time Holiday Spirit when you join us for Renaissance Theatre's rollicking production at the old Baptist Church at the Burritt on the Mountain Museum. Brand new production, with several new cast members. Directed by Carol Puckett. The show opens Wednesday, Dec.16, 17, 18, 19, 20, with 2 shows on 19th - 2:30 PM & 7:30 PM and 2 shows on 20th - 2:30 PM and 7:30 PM. All seats \$20.00. Evening shows are at 7:30PM and matinees are at 2:30PM. All proceeds after expenses benefit the Burritt Museum and the Renaissance Theatre, call 536-2882 for ticket information. This show always sells out, call and order your tickets today!



The Eight Reindeer Monologues

By Jeff Goode

Coming to the Alpha Stage, downstairs this December. Fasten your safety belts, Santa's sleigh is in for a rough landing as a small herd of disgruntled sleigh pullers expose Santa for what he may truly be. For Mature Audiences! Directed by Gina White.

Dec. 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12 Downstairs All Seats \$12.00



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www.renaissancetheatre.net

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black students.

The school was financed partly by the Julius Rosenwald Fund of Chicago to help black schools in the South. Rosenwald funded one-third of the money, the State of Alabama funded one-third and the balance was supplied by the Mullin's Flat community. Most of the community funding was supplied by several of the wealthy black farmers.

James P. Burns who died in 1919 of double pneumonia, was a resident of Mullin's Flat. He operated a general store, a blacksmith shop and forge and a carpentry shop which specialized in the manufacturing of caskets.

The Horton School, located in Pond Beat, like the Silver Hills School, was funded jointly by the Rosenwald Fund, the State and the Community.

In the early days of Pond Beat there was a large southern mansion and plantation near the Tennessee River. The building was demolished in 1982. The land became part of the Redstone Arsenal. The house had been occupied at times by the Childress family and the Jones family.

The government moved rap-

idly in its efforts to acquire the lands of Mullin's Flat and Pond Beat. The Quartermaster General filed a petition on July 23rd, 1941 for the seizure of the lands.

The U.S. District Court of Northern Alabama entered an order granting possession of the lands to the Government as of noon July 24th, 1941.

The Federal Land Bank of New Orleans, acting as a consult-

ant to the Government, made an appraisal of each tract.

Most of the land owners accepted the evaluation. A few owners went to court to protest the Government evaluation and offer. The Government permitted the land owners to remain in possession of their property until crops were harvested.

The Churches in the two communities merged and formed the Center Grove United

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SCHEDULE FOR SPRING 2010

| | | | |
|-------------|------|-------------------------------|--|
| January 25 | 6:30 | Robert Patterson | Misconceptions About the Law |
| | 7:40 | Brent Jordan | Private Disability Insurance |
| February 1 | 6:30 | Phil Price | DUI Law |
| | 7:40 | Perry Shuttieworth | Roll on 18 Wheeler |
| February 8 | 6:30 | Connie Glass | Elder Law |
| | 7:40 | Robert Prince | Rules of the Road |
| February 15 | 6:30 | Ron Sykstus & Amy Tanner | Bankruptcy, VA Disability, Security Clearances |
| | 7:40 | Josh Hayes | Politics and the Law |
| February 22 | 6:30 | Michael K. Wisner | Wills, Trusts, and Estate Law |
| | 7:40 | Jonathan Lusk | Divorce Law |
| March 1 | 6:30 | Ed Gentle | Mass Tort Cases |
| | 7:40 | Mayor Tommy Battle | City Government |
| March 8 | 6:30 | Matt Glover | Bad Faith and Fraud Cases |
| | 7:40 | Kerri Johnson Smith | Employment Law |
| March 22 | 6:30 | Rebecca Brinkley | Contract Law |
| | 7:40 | Barton Warren & Derek Simpson | Trial Tactics |
| March 29 | 6:30 | Michael Timberlake | Nursing Home Law |
| | 7:40 | Richard Chesnut | Real Estate Law |
| April 5 | 6:30 | Archie Lamb | Sports Law |
| | 7:40 | Charles L. Brinkley | Corporate Litigation |
| | 8:40 | Graduation | |

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Church. When their congregations were forced to move, the original church was dismantled and moved to the corner of Jordan Lane and Mastin Lake Road in Huntsville.

Many of the old residents of the two communities believed the large black ownership (about 80%) of the land was influential in the area being chosen for the arsenal.

When the Government decided to build the arsenal, the property owners had no choice but to sell. As one old resident said, "They set the price and we had to accept it."

Still, the coming of the arsenal was a Godsend for many of the tenant farmers and their families.

Many of the residents of these communities got good paying jobs working for the Army and the Army contractors, and many of these displaced people were able to buy homes which without the Arsenal takeover, they would never have been able to do.

Today the towns are but memories for the people who once lived there.

Things A Married Woman Cannot Help Thinking

from 1899 publication

- That she was very pretty at sixteen.
- That she had, or would have had, a great many good offers.
- That her lady friends are five years older than they say they are.
- That she has a very fine mind.
- That the people think too much of the looks of that Miss ...
- That her mother-in-law is a very trying woman.
- That her sister-in-law takes airs and ought to be put down.
- That her girls are prettier than Mrs. A.'s girls.
- That her eldest son takes after him.
- That he is going to throw himself away on Miss Scruggs.
- That Miss Scruggs set her cap for him and did all the courting.
- That her servant girls are the worst ever known.
- That she pities old maids.

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The Tradition

by Jackie Reed

I still remember the first Christmas Eve I had dinner with Chuck's parents. We were dating at the time and when I was invited to have dinner with them I was thrilled.

The house was decorated for the holidays with a beautiful wreath on the front door and a large Christmas tree in the living room.

Chuck's mother was a good cook and would often spend days preparing the special Christmas Eve dinner. She would insist that everyone had to try all the dishes on the table.

When I would complain about gaining weight she would say, "You worry about that next month. Right now, you eat!"

My most vivid memory of that night was the love shared by everyone there, I remember thinking, "What a nice tradition."

Little did I know that I would be a part of that tradition for the next forty years.

As the years went by babies were born, people got married or moved away and some died. The one consistent event in our lives, that brought us all together, was the Christmas Eve dinner.

Sometimes there would be thirty or more people for dinner. Chuck's father would grumble in a good natured way that homeless people could be eating dinner there and they would never be noticed in the crowd.

When Chuck's mother passed away in 1986, the family began asking where we would spend Christmas Eve. For me, there was no question. We would continue the tradition. The only

difference was that we would provide all the food so Chuck's dad would not have to worry about it.

This will be the first Christmas Eve in forty years that we will not be together at his house. Chuck's father died in May of this year at the age of 101. A few months later, Chuck died also, at only 77. He was the love of my life.

It was a beautiful tradition, one that I will never forget.


This Christmas I pray that everyone else may be as blessed as I was.

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The Russel Erskine Hotel

More than nostalgia, the Russel Erskine Hotel still stands as a monument to a by-gone era, a time when Huntsville was young and growing. Now that there are other and newer monuments and skyscrapers, the Russel Erskine Hotel has taken a lesser, but still significant, role.

Albert Russel Erskine was the onetime president of the Studebaker Corporation. Although he did not have an important financial interest in the hotel, it was named for this local person of national prominence.

According to local folklore, the hotel ran into financial trouble before it was ever completed. In an attempt to raise more money, the owners came up with a plan to name it after Erskine, a local hometown boy made good, hoping to interest him in investing in the venture. When the hotel was dedicated, Erskine came to Huntsville, listened to the speeches honoring him, ate the free food, drank the free liquor, stayed in the free suite, and then went back to Detroit without spending any money!

As each city has its prominent hotel, the Russel Erskine was, "the place to go" in Huntsville, Alabama. Officially opened on January 3, 1930, in the midst of the Great Depression at a cost of 1.5 million dollars, it was and still is a splendid building—12 stories high and 132 rooms. It became one of Huntsville's leading attractions and immediately became a popular spot for conventions and

travelers.

Besides the convenience and availability of a large hotel in Huntsville, visitors noted the "completeness" and "exquisiteness" of the furnishings in 1930. It was also noted that such modern conveniences of the day as an electric fan and an RCA radio were in each room. One satisfied guest, Dr. George Alden of Massachusetts, wrote the hotel saying that the Russel Erskine was the best appointed and gave the best service of any hotel during his trip.

It was Huntsville's best advertisement and many balls and gatherings were held in its splendid ballroom and banquet rooms.

But as motels began to be built on the perimeter of the city, the hotel not only had to deal with competition, but also a change of taste and choice of potential guests.

In the 1960s, the movement

of commercial activity away from downtown areas in many American cities hastened the demise of

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many hotels and businesses. The stately Russel Erskine Hotel, so proudly rooted on Clinton Avenue, could not move with the new development and economic opportunities outside its downtown site. Measures to revive the hotel were short-lived. In March of 1971, the Russel Erskine Hotel closed its doors to transient guests. It's only business thereafter was to cater to conventions, civic clubs, and special accommodations.

Many well-intentioned plans of a succession of owners to revive the hotel were unsuccessful. Consequently, the hotel was auctioned off to the First Alabama Bank in 1975 for \$300,000, which included the furnishings.

The First Freewill Baptist Church bought the ballroom's main chandelier and the lobby's four metal chandeliers within the first half-hour of the sale. Visitors and buyers rummaged though the halls of the once-proud hotel, looking at price tags on the furnishings, and eventually removing the trappings of the hotel. Perhaps they bought for their own use, to resell, or to obtain a precious keepsake of the place that held for them a fond memory of a "Cotton Ball," an unforgettable evening for a debutante, or honeymoon. By any account, it was the wake of the hotel.

Ironically, in 1978, the Russel Erskine Hotel was considered as a county-state work-release center for the Department of Corrections. Reportedly, a proponent of the idea said that, "It looks like the building was just built for this purpose."

Finally and happily on September 15, 1983, the Russel Erskine reopened its doors as a high-rise complex for the elderly and disabled. Renovated for \$3.6 million by local business people working with the Huntsville Preservation Authority the memory, the brilliance, and the

hotel building itself has been revived.

Huntsville's premier landmark of the 30s and 40s remains, except now it serves to house its residents permanently—not as temporary guests. While the new tenants still share much of the same ambiance of this venerable building as the former occupants, still there is a distinction between a hotel and a high-rise apartment house.

But two facts are indisputable: the new residents still have magnificent views from their windows, and all residents of the hotel have lived in a part of Huntsville's history.

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Touched By The Hands Of God

Christmas Remembered

by Johnny Johnston

Perhaps the level of anticipation exceeds the event itself. This was life in Mill Town Alabama. Tillman Hill in his book "Mr. Anderson's Monument" gave a very good assessment of life during the 40's when everything was valuable and little was financially attainable.

Tillman talked about life during Christmas when he so desperately wanted to give his parents a little something for Christmas. He snatched a box of cigars from his father's bedroom and three pairs of hose from his mother's clothing and wrapped them separately. These were his gifts to them for Christmas.

His mother later, very quietly, thanked him for the gift knowing he had no way of delivering any

other thing to them as gifts.

My late brother Fred had a job carrying in Mrs. Webb's coal on a daily basis which paid him 10 or 15 cents per week.

My sister was working at Wilson's Laundry at age 14 and used 20 cents of her salary to buy two gifts for two brothers for Christmas.

Do I sound sad? Don't mean to. We were very happy at Christmas time. It was a time for family, for bright lights, for visits from other family members and especially time to visit Aunt Annie White's house in Morgan City. Aunt Annie always baked a cake for the holidays.

Other fun things were the Huntsville Christmas parade around the square, up Jefferson and down Washington. I don't remember any Santa Clause interviews in Dunavants. Dunavants was about the only department store downtown and there wasn't anything outside of

downtown.

If you lived in Lincoln you usually got a gift at a church party. At the Baptist Church where I went we were usually given a bag with an apple or orange and maybe one piece of hard candy.

I especially remember Barbara's Grandmother Brown who lived on a farm in Baker's Cross Roads, Tennessee. She couldn't wait to open her gifts no matter how meager they were. She then couldn't wait to carefully place them in drawers or closets where we found them unused after she passed away!

At my age, I happily look back at those days living on Maple Street but I also look at Christmas for our Children, Grand Children and Great Grand Children and try my best to help them have a Christmas of fun, presents and gifts from Santa. Barbara sees to it that they have memories from our holidays that they will always remember.

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